

## LAMENTATIONS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to the book of Lamentations as we continue our study through the Word of God. As we begin the book of Lamentations tonight we are going to see the heart of this prophet of God, Jeremiah. And I believe Jeremiah wrote Lamentations and it wasn't until the 18<sup>th</sup> Century when this was challenged.

The Septuagint or the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures has an introduction to this book that names Jeremiah as the one who wrote it and we will see that in a minute. The other thing we need to remember is that Jeremiah was an eyewitness to these events and thus, he could write down these words with accuracy.

And if you think about it, the book of Lamentations is really a conclusion or ending to the book of Jeremiah. The time frame is 586 B. C. and the Babylonians have captured the Southern Kingdom of Judah, destroyed the city of Jerusalem, its walls and the Temple of God was burned to the ground!

We can read of this in Jeremiah 52:4-14, which says **“Now it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and encamped against it; and they built a siege wall against it all around. So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. By the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, the famine had become so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. Then the city wall was broken through, and all the men of war fled and went out of the city at night by way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king’s garden, even though the Chaldeans were near the city all around. And they went by way of the plain. But the army**

**of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and they overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. All his army was scattered from him. So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, and he pronounced judgment on him. Then the king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. And he killed all the princes of Judah in Riblah. He also put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in bronze fetters, took him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death. Now in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month (which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, who served the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He burned the house of the LORD and the king's house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire. And all the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down all the walls of Jerusalem all around."**

Imagine what Jeremiah was feeling after spending some 40 years warning the people of this coming judgment and their refusal to listen and now it is upon them. We said in our study of Jeremiah that this prophet of God was known as the "Weeping prophet" because he wept over the sin of his people and the destruction that was and has come upon them.

And now that all this destruction has taken place Jeremiah finds himself sitting on a hill overlooking the rubble that once was Jerusalem. There may have been some smoke still rising up from the city. Again, imagine how you would feel in a situation like this. Forty years of your life warning the people of God's coming judgment, that they needed to repent, to get right with God, but they refused to listen, they refused to change. That is what Jeremiah was going through and what Jeremiah see's before his eyes is the result of a rebellious people who he had warned that these things would come to pass if they did not repent and they didn't!

Now I don't know about you, but at that point I would probably say, "I told you so!" Or, "You are only getting what you deserve!" But not Jeremiah, instead he laments, he mourns over what he sees. In fact, he weeps so much for this city and its people that his tear ducts dry up; at one point he couldn't produce tears anymore!

As I look at the heart of Jeremiah and see his actions, I see the heart of Jesus for sinful man! The Lord has such compassion for us, for people. Just listen to the heart of our Lord and Savior as He looked over this city of Jerusalem, much in the same way that Jeremiah did.

In Luke 19:41-44 we read, **"Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.'"**

That is the heart of Jeremiah and it should be our heart as well. J. Vernon McGee put it like this in regards to Christians today and how they are not moved by what they see, what they share with others like many Christian men and women of the past. He wrote,

Dr. Alexander Whyte, one of the great expositors of the Word of God of days gone by, has said: "There is nothing like the Lamentations of Jeremiah in the whole world. There has been plenty of sorrow in every age, and in every land, but such another preacher and author, with such a heart for sorrow, has never again been born. Dante comes next to Jeremiah, and we know that Jeremiah was the great exile's favorite prophet." . . .

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan tells the story about Dr. Dale Birmingham who used to say that Dwight L. Moody was the only man who seemed to him to have the right to preach about Hell. When someone asked Dr. Dale why he said that, he replied, ‘Because he always preaches it with tears in his voice.’ That is the type of man God wants today. We have too many who are not moved by the message they give.

I am afraid that we have developed a generation in our day that has no feeling, no compassion for this lost world. There is little concern for getting out the words of God. There is little attention given to moral fiber or a high sense of duty.

David Garrick, one of the great Shakespearean actors of the past, told about the day he was walking down the street in London and found a man standing on the corner just yearning over the people. Garrick said, “I stood on the outside of the crowd, but I found myself imperceptibly working my way in, until I stood right under that man, and there came down from his breast hot tears.”

He went on to say that there was a woman there, pointing her shaking, withered finger at the man who spoke, and she said, “Sir, I have followed you since you preached this morning at seven o’clock and I have heard you preach five times in the streets of this city, and five times I have been wet with your tears. Why do you weep?” That preacher was George Whitefield, a cross-eyed man who was burlesqued on the English stage and denounced from almost every pulpit in the country.

David Garrick went on to say, “I listened to George Whitefield, and as I listened to him I saw his passion and his earnestness. I knew that he meant that without Christ men would die. As I listened to him, he came to the place where he could say nothing more. He reached up those mighty arms, his voice seemed almost like a thunderstorm as he said one final word: ‘Oh!’” Why, he could break an audience with that word! When George Whitefield said “Oh!” men bowed before the Holy Spirit like corn bows under the wind.

Garrick went on, “I would give my hand full of golden sovereigns if I could say ‘Oh!’ like George Whitefield. I would be the greatest actor that the world has ever known.” The only difference was that George Whitefield was sincere - he was not acting. Jeremiah was that kind of a preacher also.

I am afraid that we have developed a generation in our day that has no feeling, no compassion for this lost world. There is little concern for getting out the Word of God. There is little attention given to moral fiber or a high sense of duty.

Several years ago in a *Reader's Digest* article, young people were counseled that their highest chances of success in life would be found “by engaging in work you most enjoy doing, and which gives fullest expression to your abilities and personality.”

If Jeremiah had read that article and heeded its advice, he probably would have gone into some other kind of business. But Jeremiah could say that it was the Word of God that he rejoiced in: “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jer. 15:16). How wonderful this man was!

The young people today who have been trained - even many in Christian work - are simply looking for a job where they can punch a clock, go home to watch TV, and forget all about it. They hold their feelings and emotions in reserve and are unwilling to become really involved in getting out the Word of God.

I don't always understand Jeremiah, but I admire him and look up to him.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Vol. III, pp.425-426

Now the book of Lamentations is divided up into five different laments or a five poem dirge or lament. Jeremiah is just pouring out his heart over what he sees. I think Charles Swindoll summed it up very well when he said the following in his book, "The Lamentations of Jeremiah." He wrote,

"It is a mute reminder that sin, in spite of all its allurements and excitement, carries with it heavy weights of sorrow, grief, misery, barrenness, and pain. It is the other side of the 'Eat, drink, and be merry' coin."

May we not lose sight of that fact! The people were warned they just chose not to listen to what Jeremiah and the other prophets of God were saying. They were having such a good time they thought these things had to be of God, but they weren't. And they saw the consequences to their actions. And God does the same with us, warning us of the danger that is out there.

And that is where we will pick up our study this evening in the book of Lamentations, in Lamentations chapter 1 starting in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word!

Now remember I spoke of how the Septuagint gives to us the introduction to the book of Lamentations. This is how the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures opens up,

“And it came to pass, after Israel had been carried away captive, and Jerusalem had become desolate, that Jeremiah sat weeping, and lamented with this lamentation over Jerusalem, saying . . .”

## **LAMENTATIONS 1**

### **VERSES 1-4**

1. As you read these words of Jeremiah you can picture how broken he was over what he was seeing. As he looks down upon the city of Jerusalem it is destroyed! A city that once was filled with people is now empty! A nation that once was great has now been taken into captivity.

How can that be? Because those things she trusted in to help her, her lovers, the idols she worshiped came up empty. They could not help her. The nations she looked to for help, they have been no help at all! God wanted them to trust in Him but instead they turned their backs on Him.

2. I am sure you are aware of this but prosperity leads to self-reliance and you tend not to look to God anymore. In fact, it can get so bad that you don't have time for God anymore! There is no need for God and then there is no room for Him!

And what happened in Israel I see happening in the church today. People don't see their need for God and because of all their activities there is no room for God in their lives! And yet, when our Lord taught His men and us how to pray, one of the things He said was, "**Give us this day our daily bread.**" Matthew 6:11.

You see, each and every day God wants us to trust Him, to rest in Him, to wait upon Him to provide for us. And as God does bless us don't let that prosperity cause you to move into a condition of self-reliance!

Remember the words of Agur in Proverbs 30:8-9, "**Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches - Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, And say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God.**"

Do you see what Agur is asking for? He is asking God to give him just what he needs to live, not too little and not too much. Why? Because prosperity seems to ruin people spiritually, it drives them from God. They are too busy using the toys that they bought that they don't have time for God! On the other hand we see that poverty causes people to curse God for their condition, to do things that are wrong.



As one person said, “Never bless me above my capacity to love You!” I like that and thus, we need to be content in what God has given to us. It is as Paul said in Philippians 4:11-13, **“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”** May we learn to be content in what the Lord has given to us and not allow the things of this world to cause us not to see our need for Him and bring us to the point where we have no room for Him!

3. What was the reason for their captivity? It was sin and sin will always bring you into captivity, make no mistake about it! We tend to think we know better than God and as sin overtakes our lives we look back and wonder what happened, how we have drifted so far from God? The reason is simple; we allowed sin to take us captive.

Remember what Jesus said in John 8:34, **“... ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.’”** Now you can accept that or reject it but it doesn’t change the fact that sin will bring you into bondage, you will be taken captive by it!

But we don’t have to live in that condition because Jesus said, **“... ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. . . . Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.’”** John 8:31-32,

36.

Don't travel down that road, be free in Christ or as Paul put it in Romans 6:6-7, **“knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.”** Too often people place themselves into bondage when Christ has set us free!

Also, as you look at verse 4 you see another consequence of sin and that is bitterness. You see, all adult male Jew's were required to come to Jerusalem for three main feasts, as long as they were able. There was the Feast of Passover in the spring. There was the Feast of Pentecost in the summer. And there was the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall. But now the roads to Zion were empty.

And the reason they were empty was because they were in captivity because of their sin. And as much as it was their fault, man loves to blame God. The result of that is they became bitter at God and at others for what is happening to them. Instead of repenting of their sins they are blaming everyone else, even God and that will never set them free!

#### VERSES 5-6

1. Sin does take its toll upon a people and a nation. They once started out shining brightly, but now their light has gone out. You see, it is more than just being taken captive, but **“All her splendor has departed.”** And I am not talking about outward beauty but an inward beauty that manifests itself outwardly. For Israel, her glory was found in the presence of the Lord as Psalm 3:3 tells us, **“But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head.”** And sin will weaken us, cause us to be fearful.

And you look at someone who is captive by sin, their beauty is gone and they are weakened, fearful. Does this happen immediately? No it doesn't but remember Samson and how his life was filled with sin and at one point the Holy Spirit departed from Samson and he didn't even realize it. That is what sin does, it blinds us, binds us and it grinds at us and yet we continue down that path. Be set free in the Lord and not taken captive by sin!

### VERSE 7

1. We have seen that sin brings us into captivity, it destroys our beauty in the Lord, it weakens us and here we see that as the world looks at us they mock us, they will put us down, we become a laughing stock. "And he calls himself a Christian; he is no different than us!"

Now you may think that is unfair but when you stumble, when you fall, don't expect the world to look upon you with compassion, to have sympathy for you, because they won't. They are just waiting for you to fall so they can announce it to the world. Be careful and as Christians, if a brother or sister does stumble and fall, instead of mocking them, be there to lift them up, to care for their wounds, and to help get them back on track.

2. Now when did Judah realize the mess they were in, when did they see their sin? When they were taken into captivity! It usually takes the loss of something to make a person aware, to make them realize what they had. Judah was remembering now but it was too late, they were taken into captivity!

VERSES 8-9

1. First the Lord says in regards to the grievous sins of Judah that her “**nakedness**” has been exposed. What does that mean? It means that her sins have been exposed for all to see and those people, those nations that once looked up to her see her exposed and now they despise her!

Next we see the Lord speak regarding the grievous sins of Judah that “**Her uncleanness is in her skirts.**” Again, what does that mean? The Lord is likening the sin of Jerusalem to that of a woman during her menstrual period, she was unclean!

In in the midst of all this there was no one to comfort her. Was that true? No, the Lord was there but they were not looking to the Lord, they were not repenting of their sins and thus, there was not comforter for her!

2. For Judah, she did not look ahead in regards to her sin, she did not count the cost of her sin and now it has led to this! And sin is truly like that. It does bring pleasure for a time but in the end there are the consequences of your actions. You will find yourself in bondage, heartbroken, and even destroyed!

VERSES 10-11

1. This is speaking of the Babylonians who went right into the Temple of God and they took everything that they wanted, even entering the Holy of Holies!

2. Now remember that for around 2 years the Babylonians were attacking the Southern Kingdom of Judah and they had surrounded the city of Jerusalem, cutting off their food supplies. And because the Babylonians had cut off their food supply they were starving to death. Money was worthless but food was as precious as gold. And the reason for this was their sin!

#### VERSES 12-17

1. As you read this you see the hurt, the pain of Jeremiah as he looked upon his nation and his people. The devastation that this captivity brought upon them! And who brought this upon them? God did and the reason, as I have said, was because of their sin. And the reality is they brought this upon themselves. God wanted to bless them but He could not ignore their sin and thus, judgment came!

Think about that, “**. . . His fierce anger.**” You don’t hear much about that today but you do hear a feel good message, a feel good Gospel! Listen to what J. Vernon McGee had to say. He wrote,

People don’t like to hear about the fierce anger of God today. That aspect is often left out of the gospel message, and I have observed this particularly in the religious programs that are shown on TV, even by so-called gospel churches.

In one Christmas program I saw, they did say that Christ was born of a virgin and that He was God manifest in the flesh - I rejoiced in that. But the program was a travesty of the gospel because it said that Christ came to give you a new personality, to bring peace and love - and oh, how insipid it was!

It was a message for comfort and for compromise. The excuse that is often given for such an approach with the gospel is that it is trying to reach the man of the world. Jeremiah, too, was trying to reach a lost world, and he wasn't very successful; but at least he gave God's message as God had given it to him. God judged Judah because of her sin, and He still will judge sin today.

- J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible* Vol. III, pp.425-426

How true that is! Now in looking at the church today, one writer wrote,

I am grieved at the reports surfacing in many "churches" in Western culture who minimize the serious offense that sin is to a holy God. No, I don't believe that we should only preach hellfire and damnation to people. It is good to focus on the goodness of God. However, we cannot enjoy the goodness and favor of God until we first come face-to-face with the seriousness of our sin, come to the end of ourselves, turn away from a sinful, idolatrous lifestyle, and trust in the merits of Jesus Christ's work on our behalf on the cross by faith, securing our adoption as sons and daughters of God by God's grace. . . .

Joel Osteen, pastor of Lakewood Church in Houston, which boasts that more than 25,000 people attend their services weekly, recently said: "Listen; don't dangle people over the fires of hell. Lisa and I always kid about you know we're going to dangle them over the fires of hell. Listen, that doesn't draw people to God. They know what kind of life they live. They know how bad they've lived. What you've got to do is talk about the goodness of God. Listen, it's the goodness of God that brings people to repentance. It's the goodness of God. One thing I always appreciated about my dad is that he instilled into us a good vision of who God was. We learned about a good God." [Sermon: What the Resurrection Means to Us As Believers]

The problem in 2 Peter was that false teachers were distorting Scripture to serve their own purposes. Osteen is right, it is the kindness of God that leads to repentance (Rom 2:5), however God's kindness is most magnified in the horrific execution of His Son Jesus on the cross for our sin. This is the good news of the Gospel: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. It seems to me that Osteen is walking closely in the footsteps of those leading people astray in 2 Peter, using Scripture for their own gain and to validate their misguided message.

I mention Joel Osteen, not to slander him, but to warn him and others who would fail to expose people to the whole counsel of God's Word. Yes, we can draw a crowd by telling people how good God is and how He wants them to enjoy His favor. And this message is true. But it is not the whole message. You can't enjoy the benefits of the good news until you've first dealt with the reality of the bad news.

Those who claim to be men of God, called to share His Word with people everywhere, preach the Word. Preach all of it. The good news about God and the bad news about man. People need to hear it all.

- <http://aaronmartin.blogspot.com/2006/07/warning-to-feel-good-gospel-preachers.html>

Amen to that. People need to know where they stand with God, and they are separated from God because their sins have separated them from God. That is the bad news.

The Good News is that Jesus Christ has come to set us free from our sins, the price of our redemption has been paid in full and all we have to do is receive that free gift by faith.

You see, the bad news causes me to look to someone to save me, a Savior, Jesus! Never forget that!

2. Once again we see that there was no one to comfort her in this situation. But why was the situation hopeless? Because God had turned against them because of their sin and He put it in the heart of the Babylonians to come upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah and take them into captivity.

It is a sad day when God turns His back on His people, but God's patience and longsuffering, as rich and deep as they are, does come to an end bringing about the judgment of God. As God said in Genesis 6:3, "... 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever. . . .'"

Why does God say this? What is the reason for this? We are told in Genesis 6:5, "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." How close are we today from the judgment of God as you look at the thoughts and the intent of man's heart and how wicked it truly is? I think we are very close!

#### VERSES 18-19

1. Notice the problem. The Lord is righteous and man is not, man has rebelled against Him! And God has to deal with sin, He can't ignore it or it would make Him unjust, unrighteous and-so-on. G. Campbell Morgan put it like this in regards to the anger of God and His dealing with sin. He wrote,



This is a supreme necessity in the interest of the universe. Prisons are in the interest of the free. Hell is the safeguard of heaven. A state that cannot punish crime is doomed; and a God who tolerates evil is not good. Deny me my Biblical revelation of the anger of God, and I am insecure in the universe. But reveal to me this Throne established, occupied by One Whose heart is full of tenderness, Whose bowels yearn with love; then I am assured that He will not tolerate that which blights and blasts and damns; but will destroy it, and all its instruments, in the interest of that which is high and noble and pure”.

- G. Campbell Morgan, Studies in the Prophecy of Jeremiah, p. 248

And I do understand that as some read of the fierceness of God’s judgment against a nation and her people they feel it is unfair. Let me make this clear, it is not! God is gracious and merciful and He never gives us what we fully deserve.

Never forget that God gets no pleasure in pouring out His judgment, but, because He is righteous and holy He must deal with sin. It is as Ezekiel 33:11 says, “**. . . ‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’**”

Now some wonder why God is so patient, so longsuffering. In fact, some of you may be wondering why God does not judge our wicked nation. Well, Peter tells us that, “**The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**” II Peter 3:9.

Think about it, aren't you thankful the Lord waited until you got saved? Of course you are and so am I. But like I have said, His Spirit will not always strive with man and judgment is coming, make no mistake about it!

2. And this judgment was so severe that some of the people were starving to death and they still refused to obey the Lord! That is man, stubborn, stiff-necked!

### VERSES 20-22

1. This is not Jeremiah speaking here but the people of Judah as they see all that is going on. It was bad and for those who tried to escape, they were cut down by the sword. Those that remained in the city starved to death or died from pestilence. And Jerusalem is crying out for the people to be judged as she has been judged. But this judgment upon them was from the Lord and they will go into captivity for their sins!

## **LAMENTATIONS 2**

### VERSE 1

1. Ezekiel tells us that the glory of the Lord had departed from the Temple, from Judah and the people were not even aware of it. Keep in mind that the Temple was the place where God dwelt. And He sat upon the Mercy Seat with His feet resting upon the Ark. And yes the Temple was destroyed, the place where God dwelt but He was no longer there, the people did not want Him and this shell of a structure was now destroyed, the Temple was burned to the ground!

VERSES 2-3

1. Here we see Jeremiah speak of the Lord bringing total destruction upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah for her sins! He speaks of bringing down the strongholds, the fortresses, the military might of Judah as well as her leaders! He speaks of breaking the horn, cutting them down and the horn was a symbol of strength. God had cut off the horn or the strength of this nation because of her wickedness.

And that is something we need to understand, our strength is not in our military might, our weapons of war, the numbers of soldiers we have, our strength has to be in the Lord or we will not succeed!

Judah found that out and they should have known better just as we should know these things. In Psalm 20:7 we are told, **“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the Lord our God.”** And in Psalm 33:16-17 we are told, **“No king is saved by the multitude of an army; A mighty man is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a vain hope for safety; Neither shall it deliver any by its great strength.”**

May we learn the lesson and heed the warning as individuals and as a nation!

VERSES 4-7

1. God's judgment was all-encompassing. Even those that looked good outwardly, pleasant to the eye, God saw their heart and judged them with His righteous judgment. There is no escape for the wicked. It is as Paul said in Hebrews 4:12-13, "**For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.**"

Folks, you can't fool God. I have been fooled over the years by people and I am sure you have too, but God knows not only a person's heart, but the motives behind what he is doing, the motives of his heart.

Everything is open to Him to see and thus, allow God's Word to work in you to purge you of these things, to refine you in the Refiners fire so that as the Lord looks at your life He sees His reflection just as the refiner sees his reflection in the purified gold!

For the people of Judah, the false worship, their religion they held onto, the Lord saw through the emptiness and He judged them!

2. Now we also see God put an end to the Feast Days. That makes sense; the Lord Himself has departed from the Temple and from Jerusalem and thus, any feasts celebrated would be empty. And we need to remember the city was under siege! There was no time to celebrate these feasts!

Keep in mind that the Feast Days were times of celebrations with much shouting and cheering and praising the Lord. But now the Babylonians had completely destroyed the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. No longer are the Jews shouting for joy but it is the sound of the Babylonians as they entered the city of Jerusalem and the Temple of God. It was the tragic result of a nation who refused to repent of her sin and get right with God.

#### VERSES 8-10

1. Did you hear that? **“The LORD has purposed [determined] to destroy The wall of the daughter of Zion.”** As unfair as that might sound since these are God’s people, it was a righteous judgment. You see, God sent prophet after prophet and they were warning the people of the danger they were in. It wasn’t that they didn’t know they just refused to listen.

In Isaiah 28:9-10 we read, **“Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.”**

You see, Israel was mocking Isaiah for the way he taught, verse-by-verse, you might say, the Words of God. Wolf put it like this, “Verses 9 and 10 portray the sarcastic reaction these Judean leaders had to Isaiah’s words of rebuke. They were tired of Isaiah’s strictness and of his recurring application of God’s laws. The string of monosyllables in verse 10 may mean that the Judean leaders regarded Isaiah’s message as meaningless or as child’s play.”

People do the same thing today as the Word of God is being taught. They belittle the Scriptures, thinking they are the words of men, thinking you need more than the Scriptures to get the people’s attention.

I disagree. Give them the Words of God which are living and powerful and see what the Holy Spirit will do in their lives. His Word will not return void. The tragedy is, when you move away from the truth of God's Word and adopt the teachings and philosophies of the world, you are moving towards the judgment of God and the Southern Kingdom of Judah found that out as they disregarded the prophets of God and the Word of God!

### VERSES 11-12

1. Jeremiah is overwhelmed at this point. All that he has seen and is seeing is just too much for him. He has cried so much over what has taken place that he has no more tears, they are dried up. Can you imagine the grief and pain this man felt as he sat on that hill overlooking the city he loved and the people he loved?

Even after how they treated him, trying to kill him, placing him in prison, mocking him and making his life miserable, and yet he still loved them. What we see flowing from this man, from Jeremiah is the love of God!

2. And if you think Jeremiah is overreacting, look again at verse 12, "**They say to their mothers, 'Where is grain and wine?' As they swoon like the wounded In the streets of the city, As their life is poured out In their mothers' bosom.**"

The famine was so bad that these mothers couldn't eat anything, and when their infants tried to nurse there was no milk to feed them. Their mother's breasts were dry and these infants died trying to feed. They could no longer even provide the basic necessities of life!

VERSES 13-15

1. We are told in Hebrews 12:5-6, **“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.’”**

That is what God was doing with His people, chastening them to draw them back. If you are not a child of God then God will not chasten you. Yes He will judge you for your sins and this judgment sometimes happens in part in this life and it certainly happens in the life to come. It is as Hebrews 9:27-28 says, **“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”** But God chastens His children, disciplines them as He is preparing them for heaven!

2. Now the true prophets of God were trying to expose, reveal the sins of the people so that they might repent and get right with God. On the other hand the false prophets were telling the people they were okay, building up their self-esteem, instead of humbling them with the truths of God.

We read of this very thing in Jeremiah 6:14-15 as we are told, **“‘They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace!’ When there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time I punish them, they shall be cast down,’ says the LORD.”** Because they listened to the false prophets instead of the true prophets of God, their wound was not healed, and thus, God could not comfort them, judgment was coming!

3. And keep in mind that God wanted to comfort them, but they refused to look to Him, they refused to repent and thus, judgment came and it was devastating for them. Remember that Jerusalem once was a thing of beauty, the joy of the whole earth. The queen of Sheba traveled to see its wonders and couldn't believe her eyes. But now it is in ruins and the people are mocking her as they go by as we have seen and will see again as we read on. Sin is destructive, it is devastating and it didn't have to happen because God wanted to heal them, they just refused!

#### VERSES 16-17

1. The reality was it wasn't the Babylonians that swallowed them up; it was the Lord who used the Babylonians as the instrument of His judgment upon them! And keep in mind that ever since they were in the land the Gentile nations wanted to get at Jerusalem, to obtain her wealth, but God protected her until now.

2. And like Judah, God has warned us of what is coming if we don't repent and get right with Him as a nation and individuals. You see, God had warned the children of Israel even before they entered the Promised Land what would happen if they turned from Him. Back in Deuteronomy chapter 28 God said the people would be blessed when they walked in obedience and they would be cursed if they walked in disobedience to Him. This judgment should have come as no surprise to them and the people of this world need to wake up. Just as God judged this earth with a flood because of the wickedness He is going to judge it again and this time with fire! The signs are there, but sadly many reject them and the Lord who has warned them!



VERSES 18-20

1. Here is a call to repent, to cry out to the Lord but the wall of the people's hearts was more impenetrable than the wall of the city of Jerusalem, they would not let God in!

2. Now instead of meditating on the things of God, enjoying the beauty of a relationship with Him they had to watch out for the enemy. Keep in mind that the Jews had three watches during the night that went from 6-10, 10-2, and 2-6 in the morning.

So instead of joy they are going to be crying out because of all that has come upon them. And as you can see and as we have seen as we went through Kings and Chronicles, it was horrible! Not only were people dying from starvation, but it got so bad that some of the women were eating their own children just to survive, just to keep themselves from starving to death.

And once again God warned them these things would come to pass if they turned from Him. Back in Leviticus chapter 26, before they even entered the Promised Land, we read beginning in verse 27, "**And after all this, if you do not obey Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.**" Leviticus 26:27-29. God is not joking, what He has promised will come to pass be it blessings or judgment! (Also in Deuteronomy 28:53-57 we see a similar warning by God to His people)

VERSES 21-22

1. Think about this for a minute. Jeremiah shared God's warning, he shared the Word of God with the people, he pleaded with them to turn back to God and they refused. Now the judgment came, the judgment that Jeremiah warned them was coming because of their sin and for Jeremiah, just because he was right did not mean he was comforted.

I have done many funerals and I have done some for people who have heard the truth and yet, they never came to the faith. Their family, their friends pleaded with them and yet they did not respond. And even though the warning that was given was correct, there was no comfort in knowing where that person was going! You see, if only the people listened, what unspeakable tragedy they would have been spared.

2. As I have said earlier, when we share the love of God with people, which is rich and deep, we must be careful to be balanced in what we say, because God is holy and righteous and will judge the wicked of this world. Hebrews 12:29 tells us, "**For our God is a consuming fire.**"

People need to know that their sin has separated them from God and Jesus has come to bridge that gap between man and God as He paid in full the penalty for our sins! The bad news first so they will want to hear the Good News, the Gospel message!

And for those who glibly say, “When I get to heaven God and I will have a talk, it is all good!” No it is not! Listen carefully to what God says in Psalm 50:16-21, where we read, **“But to the wicked God says: ‘What right have you to declare My statutes, or take My covenant in your mouth, Seeing you hate instruction and cast My words behind you? When you saw a thief, you consented with him, and have been a partaker with adulterers. You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother’s son. These things you have done, and I kept silent; you thought that I was altogether like you; but I will rebuke you, and set them in order before your eyes.’”**

God is not like us nor will He ignore our sin. He will set things in order; He will cleanse this land one day as He pours out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world. The Good News is that Jesus has come to save that which was lost, you and me. He came to forgive you of your sins.

Now you can either accept that or you can reject it. The thing you can’t do is to blame God for His judgment upon you if you have rejected His free gift of life that is found in His Son, Jesus Christ. You are only getting what you deserve! I will close with these words from Paul in Ephesians 2:8-9, **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”**