

11-2017

Article 25: Lamentations at a Glance

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Recommended Citation

Willmington, Harold, "Article 25: Lamentations at a Glance" (2017). *The Owner's Manual File*. 21.
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LAMENTATIONS AT A GLANCE

This book consists of five “songs of deepest sorrow,” lamenting the terrible and tragic destruction of Jerusalem by the invading Babylonians, which cruel event Jeremiah personally witnessed.

BOTTOM LINE INTRODUCTION

THE WRATH OF GOD UPON THE CITY OF GOD: ONE OF SCRIPTURE’S SADDEST STORIES.

The book of Lamentations can be compared to the account in Rev. 18, outlined as follows:

- A. In Lamentations, the prophet of God weeps over the destruction of Jerusalem, the messianic city.
- B. In Rev. 18, the merchants of greed weep over the destruction of Babylon, the materialistic city.

In the midst of sorrow, however, Jeremiah has reason for hope. But the merchants possess no such hope (3:21-25; Rev. 18:15-19).

FACTS REGARDING THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK

1. Who? **Jeremiah**. He was known as the weeping prophet (Jer. 4:19; 9:1, 2, 10; 13:17; 14:17) and authored the longest book in the Bible (apart from the Psalms), the book of Jeremiah.
2. What? The books of 1 and 2 Kings, Lamentations, Jeremiah.
3. When and where?
 - a. 1 Kings: 600 B.C., from Jerusalem
 - b. 2 Kings: 600 B.C., from Jerusalem
 - c. **Lamentations**: 586 B.C., from Jerusalem
 - d. Jeremiah: 500 B.C., from Egypt
4. Why?
 - a. 1 Kings: A record of Israel’s kings from Solomon to Ahaziah, son of Ahab
 - b. 2 Kings: A record of Israel’s kings from Ahaziah to Zedekiah
 - c. Lamentations: A funeral chant over the doomed city of Jerusalem
 - d. Jeremiah: Events just prior to and following the destruction of Jerusalem
5. To whom?
 - a. 1 and 2 Kings written to both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel
 - b. Lamentations and Jeremiah written to the southern kingdom

KEY EVENTS

1. Jeremiah's agony over the city of God
2. Jeremiah's assurance from the Son of God

KEY PLACES

1. **Jerusalem:** city of God, capital of Israel, subjected to total destruction by the Babylonians as divine punishment for its sin

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. Lamentations is the only biblical book which, for the most part, is arranged in acrostic fashion. Each of the first four chapters of Lamentations is an acrostic poem. In 1, 2, and 4, each of the 22 verses begins with a successive letter of the Greek alphabet. In chapter 3, every third of the 66 verses begins with successive Greek letters. Though chapter 5 has 22 verses as well, it does not follow the acrostic pattern.
The *Bible knowledge Commentary* asks:
"Why was the acrostic form used? One possible reason was to help readers remember the words of the lament. Most school children today remember the musical acronyms "face" and "every good boy does fine" by which they were taught the notes on the spaces and lines of the musical treble clef. In the same way the acrostic pattern would serve as a memory device so that the Israelites would not forget any of the important lessons written in the Book of Lamentations." (Walford & Zuck. Victor Books, p. 1210)
2. This book marks the second horrible occasion on which women ate their children in times of starvation. (Compare Lam. 2:20 with 1 Kings 6:28-29. These are fulfillments of the prophecy in Lev. 26:29.)
3. Tradition says Jeremiah sat weeping outside Jerusalem's north wall under the knoll called Golgotha, where Christ would later die. This book is, in essence, the wailing wall of the Bible.
4. Though other Bible books contain laments (see 2 Sam. 1:17-27; Job 3), only Lamentations is composed entirely in this literary style.
5. The Jews have for centuries publicly read Lamentations each year on the ninth of the month of Ab to commemorate both the destruction of the first temple in 586 B.C., and also that of the second temple, in A.D. 70.
6. Of the 1189 biblical chapters, none can compare with Lam. 3 in terms of the writer being transported from the deepest pit of despair to the loftiest pinnacle of faith!
 - Jeremiah's words from the pit of despair:
"He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day. My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones. He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travail. He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy. Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer. He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone, he

hath made my paths crooked. He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate. He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins. I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day. He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes. And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD” (3:2-18).

- Jeremiah’s words from the pinnacle of faith:
“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. . . For the LORD will not cast off for ever: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men” (3:21-26, 31-33).

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

Deuteronomy:

- There exists a very close relationship between Deuteronomy and Lamentations, the first being the root and the second the fruit. One foretells (Deuteronomy), the other fulfills (Lamentations). Dr. John Martin aptly illustrates this connection between the two books as follows:

Parallels between Lamentations and Deuteronomy

Lamentations	Deuteronomy
1:3 She dwells among the nations; she finds no resting place.	28:65 Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot.
1:6 In weakness they have fled before the pursuer.	28:25 The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will come at them from one direction but flee from them in seven.
1:18 My young men and maidens have gone into exile.	28:41 You will have sons and daughters but you will not keep them, because they will go into captivity.
2:15 All who pass your way clap their hands at you; they scoff and shake their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem.	28:37 You will become a thing of horror and an object of scorn and ridicule to all the nations where the Lord will drive you.
2:21 Young and old lie together in the dust of the streets.	28:50 . . . a fierce-looking nation without respect for the old or pity for the young.
4:10 With their own hands compassionate women have cooked their own children.	28:56-57 The most gentle and sensitive woman among you . . . will begrudge the husband she loves and her own son or daughter the afterbirth from her womb and the children she bears. For she intends to eat them secretly during the siege.
5:5 We are weary and find no rest.	28:65 Among those nations you will find no repose.
5:11 Women have been ravished in Zion, and virgins in the towns of Judah.	28:30 You will be pledged to be married to a woman, but another will take her and ravish her.
5:12 Elders are shown no respect.	28:50 . . . a fierce-looking nation without respect for the old . . .
5:18 Mount Zion . . . lies desolate, with jackals prowling over it	28:26 Your carcasses will be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten them away.

(The Bible Knowledge Commentary. Victor Books, p. 1209)

Jeremiah:

- The Hebrew phrases "daughter of Zion," "daughter of my people," and similar phrases are used to refer to Israel about 20 times in each book.
- The author of each book describes his tears as streams of water (1:16; Jer. 9:1).
- The author of each book tells of being confined in a pit (3:53; Jer. 37:16; 38:6).

TITLES FOR AND TYPES OF JESUS

1. The Lord of Righteousness (1:18)
2. The Lord of Judgment (2:1-8)
3. The Compassionate, Merciful, and Faithful God (3:22, 23, 32)
4. The Eternal God (4:19)