

Process Your Pain at the Throne of Grace

Studies in the Book of Lamentations

Lamentations 4:1-5:22

“Course Correction: The Journey from Ruin to Renewal”

Introduction: Lamentations provides an intimate look at the emotional and spiritual trauma experienced by the inhabitants of ancient Jerusalem during the Babylonian invasion. The destruction of ancient Jerusalem and the temple was a cataclysmic event in world history. It is a sober reminder that sin always has consequences. Also, when you have a relationship with God there is opportunity for repentance and restoration.

I. A Summary of Suffering through Siege Warfare (Lamentations 4:1-22)

- A. Verses 1-10: This section is a poetic description of the famine experienced by the inhabitants of Jerusalem because of siege warfare (2 Kings 25:1-3). The severe famine had detrimental physical and mental effects on people. The narrator describes the effect on children and their mothers (Job 39:13-18). The narrator describes the slow death of starvation as a worse fate than the instant destruction of Sodom.
- B. Verses 7-8: The vow of a Nazarite was a temporary voluntary commitment with specific rituals connected to the Levitical priesthood. Whether this passage is referring to actual people who took the vow of a Nazarite or simply distinguished people of high society the famine affected their physical appearance.
- C. Verse 10 is a graphic statement about cannibalism that results from the mental and spiritual degradation caused by famine (Deuteronomy 28:52-57). An incident of cannibalism during siege warfare is recorded in 2 Kings 6:24-29. Sin had corrupted an entire community so thoroughly that their behavior became physical manifestations of total depravity.
- D. Verses 11-13: The Lords' fury manifested as the invading Babylonian army. The spiritual leaders who should have taught the truth of God's word and led the people in covenant faithfulness instead led the people into idolatry. Verses 14-16: The captives were rejected and disrespected by the foreigners they wander among.
- E. Verses 17-22. History and tradition states that the Edomites took advantage of Judah during the Babylonian invasion (Obadiah 1:10-16). The narrator declares the certainty of Edom's future judgement. Judah's punishment was severe yet temporary. Edom was guilty of taking advantage of a suffering community.

II. The Supplication for Renewal (Lamentations 5:1-22)

- A. In verses 1-18 the lamenter prays to God concerning the suffering of the community. As much as the covenant unfaithfulness and subsequent disaster that came upon the people was prophesied, the repentance was prophesied also (Leviticus 26:40-45). The book of Lamentations served as a liturgical resource to help guide people through the processes of

grieving the calamity that befell their nation while admitting their corporate sin and seeking the Lord for help during suffering.

- B. The final portion of the prayer reorients the reader to theological truth about God. The author describes the unchanging and eternal nature of God. The author makes the request for restoration and renewal.
- C. The prayer ends in a desperate tone. The author does not get an instant answer to this prayer because it is a means of processing through pain while remaining grounded in truth. God has not abandoned His people whom He foreknew (Romans 11:2). The decree of Cyrus ended the Babylonian captivity; the temple and the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt (Ezra-Nehemiah). Yet, even after the return from exile, the Old Testament ends in a somber tone. But thanks be to God who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises” (Hebrews 8:6).

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:1-4).

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