

Sermon, August 14, 2011
“Building Out of the Ruins”, Lamentations 3:17-41
Pastor Thomas P. Bellhy

The Books of Prophecy

- Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekial, Daniel
- Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Overview of Lamentations:

- Jeremiah, the author, served as both a priest and a prophet, and was the son of a priest named Hilkiyah.
- His name means “Jehovah establishes, appoints, or sends.”
- The title “Lamentations” comes from a translation of the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, and means “loud cries, wailing”.
- As an eyewitness to divine judgment, Jeremiah likely wrote Lamentations shortly after 586BC.
- The entire 5 chapters is lament over the death of the city of Jerusalem.
- Even though Babylon is the tool God uses to exercise judgment against Judah, Babylon or Nebuchadnezzar is never mentioned. Only God’s judgment is spoken of.
- **Overall Outline of Lamentations¹ :**
 - I. Jerusalem’s misery and desolation
 - II. The Lord’s anger against His people explained
 - III. Judah’s complaint and the hope of God’s grace
 - IV. The contrast between Judah’s past and present
 - V. Judah’s appeal for God’s forgiveness

Major Themes of Lamentations:

- Jeremiah recognizes that the judgment on Jerusalem and temple is judgment of a righteous God.
- Begins with lament and ends with repentance.
- Understanding the grace and mercy of God, Jeremiah appeals with intercessory prayer for God’s mercy.
- Jeremiah is building out of the ruins those who truly have faith, the remnant.
- The focus of the book is God’s love, goodness, compassion, and righteousness

Lamentations teaches that in the midst of God’s righteous judgment of disobedience there is still hope if you seek God with true repentance and faith.

1. Jeremiah grieves for the death of Jerusalem.

Lamentations 3:17-42

- Jeremiah remembers the glory of a once proud city. He remembers the covenant of God, the “Promised Land”, the temple where God’s presence was among His people, now all is in ruin.
- Jeremiah’s grief was deep and real; not just the World Trade Center, but the entire city destroyed.
- **Lamentations 1:1** *How lonely sits the city that once was full of people!*
- **Lamentations 1:3** ³ *Judah has gone into exile with suffering and hard servitude; she lives now among the nations, and finds no resting place; her pursuers have all overtaken her in the midst of her distress.*
- The city was sieged, starved and enslaved!
- Why? Because of disobedience; the worship of false gods and idols, ignoring the Word of God, His commands, precepts and teachings.

¹NASB, 1995

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2. In Jeremiah’s grief he also remembers hope!

Lamentations 3:21-30

- Jeremiah is calling on God’s people to have faith in their Lord.
- When the grieving is done and more sober mind recognizes that God’s judgment is always righteous, one will also remember that the Father is always loving, merciful, faithful, and good to those who have faith, who wait for Him in the midst of despair.
- Hope is a product of faith.
- **Hebrews 11:1** *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*
- When you recognize that God has dealt justly with you, it was because you have turned away from Him and ignored His loving pursuit of a relationship with you.
- God wants you to walk with Him, have faith, not away from Him.
- When left to your own devices calamity will ensue.
- When you walk with God calamity may still come, but you will find comfort in the rock of your salvation, Jesus.
- Faith will bring the light of hope of a loving Father full of grace.

3. Hope is being sure of good things to come when you remain in the presence of God; Father Son, and Holy Spirit

Lamentations 3:31-38 .

- The Lord will not reject or cause grief to those who truly seek Him and remain faithful.
- Good and bad circumstances fill out the lives of all people.
- When the trials of life come at you the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is how you deal with the particular trouble in front of you.
- Are you God-centered or self-centered?
- Not all bad things are judgment from God. Life happens. But do you recognize God’s hand when He is exercising judgment ?
- Is your trial a result of disobedience?
- If so, God wants you to come back to Him.

4. Examine your ways, have hope in faith, truly repent (change your ways) and return to that loving relationship with your Creator.

Lamentations 3:39-41 ³⁹ *Why should any who draw breath complain about the punishment of their sins?* ⁴⁰ *Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD.* ⁴¹ *Let us lift up our hearts as well as our hands to God in heaven.*

- Jeremiah is encouraging the faithful to build out of desolate circumstances.
- Are you building out of the ruins?
- When you recognize God’s judgment, don’t complain! Look in a mirror and examine yourself.
- Do you see the imperfections that God sees? Or do you rationalize away your sins?
- Can you discern your ways as opposed to His ways through His Word? Or do you use your own standard of right and wrong?
- Respond to the Lord with true repentance and faith.
- Think of the imagery Jeremiah is using.
- Lift up your heart and hands to heaven.

Lamentations teaches that in the midst of God’s righteous judgment to disobedience there is still hope if you seek God with true repentance and faith.