

How to lament with hope: Learning to lament in a godly way

St. Peter's Barge church weekend May 2024

Talk 1 (Introduction and Lamentations 1)

Theme verse: Luke 19:41

And when [Jesus] drew near and saw [Jerusalem] he wept over it

Why a series of talks on Lamentations?

1. To prepare us for when we are sad
2. To show us when and how we ought to be sad (Amos 6:4-6; Romans 12:15)
3. To shape our sorrows and show us how to lament
4. To warn us of worldly sorrow (Hebrews 12:17; Malachi 2:13; Matthew 27:3-6; Revelation 18:9-11) and teach us godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:5-13)
5. To show us how to grieve with hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

Introduction to Lamentations

What caused these poems to be written?

The destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587BC

For what happened see 2 Kings 23:36-25:21; Jeremiah 39:1-10; Jeremiah 52:1-30;
2 Chronicles 36:1-21

For some responses see, for example, Psalms 74; 79; 89; 137.

For lamentation see Isaiah 61:3; Jeremiah 41:5; Zechariah 7:3, 5; 8:19

Who wrote them?

Jeremiah?

The shape of the five poems

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5
A ____ (3 lines) ____ ____	A ____ (3 lines) ____ ____	A ____ (1 line) A ____ (1 line) A ____ (1 line)	A ____ (2 lines) ____	(22 verses but no alphabetic sequence)
B ____ ____ ____	B ____ ____ ____	B ____ B ____ B ____	B ____ ____	
C ____ ____ ____ etc	C ____ ____ ____ etc	C ____ C ____ C ____ etc	C ____ ____ etc	

Why alphabetical acrostics? The idea of 'ordered grief'

Summary of the content of the poems

1. Blessing: God has been kind to us
2. Transgression: We have sinned
3. Judgement: God has used the nations to punish us
4. Pain: It really hurts
5. Lament: We lament, long, and pray for the punishment to be paid

Why it matters that they are poems

The 'voices' of the poems

The poet watches

The victim speaks

The people speak (we, us, our)

What are these poems meant to achieve?

Chapter 1

Weep for the church in the lonely sorrows of sin

Note emphasis on our sins (1:5, 8, 9, 14, 17, 18, 20, 22)

Note theme 'no comfort' (1:2, 9, 16, 17, 21)

Note repetition of 'groan' (1:4, 8, 11, 21, 22)

1:1-11 Watch and weep for the lonely city

¹ How lonely sits the city
that was full [= 'great'] of people!
How like a widow has she become,
she who was great [= 'full'] among the nations!
She who was a princess among the provinces
has become a slave.

² She weeps bitterly in the night,
with tears on her cheeks;
among all her lovers
she has none to comfort her;
all her friends have dealt treacherously with her;
they have become her enemies.

³ Judah has gone into exile because of affliction
and hard servitude;
she dwells [sits] now among the nations,
but finds no resting place [Deut. 28:65; Ruth 3:1; Psalm 116:7];
her pursuers have all overtaken her [Jer. 52:8]
in the midst of her distress.

⁴ The roads to Zion mourn,
for none come to the festival;
all her gates are desolate;
her priests groan;
her virgins have been afflicted,
and she herself suffers bitterly.

⁵ Her foes have become the head [Deut. 28:44];
her enemies prosper,
because the LORD has afflicted her
for the multitude of her transgressions;
her children have gone away,
captives before the foe.

⁶ From the daughter of Zion
all her majesty has departed.
Her princes have become like deer
that find no pasture;
they fled without strength
before the pursuer.

⁷ Jerusalem remembers
in the days of her affliction and wandering
all the precious things [2 Chron. 36:19]
that were hers from days of old.
When her people fell into the hand of the foe,
and there was none to help her [Psalm 22:11; contrast Psalm 72:12],
her foes gloated over her;
they mocked at her downfall [= cessation, sabbath; 2 Chron. 36:21].

⁸ Jerusalem sinned grievously;
therefore she became filthy;
all who honored her despise her,
for they have seen her nakedness;
she herself groans
and turns her face away.

⁹ Her uncleanness was in her skirts;
she took no thought of her future;
therefore her fall is terrible;
she has no comforter.
"O Lord, behold my affliction,
for the enemy has triumphed!"

¹⁰The enemy has stretched out his hands
over all her precious things;
for she has seen the nations
enter her sanctuary,
those whom you forbade
to enter your congregation [Deut. 23:3].

¹¹All her people groan
as they search for bread; [Jer. 37:21; 38:9; 52:6]
they trade their treasures for food
to revive their strength.
“Look, O LORD, and see,
for I am despised.”

1:12-22 Weep as you listen to the lonely city

¹²“Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by [e.g., Jer. 18:16]?
Look and see
if there is any sorrow like my sorrow,
which was brought upon me,
which the LORD inflicted
on the day of his fierce anger.

¹³“From on high he sent fire; [Jer. 38:17; 39:8]
into my bones he made it descend;
he spread a net for my feet;
he turned me back;
he has left me stunned,
faint all the day long.

¹⁴“My transgressions were bound into a yoke; [Deut. 28:48]
by his hand they were fastened together;
they were set upon my neck;
he caused my strength to fail;
the Lord gave me into the hands
of those whom I cannot withstand.

¹⁵“The Lord rejected
all my mighty men in my midst;
he summoned an assembly against me
to crush my young men;
the Lord has trodden as in a winepress
the virgin daughter of Judah. [Isa. 63:3; Joel 3:13]

¹⁶“For these things I weep;
my eyes flow with tears;
for a comforter is far from me,
one to revive my spirit;
my children are desolate,
for the enemy has prevailed.”

¹⁷Zion stretches out her hands, [1 Kings 8:38]
but there is none to comfort her;
the LORD has commanded against Jacob
that his neighbors should be his foes;
Jerusalem has become
a filthy thing among them.

¹⁸“The LORD is in the right,
for I have rebelled against his word; [cf. Daniel 9]
but hear, all you peoples,
and see my suffering;
my young women and my young men
have gone into captivity.

¹⁹“I called to my lovers,
but they deceived me;
my priests and elders
perished in the city,
while they sought food
to revive their strength.

²⁰“Look, O LORD, for I am in distress;
my stomach churns;
my heart is wrung within me,
because I have been very rebellious.
In the street the sword bereaves;
in the house it is like death.

²¹ "They heard my groaning,
yet there is no one to comfort me.
All my enemies have heard of my trouble;
they are glad that you have done it.
You have brought the day you announced;
now let them be as I am.

²² "Let all their evildoing come before you,
and deal with them
as you have dealt with me
because of all my transgressions;
for my groans are many,
and my heart is faint."

Responding to Lamentations 1

Thinking about how we lament (2 Samuel 1; Mark 5:38)

The loneliness of sin (Genesis 3:9 'Where are you?')

Sorrows in a mixed church (Daniel 9:3-19; Nehemiah 9:33 'we have acted wickedly')

Hope in Lamentations 1?