

# LAMENTATIONS

## GOD STATEMENT: THE GOD WHO IS \_\_\_\_\_ (a) AND \_\_\_\_\_ (b)

The book of Lamentations was written by the prophet Jeremiah; that's why it was originally appended to the book of Jeremiah. It's one of the \_\_\_\_\_ (c) books in the Bible (if not *the* saddest). It is made up entirely of mournful songs. Many would compare it with the book of Job, but Job is sad because of a \_\_\_\_\_ (d) tragedy, whereas in Lamentations Jeremiah is weeping over a \_\_\_\_\_ (e) catastrophe—the fall of \_\_\_\_\_ (f) at the hands of the Babylonians in 586 B.C. Many Jews today read Lamentations at the Western Wall (i.e., the Wailing Wall), where they still lament the destruction of the Temple. And to this very day the whole of Lamentations is sung once a year in every synagogue on the ninth day of Abib (July), because that's the exact date on which the Babylonians destroyed the \_\_\_\_\_ (g).

Jeremiah predicted the disaster in his earlier prophetic book (Jeremiah). In a book of Lamentations he writes \_\_\_\_\_ (h) poems that describe his eyewitness account of that disaster. Think of Lamentations as a five-poem \_\_\_\_\_ (i) dirge of Jerusalem's death. Jeremiah is weeping his heart out as he reflects on that disaster. This collection of mournful songs has earned Jeremiah the nickname, "the \_\_\_\_\_ (j) prophet."

But, as in his previous book, Jeremiah reminds readers that God has not and will not \_\_\_\_\_ (k) His people. God is \_\_\_\_\_ (l), and His mercies continue to remain available to those who respond to His call.

As just stated, the book of Lamentations consists of five independent poems carefully put together with a device called an \_\_\_\_\_ (m). In an acrostic, the letters of the \_\_\_\_\_ (n) are the framework for the song or poem. Since the Hebrew alphabet has twenty-two letters, each section has twenty-two \_\_\_\_\_ (o). There are twenty-two verses in Chapters 1, 2, 4, and 5, and Chapter 3 has sixty-six verses ( $22 \times 3 = 66$ ).

### FIRST POEM (Lamentations 1)

The first acrostic poem, or lament, looks at the ruined city of Jerusalem. The city is \_\_\_\_\_(p) (Lam 1:1). Her friends have forsaken her (Lam 1:2-3), her roads and gates are desolate (Lam 1:4), and enemies have overthrown her government (Lam 1:5-6). The city's fall could hardly be more thorough and spectacular (Lam 1:9).

But it wasn't just the fact that the whole city had been besieged and then destroyed that upset Jeremiah. Nor was it just that the Temple was gone. What really upset Jeremiah was the fact that the desolation wasn't the result of some bad luck or some accident. He knew that \_\_\_\_\_(q) was the reason. He knew that God sent \_\_\_\_\_(r) upon the people because they had abandoned His ways (Lam 1:5, 8-9, 14, 18-22). The grief of the people and the grief of Jeremiah was heartfelt because they realized that the destruction of Jerusalem didn't need to happen. They know it happened because they know they have betrayed their commitments to the Lord. They realize that God has afflicted them. They understand that the God who protected them from harm has forsaken his role as protector due to their \_\_\_\_\_(s). In other words, their wounds are solely their \_\_\_\_\_(t) fault. God has not afflicted and forsaken for no reason.

## SECOND POEM (Lamentations 2)

The second acrostic poem intensifies God's activity against Israel. God is not portrayed as having deserted Israel. Instead, the Lord has become Jerusalem's purposeful \_\_\_\_\_(u) (Lam 2:4-5). God has withdrawn his \_\_\_\_\_(v) from the city (Lam 2:3)—the protection that saved Jerusalem in Hezekiah's and Isaiah's time (2 Kings 18-19)—which has resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem's temple, gates and walls (Lam 2:6-9). Religious \_\_\_\_\_(w), prophetic \_\_\_\_\_(x), and \_\_\_\_\_(y) of the Law have all ceased (Lam 2:6, 9-10). Inconsolable grief has resulted from these setbacks (Lam 2:11-13). Confession of sin and prayers are offered in hopes of relief from guilt and misery (Lam 2:14-22).

This lament leaves no doubt about the reason for the calamity. In language reminiscent of Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer 2:8; 5:12-13; 6:13-15; 23:13-20), the text claims that the \_\_\_\_\_(z) are partly to blame because they have spoken \_\_\_\_\_(aa) (Lam 2:14). From Deuteronomy 27-28 onward God has promised punishment for covenant infidelity. This word of judgment has now come true, for God's word cannot \_\_\_\_\_(bb). Israel's false prophets preached slackness towards sin, which caused God to promise devastation, and it is God's word that has proven \_\_\_\_\_(cc).

### THIRD POEM (Lamentations 3)

This chapter contains three acrostic poems that inject a \_\_\_\_\_ (dd) note into the book. This is the key chapter in the book. In the most intense lamentation of the book, Jeremiah's faith soars.

Mournful admissions of guilt still occur (Lam 3:1-18, 40-54), yet Jeremiah does not believe that God's \_\_\_\_\_ (ee) is the final word. In the midst of terrible pain Israel's remnant may discover anew the Lord's \_\_\_\_\_ (ff). They may do so, however, only through an attitude of humble perseverance in suffering, an acknowledgment of one's own sins, and a \_\_\_\_\_ (gg) to God. Faith and \_\_\_\_\_ (hh) in God is required for healing.

Two texts express this hope very clearly. After confessing his sin and the sin of the people (Lam 3:1-18), Jeremiah states that the substance of God's \_\_\_\_\_ (ii) indicates that all is not \_\_\_\_\_ (jj). God is merciful, for the people have not been totally consumed (Lam 3:22). It's \_\_\_\_\_ (kk) for the Lord's compassion to fail (Lam 3:22). God's faithfulness is self-renewing each \_\_\_\_\_ (ll) (Lam 3:23), and God has always sustained those who trust in him (Lam 3:24). Therefore, it's advisable to \_\_\_\_\_ (mm) quietly, all the while bearing patiently the \_\_\_\_\_ (nn) of personal and national sin, for God to save (Lam 3:25-30). After all, God doesn't desire to punish but to \_\_\_\_\_ (oo) (Lam 3:31-36). Jeremiah is certain that the same unerring \_\_\_\_\_ (pp) that brought death may once again result in life (Lam 3:37-39). If God's nature were different, then Jeremiah's conclusions would have to change drastically. As it is, though, the sovereign Lord of history remains the \_\_\_\_\_ (qq).

### FOURTH POEM (Lamentations 4)

Despite the steadfast \_\_\_\_\_ (rr) that's based on God's character which is expressed in Lamentations 3, Israel as a whole has yet to return to the God. So, the present reality continues to be grim. Every element of Israelite society has been affected by Jerusalem's fall. Infants die (Lam 4:4), some of them because their mothers cook and eat them under siege-induced conditions (Lam 4:10). Prophets (Lam 4:13) and Nazirites (Lam 4:7) share the national misery. In short, God's \_\_\_\_\_ (ss) has "divided," or "\_\_\_\_\_ (tt)," the people throughout the world (Lam 4:16). The scattering is so thorough that its effects on Israel is compared with the destruction of \_\_\_\_\_ (uu) (Lam 4:6).

Biblical evidence of divine scattering has already appeared in Jeremiah's forced journey to Egypt (Jer 42-44) and Ezekiel's ministry in

Babylon. It is also obvious in the books that follow Lamentations. Esther lives in \_\_\_\_\_ (vv), while Daniel lives out most of his life in \_\_\_\_\_ (ww). Ezra and Nehemiah are employed by the Persian government and must obtain permission to spend time in Jerusalem. Israel has indeed been scattered by God, yet those later passages prove that return to the \_\_\_\_\_ (xx) Land.

### FIFTH POEM (Lamentations 5)

Unlike the first four chapters, Lamentations 5 is not an acrostic poem. It does have twenty-two verses, but it's not in alphabetic form. Instead of a poem, it's simply a \_\_\_\_\_ (yy), a plea for God's mercy. Also, this poem is clearly a \_\_\_\_\_ (zz) lament, unlike the other texts that have an individual tone. The people have taken up the cry for help, a practice that makes it possible for God to stop being their enemy and to \_\_\_\_\_ (aaa) his scattered people to the Promised Land. God can \_\_\_\_\_ (bbb) their difficult circumstances and take away their \_\_\_\_\_ (ccc) (Lam 5:1-18).

As in Lamentations 3, \_\_\_\_\_ (ddd) hopes here are rooted in God's \_\_\_\_\_ (eee). Here the people confess the Lord's never-ending nature (Lam 5:19-22). They know that \_\_\_\_\_ (fff) will not occur in a moment, so their opportunity for revival and rebuilding rest in a God who transcends time. These worshipers also realize that unless the Lord \_\_\_\_\_ (ggg) them they will never rise from the ashes (Lam 5:21). If God casts them off forever they have no hope. But the presence of Lamentations in the Bible and their understanding of God's character prove that they have been heard by God. God cannot \_\_\_\_\_ (hhh) those who \_\_\_\_\_ (iii) because it is not within his nature to do so. God would not be God if \_\_\_\_\_ (jjj) were not \_\_\_\_\_ (kkk), but neither would God be God if \_\_\_\_\_ (lll) were not \_\_\_\_\_ (mmm).

### LESSONS FROM LAMENTATIONS

- God is \_\_\_\_\_ (nnn) and \_\_\_\_\_ (ooo). Jeremiah has experienced the worst that life can offer in the way of pain, sorrows, senseless violence and loneliness. Yet his eye of faith focuses on the living God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (ppp) brings terrible \_\_\_\_\_ (qqq). Don't fail to see God's holy \_\_\_\_\_ (rrr). Don't think that God will do nothing about your sinful activities. Jerusalem wasn't supposed to fall because it was God's city. But it did.

- When we need help, there is nowhere else we can turn to but the \_\_\_\_\_ (sss) God. There is no other one to see; no other god to whom we may pray; no other god with whom we may have a relationship. God alone is always there.
- God's \_\_\_\_\_ (ttt) never \_\_\_\_\_ (uuu). Israel's false prophets preached slackness toward sin, but God promised devastation. As always God's word proved infallible.
- Learn to \_\_\_\_\_ (vvv) on God to save. We may have to bear the consequences of personal or national sin. But if we'll trust in Him, He'll save us.
- God doesn't want to \_\_\_\_\_ (www); he wants to \_\_\_\_\_ (xxx). God punishes because he is holy and must punish. But God is merciful, and he wants to forgive and bless.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (yyy) is always appropriate in times of suffering.

#### KEY PASSAGES FROM LAMENTATIONS

- Lamentations 1:14
- Lamentations 3:22-23
- Lamentations 3:24
- Lamentations 3:25
- Lamentations 3:31-33
- Lamentations 3:56-58
- Lamentations 5:19-22
- Lamentations 5:21-22

## FILL-IN-THE-BLANK ANSWER KEY

[a] RIGHTEOUS	[ss] anger
[b] FAITHFUL	[tt] scattered
[c] saddest	[uu] Sodom
[d] personal	[vv] Persia
[e] national	[ww] Babylon
[f] Jerusalem	[xx] Promised
[g] Temple	[yy] prayer
[h] five	[zz] community
[i] funeral	[aaa] restore
[j] weeping	[bbb] reverse
[k] abandon	[ccc] shame
[l] faithful	[ddd] renewal
[m] acrostic	[eee] character
[n] alphabet	[fff] restoration
[o] verses	[ggg] renews
[p] desolate	[hhh] judge
[q] sin	[iii] repent
[r] punishment	[jjj] sin
[s] disobedience	[kkk] punished
[t] own	[lll] forgiveness
[u] enemy	[mmm] extended
[v] protection	[nnn] just
[w] feasts	[ooo] good
[x] visions	[ppp] Sin
[y] teaching	[qqq] consequences
[z] prophets	[rrr] anger
[aa] lies	[sss] living
[bb] fails	[ttt] word
[cc] infallible	[uuu] fails
[dd] hopeful	[vvv] wait
[ee] anger	[www] punish
[ff] grace	[xxx] bless
[gg] return	[yyy] Prayer
[hh] trust	
[ii] character	
[jj] lost	
[kk] impossible	
[ll] day	
[mm] wait	
[nn] consequences	
[oo] bless	
[pp] word	
[qq] same	
[rr] hope	