

Lamentations 3

Lamentations 3.1-18

Note: This chapter is in sections of 3 verses each – each section begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet

-Example: *verses 1-3* all begin with the letter "Aleph"

-*Verses 4-6* begin with the letter "Beth," etc. (See the headings for *Psalms 119*)

-So there are 66 verses instead of 22, as in the other chapters)

This chapter is written from first-person singular point of view, but the author represents the nation Israel (a communal lament)

V 1-3 – Jeremiah considers himself typical of the nation – he is speaking on behalf of the nation

-The nation has seen the rod of God's wrath

-God has changed light into darkness

-God has turned his hand against the country

V 4-6 – **What is another result of the rod of God's wrath?** Disease and premature old age

-**More results?** Bitterness and hardship

-Notice the emphasis on darkness (as opposed to the light of God)

V 7-9 – **How was the nation walled in?** When people leave God, they lose their freedoms

-Their "chain" is heavy

-**Read Matt. 11.29-30**

-Remember *Jer. 14.11* – God told Jeremiah not to pray for the people of Israel

-**Is there any other place in the Bible where we are told not to pray for a person?** *1 John 5.16*

-**V 9** – **What figure of speech did Jeremiah use next?** A bear and a lion are in the way

-Jeremiah: It is like being torn apart by a bear or a lion

-**Lesson?** When God punishes a country, stand back – it is going to be fierce

V 13-15 – Another illustration: God's arrows went into the nation of Israel

-**What else had happened to the nation of Israel?** The other nations were laughing at Israel

-God made Israel drink wormwood (see *Rev. 8.11*) – a very bitter substance

-Wormwood is sometimes associated with gall

V 16-18 – **Have you ever hit a piece of gravel in a can of beans, etc.?** Yes – not good for teeth

-**V 17** – The nation had forgotten what happiness was

-Jeremiah seems to be at the bottom of his despair – it is as if God had forsaken the nation (sounds like Jesus on the cross: "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*")

Lamentations 3.19-38

V 19-21 – Jeremiah began to pray on behalf of the nation – there is hope in his voice

-He would not be praying if there was no more hope and if God would not listen to their

prayers

-Jeremiah's soul is bowed and contrite before God

-He has hope

-V 21 – He began to remember many things that he had forgotten in the despair of the destruction of the city

-Read Psalm 51.17 – God always listens to a broken and contrite heart

V 22-24 – Jeremiah continues to come out of his despair

-What does he remember at this time? God's loving-kindness and compassion – they never fail

-V 23 – God's loving-kindness and compassion are renewed every morning (Christian camp song)

-V 23b – **What else did Jeremiah remember?** God's faithfulness was great

-“My portion” = the sum total of my desires

-Jeremiah is remembering more and more about the love of God

V 25-27 – **What type of person does God like?** The one who waits for him (does things his way)

-And the person who seeks God – Read 2 Chronicles 15.2

-V 26 – We are to wait for salvation from God

-V 27 – **Meaning?** We must learn discipline in our youth

V 28-30 – **Meaning?** We are to learn from God in silence (a lesson that the nation of Israel needed to learn)

-V 29 – **Putting his mouth in the dust?** We learn to humble ourselves, and then there is hope

-V 30 – **Messianic?** Jesus: **Read Matt. 5.39, 1 Cor. 4.12, 1 Peter 2.23**

-Jesus did not return evil for evil

V 31-33 – What a beautiful verse! **Did the Lord reject his people forever?** No – they came back in 536 BC under Zerubbabel

-Then a second group under Ezra

-Then a third group under Nehemiah

-Ultimately he sent his son to the earth for the salvation of God's people

-V 32 – He causes grief, but then shows compassion

-The great preacher Marshall Keeble said about preaching: “Cut deep, and then apply the salve.”

-V 33 – **If he does not want to afflict people, then why did he do it?** For their own good

V 34-36 – God is against the mistreatment of the helpless (example: the prisoners)

-V 35 – He does not want to deprive people of their justice

-V 36 – **What else does he not approve of?** Mistreatment in lawsuits

V 37-38 – God is in control of everything

-V 38 – God is the source of punishment, as well as blessings

-Why is Jeremiah going over all this? To show the two sides of God – we should not

complain whichever side we experience

Lamentations 3.39-47 – a plea for repentance

V 39 – Jeremiah: Why complain about what has happened, since we know the sins that this nation has committed?

V 40-42 – **Instead of complaining about what has happened, what should the people do?**

Examine their lives

-When are we to do this in the church? During the Lord's Supper (*1 Cor. 11.28*)

-V 41 – **What metaphor is used here to plead with God?** Lifting up one's hands

-V 42 – Jeremiah suggests that the people ought to be saying to God at this time:

-God had not pardoned – in other words, God does not forgive where there is no repentance

V 43-45 – They admit that the destruction of their city came from God

-V 44 – **Why had God covered himself with a cloud?** So that they could not get through to him unless they repented

-V 45 – They had become the garbage of the day

V 46-47 – Their enemies were celebrating

-V 47 – Panic, pitfalls, devastation, destruction

Lamentations 3.48-54

V 48-51

-V 48 – So characteristic of Jeremiah

-How could anybody doubt that the author of *Lamentations* was Jeremiah?

-V 49 – Jeremiah cried constantly over his people

-V 50 – **Does God care about our tears?** Yes, when they are tears of repentance

-V 51 – Jeremiah's soul was hurting because of the city

V 52-54 – **Is Jeremiah speaking about Israel or himself?** Himself – the men of his own village tried to kill him – **Read Jeremiah 11.18-23**

-V 53 – When the Israelites tried to kill him (*Jer. 38.6-13* when they put him into the cistern)

-V 54 – **In what sense did the waters flow over his head?** He could have died there

-Who rescued him? Ebed-melech the Ethiopian

Lamentations 3.55-66

V 55-57 – Jeremiah pleaded for his life from the cistern

-What was the message from God? Do not fear

V 58-60 – Jeremiah had been redeemed from the pit

-God was watching all the schemes against the life of Jeremiah

-What does this tell us about God?

V 61-63 – God heard all the awful things they were saying about Jeremiah

-He even heard the whispering against Jeremiah

-**V 63** – "I am the one that they sin against"

V 64-66 – **What did Jeremiah ask for?** The vengeance of God

-**V 65** – Jeremiah asked God to curse those who tried to kill him

-**V 66** – He asked God to pursue them and destroy them

-**What is the basis for these requests?** The justice of God, the vengeance of God

-These are known as imprecatory verses in the Old Testament (See the "Imprecatory Psalms" in any Old Testament reference book)

-**What does the New Testament tell us to do about our enemies?**

-*Romans 12.19* – to let God take the vengeance

-Our personal attitude must be that of Christ – **Read Matt. 5.43-48**

Lessons from *Lamentations 3*:

1. The wrath of God does change to forgiveness if our attitude changes.

2. The enemies of Jeremiah were persecuted by God.

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