Talks For Growing Christians

Study Guide for

Lamentations

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Lesson 1

Jerusalem’s Misery and Desolation
Lamentations 1

background notes
1.
2.
3.

doctrinal points
1. Lamentations contains specific details of the desolation and destruction of Jerusalem.
2. Lamentations contains prophetic implications of the coming Messiah and future godly remnant.

practical application
Think ahead!

questions
1. According to the traditional view, who was the author of Lamentations?
2. Lamentations is a series of 5 laments or funeral dirges. What do they describe?
3. Lamentations is written in _________ poetry and each of the first 4 chapters is an __________ poem.
4. Why did the Lord allow such a sad situation to come about in Jerusalem?
5. Lamentations not only gives us a great amount of detail about Jerusalem as it was when the book was written, but it also has other important implications. What are these other implications?
answers
1. Evidence supports the traditional view that Lamentations was written by the prophet Jeremiah soon after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC, while the fallen city was still suffering.

2. The 5 laments of Lamentations describe the desolation and destruction of Jerusalem after its fall to the Babylonians. The Temple was desecrated and destroyed and all the Temple treasures were taken away to Babylon. Conditions were so desperate that even cannibalism took place as a matter of survival.

3. Lamentations is written in Hebrew poetry, and each of the first 4 chapters is an acrostic poem. The Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters. Chapters 1, 2 and 4 have 22 verses each and every verse begins with a succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter 3 has 66 verses with every three verses beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter 5 is a Hebrew poem of 22 verses but it is not an acrostic poem.

4. God’s people had committed many transgressions (v 5). Jerusalem had committed spiritual adultery (v 8) and apostasy (v 9). The people also had allowed idolatry into the land (v 10).

5. In addition to the very detailed descriptions of Jerusalem and the conditions of God’s people, Lamentations has important prophetic implications. Three of them are:
   a. Just as Jeremiah lamented over the sad and desolate condition of Jerusalem, so our Lord would mourn over the Jerusalem that rejected her Messiah. See Matthew 23:37-38.
   b. As Jerusalem suffered the judgment of God because of her sin, so the Lord suffered the judgment of God because of our sin. See verse 12.
   c. The future godly remnant of the Jewish people will recognize that their desolate and sorrowful state as a nation down through the years has been because of their rejection of the Messiah.

discuss / consider
Discuss the depth of the destruction and desolation God’s judgment had brought upon the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish people as described in this chapter. Consider their signs of repentance in the final 3 verses of the chapter. Are you able to identify any signs of repentance from the people of sinful cities and nations today?

challenge
The Jewish people of Jeremiah’s day did not consider the consequences of their many transgressions. They had disregarded the truth that God hates and judges sin. They had reaped what they had sown.
Have you put your faith in God’s Son, the Messiah, that you might experience God’s forgiveness of your sins rather than His judgment against them? Trust Him today.

memorize
“How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow is she, who was great among the nations! The princess among the provinces has become a slave.” Lamentations 1:1

“See, O Lord, that I am in distress; my soul is troubled; my heart is overturned within me, for I have been very rebellious.” Lamentations 1:20a
Lesson 2

The Lord's Anger against His People
Lamentations 2

background notes
1. 
2. 
3. 

doctrinal points
1. The wrath of God against sin results in national turmoil.
2. The wrath of God against sin results in personal tragedy.

questions
1. Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet (See Jeremiah 9:1 and Lamentations 2:11a.) Why was Jeremiah weeping?
2. The first 10 verses of this chapter indicate that it was not Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian forces who were the cause of Jerusalem's devastation and desolation. What/who was the cause?
3. Describe 5 of elements of the national turmoil visited on Judah and the city of Jerusalem (vs 1-10).
4. Describe 3 elements of the personal tragedy experienced in Jerusalem during the Babylonian siege of the city (vs 18-22).
answers

1. Jeremiah was weeping because of the sin of God's people and the resulting devastating conditions in Jerusalem and the nation of Judah. God in His judgment allowed the enemy Babylonian forces under Nebuchadnezzar to overrun Jerusalem, burn the Temple and take the people into captivity with great loss of life.

2. The cause of the devastation and desolation of Jerusalem was the anger and wrath of God as He exercised His judgment. Note in verses 1-6 the descriptions of God's anger, wrath, fury and indignation.

3. The national turmoil experienced by Jerusalem included the loss of the glory of Israel, the great loss of life among God's people, the humility of Judah's national defense, the destruction of the Temple, and the breaking down of the city walls and gates.

4. The horrible personal tragedies resulting from the siege of the Babylonian forces included children starving and dying in the streets and in their mother's arms, starving women actually eating their own children in order to survive and people young and old, prophets and priests being slain by the sword.

discuss / consider

God severely disciplined His people in the 6th century BC as recorded in this chapter of Lamentations. Discuss the "godly gain" that God's people experienced during the century that followed as a result of His discipline.

challenge

Do you welcome and accept God's love? Do you welcome and accept His discipline - even when it may be painful? Hebrews 12:5b-6 says, "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." Allow "godly gain" to take place in your life as God lovingly disciplines you!

memorize

"How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud of His anger! He cast down from heaven to the earth the beauty of Israel, and did not remember His footstool in the day of His anger." Lamentations 2:1
Lesson 3

The Prophet's Anguish and Hope
Lamentations 3

background notes
1.

2.

3.

doctrinal points
1. God's people can hope in the midst of hurts and hardships.

2. God's people can pray in the midst of pains and problems.

practical application
Give the younger generation the challenge of hard work.

questions
1. In this chapter Jeremiah identifies himself with the city of Jerusalem (1st person pronouns) in its sufferings under the judgment of God for the sins of the nation. In this aspect Lamentations 3 is messianic because it _______________ the passion of the Lord Jesus as He suffered on the cross for our sins.

2. What was it that gave Jeremiah hope in the midst of his anguish (vs 22-24)?

3. In verses 25-40, Jeremiah expressed 7 divine principles as to the nature of affliction for Israel in that day and also for God's people at all times. List the 7 principles.

4. Identify 4 verses in this chapter which capture the picture of Jeremiah as the “weeping prophet”. What lesson should we learn from Jeremiah's prayer in these verses?
answers
1. This third chapter of Lamentations has messianic implications because it foreshadows the passion of Christ as He suffered on the cross for our sins.

2. In the midst of horrible conditions in Jerusalem, Jeremiah passionately expressed hope in God’s great faithfulness and daily compassions.

3. The seven principles regarding the nature of affliction are:
   a. Affliction can be endured because there is hope in God’s restoration (vs 25-30).
   b. Affliction is only temporary and tempered with God’s compassion (vs 31-32).
   c. God does not delight in affliction (v 33).
   d. God does not approve of affliction caused by injustice (vs 34-36).
   e. Affliction is always under the sovereign control of God (vs 37-38).
   f. Affliction can be a result of sin as in Judah’s case (v 39).
   g. Affliction should cause people to turn back to the Lord (v 40).

4. Verses 48-51 give a clear picture of Jeremiah as he wept over the sins of Jerusalem. We can learn from his prayer that we should be faithful in prayer even in the midst of pain and suffering.

discuss / consider
Consider the detail in which Jeremiah describes God’s dealings with His people. Discuss how you could encourage believers around you to say together (verse 40a), “Let us search out and examine our ways” and act upon the results individually and as part of your church.

challenge
Read again the verses of this chapter containing the word “hope”. Very few of us have been in such a desperate situation as was Jeremiah, yet we tend to lose hope in our personal times of crisis. Will you follow the example of Jeremiah and place your hope in the Lord’s faithfulness and compassion, even in your most difficult times of pain and suffering?

memorize
“Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is His faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, therefore I hope in Him.”Lamentations 3:22-24
Lesson 4

Discipline, Confession, and Restoration
Lamentations 4-5

background notes
1.

2.

3.

doctrinal points
1. There is restoration after divine discipline.

2. There is restoration after contrite confession.

practical application
Take heed lest you fall!

questions
1. The book of Lamentations has been called “the __________ of a city.” Jeremiah mourns the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC by the ___________________.

2. Horrible conditions, including cannibalism, existed in Jerusalem as God disciplined His people (4:3-12). This sad situation was predicted as part of God’s law if the people were disobedient and would not follow the Lord. Identify two portions of Scripture that record these predictions.

3. Even the prophets and priests were subject to God’s discipline. What happened to them?

4. Fallen Jerusalem is pictured as a mourning widow in chapter 1, as a weeping daughter in chapter 2, as a man suffering the affliction of discipline in chapter 3, and as tarnished gold in chapter 4. Here in chapter 5, Jerusalem is seen as a ______________.  

5. Why could Jeremiah be so confident that God would not utterly reject His people, but rather would restore them (5:19-22)?
answers
1. The book of Lamentations has been called “the funeral of a city.” Chapters 1-4 are a series of laments or funeral dirges, and chapter 5 is a prayer of the godly remnant in recognition of their sins as a nation. Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians besieged and destroyed the city of Jerusalem.

2. “. . . I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. You shall eat the flesh of your sons . . .” (See Leviticus 26:27-29.) “You shall eat the fruit of your own body . . . in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you.” (See Deuteronomy 28:53-57.)

3. The prophets and priests would be shunned as unclean lepers and they would be scattered among the nations as God in His anger disciplined them (4:13-16).

4. In chapter 5, fallen Jerusalem is seen as a suffering orphan (v 3).

5. Jeremiah and the godly remnant could be confident that God would not utterly reject them and that He would restore them because they knew the covenant promises God had made with His people. Read Deuteronomy chapter 30 in this connection.

discuss / consider
Discuss the reason or reasons why God inflicted a greater punishment upon Jerusalem than He did upon Sodom (v 6).

challenge
Is pride in your past accomplishments causing you to be blind to moral or spiritual failure in your life today? In his letter to the Corinthian church, Paul admonishes us not to fall as the Israelites did and he uses their experiences as an example to warn us of prideful temptations. “Therefore let him who [pridefully] thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” (See 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.)

memorize
“The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom . . .” Lamentations 4:6a

“Turn us back to You, O Lord, and we will be restored; renew our days as of old . . .” Lamentations 5:21