

The touching significance of this book lies in the fact that it is the disclosure of the love and sorrow of Jehovah for the very people whom He is chastening – a sorrow wrought by the Spirit in the heart of Jeremiah (Jer. 13.17; Mt. 23. 36, 38; Rom 9. 1-4). I think this introduction by Schofield serves best to introduce my series on this book.

A moving commentary on the character of JEHOVAH – on one hand He loves His people but on the other hand He disciplines them so that they will eventually be drawn to Him. Each chapter reveals His character in contrast to his people's disobedience.

1. God is Righteous. (The Depravity of Zion). Key Verse 1:18.
2. God is Sovereign. (The Destruction of Zion). Key Verse 2:17.
3. God is Merciful – He is Faithful. (The Despair of Zion). Key Verses 3:22, 23.
4. God is Justice. (The Discipline of Zion). Key Verses 4:11, 22.
5. God is Immutable. (The Deliverance of Zion). Key Verses 5:19, 21 (cf. 4:22).

Lesson aim: in Zion's darkest hour there was hope – not because of who and what Zion was but because of who and what JEHOVAH is – eternally. The purpose of this series is to show that all believers are held accountable to his LORD. If he makes a ruin of his life the LORD will assuredly discipline him but always with the view to turning the errant believer back to Him. In this visceral portion of God's Word we see His character observed from a unique viewpoint: from the eyes of a prophet to a people who had completely rejected the LORD but nonetheless were His people. The lesson is clear to today's believer: we need to learn and obey God's word. There is no alternative life for the believer. To disobey God is to learn from His School of Hard Knocks.

Historical background¹

Jerusalem had fallen to Babylon. The city had been ransacked and its people either killed or taken captive. Tradition has it that Jeremiah had fled and was dwelling in a cavern when he wrote this tragic account:

"...As to its authorship, there is no room for hesitancy in following the LXX. and the Targum in ascribing it to Jeremiah. The spirit, tone, language, and subject-matter are in accord with the testimony of tradition in assigning it to him. According to tradition, he retired after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar to a cavern outside the Damascus gate, where he wrote this book. That cavern is still pointed out. "In the face of a rocky hill, on the western side of the city, the local belief has placed 'the grotto of Jeremiah.' There, in that fixed attitude of grief which Michael Angelo has immortalized, the prophet may well be supposed to have mourned the fall of his country" (Stanley, Jewish Church)...." —Easton's Illustrated Dictionary.

¹ Taken from The complete biblical library the book: "...describe(s) the terrible suffering of the Jews brought about by the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the city and Temple by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army in 586 B.C...."

¹ How lonely sits the city That was full of people! She has become like a widow Who was once great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces Has become a forced laborer! Lamentations 1:1 (NASB77)

The fall of Jerusalem Depicted

Jeremiah starts out this lament by using a mixture of images. [See endnote 1](#) First, Her (Jerusalem's) population was decimated. Second, was economic ruin. Third, was a universally known status of that of a widow – She became a widow because her king had taken from her. In the times this was written and even now in certain cultures for a woman to lose her husband meant that she was destitute with no security. Finally, the tremendous fall from royalty to slavery. This was certainly calamitous.

² She weeps bitterly in the night, And her tears are on her cheeks; She has none to comfort her Among all her lovers. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; They have become her enemies. Lamentations 1:2 (NASB77)

Instead of peaceful sleep as before her ruin she was now crying on her pillow.² Her treaties of peace with her neighbors did nothing for in her hour of need. Her Friend and Husband had been treated with abandon and unfaithfulness. Now, it appears that He will not come to her aid and her sorrow is fathomless.

Now a word about the Word Zion. Here are some helpful words:

"...The word Zion (vv. 4, 6) referred originally to the hill in Jerusalem on which the city of David was built (cf. [2 Sam. 5:7](#); [1 Kings 8:1](#)). Later with the temple's construction on Mount Moriah and the ark's transfer from the city of David to the temple (cf. [2 Chron. 5:2, 7](#)), the hill on which the temple stood began to be called Mount Zion (cf. [Pss. 20:2](#); [48:2](#); [78:68-69](#)). The word eventually was applied to the entire city of Jerusalem, which included the city of David, the temple mount, and the western hill on which the city later expanded (cf. [Jer. 51:35](#)). The term 'Zion' is often associated with God's dwelling place whether the temple proper or the city where the temple was located. (On the Daughter of Zion see comments on [Lam. 2:1](#).) So in [1:4-6](#) Jeremiah emphasized the religious desolation in Jerusalem after the temple and its associated sacrifices and feasts, which symbolized God's presence and fellowship with His people, were destroyed...." —Bible Knowledge Commentary.

Commentary on "gates" in verse 4³

² Bible Knowledge Commentary on Lam. 1:2.

³ Gates may not only refer to the literal gates which of course were destroyed but also to the justice system. Legal questions were many times resolved at the gates of Jerusalem see [Deut 21:19;22:15;22:24;25:7](#); [Ruth 4:1,10,11](#)

The reason for Jerusalem's Calamity

I'm going to jump directly to verse 8 and 9 to pick up the next thought

⁸ Jerusalem sinned greatly, Therefore she has become an unclean thing. All who honored her despise her Because they have seen her nakedness; Even she herself groans and turns away. ⁹ Her uncleanness was in her skirts; She did not consider her future; Therefore she has fallen astonishingly; She has no comforter. " See, O Lord, my affliction, For the enemy has magnified himself!"
Lamentations 1:8-9 (NASB77)

There is much in God's word that describes the events leading up to her downfall. Hosea is an example.² We are all familiar with the account of Hosea and his wayward wife. There is a clear connection between Hosea, his wife and all Israel (Judah and Samaria) although the closest connection can be made with the northern kingdom it certainly follows that Judah cannot ignore the warnings nor the implication of unfaithfulness to JEHOVAH. We need to understand the historical context of Israel's tendency for departing from her commitment to JEHOVAH and her final discipline – I'm using Israel in the general context – both the Northern kingdom and Judah. For *centuries* she had shown this lack of commitment so it was not without much warning from JEHOVAH with many prophets over the centuries that she had ample opportunity to repent of her bent for idolatry. Starting with the split of the northern and southern kingdom and the immediate fall of the northern kingdom into idolatry and continuing centuries later when the northern kingdom was defeated there was a succession of prophets who were mistreated and generally ignored.

Order of Prophets See endnote 3

See also end note ⁴

Jerusalem pleads for help.

Bible Knowledge Commentary makes an interesting observation: the first 11 verses views Israel's calamity from the inside. Jeremiah stood outside Jerusalem looking in at what had been a prosperous city but now desolate. The next section is best described by the Bible Knowledge Commentary:

"...The second half of this first lament now changed its focus. Instead of standing on the outside looking in, Jeremiah moved inside and looked out. Jerusalem herself called to those around to take note of her condition.

- *Verses 12-19 contain Jerusalem's call to those who had observed her desolation.*
- *Verses 20-22 contain Jerusalem's call to the Lord...." (My bullets)*

¹² **Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith**

the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.

Lamentations 1:12 (KJV).

First, the plea goes out to anyone who passes by. HELP PLEASE! This is a call of desperation. I think it is the natural order of things. First is the call to anyone then in the natural order of things Desperation calls out to the LORD:

²⁰ Behold, O Lord; for I am in distress: my bowels are troubled; mine heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled: abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death. Lamentations 1:20 (KJV)

So this is the universal call of someone who has lost all. This is in great contrast to the righteous Job. When calamity hit Job his response was:

²⁰ Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, ²¹ And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. ²² In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.
Job 1:20-22 (KJV)

So, if I may, there is a lesson to be learned here. Just as Jerusalem had still not gotten it after being disciplined many believers today who continue in their sin and the consequences come still do not get it, Job set the eternal example. Bless the LORD in every circumstance in life.

The Hope of Restoration

²¹ Turn us to Yourself, O Lord, and we shall be turned and restored! Renew our days as of old!— ²² Or have You utterly rejected us? Or are You exceedingly angry with us [still]?

Lamentations 5:21-22 (AMP)

I took the liberty of quoting from the Amplified because I think it best shows the intent of the original. We have here the pitiful cry of a child who fears that his parent is still "mad" at him. Of course that is not the case but from the child's viewpoint the fear is still there until the parent takes him in his arms and comforts him. This is the thrust of Lamentations – although the sin of Jerusalem is great, the hope is that the LORD will renew her as her days of old.

All is not gloom and doom in Lamentations. There is of necessity a tremendous contrast between the sin of Israel and the character of JEHOVAH but the lesson to be learned is this – no matter how far the believer has fallen or how bleak his circumstances might be *perhaps through no fault of his own* the LORD is there to bring His child back to Him. This is the Paradox – on one hand we have the sinfulness of Jerusalem but on the other hand Israel has the hope that she will be restored.

Endnotes begin here.

1. "...Jerusalem had experienced a catastrophic metamorphosis. Jeremiah listed three ways in which the city had changed. First, her population had been decimated. The once-bustling city was now deserted. Second, her economic position had changed. The city that had once been great among the nations was now reduced to the status of a widow. The concept of widowhood is used throughout the Old Testament to depict a position of helpless despair; it is often linked with aliens and orphans as individuals who could not protect themselves (cf. [Ex. 22:22](#); [Deut. 10:18](#); [24:19-21](#); [26:13](#); [27:19](#); [Isa. 1:17](#)). Jerusalem was now destitute and defenseless. Third, her social position had changed. The queen... has now become a slave. The city that used to rule other nations was now forced to serve the nation of Babylon...." —Bible Knowledge Commentary

2. Hosea's Times (1:1)

1:1. In Hebrew the name Hosea ("salvation") is the same as Hoshea, Israel's last king (2 Kings 17:1). Hoshea was also Joshua's original name (Num. 13:8, 16). Nothing is known of Hosea's family background except that he was a son of Beeri.

Hosea's ministry extended for a number of decades in the second half of the eighth century b.c. Four kings of Judah (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah) reigned when Hosea prophesied. Only one king of the north (Jeroboam II), is mentioned though Hosea's message was directed primarily to the Northern Kingdom. Six kings of Israel followed Jeroboam II during the reigns of the four Judean kings mentioned. Perhaps Hosea omitted those six (as stated under "Date" in the Introduction) to point up the legitimacy of the Davidic dynasty in Judah. —Bible Knowledge Commentary

3. Order of Prophets -

Before the Captivities: to the 10 tribes of Israel: Amos, Hosea, Obadiah, Joel

Before the Captivities: to the 2 tribes of Judah: Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Jeremiah

During Exile in Babylon: Ezekiel, Daniel

After the Exile: Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi

4.

<i>Prophetic Books</i>			
Name	Written By	Date Written	Years Taken
Isaiah	Isaiah	700	
Jeremiah	Jeremiah	550	
Lamentations	Jeremiah	550	
Ezekiel	Ezekiel	525	
Daniel	Daniel	525	
Hosea	Hosea	750	
Joel	Joel	700	

Amos	Amos	780	
Obadiah	Obadiah	848-841	
Jonah	Jonah	800	
Micah	Micah	725	
Nahum	Nahum	725	
Habakkuk	Habakkuk	550	
Zephaniah	Zephaniah	600	
Haggai	Haggai	500	
Zechariah	Zechariah	500	
Malachi	Malachi	420	
—Easton's Illustrated Dictionary			