

A User's Guide to LAMENTATIONS

Sunday Evening, November 17, 2024 – WOCC – Rich Howell

BACKGROUND OF LAMENTATIONS: The best place to go for background material on Lamentations is the book of Jeremiah. If we were to put Lamentations where it fits time-wise, it would go after Jeremiah ____, and in chapter ____, between verses 30 and 31. Both chapters describe the horrific destruction of Jerusalem by the hand of the Babylonians. The difference between Jeremiah and Lamentations is that in the former book, the prophet _____ and grieves. In the latter, he _____ and grieves.

[NOTES: The English word "lamentation" means to cry aloud. Thus, a lamentation is a verbal expression of grief. The Hebrew name for the book is Ekaḥ, which means _____ – the first word of 1:1, 2:1 and 4:1.]

AUTHOR OF LAMENTATIONS: There is no specific mention of the author, but there is also _____ good _____ to doubt Jeremiah as its author. Who else would have written it? Who else could have written it? Jeremiah was God's ordained prophet in the city, during its decline, demise, fall and aftermath. He was an eye-witness and had a front-row seat to the whole tragic chain of events. Besides that, the content, the tone, the vocabulary, and literary style of this book all point to Jeremiah as its author.

[NOTES: The book has carried the name "The Lamentations of Jeremiah" since before the time of Christ. The Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures, the Septuagint (translated in the 2nd century BC), attaches Jeremiah's name to the book and includes this brief introduction: "And it came to pass after Israel was taken captive and Jerusalem made desolate, that Jeremias sat weeping, and lamented with this lamentation over Jerusalem, and said..."]

TIME-FRAME OF LAMENTATIONS: Judging from Jeremiah's descriptions of the destruction, and his fresh sense of "shock and awe," the book should be dated shortly after Nebuchadnezzar's captain, Nabuzaradan, came in and burned the city to the ground, including the Temple! That would date the book in that same year, _____ BC.

A LITERARY FEATURE OF LAMENTATIONS: All five chapters are _____ poems, using the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet in order (see Psalm 119)! Chapters 1 and 2 use each Hebrew consonant as the first letter of each _____-line stanza. Chapter 3 has the same total lines, but divided differently, with 66 _____-line verses. Chapter 4 is shorter, with 22 _____-line verses. Finally, Chapter 5 is shorter still, with 22 _____-line verses (Confused yet?! Besides being a book inspired by God, it is widely considered a literary masterpiece!

Q. DOES LAMENTATIONS HAVE A MESSAGE FOR 21ST CENTURY MAN?

Definitely! On the negative side, we learn that God's warnings are not "_____ threats". The lives of the unrepentant will be turned into rubble – sooner or later. _____ is the eternal destiny of the rebellious. On the positive side, we learn that even if our life on earth is in shambles, a smoldering ruin, there is always _____ – if we will look up and turn to the ever-faithful ever-loving God of Heaven!

BRIEF OUTLINE of LAMENTATIONS:

1:1-11 **LAMENT _____ THE FALLEN CITY**
(1:1-5)

1:12-22 **LAMENT _____ THE FALLEN CITY**
(1:12,17-18,21-22)

2:1-22 **LAMENT OF GOD'S _____**
(2:1-2,5,14-17)

3:1-66 **PERSONAL LAMENT - FROM _____ TO _____**
(3:19-33,39-42)

4:1-22 _____ **THE SIEGE**
(4:1-2,6,12-13,21-22)

5:1-22 **PRAYER FOR THE THREE R'S:**
(5:1-2,7,15-22)

R _____

R _____

R _____