

**PREPARATION FOR LESSON:** read the book of Lamentations**BACKGROUND****Author & Date:** written by Jeremiah in 586 BC**Theme:** God's judgment on the nation of Judah**Purposes:** to lament the destruction of Jerusalem (Judah)  
to teach God's people the right attitude towards God's discipline**Scripture background:** 2 Kings 25:3, 8-10; 2 Chronicles 36:17-19; Jeremiah 52:6-14

<b>OUTLINE</b>	1	<b>Jerusalem's Complaint</b>	<i>Look at our condition</i>
	2	<b>God's Judgment</b>	<i>How He judged them</i>
	3	<b>Jeremiah's Grief</b>	<i>Judah's disobedience, consequences, acceptance, certainty</i>
	4	<b>God's Judgment</b>	<i>Why He judged them</i>
	5	<b>Jerusalem's Prayer</b>	<i>God, renew &amp; restore us</i>

**HISTORICAL SETTING IN JUDAH:**

When people died in the Middle East, special poems were composed & then sung, read or chanted in their honor. They were called *laments*. Gradually these poems were written for cities & nations when they were destroyed. So in 586 BC, after the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem & the nation of Judah was taken off the map, five laments were written in her honor. The Jews always believed they were written by Jeremiah within 2-3 weeks of the destruction. He sat on a hillside outside Jerusalem, overlooking the devastation & ruins.

He put the laments in a separate scroll because they would be the liturgy in the anniversary services

He is the only logical author because he remained in Jerusalem & was known for his laments 2 Chron. 35:25

He reveals his authorship by including similarities from his other book

in both books he weeps for Jerusalem Jer. 9:1 (8:23) cf. Lam. 1:16; 2:11; 3:48-51

in both books he tells about his experience in the cistern Jer. 38:6 cf. Lam. 3:52-63

The introduction in the Septuagint, Jewish Talmud, Aramaic, Syrian & Old Latin versions said,  
*And it came to pass after Judah had been carried away into exile & Jerusalem made desolate, that Jeremiah sat weeping; he lamented with this lamentation over Jerusalem & said: ...*

**EXPLANATIONS:****About the book**

- ♦ **Descriptions:** *A hymn of sorrow*  
*A cloudburst of grief; a river of tears; a sea of sobs.* J. S. Baxter, British Bible scholar  
*Every letter was written with a tear & every word with the sound of a broken heart.*  
*An elegy written in a graveyard.*
- ♦ **Style:** uses three forms to create a work of art
  - \* *Funeral meter* – the first line or phrase is longer & descriptive; the second part drops off abruptly
  - \* *Alphabetic acrostic* - matches the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet (*A, B, G* are the first 3 letters)
  - \* *Mirror image*

The *funeral meter* unites the **words** in each verse. The *alphabet acrostic* unites the **verses** in each poem. The *mirror image* unites the **chapters** of the book.
- ♦ **Reasons for the acrostic style**
  - \* It has symbolic meaning  
*When a person repeats the alphabet, he has embraced all the possibilities of words.* German scholar  
We talk about going from “A to Z”, implying a totality or completeness  
The Jews had sinned from “A to Z”; now there needs to be confession from “A to Z”  
Jeremiah expresses his grief from “A to Z” as a complete statement of grief
  - \* It is easier to memorize for reciting, singing or chanting in the temple services
  - \* It helps the author control his emotion & words, knowing how to start & how to stop



## EXPLANATIONS

### About the book continued

#### ♦ Example of acrostic style

- 3:1-6 **A**s a man I have seen affliction - by the rod of His wrath.  
**A**long the way of darkness He has driven me - without any light.  
**A**gainst me only He repeatedly turns His hand - all the day long.  
**B**y reason of Him my flesh & skin waste away - He has broken my bones.  
**B**uilding up siege mounds, He has surrounded me - with bitterness & tribulation.  
**B**ecause of Him, I dwell in darkness - like those long dead.

### About the Picture

Jeremiah is a picture of Jesus in some of the things He (Jesus) experienced & said

- Both **wept** over Jerusalem, knowing it would be destroyed because the people rejected God  
it was destroyed in 586 BC; then destroyed again in 70 AD Luke 19:41-45
- Both were known as **men of sorrow**  
Jeremiah was *the weeping prophet*; Jesus was a *man of sorrows*; acquainted with grief Isa. 53:3
- Both **lamented** while experiencing God the Father's judgment  
Jeremiah, when sitting on Mt. Calvary  
Jesus, when dying on Mt. Calvary during the 3 hours of separation from the Father Lam. 1:12; 2:15-16; 3:14-15, 19

## DEVELOPED OUTLINE

- Chapter 1** Vss. 1-11 are **about** the city; vss. 12-22 are the thoughts & feelings **of** the city as tho she were a person vs. 12
- Chapter 2** Because God's people refused to obey, God had to bring judgment; He destroyed their city & nation vss. 9, 15  
30 times Jeremiah refers to *He, Him, the Lord, You*; it is a lament of God's judgment – **how** He did it.
- Chapter 3** Disobedience, vss. 39-42; consequences, vss. 46-47; acceptance, vss. 27-28; certainty, vss. 22-24, 31-33
- Chapter 4** Jeremiah is not **complaining**, God, **why** did You do it? He is **explaining**, **this** is why; *the nation deserved it* vs. 13
- Chapter 5** God will show mercy to Jerusalem, when the people repent, because He is just (fair) & because He is faithful  
vss. 21-22 The Jews have certainty God will restore & renew them, **unless** He goes back on everything He promised. But that is impossible. God could never deny Himself or His promises. This was the *Jewish* way of claiming God's promises.

## APPLICATION: The right attitude towards God's discipline

When we knowingly, deliberately **disobey** God, sooner or later, there will be **consequences** that bring some kind of suffering. This is God's discipline.

(Not all suffering is because of disobedience. We need to honestly look at our life & ask the Holy Spirit to show us. If there is **no** disobedience we are aware of, we can know God has allowed the suffering for another reason.)

If there *is* an attitude, something we have done or something we have failed to do, we need to admit it & ask God's forgiveness. When it has been serious disobedience (willful & repeated), even after forgiveness, God allows us to suffer the consequences. It is His justice.

Therefore, we need to **accept** God's discipline. He is not trying to browbeat us or make us miserable.

The discipline shows us the seriousness of our disobedience; it gives us a desire to correct it; it helps us to learn, so we do not keep repeating it or think it does not matter.

If we continue to obey, we can have **certainty** that...

- ...in the discipline, God will not abandon us or stop loving us
- ...the discipline is never meant to destroy us
- ...God will give us wisdom to deal with the situation
- ...the discipline will bring blessing as we make wise decisions

Even when we are unfaithful

God is always faithful. **Great is His faithfulness!**

