

# A Plea for Restoration

Lamentations 5:1-22  
SS Lesson for 04/25/2021

**Devotional Scripture:** Jer 31:23-28

## OUTLINE

### LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

*Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

*Key Verse: Lam 5:21*

*Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary*

### MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

#### PLEA FOR REMEMBRANCE (LAM 5:1-7)

##### *Remember their inheritance (1-2)*

An inheritance of God's kingdom (Luke 12:32)

An inheritance because of being an heir (Rom 8:17)

An inheritance of the crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8)

An inheritance for those who are poor in the eyes of the world (James 2:5)

An inheritance that can never perish (1 Pet 1:3-4)

##### *Remember their needs (3-4)*

Remember needs because God knows them better than we do (Luke 12:29-31)

Remember needs because God is able (2 Cor 9:8)

Remember needs through spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3)

Remember needs through the power of Grace (Titus 2:11-12)

##### *Remember their oppressors (5-6)*

Oppression of the weak (Ps 12:5)

Oppression that has no comfort (Eccl 4:1)

Oppression that brings destruction upon the wicked (Isa 30:12-14)

Oppression of the widows, fatherless and aliens (Zech 7:9-10)

Oppression brings the judgment of God (Mal 3:5)

##### *Remember not their sins (7)*

Not remember because God is faithful (1 John 1:9)

Not remember because Jesus redeemed us (Titus 2:14)

Not remember because of God's mercy (Heb 8:12)

Not remember because of Jesus' blood covenant (Matt 26:28)

#### PLEA FOR RELIEF (LAM 5:8-16)

##### *Relief from evil rulers (8)*

Rulers who prey on helpless people (Prov 28:15)

Rulers who rebel against God and don't defend the helpless (Isa 1:23)

Rulers who scatter and hurt their people (Acts 20:29-30)

Rulers who devour their people (Ezek 22:25)

##### *Relief from famine (9-10)*

Famine that causes a move (Gen 12:10)

Famine should cause one to seek God's face (2 Sam 21:1)

Famine that God's relieves for those who fear Him (Ps 33:18-19)

Famine however cannot separate us from God's love (Rom 8:35)

##### *Relief from abuse (11-13)*

Relief from abuse because there is a reward in Heaven (Matt 5:11-12)

Relief from abuse because the future glory outweighs temporary suffering (2 Cor 4:17-18)

Relief from abuse because of the greater value of suffering for Jesus (Heb 11:25-26)

Relief from abuse because of looking forward to a better resurrection (Heb 11:35)

Relief from abuse because of a genuine faith (1 Peter 1:6-7)

##### *Relief from mourning (14-16)*

Relief from mourning through God's comforting (Matt 5:4)

Relief from mourning because of God's compassion (2 Cor 1:3-4)

Relief from mourning because of God's favor (Isa 61:2)

Relief from mourning because of being near God (James 4:8-9)

Relief from mourning because of God turning grief to joy (John 16:20)

#### PLEA FOR RESTORATION (LAM 5:17-22)

### *Restoration of joy (17-18)*

Joy through the refreshing of God (Acts 3:19)

Joy through liberation (Rom 8:19-21)

Joy through reconciliation (2 Cor 5:17-20)

Joy because of God's refuge (Ps 5:11)

### *Restoration of God's presence (19-20)*

Restoration because of God's unfailing love (Ps 119:76)

Restoration because God is the God of comfort (2 Cor 1:3-4)

Restoration because of God's compassion (Isa 49:13)

Restoration because God is the only one who provides comfort (Isa 51:12-13)

### *Restoration through returning to God (21-22)*

Returning to God brings restoral (Deut 30:2-3)

Returning to God brings answered prayers and forgiveness (1 Kings 8:47-50)

Returning to God brings healing (2 Chron 7:14)

Returning to God could bring blessings from Him (Joel 2:13-14)

Returning to God is a sign of growth in faith (Luke 17:17-19)

## **CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS**

### COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM THOMAS CONSTABLE

*Verse 1*

*Verses 1-18*

*Verse 2*

*Verse 3*

*Verses 4-5*

*Verse 6*

*Verse 7*

*Verse 8*

*Verses 9-10*

*Verses 11-12*

*Verses 13-14*

*Verse 15*

*Verse 16*

*Verses 17-18*

*Verse 19*

*Verses 19-22*

*Verse 20*

*Verse 21*

*Verse 22*

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE ECHOES COMMENTARY

## **Lesson Background and Key Verse**

### **Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

When is the last time you heard a sermon or lesson from the book of Lamentations? Christians in the Western world have a difficult time with this question. Lamentations has been largely neglected in favor of texts that call us to joyful worship. Even in personal devotional time, Lamentations is often bypassed in favor of almost anything else. We don't like to dwell on pain, which is what Lamentations does. Think about it: Would you rather watch a cheery movie about the birth of Christ or a solemn movie about his crucifixion? But remembering tragedy, as important as that is, isn't the only purpose of Lamentations. The book can also teach us much about our relationship with God—if we let it.

The book of Lamentations reflects the period of about 586-538 BC, the period of Babylonian captivity. Assyria had taken the northern tribes of Israel into exile earlier, in 722 BC (2 Kings 17:1-6). "Only the tribe of Judah was left" (17:18). But despite the warnings of many prophets, Judah continued in sin (21:10-15). The writer of Lamentations, commonly taken to be Jeremiah, had warned Judah for many years that God's judgment was coming (Jeremiah 25:2-11). As instruments of God's wrath, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC (2 Chronicles 36:15-20). Many who were left alive were carried into exile; the weak and the poor were left behind to contend with foreign settlers (2 Kings 25:1-21). The five chapters of Lamentations do not shy away from

describing that devastation and its aftermath. Lack of food resulted in starvation (Lamentations 2:12; 4:4-5) and cannibalism (2:20; 4:10). Those who did not die by the sword were weak with hunger and disease (4:9). For all the chaos of the setting, Jeremiah was very intentional in the literary forms he used when writing this book. The first four chapters are all acrostics. This means that each verse begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in consecutive order. In English this would mean beginning the first verse with A, the second with B, etc. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, thus there are 22 verses in each of chapters 1, 2, and 4. Chapter 3 is a bit different with 66 verses because the acrostic format appears there three times. This tight orderliness was perhaps a way for Jeremiah to organize what he saw. If so, it is a subtle hint that, though on the surface all seems lost, order still exists—or at least could exist again. Lamentations 5 does not have an acrostic pattern. That is not accidental, since it is the same length as chapters 1, 2, and 4. The discontinuance of the careful pattern seems to mimic the ebbing fortunes of the people. For all their cries to God, no help seemed to be forthcoming (compare 3:44).

### Key Verse: Lam 5:21

*Turn us back to You, O LORD, and we will be restored; Renew our days as of old*

### Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

The prophet's final dirge breaks the pattern established in his earlier laments. The acrostic pattern and *qnah* meter are not used. In fact the entire chapter is more properly a prayer than a lament. Chapters 1-3 each close with a prayer to the Lord (1:20-22; 2:20-22; 3:55-66) but no prayer is included in chapter 4. Therefore it is possible to see chapter 5 functioning as the prayer following chapter 4 and serving as the book's concluding prayer. The prayer itself is composed of two sections, each of which summarizes the response the remnant needed to make. The first response is a call for God to *remember* their condition (5:1-18). This section also includes a confession of sin. After the call for God to *remember* is a call for God to *restore* Judah (vv. 19-22). In context this is a call to restore both the land of Israel and the blessings of the covenant (Deut. 30:1-10).

**5:1.** Verse 1 introduces the prayer. The remnant called on God to **remember** the indignities they had suffered and to **look** at their present **disgrace**. Jeremiah had already indicated that God notices such atrocities (3:34-36). Therefore the people's call was not just for God to **see** what had happened (for He sees everything: cf. Prov. 15:3), but rather that God see *and act* on their condition.

**5:2.** Through the use of the first person ("we," "us," "our") the people described (in vv. 2-10) the general conditions of suffering brought about by Babylon. The land of Judah had been parceled out **to foreigners**. Babylon assumed dominion over the land, and its occupying forces were stationed there (Jer. 40:10; 41:3). In addition, nations surrounding Judah appropriated or annexed some of her land for themselves (cf. Ezek. 35:10).

**5:3.** Besides losing their property, the people also lost their rights. Their new taskmasters were cruel despots who cared little for them. The men were as defenseless as the **orphans and fatherless** and the women were as vulnerable as **widows**. In Israel orphans and widows were the most helpless people in society (see 1:1). They had no one to stand up for their rights or to insure that justice was done. Under Babylon's rule Judah had no rights or means of protection. She was the vanquished enemy, and Babylon her cruel overlord (cf. Hab. 1:6-11).

**5:4-5.** Babylon's rule over Judah was severe. The Jews now had to pay for the **water** they drank and the **wood** they used for cooking. Both in Judah and in Babylon the Jews found **no rest** from their pursuers. Persecution and fear dogged their every footstep (cf. Deut. 28:65-67; Ezek. 5:2, 12).

**5:6-8.** Still another reason accounted for Judah's calamity. She **submitted to Egypt and Assyria to get enough bread**. The words translated "submitted to" (*nā'annū yād*) literally mean "to give the hand to" or "to shake hands." The phrase implies the idea of establishing a pact or treaty (cf. 2 Kings 10:15) and often referred to one group surrendering or submitting to a more powerful group or person as part of a treaty (1 Chron. 29:24; 2 Chron 30:8; Jer. 50:15). Judah had pledged her allegiance both to Egypt and Assyria in her history, for the sake of national security (cf. Ezek. 16:26-28; 23:12, 21). Judah's past leaders (**fathers**) shifted their allegiance between countries, and their fickleness ultimately destroyed them. Their sin brought their death, and their survivors bore **their punishment**. The present generation was not claiming to be suffering unjustly for their forebears' sins (cf. Lam. 5:16), but saw their punishment as a logical conclusion to their ancestors' folly. Their forefathers' willing submission to godless nations was now bearing bitter

fruit. Babylon appointed cruel taskmasters; men of low degree were exalted and the people of Judah were forced to submit to them: **Slaves rule over us.**

**5:9-10.** The severe conditions and scarcity of food prompted the people to take desperate means for survival. Probably **the sword** they had to brave was carried by the bands of roving **desert** nomads through whose area the people of Judah had to travel in order to buy **bread** (i.e., “food”). The Jews’ **skin** was **feverish** because of their lack of adequate food (cf. 4:8).

**5:11-14.** In these verses the subject switches from the first person to the third person (“their”). After speaking of their general conditions of suffering (vv. 2-10), the people described its effects on different groups of individuals. No element of society escaped the ravages of judgment. The first group mentioned who suffered the horrors of foreign occupation were the **women** of Jerusalem (**Zion**) and the **virgins... of Judah**. Women who survived the Babylonian assault on their cities were mercilessly raped by the sadistic soldiers. In a scene of savage brutality, repeated by many conquering armies throughout history, the victors went on a wanton spree of lustful revenge against defenseless women. The city’s leaders also felt the fury of the Babylonians. **Princes** were **hung up by their hands**. Those responsible for leading Judah’s rebellion against Babylon were tortured to death in this cruel way. Possibly this was a form of crucifixion since hanging and impaling victims on stakes was the usual method of execution used during that time. **Elders** were also tortured. The **young men** who survived the Babylonian attack were enslaved. Because of the shortage of domestic animals in Palestine (probably because most had been eaten during the 30-month siege), men were forced to perform tasks usually done by animals. Men turned **the millstones** (as Samson also was forced to do, Judges 16:21) to grind grain, and **boys** were forced to carry large **loads of wood** needed in the city. Those who were Judah’s hope had been reduced to the status of slaves. Wisdom, justice, and happiness had departed from the city. **The city gate** where **the elders** used to gather was the place of justice and wisdom. Disputes between individuals were taken to the wise elders. But with the departure of the elders (cf. Lam. 5:12) the wisdom and justice normally available to the Jews was gone. Even the **music** of **the young men** had ceased. Music was associated with joy and happiness (cf. Ps. 95:1-2); and Judah had nothing to rejoice about now as her people suffered under the harsh hand of Babylon.

**5:15-18.** A veil of gloom hung over Jerusalem. The **joy** and revelry that had once been there was replaced by sadness and **mourning**. The bustling activity of a once-thriving city had given way to **desolate** ruins inhabited only by wild animals. **The crown** figuratively represented the glory and majesty that had belonged to Jerusalem. That glory was now gone. It was lost because of sin. The people were **faint** from hunger, and their **eyes** were **dim** from tears (cf. 2:11; 3:48-49). Judah had only herself to blame for her present condition of desolation in which wild **jackals** (cf. 4:3) prowled.

**5:19.** After describing her condition (vv. 1-18) Judah concluded her prayer by calling on God to act (vv. 19-22). The basis for this call was God’s eternal sovereignty: **You, O LORD, reign forever**. Judah was not suffering because her God had been defeated by the stronger gods of Babylon. Judah’s God was the only true God, and *He* had caused her calamity (cf. 1:12-17; 2:1-8; 4:11). Yet this same God who brought about her destruction also had the power to bring about her restoration—if He chose to do so.

**5:20.** The knowledge of God’s ability to restore the nation prompted the people to ask two questions. Because of the nature of Hebrew parallelism these two questions should be viewed synonymously. To **forget** about Judah would be to **forsake** her to her present condition of suffering. The use of “forget” here is the opposite of “remember” in verse 1. God cannot “forget” anything. This figure of speech means to forsake or abandon the people *as though* He has forgotten them. The people were asking God **why** He had abandoned them for **so long**. Significantly Moses employed the figure of God remembering His covenant if His people would confess their sin (Lev. 26:40-42). So the people of Judah were calling on God to fulfill the remainder of His covenant promise.

**5:21-22.** The specific action the people requested was, **Restore us to Yourself... that we may return**. The people wanted to be restored to the blessings of God’s covenant which included being restored to the land of Israel (Lev. 26:40-45; Deut. 3:1-10). Their ultimate hope for restoration was God’s faithfulness to His covenant promises. **Unless** God had **utterly rejected** the nation (which He vowed never to do; Lev. 26:44; Jer. 31:31-37) the people could depend on Him to answer their request. Thus the Book of Lamentations ends on a note of hope. In spite of severe suffering because of her sin, Judah had not been abandoned as a nation. God was still sovereign, and His covenant with Israel was still operative despite her disobedience. The hope for the nation was that if she would call on God and confess her sin He would protect her during her captivity (Lam. 3:21-30) and would ultimately restore her as a nation to covenant blessing (5:21).

## Major Theme Analysis

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### **Plea for Remembrance (Lam 5:1-7)**

- 1 Remember, O Lord, what has come upon us; Look, and behold our reproach!
- 2 Our inheritance has been turned over to aliens, and our houses to foreigners.
- 3 We have become orphans and waifs, our mothers are like widows.
- 4 We pay for the water we drink, and our wood comes at a price.
- 5 They pursue at our heels; we labor and have no rest.
- 6 We have given our hand to the Egyptians and the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.
- 7 Our fathers sinned and are no more, but we bear their iniquities.

### **Remember their inheritance (1-2)**

*An inheritance of God's kingdom (Luke 12:32)*

32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

*An inheritance because of being an heir (Rom 8:17)*

17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

*An inheritance of the crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8)*

8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

*An inheritance for those who are poor in the eyes of the world (James 2:5)*

5 Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?

*An inheritance that can never perish (1 Pet 1:3-4)*

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you,

### **Remember their needs (3-4)**

*Remember needs because God knows them better than we do (Luke 12:29-31)*

29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30 For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

*Remember needs because God is able (2 Cor 9:8)*

8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

*Remember needs through spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3)*

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

*Remember needs through the power of Grace (Titus 2:11-12)*

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

## **Remember their oppressors (5-6)**

### *Oppression of the weak (Ps 12:5)*

5 "Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise," says the Lord. "I will protect them from those who malign them."

### *Oppression that has no comfort (Eccl 4:1)*

4 Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed — and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors — and they have no comforter.

### *Oppression that brings destruction upon the wicked (Isa 30:12-14)*

12 Therefore, this is what the Holy One of Israel says: "Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression and depended on deceit, 13 this sin will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly, in an instant. 14 It will break in pieces like pottery, shattered so mercilessly that among its pieces not a fragment will be found for taking coals from a hearth or scooping water out of a cistern."

### *Oppression of the widows, fatherless and aliens (Zech 7:9-10)*

9 "This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. 10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.'

### *Oppression brings the judgment of God (Mal 3:5)*

5 "So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me," says the Lord Almighty.

## **Remember not their sins (7)**

### *Not remember because God is faithful (1 John 1:9)*

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

### *Not remember because Jesus redeemed us (Titus 2:14)*

14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

### *Not remember because of God's mercy (Heb 8:12)*

12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

### *Not remember because of Jesus' blood covenant (Matt 26:28)*

28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

## ***Plea for Relief (Lam 5:8-16)***

8 Servants rule over us; there is none to deliver us from their hand.  
9 We get our bread at the risk of our lives, because of the sword in the wilderness.  
10 Our skin is hot as an oven, because of the fever of famine.  
11 They ravished the women in Zion, the maidens in the cities of Judah.  
12 Princes were hung up by their hands, and elders were not respected.  
13 Young men ground at the millstones; boys staggered under loads of wood.  
14 The elders have ceased gathering at the gate, and the young men from their music.  
15 The joy of our heart has ceased; our dance has turned into mourning.  
16 The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned!

### **Relief from evil rulers (8)**

*Rulers who prey on helpless people (Prov 28:15)*

15 Like a roaring lion or a charging bear is a wicked man ruling over a helpless people.

*Rulers who rebel against God and don't defend the helpless (Isa 1:23)*

23 Your rulers are rebels, companions of thieves; they all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow's case does not come before them.

*Rulers who scatter and hurt their people (Acts 20:29-30)*

29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

*Rulers who devour their people (Ezek 22:25)*

25 There is a conspiracy of her princes within her like a roaring lion tearing its prey; they devour people, take treasures and precious things and make many widows within her.

### **Relief from famine (9-10)**

*Famine that causes a move (Gen 12:10)*

10 Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.

*Famine should cause one to seek God's face (2 Sam 21:1)*

1 During the reign of David, there was a famine for three successive years; so David sought the face of the Lord. The Lord said, "It is on account of Saul and his blood-stained house; it is because he put the Gibeonites to death."

*Famine that God's relieves for those who fear Him (Ps 33:18-19)*

18 But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, 19 to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

*Famine however cannot separate us from God's love (Rom 8:35)*

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

### **Relief from abuse (11-13)**

*Relief from abuse because there is a reward in Heaven (Matt 5:11-12)*

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

*Relief from abuse because the future glory outweighs temporary suffering (2 Cor 4:17-18)*

17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.  
18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

*Relief from abuse because of the greater value of suffering for Jesus (Heb 11:25-26)*

25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

*Relief from abuse because of looking forward to a better resurrection (Heb 11:35)*

35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection.

*Relief from abuse because of a genuine faith (1 Peter 1:6-7)*

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

### **Relief from mourning (14-16)**

*Relief from mourning through God's comforting (Matt 5:4)*

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

*Relief from mourning because of God's compassion (2 Cor 1:3-4)*

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

*Relief from mourning because of God's favor (Isa 61:2)*

2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,

*Relief from mourning because of being near God (James 4:8-9)*

8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.

*Relief from mourning because of God turning grief to joy (John 16:20)*

20 I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.

### **Plea for Restoration (Lam 5:17-22)**

17 Because of this our heart is faint; because of these things our eyes grow dim;  
18 Because of Mount Zion which is desolate, with foxes walking about on it.  
19 You, O Lord, remain forever; Your throne from generation to generation.  
20 Why do You forget us forever, and forsake us for so long a time?  
21 Turn us back to You, O Lord, and we will be restored; Renew our days as of old,  
22 Unless You have utterly rejected us, and are very angry with us!

## **Restoration of joy (17-18)**

*Joy through the refreshing of God (Acts 3:19)*

19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

*Joy through liberation (Rom 8:19-21)*

19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

*Joy through reconciliation (2 Cor 5:17-20)*

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

*Joy because of God's refuge (Ps 5:11)*

11 But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you.

## **Restoration of God's presence (19-20)**

*Restoration because of God's unfailing love (Ps 119:76)*

76 May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant.

*Restoration because God is the God of comfort (2 Cor 1:3-4)*

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

*Restoration because of God's compassion (Isa 49:13)*

13 Shout for joy, O heavens; rejoice, O earth; burst into song, O mountains! For the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.

*Restoration because God is the only one who provides comfort (Isa 51:12-13)*

12 "I, even I, am he who comforts you. Who are you that you fear mortal men, the sons of men, who are but grass, 13 that you forget the Lord your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, that you live in constant terror every day because of the wrath of the oppressor, who is bent on destruction? For where is the wrath of the oppressor?"

## **Restoration through returning to God (21-22)**

*Returning to God brings restoral (Deut 30:2-3)*

2 and when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, 3 then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you.

*Returning to God brings answered prayers and forgiveness (1 Kings 8:47-50)*

47 and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their conquerors and say, 'We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly'; 48 and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive, and pray to you toward the land you gave their fathers, toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name; 49 then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause. 50 And forgive your people, who have sinned against you; forgive all the offenses they have committed against you, and cause their conquerors to show them mercy;

*Returning to God brings healing (2 Chron 7:14)*

14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

*Returning to God could bring blessings from Him (Joel 2:13-14)*

13 Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. 14 Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing — grain offerings and drink offerings for the Lord your God.

*Returning to God is a sign of growth in faith (Luke 17:17-19)*

17 Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" 19 Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

## **Conclusion and Other Thoughts**

### ***Commentary Thoughts from Thomas Constable***

#### **Verse 1**

Jeremiah called on Yahweh to remember the calamity that had befallen His people, and to consider the reproach in which they now lived (cf. Lamentations 3:34-36). The humbled condition of the Judahites reflected poorly on the Lord, because the pagans would have concluded that He was unable to keep His people strong and free. Jeremiah implied that if Yahweh remembered His people, He would act to deliver them (cf. Exodus 2:24-25; Exodus 3:7-8).

#### **Verses 1-18**

##### **A. A plea for remembrance (5:1-18)**

#### **Verse 2**

The Promised Land, Yahweh's inheritance to His people, had passed over to the control of non-Israelites (Jeremiah 40:10; Jeremiah 41:3). Their homes also had become the property of alien people (cf. Ezekiel 35:10).

#### **Verse 3**

Because the Lord no longer protected and provided for the people, they had become virtual orphans. They had lost their rights as well as their property. Jewish men had become defenseless, and Jewish mothers had become as vulnerable as widows having lost their protection.

#### **Verses 4-5**

The extent of their oppression was evident in their having to purchase water and firewood, commodities that were normally free. The Judahites' enemies were trying to squeeze the life out of them (cf. Joshua 10:24; Isaiah 51:23). They had worn them out with their heavy demands and taxes (cf. Deuteronomy 28:65-67; Ezekiel 5:2; Ezekiel 5:12).

#### **Verse 6**

Even to get enough food to live, the people had to appeal to Egypt and Assyria for help. This may refer to Judah's earlier alliances with these nations that proved futile (cf. Ezekiel 16:26-28; Ezekiel 23:12; Ezekiel

23:21). But probably the writer used Assyria as a surrogate for Babylonia (cf. Jeremiah 2:18). Judah could no longer provide for herself but had to beg for help from her Gentile enemies.

#### **Verse 7**

The present generation of Judeans was bearing the punishment for the sins that their fathers, who had long since died, had initiated. They had continued and increased the sins of their fathers. Jeremiah rejected the idea that God was punishing his generation solely because of the sins of former generations (Jeremiah 31:29-30). His contemporaries had brought the apostasy of earlier generations to its worst level, and now they were reaping its results.

#### **Verse 8**

Even slaves among the oppressors were dominating God's people, and there was no one to deliver them. Only the poorest of the Judahites remained in the land following the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C, but even the lowest classes of Chaldeans were dominating them.

"Israel, once a "kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6), is become like Canaan, "a servant of servants," according to the curse (Genesis 9:25). The Chaldeans were designed to be "servants" of Shem, being descended from Ham (Genesis 9:26). Now through the Jews' sin, their positions are reversed." [Note: Jamieson, et al, p667.]

#### **Verses 9-10**

It had become life-threatening for the Judahites even to acquire essential food, because their enemies tried to kill them when they traveled to obtain bread. Famine had resulted in fever, which had given the people's skin a scorched appearance. [Note: Ellison, p731.]

#### **Verses 11-12**

The enemy had raped the women and girls in Jerusalem and Judah. Respected princes had experienced the most humiliating deaths, and the enemy gave no respect to Judah's elderly. Since Nebuchadnezzar evidently did not torture his victims (cf. Jeremiah 52:10-11; Jeremiah 52:24-27), it may be that the Chaldeans strung up the princes by their hands-after they had died-to dishonor them (cf. Deuteronomy 21:22-23). [Note: Keil, 2:451.]

#### **Verses 13-14**

Young men had to grind grain like animals (cf. Judges 16:21), and small children buckled under the loads of firewood that the enemy forced them to carry. Elders no longer sat at the town gates dispensing wisdom and justice, and young men no longer played music, bringing joy and happiness into the people's lives. These were marks of the disappearance of peaceful and prosperous community living conditions.

#### **Verse 15**

Joy had left the hearts of the people, and they mourned so sadly that they could not bring themselves to dance. The eventual result of sin is the absence of joy.

#### **Verse 16**

God's blessing and authority, symbolized by a crown, had departed from the head of the nation. All these characteristics marked the nation because it had sinned against Yahweh. She suffered under His judgment.

#### **Verses 17-18**

Divine judgment had demoralized and devastated the people. Wild foxes or jackals prowled on now-desolate Mount Zion, which formerly had been full of people and the site of many joyful celebrations.

#### **Verse 19**

Jeremiah acknowledged the eternal sovereignty of Yahweh, Israel's true king. Judah was not suffering because her God was inferior to the gods of Babylon, but because sovereign Yahweh had permitted her overthrow.

#### **Verses 19-22**

##### **B. A plea for restoration by Yahweh (5:19-22)**

The writer now turned from reviewing the plight of the people to consider the greatness of their God.

"In Lamentations 5:19-20 the writer carefully chose his words to summarize the teaching of the entire book by using the split alphabet to convey it. Lamentations 5:19 embraces the first half of the alphabet by using the *aleph* word (... "you") to start the first half of the verse, and the *kaph* word (... "throne") to start the second half.

This verse reiterates the theology of God's sovereignty expressed throughout the book. He had the right to do as He chooses, humans have no right to carp at what He does. Wisdom teaching grappled with this concept and God's speech at the end of the Book of Job, which does not really answer Job's many sometimes querulous questions, simply avers that the God of the whirlwind cannot be gainsaid ( Job 38-41). Job must accept who God is without criticism. Then Job bowed to this very concept ( Job 42:1-6). Now the writer of Lamentations also bowed before the throne of God accepting the implications of such sovereignty....

"One reason there is no full acrostic in chapter 5 may be that the writer wanted the emphasis to fall on these two verses near the conclusion of the book. In so doing, he has adroitly drawn attention to the only hope for people in despair." [Note: Heater, pp310-11.]

#### **Verse 20**

In view of God's sovereignty, the prophet could not understand why the Lord waited so long to show His people mercy and restore them. It seemed as though He had forgotten all about them (cf. Lamentations 5:1).

Lamentations 5:21-22 amplify the creedal statement in Lamentations 5:19-20.

#### **Verse 21**

Jeremiah prayed for Yahweh's restoration of the nation to Himself. Only His action would result in restoration. The prophet cried out for renewal of the nation to its former condition of strength and blessing.

"God is the only source of true revival." [Note: Price, p701.]

#### **Verse 22**

The only reason the Lord might not restore Israel was *if* He had fully and permanently rejected His people because He was so angry with them. By mentioning this possibility at the very end of the book, Jeremiah led his readers to recall God's promises that He would never completely abandon His chosen people.

Because this last verse of the book is so negative, many Hebrew manuscripts of Lamentations end by repeating Lamentations 5:21 after Lamentations 5:22. It also became customary, when the Jews read the book in synagogue worship, for them to repeat Lamentations 5:21 at the end. They also did this when they read other books that end on a negative note (i.e, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, and Malachi).

In view of God's promises to Israel, He would not abandon the nation completely. He would bless them in the future (cf. Leviticus 26:44; Jeremiah 31:31-37; Romans 11:1-2; 2 Timothy 2:13). Nevertheless the focus of this book is on the misery that sin produces, not the hope of future deliverance.

"The theological message of Lamentations may be summarized as follows: God's angry disciplinary judgment of His people, while severe and deserved, was not final." [Note: Chisholm, p359.]

*(Adapted from URL: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/dcc/lamentations-5.html>)*

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary***

In the midst of our suffering, we know that God is still trustworthy and faithful. However, there are times when we do not feel that he is still trustworthy or faithful. We do not know where God is when we confess and repent of our sins but do not experience mercy in the consequences. We find that worship and praise lag behind the mourning and lament. Like those left in a destroyed Jerusalem, all we can see is devastation; the only thing we want is to make sure God sees and knows what we are experiencing. Lamentations helps us find language to tell God the very deep, very real pain that we remember or still experience. The book serves as an invitation to take those things to God. As Paul wrote, "Neither death, nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). Though the inclusion of Lamentations in the Bible may seem odd, it gives evidence of the truth of Paul's assertion. No siege, no famine, no cannibalism, no destruction, no forced labor, no exile could separate God's people from his love. God demonstrated this love in Jesus Christ, making a way for all people to turn to the Lord and experience his blessings. Through Jesus' great suffering, we have been added to those people who will be freed from all suffering (Revelation 21:4).

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary***

The Tears - Jeremiah warned the nation of Judah of God's coming judgment. He continued to speak God's messages as he watched the Babylonians savagely conquer their land. In the Book of Lamentations, Jeremiah cried out to the heavenly Father as the Babylonian soldiers laid siege to Jerusalem. Jeremiah compared the depth of their pain to that of an abandoned orphan or to a grieving widow who's just lost her husband. As the Babylonian siege strangled the city, a person's life could be taken just for attempting to get food or looking after their livestock. Many had blackened skin, indicating starvation. Jewish women endured rape. Officials were strung up. Strong young men did tasks once assigned solely to women and slaves. Children labored so hard they passed out under the heavy loads. Silence lingered at the city gates because the elders disappeared. Once filled with festive music and dancing on celebration days, Jerusalem's streets were now filled only with grief and mourning. Judgment had fallen because of the people's sin.

The Hope - Jeremiah made a plea before the Lord for restoration, that their present suffering would not be their sentence forever. The prophet knew God is faithful and steadfast, sincerely desiring to show His people mercy. After about 70 years in Babylonian captivity God did restore His people to Jerusalem. God still answers the cry of His children amid their afflictions, no matter when or what. He is a compassionate God, ready to respond to signs of repentance from His people.