

# JEREMIAH & LAMENTATIONS

## INTRODUCTION

1. AUTHOR – The book claims to be written by Jeremiah (1:1) son of Hilkiah and a priest. His name means "Yahweh establishes" and his call is recorded in Chapter 1. Though there is no internal evidence, tradition also says Jeremiah wrote Lamentations.
2. DATE – Jeremiah ministered from the reign of Josiah (1:2) in 627 BC to the fall of Jerusalem and forced trip to Egypt (Ch 43) in 587 BC and some time later.
3. READERS – Jeremiah's ministry is to the nation of Judah. Isaiah warned of exile. Jeremiah explains that the captivity of Judah is of the Lord.
4. THEME – Judah's time of judgment from God has arrived. She should submit to the invading Babylonians as instruments of God for the punishment of Judah's sins. If they submit, God will preserve a remnant.

## OUTLINE

JEREMIAH is not necessarily written in an arranged order either of subject matter or events. It must be studied a passage at a time in the context of that chapter.

1. God will judge Judah and Jerusalem for her sins. CH 1-25
2. Jeremiah argues against some false prophets. CH 26-29
3. Jeremiah offers some encouragement to those going into captivity. CH 30-33
4. The last days of Jerusalem and Jeremiah's troubles. Ch 34-45
5. Jeremiah makes prophecies against some of the other nations. CH 46-51
6. An historical account of the fall of Jerusalem. CH 52. See 1 Kings 24-25

LAMENTATIONS is written as four acrostics mourning the fall of Jerusalem, the city of God. Chapter five is not an acrostic.

1. Jerusalem is destroyed and cries out for help. CH 1
2. God gives His reasons for Jerusalem's fall. CH2
3. Jerusalem repents and calls on God's mercy. CH3
4. Jerusalem's former glory is contrasted to her present misery. CH 4
5. Jerusalem prays for God's mercy. CH5

## IMPORTANCE OF JEREMIAH AND LAMENTATIONS

1. From a personal standpoint, Jeremiah is a clear example of a man faithful to God and His word whose ministry by earthly standards was a failure. But he is in good company. The earthly ministry of Jesus seemed a failure as well. See 1 Corinthians 4:1-5
2. The books show God's justice as Jerusalem was destroyed and the people were taken captive. But it also shows God's mercy as He continued to offer hope to Judah.
3. God promises that He will establish a new covenant with His people with laws not on stone but on their hearts. See Ch 31. This is fulfilled by the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit to enable us to obey God's commands. See Hebrews 8 & 10.
4. In spite of all Jerusalem's advantages as the city of God's dwelling, disobedience to God brings His judgment. See Lamentations 2:17 and 3:39.
5. God called Jeremiah before he was born (1:5). The Lord knew and called us even before He laid the foundations of the earth. See Ephesians 1:4. How wonderful that we can know that our lives and service fit into His eternal plan!

## JEREMIAH

1 – Jeremiah's ministry was for the forty years just before Judah was carried away into captivity. His message was characterized by an announcement of God's judgment. After the introductory verses set the time and place of Jeremiah's ministry, God called Jeremiah to be his spokesperson. It appears that he told him to speak only what he saw. The Lord announced that he would send the kingdoms of the north in judgment against Jerusalem. The issue was that they were burning incense to other gods thus forsaking the Lord, and they were worshiping what their own hands had made. Jeremiah was to speak boldly because the Lord was with him. Look at three verses of Jeremiah's call. V9 "Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me, 'Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.'" That was his message. V17 "But you, dress yourself for work; arise and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them." V19 "They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the Lord, to deliver you."

There is the following saying on a church sign in Wayne, NE that seems to summarize this chapter. "God does not call the qualified; he qualifies the called." Jeremiah felt insecure in his task. God called him before he was born, which made him very unqualified at the time of his call. He would not have success in ministry, as most of us would define success. In God's eyes, he was a total success as a faithful proclaimer of God's word.

2 – The main complaint God brought was that the people had forsaken him for other gods that were idols. V11b "But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit." They have exchanged the greatest and best for that which is useless. V5 makes a statement that summarizes this. "What wrong did your father find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless?" V12-13 call on the heavens to witness Judah's sin in choosing another god. "Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the Lord; for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water." V27 "For they have turned their back to me, and not their face. But in the time of their trouble they say, 'Arise and save us!'"

3 – V4-5 summarize this chapter well. "Have you not just now called to me, 'My Father, you are the friend of my youth – will he be angry forever, will he be indignant to the end?' Behold you have spoken, but you have done all the evil that you could." All that is done God's way brings blessing and is the best. All that is done another way brings trouble that causes them to cry out to the Lord. Yet they refuse to turn to him. V23 "Truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel." Israel and Judah behave like unfaithful wives. No matter how many blessings God poured on them, they rejected him and his ways.

4 – This chapter is filled with more accusations of sin and announcements of coming punishment. Yet the people still refuse to turn to the Lord. V22 "For my people are foolish; they know me not; they are stupid children; they have no understanding. They are 'wise' – in doing evil! But how to do good they know not."

5 – God presents his case about why he should send punishment on the land. He appeals to the reader confident that the reader will agree with him. V1-2 "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look and take note! Search her squares to see if you can find a man, one who does justice and seeks truth, that I may pardon her. Though they say, 'As the Lord lives,' yet they swear falsely." The worst is that the people do not realize the spiritual condition in which they are. They do not see themselves as God sees them. V30-31 "An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?" The worst of it was that it gave them a false impression of God. See Romans 3 where it describes that God passed over the sins committed beforehand in his grace but now in Christ he has carried out punishment and finally demonstrated his justice. V12 "They have spoken falsely of the Lord and have said, 'He will do nothing, no disaster will come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine.'"

6 – It appears that whatever God told the nation he wanted them to do, they would not do it. V16 "Thus says the Lord: 'Stand by the road, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and

walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'" If he says, "Listen!" They say, "We will not listen!" Because of this, the Lord continues presentation of his case and announces that he will send the terrible judgment that he has announced. See verses 20 and 28.

7 – The Lord continues his case against his people and it is very compelling to one on the outside. In their blindness they still do not see it. See verses 8-10.

8 – In this chapter the Lord details more of his plans for punishment of his people. It appears he still cannot understand the depth of their rebellion against him. V13 "When I would gather them, declared the Lord, there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree; even the leaves are withered, and what I gave them has passed away from them." God does not delight in punishment but grieves and mourns over it.

9 – The same theme continues when God announces his charges against the people in verses 13-15. The highlight is V23-24. "Thus says the Lord: Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord." Sometimes it is difficult to tell if it is the prophet speaking or God. That is good in that the prophet speaks for God. However, in this chapter it seems that the prophet is speaking about his tears and weeping, only to come to the end of the section and find it says, "declares the Lord." Lord, help us pay attention to who is speaking so that we will understand and know you better.

10 – The key word in the chapter seems to be "stupid" that occurs 3 times (V8, 14, and 21). This is the word for those who do not seek the Lord and his ways, whether they are worshipers of idols, or makers of idols or shepherds of people who do not inquire of the Lord. This chapter is a contrast between the Lord and the idols. Obviously it is better to trust in the Lord. He is the only one who is real and living. V6 "There is none like you, O Lord; you are great, and your name is great in might." The Lord is the one who is sending the exile so it will happen. In contrast to the "stupid" is the prophet who calls out, V23-24, "I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. Correct me, O Lord, but in justice; not in your anger, lest you bring me to nothing."

11 – The Lord had established the covenant with Israel all the way back in the time of Egypt. They are the ones who have broken it. V10 "They have returned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, who refused to hear my words. They have gone after other gods to serve them. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant that I made with their fathers." This is followed by a threat to Jeremiah to stop prophesying. Jeremiah's response shows his trust in the Lord and that he will continue to proclaim God's word. See verse 20.

12 – Jeremiah asks, "Why does the way of the wicked prosper?" The Lord's answer is that the disaster in punishment is on the way. It will surely happen. There is an incredible invitation in V14-17 for any nation, even after God has punished it, to seek God and he will bless it among his own people. V15 "And after I have plucked them up, I will again have compassion on them, and I will bring them again each to his heritage and each to his land." He goes on to say that if they will turn to the Lord and swear by him that he will build them up in the midst of his people.

13 – God continues his threat of exile as punishment for the people of Judah. Just like the new linen belt is ruined, so will Judah and Jerusalem's pride be ruined. V25 "This is your lot, the portion I have measured out for you, declares the Lord, because you have forgotten me and trusted in lies." That linen belt represents God's desire for a close relationship with Judah. He had a purpose for them but they failed to fulfill it. V11 "So I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to me, declares the Lord, that they might be for me a people, a name, a praise, an a glory, but they would not listen."

14 – Not only are the people sent into exile but also the land suffers from God’s abandonment. One of the ways this shows is in rain. The land experiences a drought. V22 is the answer. “Are there any among the false gods of the nations that can bring rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Are you not he, O Lord our God? We set our hope on you, for you do all these things.” The worst in this chapter is the prophets who prophesy those things that God has not commanded. They said there would be no sword. God answers them in V15. “Therefore this says the Lord concerning the prophets who prophesy in my name although I did not send them, and who say, sword and famine shall not come upon this land: By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed.”

15 – The announcement of disaster on Judah continues. God has sent all kinds of trouble to warn them to turn away from idols and turn to him. See verse 6. This chapter also contains a note of hope with an invitation in verse 19. This is one of those times when it is difficult to tell if God is speaking to the prophet personally or to the nation through the prophet. V16 sounds very personal. “Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts.”

Some of our hymn/songs sound as if God’s grace is infinite, that there is no limit to it. That is a false word. God’s grace does end with judgment. He will punish sin. We need to repent and turn to him and walk in his way or he will punish us.

16 – God explains his reasons and promises exile for these people but also restoration on a scale larger than the exodus from Egypt. This is summarized in verses 11-13. Note the power and purpose of God in verse 21. “Therefore, behold, I will make them know, this once I will make them know my power and my might, and they shall know that my name is the Lord.”

17 – Judah is condemned for two sins. They have forsaken God for idols made by humans. They have not honored God with observance of the Sabbath but have carried loads on it. This probably means that these loads were from their work and they never stopped working on the Sabbath. V5-18 are virtually a psalm with wonderful thoughts. V18 “Let those be put to shame who persecute me, but let me not be put to shame; let them be dismayed but let me not be dismayed; bring upon them the day of disaster; destroy them with double destruction!”

18 – Just as with a potter who is working with clay the Lord’s actions do not preclude his changing them even if he has announced them. In other words, if he announces blessing on obedient people and they turn and disobey, he will change and punish them. If he announces punishment on a disobedient people and they turn and obey, he will change and bless them. V11-12 “Now, therefore, say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, ‘Thus says the LORD, behold, I am shaping disaster against you and devising a plan against you. Return, every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your deeds.’ But they say, ‘That is in vain! We will follow our own plans, and will every one act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.’” At the same time, this is very personal for Jeremiah again. It seems that there were some who plotted against him for preaching the word of the Lord. He turned his situation over to the Lord and did not seek personal vengeance against them. V23 “Yet you, O Lord, know all their plotting to kill me. Forgive not their iniquity, nor blot out their sin from your sight. Let them be overthrown before you; deal with them in the time of your anger.” When we think like God, not only will we have compassion and mercy for others but we will also demand justice for them. God is just and must carry out punishment on sinners unless he extends mercy and takes out that punishment on another.

19 – In this chapter, God calls Jeremiah to dramatize the upcoming disaster for the people. He is to take a group of them outside the city and show them where the disastrous events will occur. V11 “So I will break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter’s vessel, so that it can never be mended.” Verse 15 explains a purpose of God. “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, behold, I am bringing upon this city and upon all its towns all the disaster that I have pronounced against it, because they have stiffened their neck, refusing to hear my words.” And Jeremiah did it. He spoke the Word of the Lord faithfully without holding back any part of it no matter what it might cost him personally.

20 – The result of Jeremiah’s prophecy is that he was beaten and thrown into the stocks overnight. He pronounced a curse against Pashur, the one who did this. Then he cried out to the Lord in both bitterness and hope. “Why was I ever born?” V7 “O Lord, you have deceived me, and I was deceived.” In the midst of it it seems that hope takes over but then despair regains control. V18 “Why did I come out from the womb to see toil and sorrow and spend my days in shame?”

21 – God himself will be against these people to carry out all the punishment that has been spoken. V10 “For I have set my face against this city for harm and not for good, declares the Lord: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.”

Why do American Christians feel so safe when it comes to the judgment of God? It seems to be because we do not believe God will actually judge. We believe we are his chosen people. These are many of the same reasons that the nation of Judah had when they lived in Jerusalem and possessed the temple and the ark. They are not true or valid. As a nation we deserve to face the wrath of God.

22 – It appears that the minimum hope that Judah had was that at least they would return from exile. This chapter is used by Jeremiah to dispel that hope completely at least as far as that generation was concerned. The king that was carried off into exile will not ever return. God offered the option to return to him but they refused. V5 “But if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation.” See also V12. “He shall return here no more, but in the place where they have carried him captive, there shall he die, and he shall never see this land again.”

23 – This is one of the most powerful and influencing chapters in our ministry and life. The Lord accused the prophets of false ministry, being false shepherds, leading his people astray because they have given their own word instead of God’s word. It does not matter if they claim it is God’s word when it is really not. V28 “Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let the one who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat?” declares the Lord.” V31 “Behold, I am against the prophets, declares the Lord, who use their tongues and declare, ‘declares the Lord.’” The secret is found in V22. “But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds.” Lord, grant us grace to spend much time in your council to make sure that it is your word that we proclaim or teach to our children or to our friends and family when we witness to them.

24 – The Lord announced that he believed that the people in exile are good people and that he will restore them to their land after a time but that the king, the leaders of the people are wicked and that they will continue in exile and even be sent farther away. V7 “I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.”

25 – The Lord will punish the wickedness of Israel/Judah through the nation of Babylon. The length of God’s judgment in exile is announced as 70 years. V11 “This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.” Then after 70 years, the Lord will punish Babylon for their wickedness. The rest of the chapter is the Lord pouring out his judgment of wrath against all the nations of the earth. They will be forced to drink a cup that is filled with the Lord’s wrath or judgment. This is an incredible chapter for preachers and prophets. In V3 Jeremiah says to the leaders of the nation, “For twenty-three years...the word of the Lord has come to me, and I have spoken persistently to you, but you have not listened.” He goes on to pronounce the judgment that God says will come because the people have not turned from their sin. Then the Lord calls Jeremiah to preach more bad news. He calls the prophet to be faithful to the Lord and his word no matter what the results and no matter how long it is that he is called to speak it.

26 – This is a personal chapter regarding the ministry of the prophet Jeremiah. God told him to continue to preach and announce his word. V3 “It may be that they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may relent of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of their evil deeds.” When he preached the word of the Lord, the people rejected it. V12-13 “The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard. Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and

obey the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against you." The people wanted to take it out on him. Some others intervened and rescued him by stating that he is only speaking the word of the Lord and other prophets have done that and it was accepted. V24 "But the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah so that he was not given over to the people to be put to death."

27 – This chapter also counters the word of the false prophets with the word of the Lord. Not only will Judah fall to Babylon but so also will the other nations that surround her. It seems that all prophets announced that not only would Judah not go into exile but also that the furnishings from the temple, which had been removed would be returned. God told them to make that a test and see what happens with the furnishings. God makes a divine claim in V5-6. "It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me. Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant..."

28 – This chapter presents a real live example of the significance of speaking the word of the Lord. It is an individual example of one prophet who told lies. Hananiah told the people that God would break the yoke of the Babylonians and return the exiles, king, and furnishings. Jeremiah spoke the word of God saying that he wished it were true but that Hananiah was lying. He had not heard from the Lord and these things would not happen. V9 "As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet." To verify this, Jeremiah prophesies that Hananiah will die before the end of the year and he died seven months later. Lord, let our lives and ministries be faithful to you and to your word, no matter what we see or do not see and no matter what anyone else says is your word.

29 – Jeremiah wrote a letter. It claimed to be the word of the Lord Almighty. It also claimed that the Lord is the one who carried the people into exile (V4, 7). V11-14 offer the explanation and hope. "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me. When you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile." The chapter concludes with another personal attack on Jeremiah because he has proclaimed the word of the Lord and it is not popular. Again the Lord answered the attack with a promise of punishment on the attacker. Note the number of times in the book that there are prophets who speak that do not speak from or on behalf of the Lord, nor are they speaking his word. Lord, grant us the wisdom and discernment to always know when we hear your word and respond to it with obedience!

30 – The Lord prophesied that he would bring the people of Judah back from exile. This chapter is filled with so many blessings that the people will enjoy, restoration to the way things were before the exile and better. V7-9 "Alas! That day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it. And it shall come to pass in that day, declares the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck and I will burst your bonds and foreigners shall no more make a servant of him. But they shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them." V11 "For I am with you to save you, declares the Lord; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end. I will discipline you in just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished."

31 – Even though Israel was in exile and they were told to be content and get established there, God told them that he would restore their children to the land. There will be a difference this time. V33-34 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord; I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more." This promise is guaranteed as the word of God. V36

"If this fixed order departs from before me, declared the Lord, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever." There is great abundance in the promise the Lord gives to the nation of restoration. There are more verses of relationship and reassurance between the Lord and the nation of Israel/Judah. V20 "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him, I do remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, declares the Lord." V37 "Thus says the Lord; If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the Lord."

32 – Jeremiah was instructed by the Lord to purchase land and have it witnessed. This is in spite of the promise of the Lord that the land will be destroyed and the people taken into exile. God explains that the promise of the return is just as certain as the promise of exile and Jeremiah's purchase is a symbol of that certainty. V39 "I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them." This chapter is filled with wonderful expressions of the goodness of God toward his people. Note especially verses 36-41. V41 "I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul."

33 – There are several other promises that are associated with the return. V8-9 "I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. And this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and the prosperity I provide for it." Also God promised that David would have a descendant on his throne forever and so will the Levites. It is not certain how the Levite one works since it appeared in the NT that Jesus, as a descendant of Melchizedek, replaced this function just, as a descendant of David, he fulfilled this prophecy. See V24-25. Many of these promises are tied into the certainty of the creation as illustrated by V25. "Thus says the Lord: If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed order of heaven and earth, then I will reject the offspring of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his offspring to rule over the offspring of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." There are also a number of references to Jesus in this chapter. See especially verses 15, 17, and 21. V15 "In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land."

34 – After three chapters of promises of return after exile, this chapter returns to the promise of exile. Zedekiah will be captured and appear before the king of Babylon. The people did well to free their slaves as God commanded but then they changed their minds and returned them as slaves. It seems the point is to confirm that the word of the Lord will be fulfilled no matter what the situation looks like. Since they will not proclaim liberty to these slaves, God says in V17, "behold, I proclaim to you liberty to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine, declares the Lord." What a strange way to state it, yet how appropriate!

35 – Jeremiah was asked to call together a family that had lived by the command of their forefather for generations as an example to the people of Judah who have not followed the command of God. V16 "The sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have kept the command that their father gave them, but this people has not obeyed me." How many times do we do something, anything, for a far less reason than we have for obeying God! V14 "I have spoken to you persistently, but you have not listened to me." V17 "Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I am bringing upon Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the disaster that I have pronounced against them, because I have spoken to them and they have not listened. I have called to them and they have not answered." Note how God calls himself by three names, to emphasize who he is, especially in his relation with them.

36 – God told Jeremiah to write down all the words that he had given him. It seems to be with the hope that if the people heard all the disaster that the Lord was about to send that they would repent and he could turn off the judgment faucet. V7 "It may be that their plea for mercy will come before the Lord, and that every one will turn from his evil way, for great is the anger and wrath that the Lord has pronounced against his people." Some officials heard the words and had them read to the king who rejected them so obviously that he cut the scroll and burned it. The Lord told Jeremiah to write all those

words plus new ones. God will not be deterred from his will and his judgment. It does not matter how defiantly we or anyone else reject the word of the Lord, it will still be carried out. By rejecting it, we place ourselves in danger of him adding to his words of judgment. V32 "And many similar words were added to them."

37 – Jeremiah continued to speak God's word faithfully and was thrown into prison for it. V2 "But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land listened to the words of the Lord that he spoke through Jeremiah the prophet." If God were only into our comfort, this would never happen to the one person that seems to stand for God, his word and ways as Jeremiah does in his day. However, God has a different plan. Lord, make our lives those that more accomplish your purposes than our own comfort.

38 – Once again Jeremiah was thrown into prison. His message was that if the people of Judah and the king surrender to the Babylonians, they would live but if they refuse to surrender, they would be carried into captivity and die. It would not be a popular message yet Jeremiah preached it faithfully. Help us not back down from the message of the Lord no matter what we fear or feel the response may be. There is an interesting dynamic going on between the king and the prophet. The king wants to hear the word of the Lord from Jeremiah but he does not want to do it. V14 "King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah the prophet and received him at the third entrance of the temple of the Lord. The king said to Jeremiah, I will ask you a question; hide nothing from me." He feared its consequences and even when the prophet promised those consequences would not happen, he still refused to obey God's word.

39 – The fall of Jerusalem finally happened just as the Lord promised. In this time, the king was punished just as Jeremiah said. His sons were executed before his eyes and his eyes were taken out. Jeremiah was protected by the Babylonians and given his option on what to do. He remained with his own people. Ebed-Melech was given protection with a wonderful personal promise as a reward for his saving of Jeremiah. See verses 17-18.

40 – The plot thickens. Jeremiah returned to Jerusalem with Gedaliah as king. He advised the people to submit to the rule of the Babylonians and all would go well with them. There was a bountiful harvest of fruit and wine. However the plot was hatched to kill Gedaliah.

Why is it that the captain of the foreign invading army knows more about what the Lord is doing than the people who live in Jerusalem? V2 "The captain of the guard took Jeremiah and said to him, 'The Lord your God pronounced this disaster against this place...because you sinned against the Lord and did not obey his voice, this thing has come upon you.'" That is another indictment of God's people.

41 – The assassination was carried out against the one that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had appointed to rule over the land. V2 "Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and the ten men with him rose up and struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, with the sword, and killed him, whom the king of Babylon had appointed governor in the land." The leader of the assassination took all the other captives and heads to join with the Ammonites. That plan was thwarted by an attack by some rescuers who then head to Egypt. None of this was according to the counsel given by the Lord through Jeremiah. It is interesting that Jeremiah is not mentioned by name in this chapter.

42 – The leaders of the assassination expected that there will be retribution from Nebuchadnezzar and so they planned to flee to Egypt. They approached Jeremiah for him to ask the Lord what they should do. Jeremiah must wait ten days for the answer but the answer is to stay in the land and not go to Egypt. The Lord regretted what he did in his anger to the land of Israel. V10 "If you will remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull you down; I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for I relented of the disaster that I did to you." Now he would bless and restore that land but if anyone goes to Egypt, that land would be destroyed with the full wrath of the Lord and all who go there would die. He cannot put it into clearer terms but in the next chapter, the people rejected his counsel. V19 "The Lord has said to you, O remnant of Judah, 'Do not go up to Egypt. Know for a certainty that I have warned you this day.'"

We are such sinners that even witnessing the trouble and tragedy that come our way from the Lord when we reject his ways and word, we continue to sin and reject it. It only puts the grace of God into sharper contrast. When will they ever learn! When will we ever learn!

43 – Those who fled to Egypt were told by Jeremiah that they would never leave Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar who had captured Jerusalem would also show up and take over Egypt. He would destroy all the sacred pillars and idols in Egypt. V13 is about as clear as it can be. “He shall break the obelisks of Heliopolis, which is in the land of Egypt, and the temples of the gods of Egypt he shall burn with fire.”

44 – This is as clear an indictment against the people of Judah as there could be. The word of the Lord continues by asking in effect, “Remember how I destroyed Judah? I will do the same to all of you in Egypt.” V4 “Yet I persistently sent to you all my servants the prophets, saying, ‘Oh, do not do this abomination that I hate!’ But they did not listen or incline their ear, to turn from their evil and make no offerings to other gods.” The people misinterpreted and rejected God’s word. They think things were fine for them before Jeremiah called them back to the Lord so they will stay in disobedience. V29 “This shall be the sign to you, declares the Lord, that I will punish you in this place, in order that you may know that my words will surely stand against you for harm.”

45 – It appears that Baruch, Jeremiah’s assistant, was discouraged and about to give up. Jeremiah came with God’s word for Baruch. It was that no matter what happened to him, even if disaster, he would always escape with his life. V5b “But I will give you your life as a prize of war in all places to which you go.” This is a very personal encouragement for someone who has seemed to stand with Jeremiah throughout his ministry. We praise you Lord that you are aware of individual faithfulness and not only national. Help us to be those individually faithful ones.

46 – In this chapter God demonstrated his lordship and sovereignty over all the nations by announcing that Egypt would also be judged and destroyed by him through the instrument of the Babylonians and Nebuchadnezzar. They would go into exile but later be restored. V25 “The Lord of host, the God of Israel, said: ‘Behold, I am bringing punishment upon Amon of Thebes, and Pharaoh and Egypt and her gods and her kings, upon Pharaoh and those who trust in him.’” V28 “Fear not, O Jacob my servant, declares the Lord, for I am with you. I will make a full end of all the nations to which I have driven you, but of you I will not make a full end. I will discipline you in just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished.” When we read this from God’s perspective, it is a chapter of great glory to the Lord because he is able to finally take out his vengeance on sin and sinners.

47 – A similar message was announced concerning the nation of the Philistines. Nothing can stop the sword of the Lord once it begins because nothing can stop the Lord and his commands or orders. This is another statement from God about vengeance. We must see these as that which brings the Lord glory. V6-7 “Ah, sword of the Lord! How long till you are quiet? Put yourself into your scabbard; rest and be still! How can it be quiet when the Lord has given it a charge? Against Ashkelon and against the seashore he has appointed it.”

48 – This is a long chapter pronouncing judgment on Moab. The reason is in V42. “Moab shall be destroyed and be no longer a people because he magnified himself against the Lord.” This judgment will affect every aspect of life. There will be no more shouts of joy but of sorrow and pain. The chapter after 46 verses of destruction and judgment ends with one verse of hope. V47 “Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab in the latter days, declares the Lord.” God is totally in charge of the fortunes of the nations. Therefore it is safe to assume that he is also in charge of churches, including our church. He is also in charge of our families, including those who seek divorce. Lord, let us trust in you that you always do what is right and best.

49 – This chapter continues the prophecies against surrounding nations. Note that of the five nations listed, two are told that their fortunes will be destroyed. It seems that Ammon and Moab are restored because they are relatives of Israel, through Lot. For the other nations, there is no hope. V20 “Therefore hear the plan that the Lord has made against Edom and the purposes that he has formed against the inhabitants of Teman: Even the little ones of the flock shall be dragged away. Surely their fold shall be appalled at their fate.” Either way the fortunes of the nations are in the Lord’s hands completely. So are

ours. V6 "But afterward I will restore the fortunes of the Ammonites, declares the Lord." V39 "But in the latter days I will restore the fortunes of Elam, declares the Lord."

50 – Here Jeremiah pronounced the Lord's word against Babylon. As great as the city was, it would be completely destroyed. However, just as much emphasis in this chapter is on the restoration of Judah/ Israel as on the destruction of Babylon. V4 "In those days and in that time, declares the Lord, the people of Israel and the people of Judah shall come together, weeping as they come, and they shall seek the Lord their God." V20 "In those days and in that time, declares the Lord, iniquity shall be sought in Israel, and there shall be none. And sin in Judah, and none shall be found, for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant." V34 "Their Redeemer is strong; the Lord of hosts is his name. He will surely plead their cause, that he may give rest to the earth, but unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon." There are also several verses of judgment against Babylon. V14 "Set yourselves in array against Babylon all around, all you who bend the bow; shoot at her, spare no arrows, for she has sinned against the Lord." V25 "The Lord has opened his armory and brought out the weapons of his wrath, for the Lord God of hosts has a work to do in the land of the Chaldeans."

51 – Babylon will fall. Even though at that point in history it is about to destroy Jerusalem and carry away all Jews to captivity, the Lord decrees that the city will fall. Even though God sent them on their mission to carry out his judgment against his people, they will be destroyed for doing it. God uses even the greatest sovereign nations to accomplish his purposes. It sounds much like the book of Habakkuk that a wicked nation is judged by another nation and even though that second nation is more wicked, God will assert his holiness and righteousness by judging that nation as well. V20 "You are my hammer and weapon of war; with you I break nations in pieces; with you I destroy kingdoms." V29 "The land trembles and writhes in pain, for the Lord's purposes against Babylon stand, to make the land of Babylon a desolation, without inhabitant." V56 "For the Lord is a God of recompense; he will surely repay."

52 – The account returns to history from prophecy. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed, completely, just as the Lord had said. Though the king and other leaders tried to flee, they were captured. The king's sons were executed right in front of him and then so that the last thing he ever saw would leave an impression, his eyes were put out. He was taken captive to Babylon. All the important buildings in Jerusalem were destroyed and burned down. Anything valuable was carried off to Babylon. There is great detail to emphasize the thoroughness of the destruction. All the key leaders were also carried off to Babylon where they were then executed. V27 "So Judah was taken into exile out of its land." The Lord kept his word exactly as he said. No matter what it looked like day by day, the Lord's word was carried out completely. How stark it is and how final when it says in V13, "And he burned the house of the Lord." Let us never deceive ourselves that we are so secure in our relationship with God that we can do as we please and there will be no consequences.

## LAMENTATIONS

1 – There is a depth of grieving expressed here that is beyond what most of us know. Are we even capable of it? The author thinks of not only the destruction but also how it impacted every area of life for the city of Jerusalem. However, only one cause is listed. V5 “The Lord has afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions.” The prophet wept so much over the destruction. He grieved over the destruction and the loss, not only for himself but also for his people and for God. V18 “The Lord is in the right, for I have rebelled against his word; but hear, all you peoples, and see my suffering; my young women and my young men have gone into captivity.”

How affected are we by scenes of that suffering? Are we hardened? Is our reaction the same as God’s as it should be? People who fit that are given to us so that we can experience God’s care.

2 – All of this destruction is from the Lord. It is all attributed to his doing. V3b “He has withdrawn from them his right hand in the face of the enemy.” Here it is not so much what God has done as that he has withdrawn his protection that he usually gives his people. The grief is so deep that the walls of the city are called on to pour out water of tears for what has happened. But the Lord did it. It is all his punishment. V17 “The Lord has done what he purposes; he has carried out his word, which he commanded long ago; he has thrown down without pity; he has made the enemy rejoice over you and exalted the might of your foes.” V8 “The Lord determined to lay in ruins the wall of the daughter of Zion; he stretched out the measuring line; he did not restrain his hand from destroying; he caused the rampart and wall to lament; they languished together.” V14 “Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes, but have seen for you oracles that are false and misleading.”

3 – The prophet calls on all to turn to the Lord. This is explained in V21-24. “But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will hope in him.” V31-33 “For the Lord will not cast off forever, but though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men.” He calls on the people to repent. V37-39 “Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come? Why should a living man complain, a man, about the punishment of his sins?” V40-42 “Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord. Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven: We have transgressed and rebelled, and you have not forgiven.” This chapter ends with Jeremiah’s personal appeal against those who have hurt him when he proclaimed the word of the Lord. V58 “You have taken up my cause, O Lord; you have redeemed my life.”

4 – The grief continues as it has been impacted by further elements of the city and its people. V11-13 “The Lord gave full vent to his wrath; he poured out his hot anger, and he kindled a fire in Zion that consumed its foundations. The kings of the earth did not believe, nor any of the inhabitants of the world, that foe or enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem. This was for the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed in the midst of her the blood of the righteous.” The people had thought that living in the Lord’s city they were totally secure, that nothing could ever happen to them. It appears that they became complacent and thought they could sin without consequence. What they did not realize was that while no outsider could harm them when they rebelled against the Lord, he would no longer protect them and they could be destroyed. It seems that the prophets are the real reason that destruction came to Jerusalem. In other words, as long as there were prophets who proclaimed the word of the Lord, he held off destruction. Lord, help us be even more faithful to your word no matter what!

5 – In this chapter, the prophet calls out to the Lord to restore. V20-22 “Why do you forget us forever, why do you forsake us for so many days? Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old – unless you have utterly rejected us and you remain exceedingly angry with us.”