

***Cover to Cover: From Genesis to Maps***  
**Sermon # 25 – “Lamentations”**  
**January 6, 2008**

Five books comprise the “Major” Prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel.

Both Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied in Judah. Jeremiah’s ministry began some 60 to 70 years after the death of Isaiah. Isaiah witnessed the fall of Israel (the Northern Kingdom). Jeremiah witnessed the fall of Judah (the Southern Kingdom).

Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel are “exilic” books (i.e., written during the time God’s people were in exile). Of the 3 exilic books, Lamentations concentrates on the past, while the other two look forward.

Why is Lamentations (a much shorter book) included in the Major Prophets rather than the Minor Prophets? Lamentations was written by Jeremiah. It has an immediate connection with his much larger book of prophecy that precedes it. Thus, it was logical to have it follow in sequence.

Jeremiah wrote his “sequel” immediately following the destruction of Jerusalem (586 BC) but before he was carried off to Egypt. He puts into words here what he saw and felt.

The Book of Lamentations has been called “the Wailing Wall of the Bible”. It also has been described as a hymn of heartbreak, a psalm of sadness, a symphony of sorrows.

The Book of Lamentations is actually a series of 5 laments (or funeral dirges), wherein Jeremiah is lamenting the tragic “death” of Zion (Jerusalem), the city of God. Each chapter (or dirge) utilizes a unique metaphor to express grief over the loss.

**Chapter 1 – A Mourning Widow: The Pain of Zion’s Fall.**

The consequences of sin are always painful.

Jerusalem is personified as a grief-stricken widow, left abandoned and all alone.

When sin is at its most appealing, you never have a shortage of “friends” wanting to join in and be part of your sin. But, when the consequences of sin arrive, those “friends” are suddenly nowhere to be found.

The consequences of sin are always paid alone.

## **Chapter 2 – A Weeping Daughter: The Plight of Zion’s Fall.**

God’s judgment upon sin also brings pain.

The dishonored Daughter of Zion weeps and weeps, but is not comforted. Observers are amazed that the once-beautiful city has now been brought so low.

## **Chapter 3 – An Afflicted Man: The Purpose of Zion’s Fall**

The prophet himself is the afflicted man. In his affliction, he seeks to make sense of it all.

Sin causes hopelessness and despair.

## **Chapter 4 – Tarnished Gold: Pondering Zion’s Fall**

The resources that were once so highly prized have now become significantly devalued.

Eventually, possessions and material goods lose their luster.

## **Chapter 5 – A Fatherless Child: A Plea in Light of Zion’s Fall.**

The once-mighty nation has become like an orphan.

This lament is a prayer on behalf of the remnant, a painful plea to the Lord for renewal and restoration.

This book does not seem to end on a very hopeful note.

### ***One final point regarding this book’s literary structure:***

This book is a chiasm. Thus, the crescendo (or high point) of the book is in the middle. Parallel and corresponding thoughts appear in Chapters 1 & 5, and in Chapters 2 & 4, much like mirror images. And then, intentionally, in the middle chapter, there is a climactic center-point.

3:19-24, 32, 55-58 – Here is the word of hope!