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# *Lamentations*

HOPE AND HEALING IN THE  
AFTERMATH OF REBELLION  
AGAINST GOD

PRECEPT UPON PRECEPT®

*English Standard Version*

## LAMENTATIONS

HOPE AND HEALING IN THE AFTERMATH  
OF REBELLION AGAINST GOD

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## HELPFUL STUDY TOOLS

ARTHUR, KAY; ARTHUR, DAVID; DE LACY, PETE

**How to Study Your Bible**

*Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1994/2010*

**The New Inductive Study Bible—English Standard Version**

*Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2013*

**Hebrew Word Study Tools**

## RECOMMENDED COMMENTARIES

GAEBELEIN, FRANK E.

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*Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishers, 1990*

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*Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1983-c1985*

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## RECOMMENDED SOFTWARE

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**Lamentations**  
*Lesson 1, Chapters 1–2*

## LESSON ONE

### Chapters One and Two

THIS LESSON INCORPORATES The following located in the Appendix:  
Observation Worksheets of Lamentations 1–2  
Word studies  
Cross-references

#### THE AFTERMATH OF REBELLING AGAINST GOD

**What happens when a nation turns its back on God? When it acknowledges God but does not honor Him as God? When it twists, distorts, or even forbids the proclamation of the truths of His Word?**

**Oh, how timely is this study of Lamentations.**

**What lessons are there for you and your nation . . . and for us as individuals in dealing with the aftermath of rebellion? Of listening to false prophets? Of thinking that God will not hold us accountable for transgressing His Word and then discovering we were wrong?**

**How do you live with yourself? With the consequences? Reconstruct the shambles of life and make it worth living again?**

**Or can you?**

**Yes, you can, because He's a God of compassion. You just need to know how to tap into His mercies which are new every morning . . . and this you will learn in your study of Lamentations.**

DAY  
ONE

A lament is an expression of grief, of mourning, of sorrow. Surely we have each been there at one time or another. Some of us more than others. We feel as if life is one continual lament. You know the feeling, don't you? The pain. The guilt for what we did, should have done, or didn't do. The crippling sorrow. The sense,



often, of despair. And then to make matters worse, we think there is no sorrow like our sorrow—and a twinge of envy creeps into our hearts as we look at those who have what we’ve dreamed of and missed.

We will study Lamentations chapter-by-chapter over the next three weeks. Lesson 1 covers chapters 1–2, Lesson 2 covers chapter 3, and Lesson 3 covers chapters 4–5. As you begin seeing for yourself what the text says, you’ll want to ask the Lord’s help; He’s the ultimate Author!

1. In the Appendix you will find “**Observation Worksheets**,” which are simply the text of Lamentations double-spaced with wide margins. Your assignment for today is to read the first chapter of Lamentations. As you read Lamentations 1,
  - a. pick a color for *Jerusalem* (for example, light blue) and color every reference to Jerusalem, including pronouns, in that color.
  - b. color any synonyms used for Jerusalem, such as Zion, in the same color. Jerusalem was the capital of a nation who rebelled against the Lord. If you are living in a nation that has done the same, take note!
2. As you read, you may have noticed certain words repeated throughout the chapter. These are called key words. **Key words** are important repeated words the author uses throughout a chapter, a segment of scripture, or an entire book. They help unlock the meaning of the text. Color-coding them and/or marking them in a distinctive way helps you see how often and when they are used.

It is also helpful to list these important words on a **Key Word Bookmark** and mark them as you will do throughout the book. You can use the card on the back cover of your Precept book. Marking suggestions for some frequently used words in the Bible are on the reverse side of the card. \*Throughout this book, an asterisk denotes words with a marking suggestion.

List *Jerusalem* on your card, along with the following key words. Then read chapter 1 again and mark these words:

- a. *comfort*
  - b. *foes (enemies)* and any synonyms
  - c. *nations\**
  - d. expressions of time,\* such as *when* or *on the day of* . . .
3. Now that you’ve read the chapter twice, let’s see what you learned from marking Jerusalem. Of course it is a city, but a city is comprised of people. Seek out the answers to the “5 W’s and an H” (Who, What, When, Where, Why, How) that help us get a true analysis of what is being written.





- d. Who lived in Jerusalem—or is still in the city—and where are they? What is their state—how are they faring? List the various peoples below and note what the text tells you about them.
- e. Does this chapter give you any sense of the timing of this lament—when it happened and what led up to it?
- f. What does Jerusalem acknowledge in this chapter? By the way, did you notice the shift in pronouns in verses 9 and 11? Why the shift?
4. Although we haven't finished observing this chapter, we'll pause at this point so you can take some time to reflect on what you've observed. Remember, Beloved of God, the words you've observed are the very words of God. They've come from His mouth and the Lord has preserved them over the millennia so we can know and understand Him and His ways and have insight for the times we live in.



Now, after this first run through, what have you seen and learned that God can use in your life? Do you see any similarities to the state of your nation, your capital, your people today? Jot them down. Also, what emotions does it evoke and why?

## DAY TWO

1. Ask the Spirit of God to use Lamentations to open your eyes to the state of your nation—and to cleanse you, its citizen, through the washing of the water of His Word.
2. Read through Lamentations 1 again today. You might read it aloud, as hearing its words will help you remember it better. Add the following to your Key Word Bookmark and color or mark every reference to:
  - a. the *Lord*, \* including pronouns.
  - b. the *sanctuary* (see temple\*), which is the temple where the people worshiped God. *Sanctuary* is only mentioned once in this chapter, but it will appear more later. Remember the sanctuary is the temple built by King Solomon, the son of David the second king of Israel. This is where they were to turn to and pray when they were in distress because of their sins (2 Chronicles 6–7).
  - c. every occurrence of *transgression(s)*, \* *sinned*, *rebelled*, and *evildoing*.
3. Now, let's see what we can learn from the references to the Lord that we marked in Lamentations 1. Read all the instructions before you begin so you don't duplicate your work.
  - a. What does Jerusalem want the Lord to do and why? List your insights.



- b. What did the Lord do to Jerusalem? Does the text tell you why? If so, note it.
- c. What does this chapter tell you about the Lord—His person and ways? List your observations.
4. If you have the tools, look up the Hebrew words translated *transgression* and *sinned*. Record them below along with their meanings.
- a. transgression
- b. sinned



5. According to what you have observed in Lamentations 1,
  - a. when we sin (transgress)—who is it against? Who suffers?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What do you think the first three lines of Lamentations 1:9 mean?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. Now for application, when you make a choice, do you stop and consider the consequences of that choice? Would this change some of the decisions you made in the past? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. After you finish this course on Lamentations, you might consider leading someone through the 40-Minute Study on *How to Make Choices You Won't Regret*.<sup>1</sup>

## DAY THREE

**“She took no thought of her future; therefore her fall is terrible. . .”**

Life is serious and choices bring consequences—grave consequences when those choices willfully go against the Word of God.

So many times when we sow to the wind and reap the whirlwind, our first response is usually “justification” for our actions, something like

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<sup>1</sup> Kay Arthur, David Lawson, B.J. Lawson, *How to Make Choices You Won't Regret* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2003).



*“But I didn’t know, I didn’t realize.  
If I had known it was going to turn out this way, then . . . ”*

Then, of course, we say we would have done differently had we known. But now it is too late!!!

Did Jerusalem know they would end up in this horrific state?

Surely as you pored over Lamentations 1, you began to sense the awful, awful far-reaching consequences of Jerusalem’s rebellion “against His word” and the pain, weeping, and desolation that followed (1:18). Did they have any idea that they, the nation formed and chosen by God, were going to be in such “affliction and wandering” (1:7), asking those who pass by to see “if there is any sorrow like my sorrow” (1:12)?

Was what happened to Judah and Jerusalem something totally unexpected? Although those of you who have been studying with us from Genesis right up to this point know the answer, others might not know. So let’s take today to explore the Scriptures and see what they were taught. For those of you who already know, remember, review is good.

1. We will begin with Deuteronomy, the fifth book of the Torah, the Law. Read Deuteronomy 28:1–29:1. As you read, simply look for the blessings and the curses. Then answer the questions below. Short answers are fine. Detail is not necessary.
  - a. What brought the blessings?
  - b. What brought the curses?
  - c. Have you seen any of the curses mentioned in Deuteronomy also mentioned in Lamentations 1?



- d. Did God make the conditions and the consequences clear?
2. Now read Deuteronomy 29:22-29. What message is to be given to those who inquire of the ruined state of the land God gave by covenant to His people, beginning with Abraham, and confirmed to Isaac and then to Jacob and then to the twelve sons (tribes) of Israel? Remember God changed Jacob's name to Israel.
3. What about successive generations? Did they know about the blessings and the curses? Read Deuteronomy 31:9-13 and write out what the Word of God tells you. Get down the main points of this passage.
4. Jeremiah began his ministry as a prophet in the thirteenth year of King Josiah. In the eighteenth year of Josiah, while repairing the temple, they found the Torah, the book of the Law, which had been lost in the house, the temple of God. Josiah was twenty-six years old and had a heart for God, but he had not heard the Word of God until then. When the Law was read to him, Josiah wept, tore his clothes and humbled himself before God (2 Kings 22:10-19).  
Read 2 Kings 23:1-3 for a synopsis of what happened. Write down what the king and the people did as a result of hearing the Word of God.





6. And what will happen to Babylon and to the nations?
  - a. Read Jeremiah 25:12-17, 27-33. What is God going to do?
    - 1) What are the main points of this prayer?
    - 2) Can you see the connection between the last point of the prayer and the verses you just looked at in Jeremiah 25? Write it out.
  - b. Now look at the prayer of Jerusalem in Lamentations 1:20-22.
    - 1) What are the main points of this prayer?
    - 2) Can you see the connection between the last point of the prayer and the verses you just looked at in Jeremiah 25? Write it out.
7. Now read Jeremiah 36:1-8.
  - a. Note the timing. Note the message. Note who delivered it and what God hopes they will do (verse 7).
  - b. Did the people listen to the word of God, turn from their evil way, and pray?



- c. And how does Lamentations 1:20-22 fit into all this? What is its timing with respect to Jeremiah 36:1-8? When did they finally pray? What did they pray that they should have prayed sooner?
- d. What can you apply from this to your life?

*The Word, obedience, and prayer . . . better to intertwine them now in our lives than to not listen, not obey, and then find ourselves lamenting in prayer for forgiveness and rescue from a situation of our own making.*

## DAY FOUR

In the light of the rampant and blatant sin found among those who profess to know Jesus Christ and therefore call themselves Christians, and with respect to the dark cloud of sin hovering over the United States of America, the timing of this study seems to be ordained of God.

There is so much to learn that will help us individually and nationally and will prepare us to help others in the days ahead. Study well, Beloved, even though it is a book of laments. Maybe what we learn will keep us from sin and its awful consequences.

Yes, we live this side of the cross and are partakers of the New Covenant, first so named in the book of Jeremiah, which grants us forgiveness of sins and plants our feet firmly in the grace of God. However, grace is never license to sin with impunity. Sin always carries a personal consequence and with it comes mourning . . . a lament.

By the time we finish this study, Beloved, you will not only have learned much about dealing with the incredible sorrow that follows sin, you will also be prepared to share and apply its precepts in these times of unprecedented pain among those who live in blatant disregard of God.









b. Psalm 62:5-8

c. Psalm 142

6. What is the cry, the prayer to the Lord in Lamentations 2? What does this say to you?

7. Now that you have a taste of Lamentations 1 and 2, it seems a good time to explain how the book of Lamentations is laid out. There are insights into the composition and structure of this book that you could only get through an understanding of the Hebrew language. Therefore, since biblical Hebrew is not the language of most of us, we want to share with you what we have learned from others about the structure of the lamentations.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Frank E. Gaebelien, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 6, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishers, 1990), pp. 697-698. Charles R. Swindoll, *Lamentations of Jeremiah (Bible Study Guide)* (Fullerton, California: Insight for Living, 1986), pp. 10-11. Irving L. Jensen, *Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1978), pp. 352-53.



**First, Lamentations is poetic literature.**

- Lamentations is found in the last section of the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Bible (our Old Testament) is divided into three segments: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The last section of the Writings (containing Lamentations) is the Megilloth, which is comprised of five Old Testament books read publically on Jewish holidays.
- Lamentations is read on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av, which commemorates the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C. and A.D. 70.

Although there are different poetic styles and devices in the book, there is a specific cadence heard in the reading of the poetry that conveys the mood of its words, a mood you will quickly sense as you observe the text.

**Second, Lamentations consists of five different lamentations.**

- The title of Lamentations is taken from the book's first word, *'ēkāh*. This word may be translated "Alas!" or "How" and was a characteristic cry of lament or exclamation (cf. 2 Sam. 1:19; Jer. 9:19).<sup>3</sup>
- Except for Lamentations 5 each chapter is an acrostic. An acrostic uses the letters in a composition to spell a word or phrase, or, as in the case of Lamentations, it lays out the Hebrew alphabet in order.
- The Hebrew alphabet has twenty-two letters. Three of the lamentations—chapters 1, 2, and 4—consist of twenty-two verses. Each of these verses begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Chapters 1 and 2 have three-line stanzas while chapter 4 has only two-line stanzas.
- Lamentations 3 has sixty-six verses—three times twenty-two. It's the crescendo of the book both in layout and in content. Each of the three lines in every stanza begins with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet from *aleph* to *tau* (A to Z in the English alphabet)! [Because of the length of Lamentations 3, we will devote one week to its study.]
- And what about chapter 5? It's *not* an acrostic of the Hebrew alphabet but it does have twenty-two verses so it doesn't break the mold completely!

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<sup>3</sup> J. F. Walvoord, R. B. Zuck, & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (1:1207). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.



8. Finally, Beloved, why don't you write out your own lament for your nation. It does not need to be in poetic form. It can be a prayer. Or, if words are not your thing, what about a sketch or a composite of pictures or articles that show the state of affairs or your concerns about the nation in which you live? Or it might even be a letter to the editor.

*As a point of discipleship, remember we live in a culture that is quick to accuse anyone of judging if they feel scrutinized. So much so in fact that even the church is often afraid to talk about sin. Yet 1 Corinthians 5:6 says, “. . . Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” As members of the body of Christ, we have a calling to preach Christ crucified to those outside the church, but we must confront sin within it so that it does not spread (like leaven). Hold each other accountable, have hard conversations when necessary, and praise God that you have brothers and sisters who love enough to confront with truth!*



# LAMENTATIONS 1

## Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme \_\_\_\_\_

HOW lonely sits the city

that was full of people!

How like a widow has she become,

she who was great among the nations!

She who was a princess among the provinces

has become a slave.

2 She weeps bitterly in the night,

with tears on her cheeks;

among all her lovers

she has none to comfort her;

all her friends have dealt treacherously with her;

they have become her enemies.

3 Judah has gone into exile because of affliction

and hard servitude;

she dwells now among the nations,

but finds no resting place;

her pursuers have all overtaken her

in the midst of her distress.

4 The roads to Zion mourn,

for none come to the festival;

all her gates are desolate;

her priests groan;

her virgins have been afflicted,

and she herself suffers bitterly.



- 5 Her foes have become the head;  
her enemies prosper,  
because the LORD has afflicted her  
for the multitude of her transgressions;  
her children have gone away,  
captives before the foe.
- 6 From the daughter of Zion  
all her majesty has departed.  
Her princes have become like deer  
that find no pasture;  
they fled without strength  
before the pursuer.
- 7 Jerusalem remembers  
in the days of her affliction and wandering  
all the precious things  
that were hers from days of old.  
When her people fell into the hand of the foe,  
and there was none to help her,  
her foes gloated over her;  
they mocked at her downfall.
- 8 Jerusalem sinned grievously;  
therefore she became filthy;  
all who honored her despise her,  
for they have seen her nakedness;  
she herself groans  
and turns her face away.
- 9 Her uncleanness was in her skirts;  
she took no thought of her future;  
therefore her fall is terrible;  
she has no comforter.



- “O LORD, behold my affliction,  
for the enemy has triumphed!”
- 10 The enemy has stretched out his hands  
over all her precious things;  
for she has seen the nations  
enter her sanctuary,  
those whom you forbade  
to enter your congregation.
- 11 All her people groan  
as they search for bread;  
they trade their treasures for food  
to revive their strength.  
“Look, O LORD, and see,  
for I am despised.”
- 12 “Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?  
Look and see  
if there is any sorrow like my sorrow,  
which was brought upon me,  
which the LORD inflicted  
on the day of his fierce anger.
- 13 “From on high he sent fire;  
into my bones he made it descend;  
he spread a net for my feet;  
he turned me back;  
he has left me stunned,  
faint all the day long.
- 14 “My transgressions were bound into a yoke;  
by his hand they were fastened together;  
they were set upon my neck;



he caused my strength to fail;  
the Lord gave me into the hands  
of those whom I cannot withstand.

15 “The Lord rejected  
all my mighty men in my midst;  
he summoned an assembly against me  
to crush my young men;  
the Lord has trodden as in a winepress  
the virgin daughter of Judah.

16 “For these things I weep;  
my eyes flow with tears;  
for a comforter is far from me,  
one to revive my spirit;  
my children are desolate,  
for the enemy has prevailed.”

17 Zion stretches out her hands,  
but there is none to comfort her;  
the LORD has commanded against Jacob  
that his neighbors should be his foes;  
Jerusalem has become  
a filthy thing among them.

18 “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.

19 “I called to my lovers,  
but they deceived me;  
my priests and elders



perished in the city,  
while they sought food  
to revive their strength.

20 “Look, O LORD, for I am in distress;  
my stomach churns;  
my heart is wrung within me,  
because I have been very rebellious.  
In the street the sword bereaves;  
in the house it is like death.

21 “They heard my groaning,  
yet there is no one to comfort me.  
All my enemies have heard of my trouble;  
they are glad that you have done it.  
You have brought the day you announced;  
now let them be as I am.

22 “Let all their evildoing come before you,  
and deal with them  
as you have dealt with me  
because of all my transgressions;  
for my groans are many,  
and my heart is faint.”





## LAMENTATIONS 2

### Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme \_\_\_\_\_

- HOW the Lord in his anger  
has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud!  
He has cast down from heaven to earth  
the splendor of Israel;  
he has not remembered his footstool  
in the day of his anger.
- 2 The Lord has swallowed up without mercy  
all the habitations of Jacob;  
in his wrath he has broken down  
the strongholds of the daughter of Judah;  
he has brought down to the ground in dishonor  
the kingdom and its rulers.
- 3 He has cut down in fierce anger  
all the might of Israel;  
he has withdrawn from them his right hand  
in the face of the enemy;  
he has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob,  
consuming all around.
- 4 He has bent his bow like an enemy,  
with his right hand set like a foe;  
and he has killed all who were delightful in our eyes  
in the tent of the daughter of Zion;  
he has poured out his fury like fire.



- 5 The Lord has become like an enemy;  
he has swallowed up Israel;  
he has swallowed up all its palaces;  
he has laid in ruins its strongholds,  
and he has multiplied in the daughter of Judah  
mourning and lamentation.
- 6 He has laid waste his booth like a garden,  
laid in ruins his meeting place;  
the LORD has made Zion forget  
festival and Sabbath,  
and in his fierce indignation has spurned king and priest.
- 7 The Lord has scorned his altar,  
disowned his sanctuary;  
he has delivered into the hand of the enemy  
the walls of her palaces;  
they raised a clamor in the house of the LORD  
as on the day of festival.
- 8 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 rampart and wall to lament;  
they languished together.
- 9 Her gates have sunk into the ground;  
he has ruined and broken her bars;  
her king and princes are among the nations;  
the law is no more,  
and her prophets find  
no vision from the LORD.



- 10 The elders of the daughter of Zion  
sit on the ground in silence;  
they have thrown dust on their heads  
and put on sackcloth;  
the young women of Jerusalem  
have bowed their heads to the ground.
- 11 My eyes are spent with weeping;  
my stomach churns;  
my bile is poured out to the ground  
because of the destruction of the daughter of my people,  
because infants and babies faint  
in the streets of the city.
- 12 They cry to their mothers,  
“Where is bread and wine?”  
as they faint like a wounded man  
in the streets of the city,  
as their life is poured out  
on their mothers’ bosom.
- 13 What can I say for you, to what compare you,  
O daughter of Jerusalem?  
What can I liken to you, that I may comfort you,  
O virgin daughter of Zion?  
For your ruin is vast as the sea;  
who can heal you?
- 14 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.



- 15 All who pass along the way  
clap their hands at you;  
they hiss and wag their heads  
at the daughter of Jerusalem:  
“Is this the city that was called  
the perfection of beauty,  
the joy of all the earth?”
- 16 All your enemies  
rail against you;  
they hiss, they gnash their teeth,  
they cry: “We have swallowed her!  
Ah, this is the day we longed for;  
now we have it; we see it!”
- 17 The LORD has done what he purposed;  
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.
- 18 Their heart cried to the Lord.  
O wall of the daughter of Zion,  
let tears stream down like a torrent  
day and night!  
Give yourself no rest,  
your eyes no respite!
- 19 “Arise, cry out in the night,  
at the beginning of the night watches!  
Pour out your heart like water  
before the presence of the Lord!



Lift your hands to him  
for the lives of your children,  
who faint for hunger  
at the head of every street.”

- 20 Look, O LORD, and see!  
With whom have you dealt thus?  
Should women eat the fruit of their womb,  
the children of their tender care?  
Should priest and prophet be killed  
in the sanctuary of the Lord?
- 21 In the dust of the streets  
lie the young and the old;  
my young women and my young men  
have fallen by the sword;  
you have killed them in the day of your anger,  
slaughtering without pity.
- 22 You summoned as if to a festival day  
my terrors on every side,  
and on the day of the anger of the LORD  
no one escaped or survived;  
those whom I held and raised  
my enemy destroyed.

