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Lessons from the Book of the Lamentations of Jeremiah

By Ken Raggio

Jeremiah - The Weeping Prophet

No one but a true man of God can comprehend the bitterness of failing to win the souls of a people. For twenty-five years, Jeremiah stood in the courts of the temple and the streets of Jerusalem, begging the people to get right with God. But they utterly rejected his ministry. Over and over again, Jeremiah cried, "She has no one to comfort her!"

Lamentations 1:16 - "For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed."

Praying Too Late

Thousands of Jerusalem residents woke up captive in Babylon and realized that everything Jeremiah had prophesied was coming to pass. Jerusalem was desolate, the people wept sorely in the night, and there were none to comfort them. They knew their adversary had prevailed because of their iniquities. Their prayers were short-winded, almost breathless. It was too late to pray. Seventy years of captivity were divinely determined.

Lamentations 1:9,11,20 - "O LORD, behold my affliction: for the enemy hath magnified himself. ...see, O LORD, and consider; for I am become vile. ...Behold, O LORD; for I am in distress."

God's Footstool - The Place Of His Feet

David said the earth is God's footstool. Specifically, God wanted to plant His

feet in Jerusalem. In Ezekiel, God called the coming millennial temple, "the place of the soles of my feet." Isaiah prophesied that God would beautify the place of His sanctuary, "and I will make the place of my feet glorious." No wonder Jeremiah was so distraught that God had removed his feet from His footstool in Jerusalem.

Lamentations 2:1 - "How hath the Lord ...cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger."

Let Tears Run Down Like A River Day And Night

Jeremiah was flooded with unbearable sorrow after the Babylonians finished destroying Jerusalem and Judah. His "Lamentations" articulated the profound grief that all the captives were experiencing. Nothing provokes a Niagara of prayer like a devastating calamity. Don't wait until tragedy strikes to pray.

Lamentations 2:18-19 - "Their heart cried unto the Lord, ...let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease. Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord."

Prayer Warriors Never Stop Praying

For twenty-five years, Jeremiah stood in the gap for Judah; preaching, praying and prophesying. The people resisted every effort to save them from destruction. But even in defeat, after desolation came, and their souls were oppressed by their captors, Jeremiah never stopped pleading with God. Prayer warriors never stop praying.

Lamentations 2:20-22 - "Behold, O LORD, and consider to whom thou hast done this. ...shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord? The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets: ...thou hast slain them in the day of thine anger."

Sorrow Has Many Metaphors

Jeremiah used just about every metaphor and allegory he could think of to describe his anguish at failing to convert Judah and avert their overthrow. His sorrow was overwhelming. "I am the man that has seen affliction..."

Lamentations 3:1-16 - "...the rod of His wrath, ...dark places ...His hand against me ...my flesh and skin made old ...broken my bones ...gall and travail ...hedged me about ...my chain heavy ...He as a bear lying in wait ...as a lion in secret places ...bent His bow ...made me drunken with wormwood ...broken my teeth with stones ...covered me with ashes."

Hope Is Confidence In An Unseen Portion

I was a young preacher preparing a sermon on "Faith, Hope, and Love," and searching for a meaningful biblical definition of hope. I found Jeremiah saying, "The LORD is my portion, ...therefore will I hope in him." Everything Jeremiah could see had failed. Jerusalem was destroyed. His people were captives in Babylon. Then Jeremiah remembered that he still had an unseen portion. I discovered that you need never lose hope. God is always there.

Lamentations 3:21 - "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. ...The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him."

Let Us Lift Up Our Hands Unto God In The Heavens

Jeremiah rehearsed thirty-two lamentations; things that grieved and distressed him while in captivity. Suddenly, he interjected, "Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God..." It is as if Jeremiah knew that he could plug into God's power source and be renewed. If he would reach up to God, he knew God would reach down to him. God said that if we would seek Him, we would find Him!

Lamentations 3:41,50 - "Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens. ...Till the LORD look down, and behold from heaven."

Tell God You Remember His Great Deliverance

It is easy to forget how great the trials God delivered us from. But in captivity, Jeremiah remembered terrifying days in Jerusalem when God saved his life. He blessed the LORD.

Lamentations 3:52-55,57 - "Mine enemies chased me sore, like a bird, without cause. They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me. Waters flowed over mine head; then I said, I am cut off. I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon. ... Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not."

Praying For Obvious Results

When Jeremiah surveyed the devastating, tragic consequences of Judah's rebellion, he prayed that God would deal harshly with those who fought so hard against his prophetic warnings. God certainly would have anyway.

Lamentations 3:60-61,64-66 - "Thou hast seen all their vengeance and all their imaginations against me. Thou hast heard their reproach, O LORD, and all their imaginations against me; ...Render unto them a recompence, O LORD, according to the work of their hands. Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them. Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the LORD."

He Hath Abhorred His Sanctuary

From the day God's glory first appeared in Solomon's temple, God had warned Israel: "If ye shall at all turn from following me, ...Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight." Jeremiah lived to see that day come. "He hath violently taken away his tabernacle, ...The Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary.

Lamentations 4:1 - "...the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street."

Judah Commits Cannibalism

"The precious sons of Zion," once like fine gold, became "as earthen pitchers." Their Nazarites, who had been "purer than snow" became "blacker than a coal." But that was nothing compared to their ultimate sins. Moses prophesied in his day that if Israel forsook the LORD, "Ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat," Leviticus 26:29. It happened in Jeremiah's day. Cannibalism!

Lamentations 4:10 - "The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own

children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people."

Keep On Praying, Even Under Divine Affliction

"Remember, O LORD, what is come upon us: ...our inheritance is turned to strangers, ...We are orphans and fatherless, ...Our necks are under persecution: ...Servants have ruled over us, ...they ravished the women in Zion, ...Princes are hanged up by their hand: ...They took the young men to grind, ...The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning. ...woe unto us, ...we have sinned!" Keep on praying!

Lamentations 5:21-22 - "Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, ...renew our days as of old. But thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us."

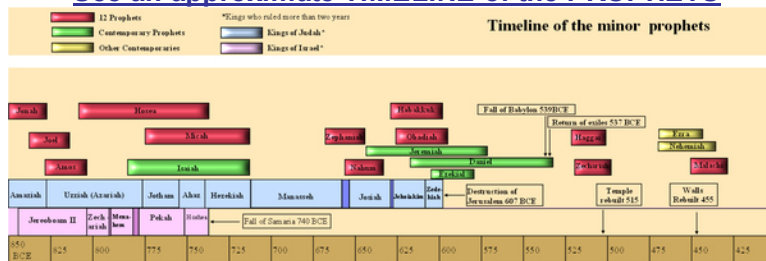
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