

THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

OT/NT: Old Testament

SECTION: Major Prophets (3 of 5)

TRADITIONAL AUTHOR: Jeremiah

KEY PEOPLE: Jeremiah and the People of Jerusalem.

SUMMARY Canonically, Lamentations is the twenty-fifth book of the [Holy Bible](#) (1), the twenty-fifth book of the [Old Testament](#) (2), and third of the five [Major Prophets](#) books (3). While we do not have internal proof that the Lamentations were written by Jeremiah, rabbinic tradition, the parallel themes in [Jeremiah](#) (4) and Lamentations, and the eyewitness character of the laments point to Jeremiah as the likely author of these five poems of lament.

Judah and its capital, Jerusalem, have been totally destroyed. After a two-year siege, the Babylonians have captured the city, torn down its walls, looted and destroyed God's Temple, taking the able-bodied citizens into exile in Babylon. Jeremiah is among the few survivors left in the land, living among those who had clung to life through the famine and watched starving children die, as false prophets continued to mislead the people about God's purposes. The book of Lamentations captures the desolation of the city and the despair of the people at the same time that it underscores the reason for this desolation.

Here we see the poet at work. In five tightly structured poems, he uses powerful images of the carnage in the city as God allows the punishment of His people for their vicious sins. But in spite of the emotional depth of his grief, the artist captures the devastation in a controlled poetic form. This is art in the service of emotional release. While a discussion of "work" doesn't often include the work of artists, these poems force us to acknowledge the power of art to encapsulate the highs and lows of human experience.

In the destruction of Jerusalem, the innocent suffered alongside the guilty. Children starved and faithful prophets like Jeremiah bore the same misery meted out to those whose sins brought an end to the city. This is the reality of life in a fallen world. When corporations collapse under the weight of bad decisions, gross negligence or outright illegal practices, innocent people lose their jobs and pensions along with those who caused the debacle. At the same time, for the Christian in the workplace, the inequities in this life are not eternal. God reigns and His compassion never fails ([Lamentations 3:22](#)). It's not easy to hang onto that divine reality in the midst of sinful systems and unprincipled leaders. But Lamentations tells us, "The Lord will not reject forever" ([Lamentations 3:31](#)). We walk by faith in the living God, whose faithfulness to us will not fail.

COMING UP: Next up is the Book of Ezekiel (5). Click [HERE](#) to explore!

FOOTNOTES:

- (1) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/the-good-news>
- (2) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/old-testament>
- (3) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/ot-major-prophets>
- (4) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/jeremiah>
- (5) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/ezekiel>

SOURCES:

- (a) Theology of Work <https://www.theologyofwork.org/old-testament/jeremiah-lamentations/jeremiah-the-poet-at-work-lamentations>

<http://www.downriverdisciples.com/lamentations>