

OCTOBER 29

Lamentations 1-2:19

Happy days are here again....not. This is Jeremiah's lament over Jerusalem after it was destroyed. He refers to what he saw before and during the siege by the Babylonians. I'm not sure how "artsy" Jeremiah and the Spirit wanted to be, but of the five chapters, chapter 3, right in the middle, is a very personal pouring out of Jeremiah's heart. Surprisingly (or not), out of the crying out of chapter 3, we have gotten many good songs.

Lamentations 1

Vs. 1-10 Verse 1 sets the tone for this chapter and this section. It describes the humbling of this once beautiful princess, Jerusalem. This part of the lament is for the city. Notice the references to Zion and Jerusalem, and notice that the city is referred to with feminine pronouns. Just for fun, underline, circle or highlight them.

Vs. 11-22 Jeremiah and the Spirit personalize the crying out of Jerusalem in the first person. The first part of v. 11 explains the situation and transitions between the third person and the first person. Notice the repetition of *I*, *my*, and *me*.

Lamentations 2:1-19

Vs. 1-10 Now notice all of what God did. It wasn't the Babylonians; it was God. If you circle *He* and *His*, you might run out of ink; but it is a good exercise.

V. 6 is ironic in that, because of this judgment, God made Zion forget the festivals and Sabbath, meaning that they couldn't hold them. In reality, they had forgotten these things themselves, and that neglect was part of the reason for their judgment and the downward spiral of their culture.

V. 7 The people never expected God to do this, but He Himself promised this, if their hearts were rebellious and their worship was useless.

Just an aside, unless the ark of the covenant had already been destroyed or hidden, it was probably lost here. It is funny that other items in the temple are mentioned as being taken in Jeremiah 52, but an important item like the ark is not mentioned. Actually, none of the furniture in the Holy Place is mentioned either. It is just assumed that it was taken to Babylon.

V. 9 This mention of the prophets is ironic since Jeremiah was the only true prophet. The others were frauds who lied and strengthened the people's rebellion against God.

Vs. 11-19 Now Jeremiah is writing about his own heartache during this destruction. How many different things can you find in these verses that caused Jeremiah sorrow and anguish? There are at least five.

Vs. 18-19 It was easy to suggest that the people should cry out to the Lord, but the hearts of these people were very sick. Think of the people who took Jeremiah captive to Egypt. In spite of every word of Jeremiah coming true, they still thought that worshiping other gods would help. In one of Ezekiel's visions, we'll see another view of the depth of the corruption of the people's hearts. These people Jeremiah is writing about here were lost, blind and ignorant. It is doubtful that they could call on the Lord.

Like Jeremiah, our job is to faithfully follow the Lord into the harvest. As we present the Word and the love of Christ, He will draw men to Himself. We work to make disciples, who make disciples. It is more than tragic to see people disregard the Lord and lose their souls, but when it comes to that, it is their choice. We work in the hope of reaching and helping those who will reach out to our Lord.

Philemon

This letter was written by Paul, in prison in Rome under house arrest, during the time he wrote Ephesians and Colossians. Philemon was, apparently, a well-to-do Christian in Colossae, who had a church in his house and who had lots of slaves. One of those slaves apparently ran off with some stuff and tried to hide out in Rome. Rome was about 1000 miles from Colossae as the bird flies, and for a slave like Onesimus, probably at least 1500 miles by foot. And then Rome was a city of thousands. What a place to hide. But wouldn't you know it, someone in Rome (maybe Tychicus or Timothy or Luke) recognized him and brought him to Paul. Talk about bad luck. Then wouldn't you know it, it got worse. Paul led him to Christ. Oh, brother. Now, although Onesimus did wrong and fled, in Christ, he had to go back and fess up. Also, although Philemon had the right to punish this slave and even have him put to death, Onesimus was now a brother in Christ. And if that weren't complicated enough, when Philemon looked at Onesimus, he noticed that there was a note pinned to his shirt from Paul.

Vs. 1-3 Philemon was a worker. It is thought that there was a church in his house. It could be that Apphia was his wife and Archippus was his son. Archippus is also mentioned in Colossians 4:17 and may have been a pastor.

Vs. 4-7 It is interesting that Paul was not only moved that Philemon was growing in Christ as a disciple, but it looks like he was a good friend and had been a source of comfort and encouragement for Paul personally.

V. 6 Notice that Paul says that by sharing his faith, Philemon was growing into the fullness of knowing Christ. I really think this is how it is meant to be. If we are not involved in the harvest, we can't grow in really knowing the Savior.

V. 7 Philemon had a ministry to workers in the harvest, strengthening and helping them. His actions were from his evident love for Christ and His people.

Vs. 8-14 Introducing another of Christ's people to love: Onesimus. From v. 13 it seems that Paul would have been happy to have kept Onesimus, but there had to be due process of forgiveness and asking permission. The very fact that Paul is being so diplomatic shows there might have been something going on behind the scenes. It may be that Onesimus stole something when he left or was a real problem to everyone and deserved severe punishment. Paul seems to be going out of his way to defuse a situation that might have gotten the better of Philemon.

Vs. 15-16 Paul adds a little eternal perspective and some sovereignty of God into the equation.

Vs. 17-20 I don't think Paul is being manipulative here, but rather fatherly. It seems that Paul also led Philemon to Christ. It is important for parents to see their children do what is right. Sadly, stuff doesn't always go right in the home or in the church. Paul is guiding him, and again, it seems that Paul was being persuasive because he felt like he needed to be.

Vs. 21-22 This sounds a little like Philippians, where Paul had a feeling he would be released soon.

You just finished another book of the Bible!

It is kind of comical to think of Onesimus trying to escape from Philemon and slavery, and hiding in the super city of Rome. He had the "bad luck" of running into the hands of God. It is hard to escape from the long arm of the Lord.

Psalm 101

If I were a guessing man, I'd say this was written after David became king of the entire nation and just after he brought the ark of the covenant into the city of David. David's confidence and purity of heart seem to be "pre-Bathsheba." David seems to be saying that because of his confidence in God's *steadfast love*, he can be firm with those who are sinful and perverse. It

might get him in trouble to be just, but his hope was in God. He knows that the *steadfast love* of the Lord will pull him through all the anger of men associated with this stand he is taking.

V. 1 What an interesting combination - *steadfast love and justice*. David learned both of these as he ran from Saul and waited on the Lord for the Lord's justice and vindication. In spite of all the hatred and warfare aimed at David, God fulfilled the promise of bringing David to the throne.

V. 2 This is the next part of the declaration of this psalm. It is hard to know if David is saying *you* to God or to the blameless way. David knew it was important to meditate on God and to keep himself pure before God. David wanted this to be true of those in his house.

Vs. 3-5 David was resolved to keep the dishonest and evil away from him.

V. 6 In contrast to the evil and faithless, David would protect the faithful in the land.

Vs. 7-8 We don't hear of David judging Israel, other than from his throne when people were brought before him. He never led wars against the wicked in Israel. During the time of the judges and the time of King Saul, lawlessness was allowed to grow. These wicked people were lawless and robbing and harming others. David would bring justice and order to the land. This need for justice is how these verses should be understood. Notice that David's desire was also to keep evil out of the city of the Lord.

Reading David's desires here, but knowing David's life, brings sad thoughts. Knowing what happened in the book of Jeremiah brings sad thoughts too. For us as disciples, knowing all of this should humble us and make us grow close to the Lord as we work in the harvest.

Proverbs 26:20

Think of this proverb in terms of what you just read in Psalm 101. Interesting connections.