

## OCTOBER 31

### Lamentations 4-5

Alas, it is our last day in Lamentations. Rejoice!

#### Lamentations 4

Vs. 1-10 Jeremiah describes the change in people and the city because of the devastation of judgment. What is interesting, especially in terms of the treatment of the children, is that the people had already changed. The people had either been offering their kids in sacrifice or were accepting of the practice. The destruction and desperation of judgment just revealed the heart beneath the civilized veneer.

Vs. 11-20 In this section we see that the punishment of the people and the success of the enemy was under the Lord's direction.

V. 13 Notice that the prophets and priests, who should have led the people, shed the blood of the righteous in the city, in its gates. This means that the people they killed were the people who stood against their sin. Although this was done by the leaders, the people approved.

V. 14 Jesus said it. When the blind lead the blind, both fall into a pit.

V. 17 This is the watching of those who had not loved or followed God. Actually, they were looking first to Egypt to help them. When Egypt didn't work, God was the backup plan. People get religious when there is a threat and they have no more resources, but they have no understanding of God either. To suddenly get religious doesn't fool God. They were so used to worshipping Baal and every other god they thought they could hold on to, but thought they could reach out to Yahweh at the same time.

V. 20 This is referring to King Zedekiah. You don't put your hope in men, particularly ungodly ones.

Vs. 21-22 We mentioned this before and will see it again. Edom was judged for their excessive joy in the destruction of Zion and was also taken into captivity. Israel returned and was restored. Edom never again became an established nation.

#### Lamentations 5

This chapter is different from the others, although it doesn't appear so in the ESV. It is written, not as a "poem," but as a prayer.

Vs. 1-18 This is an appeal to God to look and have compassion. Notice that Jeremiah says everything in the first person plural. He is praying on behalf of God's people.

Vs. 11-12 Although Babylon was guided to punish Judah, and although Nebuchadnezzar, I believe, understood that God wanted him to do this, the violence was excessive. God never is happy about this. Another example of excessive violence by a God-ordained man was Jehu. (2 Chron. 22:8, Hos. 1:4) The Babylonians overstepped their bounds also by taking young children by the hand and swinging and smashing them against buildings and rocks. In judgment, God said to Babylon in Psalm 137:9, *Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!*

Vs. 19-20 Another appeal to God.

Vs. 21-22 The final appeal. At this point, it looked like the nation was lost forever and the death and destruction would have intensified that feeling. But there were the promises to Adam and Eve, and to Abraham and to David. There were the promises of salvation and national restoration

in the book of Isaiah and in The Psalms. Notice that this plea for restoration was not to happiness or prosperity, but to God Himself. This will be fulfilled in the coming of their Messiah.

## Hebrews 2

In reading this section, notice that it still sounds sermonic. Also, notice how the author is using the OT. He had a great understanding of the OT and how it spoke about Jesus.

V. 1 This is a warning, one of about five in the entire book. The author is summarizing everything he has just said about Jesus and God speaking through Him. The message is that if you don't regard the importance of the message and the Messenger, you will drift away. In a way, if you wanted to get picky, it is saying that the message and the Messenger are so important, that if you focus your faith and practice on anything else as the primary focus and essential object of faith, you are in danger of drifting away. I know we tend to look at people who are in obvious error and agree that they have gotten lost. However, I wonder if focusing on the Christian culture, its music and meetings, isn't a log in our eye. I just read a report from people who had visited the underground church in China. Those disciples are doing far more with far less in their harvest fields than we in the West are doing in ours. It seems that the message and the Messenger are their only focus and it burns in their hearts. To be a believer in China means you are a disciple. In the West, being a "believer" can mean a lot of things and exclude any need to follow Christ in the harvest. People can get lost in their Christian culture and drift away.

Vs. 2-4 Do you get the argument here? If those who were following the law took the message seriously that had been delivered by angels, they had better take seriously this message delivered by the Son. Point: don't go back into the law.

Vs. 5-9 Some Jews believed that at the end of the age, the world would be subjected to the good spiritual armies, Michael and his merry angels. The author shoots this idea to pieces. Everything will be subjected to Jesus. While Jesus is fully God, He is also fully man, bone of our bone, the Son of Man. He is the only human capable of righteously ruling the earth and judging both mankind and the angels who were to have served mankind.

V. 9 The full subjection will come yet. Wait for it. For Jesus came first to be a sacrifice for sin.

It could be that some were using the argument that now since Jesus came, things had become no better than they were before in world affairs. Surely God would have changed the political world. Right? The Jews never understood that He needed to die for sin first. Even Jesus' disciples missed that. *And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"* (Luke 24:25-26)

Vs. 10-18 In order for Jesus to *taste death* for everyone, He had to be immersed into the entire human experience. Jesus had to be subject to the same lost world and gravity and temptation as everyone else.

V. 16 Notice that argument about angels again. The mention of Abraham refers to the redemptive promise to Abraham and to those who are saved by faith, à la Romans 4.

V. 17 Jesus had the actual experience so that He could be a high priest to us, with full understanding of what it meant to be a human. The flip side is that no one will be able to say to Him, "How would you know what it felt like? You're God."

V. 18 I've heard people expound on this temptation and how Jesus felt all temptations far deeper because He was perfect. I've never really understood all of that. But there is a very real point here that this audience might have understood. They were being frightened and pressured to return to Judaism. Jesus was under constant pressure to do the same. Because He healed on the Sabbath,

the Jewish leaders hated Him. (John 5:16-18) He didn't live according to the tradition of the elders (Luke 11:38), so they despised and shunned Him. Jesus definitely knew what it was like to be hated and cast out because of not adhering to the traditions of men regarding the law.

As disciples, following Christ in the harvest means that we might upset the local culture too, even the Christian culture. There will always be a pressure to be quieter and more harmless, so that others can feel more comfortable and secure in their way of life.

### **Psalm 103**

Remember David? Doesn't it seem like a long time since we've heard him crying out? But remember that David's life was not very easy. And then, he himself complicated it, destroying most of his family, and alienating many of his friends. Still, David was a great man because unlike so many of the kings after him, when he was humbled, he still loved God with all his heart. Here he is telling Israel to *bless the Lord*. Regardless of the challenges in our lives, following Christ in the harvest means we learn to bless the Lord in all circumstances.

Vs. 1-5 What a beautiful way to say so much with a few words. Knowing David's life and how he learned this, I wonder if he wrote this in his later years, looking back.

Vs. 6-12 I'm impressed by the mentions of God's *steadfast love* in combination with the mentions of God's anger and removing of sin. This must have meant a lot to David in those later years. David, his family, and friends suffered much as a result of his own sin. Yet God used David as an example of His mercy and grace.

Vs. 13-14 This isn't just poetry coming from David. It is his understanding of God's deep love and compassion.

Vs. 15-19 And here are the reflective thoughts of a godly man, pulled from the fire and restored by the grace of God. After all the treachery and instability he had known among those who ruled Israel and through all the trouble that he, himself, had created, David knew that it was the Lord who was in control.

Vs. 20-22 Not only does God rule over the nations, but even the spiritual world is called upon to give Him praise. Notice that the angels are addressed in different ways. Notice also that the psalm comes full circle as David repeats v. 1 to conclude this song of praise.

### **Proverbs 26:23**

You get it, right? The glaze hides what is underneath. This would be like putting whipped cream on a cow pie. In what context do you think of the word *fervent*? Yeah, me too. It reminds me of some of the fervent insincerity I have seen in religious settings where people are practical strangers to the Word and are not following Christ in the harvest, reaching the lost and making disciples, who make disciples, but they "love" Jesus and a good worship service.