

“DISCOVERING THE UNREAD BESTSELLER”

Week 23: Sunday, April 29, 2012

LAMENTATIONS – “WHERE IS GOD WHEN IT HURTS SO MUCH?”

“What Jerusalem’s fall meant to the Jews of the OT is hard for us to imagine. To them, it was the loss of everything; their Temple, priesthood, sacrificial system, capital city, nation and in most cases, large numbers of their loved ones. For the survivors of the destruction, it meant a forced march of about 3,200 kilometres (2,000 miles) to Babylon where they then had to live in exile, servitude and misery. The Book of Lamentations was written to “bewail” those awful facts”

TITLE AND AUTHOR

_____ authorship has never been questioned, particularly when one considers the similarities with the larger book just before it. In fact, the Septuagint actually names _____ as the author and introduces the Book by saying –

“_____ sat weeping and lamented with his lamentation over Jerusalem and said.....”

In the Hebrew Bible, the title is “Okeh” which means, “_____” or “How _____ It Is”. All-in-all, the Book of Lamentations is an _____ account of the prophecies of Jeremiah coming to fulfillment. Given that the city of Jerusalem is captured and destroyed in _____ BC, it is probable that the Book was written like a daily journal recorded on the battlefield; even though the siege of the city took about _____ months. In Irving Jenson’s survey of the Old Testament, he writes –

“Knowing from his prophecies how Jeremiah wept over his people before judgment fell it is not difficult for us to imagine the depths to which his soul sank in utter grief as he watched the holy city burning and his people being ravished. Lamentations reveals something of the pathos of that experience”

SNAPSHOT

The Book of Lamentations is written entirely in _____ form. While Hebrew poetry doesn’t as a rule involve _____, it does involve _____. The second and third lines will often repeat the thought of the first using different words. The first four _____ (funeral songs/poems) are written in an _____ form, meaning that each verse begins with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Chapters 1, 2 and 4 each have _____ verses, one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet; whereas Chapter 3 contains 66 verses thereby using 3 verses assigned to each Hebrew letter. Lamentations 5 goes back to using 22 verses, but isn’t structured using an acrostic pattern. All-in-all, the songs are composed using a special arrangement suitable for _____.

There are a couple of suggested reasons for using the acrostic pattern: (1) the first being to help people _____ the verses when the hymns were _____ sung or recited and (2) to perhaps give a sense of _____ to the _____ of the people (from A to Z), essentially expressing all that one can say. The five chapters can be broken down into the following themes –

- Chapter 1 – _____ and _____ at Rock Bottom – (and it’s interesting here to see Jerusalem - “personified”);
- Chapter 2 – Questioning God’s _____ – (God’s _____);
- Chapter 3 – Hanging By a _____ of _____ – (a suffering prophet);
- Chapter 4 – The _____ of _____ It All – (Jerusalem); and,
- Chapter 5 – Begging for _____ and _____

THE PURPOSE OF LAMENTATIONS IN THE BIBLE

In penning the funeral service for his city – three different themes run throughout his laments:

1. A _____ over Jerusalem's holocaust on behalf of himself, the people and the city;
2. A _____ of sin and an acknowledgment of God's _____ authority and holy _____ upon the nation; and,
3. The future entry of God's _____ and _____. Despite bringing forth His wrath, God would be faithful in remembering His _____ - (Read Lamentations 3:22-26)

THE COMMON THREAD OF JESUS

The weeping prophet Jeremiah is a _____ of Christ, the Prophet who would _____ over the very same city some six centuries later – (Read Matthew 23:37-38)

Like the prophet Jeremiah, Jesus identified Himself personally with the _____ of Jerusalem and with human _____ caused by _____. The Book of Lamentations also includes elements that typify Christ's life and ministry as the _____ of _____, as the One who was acquainted with grief. Jeremiah was afflicted, despised and mocked by his enemies, just like Jesus.

LESSONS FROM LAMENTATIONS TO APPLY IN LIFE TODAY

LIFE LESSON 1

The spirit of Lamentations goes beyond _____ the past.

The Book presents an implicit _____:

“To continually _____ means certain _____ and _____ by God”

(Lamentations 5:21-22)

LIFE LESSON 2

Admit your own _____ and take _____ for the ways you have brought _____ to yourself and _____ closest to you

(Lamentations 3:39; 3:40; 3:42a)

LIFE LESSON 3

When at rock bottom, _____.

Even though in deep agony:

Know that God is _____;

Know that God _____;

Know that God is _____; and,

Know that God _____ carry you through.

(Lamentations 3:22-26)