

Author - STEVEN R. DOUGLAS 2017

THE HOLY BIBLE NKJV REFERENCE GUIDE

OLD TESTAMENT

BOOK 25

LAMENTATIONS



Jeremiah lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem by Rembrandt van Rijn

SUMMARY

The Book of Lamentations does not explicitly identify its author. The tradition is that the Prophet Jeremiah wrote Lamentations. This view is highly likely considering the author was a witness of the Babylonians destroying Jerusalem. Jeremiah fits this qualification.

As a result of Judah's continued and unrepentant idolatry, God allowed the Babylonians to besiege, plunder, burn, and destroy the city of Jerusalem. Solomon's Temple, which had stood for approximately 400 years, was burned to the ground. The Prophet Jeremiah, an eyewitness to these events, wrote the Book of Lamentations as a lament for what occurred to Judah and Jerusalem.

The book of Lamentations is book of sorrowful songs or poems. The name implies that the topic is expressing grief over something (to lament). Jeremiah, also known as the "weeping prophet" writes this after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

It was written soon after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.; he was an eyewitness. He predicted this destruction (as did others), watched it take place, and now in this book he is sadly reflecting on it. Key personalities are the prophet Jeremiah and the people of Jerusalem.

Its purpose was to express despair and teach God's people that disobedience to the Lord results in immense suffering and distress. Jeremiah pours out his emotions in compassion, and empathy for God's nation, as he watches them inhabit a foreign land.

- In chapter 1, Jeremiah mourns for Jerusalem and Judea as it lays in ruin by the raid and destruction of Babylon, *"How lonely sits the city that was full of people! She has become like a widow who was once great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces has become a forced laborer!"*.
- Chapter 2, He described the anger of the Lord who brought judgment to the wicked land (as God had warned), *"In fierce anger He has cut off all the strength of Israel; He has drawn back His right hand from before the enemy..."*.
- Chapter 3, we see Jeremiah expressing his troubled spirit and suffering in gloom. He too is afflicted, as his homeland has been pillaged. On the other hand, he reminds us in verses 19-23, that God is faithful and will restore and bring His promise to pass, *"The LORD'S loving-kindness indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail"*.
- Finally, in chapter 4, we read that God has brought justice and ruled mightily. During the siege, the city of Jerusalem suffered incredibly. Starvation was so bad and widespread that the Israelites resorted to eating their own children.

The nation was warned about their sin and disobedience and the penalty of the coming judgment of God, and in verse 11 we read, *"The LORD has accomplished His wrath..."*.

NKJV SELECTED SCRIPTURE

- 3:22** Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.
- 3:23** They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.
- 3:24** The Lord is my portion, says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!
- 3:25** The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, To the soul who seeks Him.
- 3:26** It is good that one should hope and wait quietly For the salvation of the Lord.

CHARACTER Definitions

SIEGE OF JERUSALEM (587 BC) - In 589 BC, Nebuchadnezzar II laid siege to Jerusalem, culminating in the destruction of the city and its temple in the summer of 587 or 586 BC.

Following the siege of 597 BC, the Neo-Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar installed Zedekiah as tributary king of Judah, at the age of 21. However, Zedekiah revolted against Babylon, and entered into an alliance with Pharaoh Hophra, the king of Egypt.

Nebuchadnezzar responded by invading Judah and began a siege of Jerusalem in December 589 BC. During this siege, the duration of which was either 18 or 30 months, "every worst woe befell the city, which drank the cup of God's fury to the dregs".

In 586 BC, after completion of the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign, Nebuchadnezzar broke through Jerusalem's walls, conquering the city. Zedekiah and his followers attempted to escape but were captured on the plains of Jericho and taken to Riblah.

There, after seeing his sons killed, Zedekiah was blinded, bound, and taken captive to Babylon, where he remained a prisoner until his death.

After the fall of Jerusalem, the Babylonian general, Nebuzaraddan, was sent to complete its destruction. Jerusalem was plundered, and Solomon's Temple was destroyed. Most of the elite were taken into captivity in Babylon.

The city was razed to the ground. Only a few people were permitted to remain to tend to the land. The Jew Gedaliah was made governor of the remnant of Judah, the Yehud Province, with a Chaldean guard stationed at Mizpah.

The Bible reports that, on hearing this news, Jews who had fled to Moab, Ammon, Edom, and in other countries returned to Judah. Gedaliah was assassinated by Ishmael son of Nethaniah two months later, and the population that had remained and those who had returned then fled to Egypt for safety.

In Egypt, they settled in Migdol (it is uncertain where the Bible is referring to here, probably somewhere in the Nile Delta), Tahpanhes, Memphis (called Nopfi), and Pathros (the vicinity of Thebes)

BIBLE TIMELINE

586 BC

Jeremiah's Lamentations

Lamentations 1 - 5

Source	Date	Events
2 Kgs 25:1; Ezek 24:1–2	27 Jan 589 BC	Beginning of final siege.
Jer 34: 8–10	29 Sep 588	Release of Hebrew slaves at beginning of a Sabbatical year.
Jer 34:11–22; 37:5–16	Oct 588 to Apr 587	Babylonians temporarily lift siege due to approach of Egyptian army. Slaves taken back. Jeremiah arrested as he attempts to go to Anathoth.
Jer 34:22; Ezek 30:20–21	29 Apr 587	Egyptians defeated. Siege resumes.
2 Kgs 25:2–4; Jer 39:2, 52:7; Ezek 33:21, 40:1	29 Jul 587	Wall breached. Zedekiah captured.
2 Kgs 25:8	25 Aug 587	Nebuzaradan arrives at Jerusalem (cf. Jonah 3:3) from Riblah in Hamath and begins consultation with commanders in the field regarding the pillaging of the city.
2 Kgs 25:9–19; 2 Chr 36:18–19; Jer 52:12–25	28 Aug 587	Nebuzaradan leads forces into Jerusalem (cf. Jonah 3:4) to pillage, destroy, and burn the city and its temple.

MAP REFERENCES

