



Session 5



A CRY FOR GOD'S HELP

Lamentations

While technically unnamed, few doubt that Jeremiah, an eyewitness to Judah's destruction, is the author of the Book of Lamentations. Jeremiah spent more than 40 years warning Judah of their destruction, and once it came, Jeremiah's heart was broken. One can sense Jeremiah's moment of dread when the events of 586 BC finally occurred and the people of Judah were taken as captives to Babylon and Jerusalem was burned.

The book is written using the literary technique of an acrostic, corresponding to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Ancient Hebrew manuscripts titled this book "How," a word which begins three of the five chapters in the book. The author continually asks "how" as he laments over Judah's current situation.

Jeremiah and some others were spared exile to Babylon. As Jeremiah wandered the city of Jerusalem, he found the town desolate and completely destroyed. At the center of Jeremiah's beloved city sat the smoldering ruins of the temple. Jeremiah compared the city to a widow who once was great, but now sat alone, weeping all through the night. Jeremiah cried because Judah, instead of relying on the salvation that would come through God, relied instead on the nations surrounding it to bring salvation. But then Judah learned that salvation can come only through God.

Because the people had not listened to Jeremiah's warnings and turned to God, God sent the destruction. The walls around the city that once provided protection had been broken down and the people taken away. Jerusalem's destruction was so complete that the walls would not be totally repaired for nearly 150 years.

Despite the desperate situation, Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, had a message of hope. Chapter 3 of Lamentations is Jeremiah's personal diary and is the longest of the 5 chapters. Jeremiah concludes by recognizing that God is in charge, God still loves His people, and God gives hope for the future as He would one day return His people to Jerusalem.