

FAITH SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

August 29th, 2010

God is Real in Real Life

Focal Passage: Lamentations 3:1-66

Context The name of the Book of

Lamentations is translated from the Greek and Latin versions of the Bible. The name of the book in the original Hebrew is translated “how,” which is the first word of the First, Second, and Fourth chapters. How, is a question that is asked and answered throughout this unique book. The author, most likely, Jeremiah, takes on the voice of the people in asking how this great destruction could come to God’s people. The author also gives God’s answer to the how by pinpointing the people’s heinous sin and God’s great mercy in giving them any future hope at all.

The book consists of five laments, all but the third explicitly based on the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans in 587 B.C. and its aftermath. There are no grounds for attributing the more general language of the third to a different background. The vividness of the pictures points clearly to the work of an eyewitness. Though he was conscious of the suffering elsewhere in Judah, he concentrated on the position in Jerusalem.

Ellison, H. L. “Background of Lamentations” In *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*: Volume 6. 695. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, © 1986

Bible in a Year Daily Readings

Aug. 23rd – Aug. 29th, 2010

Aug. 23rd Lamentations 3-5

Aug. 24th Ezekiel 1-4

Aug. 25th Ezekiel 5-8

Aug. 26th Ezekiel 9-12

Aug. 27th Ezekiel 13-15

Aug. 28th Ezekiel 16-17

Aug. 29th Ezekiel 18-20

Highlights of the Week

Ezekiel 1 Ezekiel’s vision of God’s glory

Ezekiel 2-3:15 The call of Ezekiel

Ezekiel 4-5 Siege of Jerusalem Symbolized

Ezekiel 7 God will wipe out Jerusalem

Ezekiel 8 Idolatry in the Temple

Ezekiel 10 The Glory of the Lord Leaves the Temple.

Ezekiel 11:16-25 Promised Return of the People to Israel

Ezekiel 12 The Exile Symbolized

Ezekiel 15 Israel: The Useless Vine

Ezekiel 18 The Soul that Sins will Die

Lamentations 3:1-20

¹ I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. ² He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light; ³ indeed, he has turned his hand against me again and again, all day long. ⁴ He has made my skin and my flesh grow old and has broken my bones. ⁵ He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship. ⁶ He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead. ⁷ He has walled me in so I cannot escape; he has weighed me down with chains. ⁸ Even when I call out or cry for help, he shuts out my prayer.

⁹ He has barred my way with blocks of stone; he has made my paths crooked. ¹⁰ Like a bear lying in wait, like a lion in hiding, ¹¹ he dragged me from the path and mangled me and left me without help. ¹² He drew his bow and made me the target for his arrows. ¹³ He pierced my heart with arrows from his quiver. ¹⁴ I became the laughingstock of all my people; they mock me in song all day long. ¹⁵ He has filled me with bitter herbs and sated me with gall. ¹⁶ He has broken my teeth with gravel; he has trampled me in the dust. ¹⁷ I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. ¹⁸ So I say, "My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the LORD." ¹⁹ I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall.

²⁰ I will remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.

DISCUSSION

- In the writer's understanding who caused all that is going on around him and why?
- How have you personally experienced the Lord's Discipline?
- Look at Hebrews 12:5. How is the Lord's discipline a characteristic of His love?

Lamentations 3:21-39

²¹ Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:

²² Because of the LORD'S great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. ²³ They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ²⁴ I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." ²⁵ The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; ²⁶ it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. ²⁷ It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young. ²⁸ Let him sit alone in silence, for the LORD has laid it on him. ²⁹ Let him bury his face in the dust—there may yet be hope. ³⁰ Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace. ³¹ For men are not cast off by the Lord forever. ³² Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. ³³ For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men. ³⁴ To crush underfoot all prisoners in the land, ³⁵ to deny a man his rights before the Most High, ³⁶ to deprive a man of justice— would not the Lord see such things? ³⁷ Who can speak and have it happen if the Lord has not decreed it? ³⁸ Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come? ³⁹ Why should any living man complain when punished for his sins?

DISCUSSION

- What is the poet's hope based upon?
- In V. 24 what does it mean for the Lord to be one's portion?
- The following is from the Expositor's Commentary and deserves mention and discussion:
- These three verses (25-27) begin with "good" (*tob*). The significance of this word in Hebrew may escape the modern reader. For us it tends to mean that which conforms to our concepts, but in the OT it is above all that which expresses God's will and purpose. Here there is the acceptance of God's time and God's will (v.25), faith expressing itself in quiet hope and the learning of discipline (v.26). There is perhaps too ready a rejection of the variant reading "bear the yoke while he is young."

Ellison, H. L. "B. Consolation and Hope of Grace (3:21-39)" In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*: Volume 6. 720. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, © 1986.

- According to verses 29-32, How should we approach the Lord in times of discipline?

Lamentations 3:40-51

⁴⁰ Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD. ⁴¹ Let us lift up our hearts and our hands to God in heaven, and say: ⁴² "We have sinned and rebelled and you have not forgiven. ⁴³ "You have covered yourself with anger and pursued us; you have slain without pity. ⁴⁴ You have covered yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can get through. ⁴⁵ You have made us scum and refuse among the nations. ⁴⁶ "All our enemies have opened their mouths wide against us. ⁴⁷ We have suffered terror and pitfalls, ruin and destruction." ⁴⁸ Streams of tears flow from my eyes because my people are destroyed. ⁴⁹ My eyes will flow unceasingly, without relief, ⁵⁰ until the LORD looks down from heaven and sees. ⁵¹ What I see brings grief to my soul because of all the women of my city.

DISCUSSION:

- **How do these verses demonstrate repentance?**
- **Why are we so unlikely to tell God what we have done?**
- **Verses 48-51 is the author speaking about the plight of His people. Do we care this much about the sins of our family and neighbors?**
- **How should we respond to their situations caused by their sin?**

Lamentations 3: 52-57

⁵² Those who were my enemies without cause hunted me like a bird. ⁵³ They tried to end my life in a pit and threw stones at me; ⁵⁴ the waters closed over my head, and I thought I was about to be cut off. ⁵⁵ I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit. ⁵⁶ You heard my plea: "Do not close your ears to my cry for relief." ⁵⁷ You came near when I called you, and you said, "Do not fear."

DISCUSSION:

- What was the message of God to the poet in his times of deepest trial?
- How can fear destroy our dependence upon God?
- Rd. 2 Timothy 1:7. What does God replace our fear with?

Lamentations 3: 58-66

⁵⁸ O Lord, you took up my case, you redeemed my life. ⁵⁹ You have seen, O LORD, the wrong done to me. Uphold my cause! ⁶⁰ You have seen the depth of their vengeance, all their plots against me. ⁶¹ O LORD, you have heard their insults, all their plots against me— ⁶² what my enemies whisper and mutter against me all day long. ⁶³ Look at them! Sitting or standing, they mock me in their songs. ⁶⁴ Pay them back what they deserve, O LORD, for what their hands have done. ⁶⁵ Put a veil over their hearts, and may your curse be on them! ⁶⁶ Pursue them in anger and destroy them from under the heavens of the LORD.

DISCUSSION:

- Rd. verse 59. Is your life a cause worthy for the Lord to take up?
- Jeremiah was crying out to the Lord to punish those who had hurt him. How does Romans 12:17-20 tell us to handle our anger towards others?

APPLICATION

God is in supreme control and he loves us enough to get our attention when we stray from Him. In all things he is faithful. A famous hymn is based on Lamentations 3:22-23 we do well to remember the words of the chorus in every situation:

Great is thy Faithfulness, Great is thy faithfulness. Morning by Morning new mercies I see. All I have needed thy hand hath provided, Great is thy Faithfulness Lord unto me