JERUSALEM THE WIDOW

LAMENTATIONS 1:1-22
Jerusalem the Widow

Text:

Lamentations 1:1-22,

1. How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations! She who was queen among the provinces has now become a slave.
2. Bitterly she weeps at night, tears are upon her cheeks. Among all her lovers there is none to comfort her. All her friends have betrayed her; they have become her enemies.
3. After affliction and harsh labor, Judah has gone into exile. She dwells among the nations; she finds no resting place. All who pursue her have overtaken her in the midst of her distress.
4. The roads to Zion mourn, for no one comes to her appointed feasts. All her gateways are desolate, her priests groan, her maidens grieve, and she is in bitter anguish.
5. Her foes have become her masters; her enemies are at ease. The LORD has brought her grief because of her many sins. Her children have gone into exile, captive before the foe.
6. All the splendor has departed from the Daughter of Zion. Her princes are like deer that find no pasture; in weakness they have fled before the pursuer.
7. In the days of her affliction and wandering Jerusalem remembers all the treasures that were hers in days of old. When her people fell into enemy hands, there was no one to help her. Her enemies looked at her and laughed at her destruction.
8. Jerusalem has sinned greatly and so has become unclean. All who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; she herself groans and turns away.
9. Her filthiness clung to her skirts; she did not consider her future. Her fall was astounding; there was none to comfort her. "Look, O LORD, on my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed."
10. The enemy laid hands on all her treasures; she saw pagan nations enter her sanctuary—those you had forbidden to enter your assembly.
11. All her people groan as they search for bread; they barter their treasures for food to keep themselves alive. "Look, O LORD, and consider, for I am despised."
12. "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look around and see. Is any suffering like my suffering that was inflicted on me, that the LORD brought on me in the day of his fierce anger?
13. "From on high he sent fire, sent it down into my bones. He spread a net for my feet and turned me back. He made me desolate, faint all the day long.
14. "My sins have been bound into a yoke; by his hands they were woven together. They have come upon my neck and the Lord has sapped my strength. He has handed me over to those I cannot withstand.
15. "The Lord has rejected all the warriors in my midst; he has summoned an army against me to crush my young men. In his winepress the Lord has trampled the Virgin Daughter of Judah.
16. "This is why I weep and my eyes overflow with tears. No one is near to comfort me, no one to restore my spirit. My children are destitute because the enemy has prevailed."
17. Zion stretches out her hands, but there is no one to comfort her. The LORD has decreed for Jacob that his neighbors become his foes; Jerusalem has become an unclean thing among them.
18. "The LORD is righteous, yet I rebelled against his command. Listen, all you peoples; look upon my suffering. My young men and maidens have gone into exile.
19. "I called to my allies but they betrayed me. My priests and my elders perished in the city while they searched for food to keep themselves alive.
20. "See, O LORD, how distressed I am! I am in torment within, and in my heart I am disturbed, for I have been most rebellious. Outside, the sword bereaves; inside, there is only death.
21. "People have heard my groaning, but there is no one to comfort me. All my enemies have heard of my distress; they rejoice at what you have done. May you bring the day you have announced so they may become like me.
22. "Let all their wickedness come before you; deal with them as you have dealt with me because of all my sins. My groans are many and my heart is faint." (NIV)

Introduction:

I. Willis wrote, “This first acrostic personifies the city of Jerusalem as a woman who has recently been widowed.”

   A. Willis also notes that various speakers are heard including an anonymous narrator, personified Jerusalem.

   B. Willis further said that some lines are directed toward an unidentified audience (probably, the nations) and some to the Lord.

II. Lamentations 1 treats, Willis observed, topics such as:

   A. Jerusalem’s sufferings.

   B. Charges against Jerusalem.

   C. Jerusalem’s sufferings are well deserved because of its sins, but it is claimed that other equally sinful nations should be punished as well.

III. Garrett and House wrote, “Scholars do not think that Lamentations 1 is a “pure” form of any genre. Virtually every scholar who comments on the genre of Lamentations 1 considers the poem to be of mixed form.

IV. Garrett and House observe that the word all is used in Lamentations 1 sixteen (16) times; viz., all her lovers, friends, pursuers, gates, majesty,
precious things (2xs), all who honored her, all her people, all who pass by, all day, all my strong men, all peoples, all my enemies, all their evil and all my transgressions.

Commentary:

Lamentations 1:1, How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations! She who was queen among the provinces has now become a slave. (NIV)

I. “How deserted (solitary) lies the city, once so full of people!”

A. Jerusalem’s condition has greatly changed: Jerusalem was once fully populated, but is now deserted, solitary, isolated.

B. Coffman observed that “how” is the characteristic introduction to an elegy or dirge.

1. Isaiah 1:21, See how the faithful city has become a harlot! She once was full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her—but now murderers! (NIV)

2. Isaiah 14:4, 12, you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon: How the oppressor has come to an end! How his fury has ended! How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! (NIV)

C. Jerusalem is truly a phenomenal tragedy! (See Coffman.)

1. Jerusalem has sustained horrible reversals.

D. Scripture:
1. Isaiah 3:26, The gates of Zion will lament and mourn; destitute, she will sit on the ground. (NIV)

II. “How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations!”

A. Jerusalem’s condition has greatly changed: Jerusalem, once a great and respected lady, is now a bereaved, lonely widow.

B. Coffman wrote, “A grief-stricken woman sitting in misery and poverty represented the common fate of countless widows in antiquity; and this was an apt portrayal of the humiliation of the Chosen People.”

C. Clarke wrote, “Cities are commonly described as the mothers of their inhabitants, the kings as husbands, and the princes as children.

1. When, therefore, they are bereaved of these, they are represented as widows, and childless.”

a. Isaiah 1:21, See how the faithful city has become a harlot! She once was full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her—but now murderers! (NIV)

b. Jeremiah 48:17, Mourn for her, all who live around her, all who know her fame; say, 'How broken is the mighty scepter, how broken the glorious staff!' (NIV)

c. Jeremiah 2:21, I had planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock. How then did you turn against me into a corrupt, wild vine? (NIV)

d. Ecclesiastes 2:16, For the wise man, like the fool, will not be long remembered; in days to come both
will be forgotten. Like the fool, the wise man too must die! (NIV)

III. “She who was queen among the provinces has now become a slave, tributary, vassal, one required to do forced labor.”

A. Jerusalem’s condition has greatly changed: Jerusalem, who had been a ruling queen, had now become a slave.

1. Those few left in Jerusalem and Judea were forced to pay tribute to and serve Babylon. (See Clarke.)

B. The Pulpit Commentary defines “provinces” here as those countries which were once subject to David and Solomon.

Lamentations 1:2, Bitterly she weeps at night, tears are upon her cheeks. Among all her lovers there is none to comfort her. All her friends have betrayed her; they have become her enemies. (NIV)

I. “Bitterly she weeps at (in the) night, tears are upon her cheeks.”

A. “. . .heartbroken, she weeps in the night under the burden of her suffering.” (Garrett and House)

1. Jeremiah 16:5, For this is what the LORD says: "Do not enter a house where there is a funeral meal; do not go to mourn or show sympathy, because I have withdrawn my blessing, my love and my pity from this people," declares the LORD. (NIV)

2. Job 2:11, When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together
by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. (NIV)

B. Jerusalem weeps bitterly!

1. Weeping in the night speaks to Jerusalem’s lonely, lingering grief.

II. “Among all her lovers there is none to comfort her.”

A. “These lovers were those nations such as Egypt who had wooed her into their alliances against Babylon.” Coffman wrote.

1. Jeremiah 27:3, Then send word to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon through the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah. (NIV)

2. “Of course, they supported Judaea only so long as it served their own selfish interest to do so; . . .,” Coffman further wrote.

B. Instead of helping Jerusalem, those who had previously been her friends and allies now are found among her enemies. (See Clarke.)

III. “All her friends have betrayed her; they have become her enemies.”

A. Jerusalem’s condition had greatly changed: All Jerusalem’s friends have now become her enemies.

1. Nobody needs “friends” like these!

B. Scriptures:
1. Isaiah 39:5-7, Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD Almighty: The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD. And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." (NIV)

2. Isaiah 47:8-9, "Now then, listen, you wanton creature, lounging in your security and saying to yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me. I will never be a widow or suffer the loss of children.' Both of these will overtake you in a moment, on a single day: loss of children and widowhood. They will come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and all your potent spells. (NIV)

3. Daniel 4:25, You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes. (NIV)

C. Coffman quotes Matthew Henry as writing, “Let no family, no state, no nation, no Babylon, nor any other, proudly boast of their security, saying, “I sit as a queen and shall never sit as a widow (Revelation 17:7).”

Lamentations 1:3, After affliction and harsh labor, Judah has gone into exile. She dwells among the nations; she finds no resting place. All who pursue her have overtaken her in the midst of her distress. (NIV)
I. “After affliction and harsh labor, Judah has gone into exile.”

A. This was, Coffman wrote, true in two (2) ways:

1. Judah had been forced into captivity by the military of Babylon, which resulted in captivity and servitude.

2. There was also a contingent of Judah who attempted to escape Babylonian captivity by fleeing into Egypt.

B. Scripture:

1. Jeremiah 40:11, When all the Jews in Moab, Ammon, Edom and all the other countries heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant in Judah and had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, as governor over them, (NIV)

C. The Pulpit Commentary states that the people of Judah went in three (3) directions; viz.,

1. to Egypt or other safe havens.

2. to Babylon.

3. remained in Judah (mainly common people).

II. “She dwells among the nations (heathen); she finds no resting place.”

A. For Jerusalem there is no place to rest from her oppressors and no way to escape from captivity.

1. Not even Jerusalem’s last king, Zedekiah could escape from the Babylonians.
a. Jeremiah 52:6-11, By the ninth day of the fourth month the famine in the city had become so severe that there was no food for the people to eat. Then the city wall was broken through, and the whole army fled. They left the city at night through the gate between the two walls near the king's garden, though the Babylonians were surrounding the city. They fled toward the Arabah, but the Babylonian army pursued King Zedekiah and overtook him in the plains of Jericho. All his soldiers were separated from him and scattered, and he was captured. He was taken to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he pronounced sentence on him. There at Riblah the king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes; he also killed all the officials of Judah. Then he put out Zedekiah's eyes, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon, where he put him in prison till the day of his death. (NIV)

III. “All who pursue her have overtaken her in the midst of her (adversity) distress (between the straits).”

A. Psalm 118:5, In my anguish I cried to the LORD, and he answered by setting me free. (NIV)

B. “A strait,” or narrow place, clearly means adversity, just as “a large place” means prosperity. (The Pulpit Commentary)

Lamentations 1:4, The roads to Zion mourn, for no one comes to her appointed feasts. All her gateways are desolate, her priests groan, her maidens grieve, and she is in bitter anguish. (NIV)
I. “The roads to (ways of) Zion (Jerusalem) mourn, for no one comes to her appointed feasts.”

A. Before the Babylonian captivity the roads to Jerusalem were filled with happy people enroute to the great annual feasts.

B. No one attended these feasts anymore, the roads were deserted and mourned in sadness.

1. Lamentations 2:8, The LORD determined to tear down the wall around the Daughter of Zion. He stretched out a measuring line and did not withhold his hand from destroying. He made ramparts and walls lament; together they wasted away. (NIV)

2. Isaiah 3:26, The gates of Zion will lament and mourn; destitute, she will sit on the ground. (NIV)

3. Isaiah 14:31, Wail, O gate! Howl, O city! Melt away, all you Philistines! A cloud of smoke comes from the north, and there is not a straggler in its ranks. (NIV)

C. Zion, the holy mountain, is used to identify the religious significance of Jerusalem.

II. “All her gateways are desolate, . . .”

A. “No one goes in or out of Jerusalem.” (The Pulpit Commentary)

III. “her priests groan, her maidens (virgins) grieve, and she is in bitter anguish.”
A. Zephaniah 3:18, "The sorrows for the appointed feasts I will remove from you; they are a burden and a reproach to you. (NIV)

B. Psalm 68:25, In front are the singers, after them the musicians; with them are the maidens playing tambourines. (NIV)

C. Ruth 1:13, 20, would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has gone out against me!' "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. (NIV)

Lamentations 1:5, Her foes have become her masters; her enemies are at ease. The LORD has brought her grief because of her many sins. Her children have gone into exile, captive before the foe. (NIV)

I. “Her foes have become her masters (head); her enemies are at ease.”

A. These conditions were caused by the total apostasy of the wicked Hebrew nation, its total departure from the Law of Moses, Coffman stated.

1. Deuteronomy 28:44, He will lend to you, but you will not lend to him. He will be the head, but you will be the tail. (NIV)

II. “The LORD has brought her grief because of her many sins.”

A. How will Jerusalem react to God’s punishment for her sins?

1. This is the crucial question.
III. “Her children have gone into exile, captive before the foe (enemy).”

A. Israel’s children went into Babylonian captivity as “slaves driven like cattle before the army of the Chaldeans.” (See AB Commentary via Coffman).

1. Deuteronomy 28:24, The LORD will turn the rain of your country into dust and powder; it will come down from the skies until you are destroyed. (NIV)

2. Jeremiah 15:2, And if they ask you, 'Where shall we go?' tell them, 'This is what the LORD says: "'Those destined for death, to death; those for the sword, to the sword; those for starvation, to starvation; those for captivity, to captivity.'" (NIV)

3. Jeremiah 20:6, And you, Pashhur, and all who live in your house will go into exile to Babylon. There you will die and be buried, you and all your friends to whom you have prophesied lies.' " (NIV)

4. Ezra 2:1, Now these are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken captive to Babylon (they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town, (NIV)

5. Nehemiah 1:2-3, Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire." (NIV)
Lamentations 1:6, All the splendor has departed from the Daughter of Zion. Her princes are like deer that find no pasture; in weakness they have fled before the pursuer. (NIV)

I. “All the splendor (beauty) has departed from the Daughter of Zion.”

   A. Verses 1-6 have focused on Zion’s desolation and the exile of its people because of their sins.

   B. “Daughter of Zion” depicts the unity between the place and the people who had lived there. (See House.)

      1. “Zion is God’s daughter,” House wrote, but . . .

      2. she has lost all her “majesty”.

II. “Her princes are like deer (harts) that find no pasture;”

   A. Without food they become weak and have no strength to flee. (The Pulpit Commentary)

   B. Even Judah’s and Jerusalem’s princes were unable to defend themselves, their people and their city/country. (See House.)

III. “in weakness they have fled before the pursuers.”

   A. Zedekiah and his nobles were captured as they tried to flee from Nebuchadnezzar.

      1. They may have been weak because of famine.

         a. 2 Kings 25:4, Then the city wall was broken through, and the whole army fled at night through the gate between the two walls near the king's
garden, though the Babylonians were surrounding the city. They fled toward the Arabah, (NIV)

b. Jeremiah 39:4, 5, When Zedekiah king of Judah and all the soldiers saw them, they fled; they left the city at night by way of the king’s garden, through the gate between the two walls, and headed toward the Arabah. But the Babylonian army pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. They captured him and took him to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he pronounced sentence on him. (NIV)

Lamentations 1:7, In the days of her affliction and wandering Jerusalem remembers all the treasures that were hers in days of old. When her people fell into enemy hands, there was no one to help her. Her enemies looked at her and laughed at her destruction. (NIV)

I. “In the days of her affliction (miseries) and wandering Jerusalem remembers all the treasures that were hers in days of old.”

A. Remembering the “good old days” only made their emotional suffering worse!

B. The “days of old” may refer to the days of Moses and Joshua, David and Solomon, et. al.

1. They remember days of great victories, great leaders, great wealth.

II. “When her people fell into enemy hands, there was no one to help her.”
A. To make horrible conditions worse, there was no one to comfort her (Jerusalem), no one to empathize with her in her distress.

III. “Her enemies looked at her and laughed at her destruction.”

A. Being laughed at, derided, by the hated uncircumcised pagan idolatrous Babylonians must have been a bitter part of Judah’s ordeal. (See Coffman.)

B. Following the Babylonian Captivity, idolatry was no longer a problem for Israel.

1. They had learned their lesson!

C. The KJV reads, “. . .did mock her sabbaths,” indicating the Babylonians ridiculed the captives for their religious (Sabbath) observances. (See Clarke.)

1. However, Babylon had similar religious observances of its own.

Lamentations 1:8, Jerusalem has sinned greatly and so has become unclean. All who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; she herself groans and turns away. (NIV)

I. “Jerusalem has sinned greatly and so has become unclean, an abomination, an impurity.”

A. Jerusalem had committed grievous spiritual adultery against the Lord.

1. Ezekiel 16:35-39, " 'Therefore, you prostitute, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because you poured out your wealth and exposed your nakedness in your promiscuity with your lovers, and
because of all your detestable idols, and because you gave them your children's blood, therefore I am going to gather all your lovers, with whom you found pleasure, those you loved as well as those you hated. I will gather them against you from all around and will strip you in front of them, and they will see all your nakedness. I will sentence you to the punishment of women who commit adultery and who shed blood; I will bring upon you the blood vengeance of my wrath and jealous anger. Then I will hand you over to your lovers, and they will tear down your mounds and destroy your lofty shrines. They will strip you of your clothes and take your fine jewelry and leave you naked and bare. (NIV)

2. Hosea 2:10-11, So now I will expose her lewdness before the eyes of her lovers; no one will take her out of my hands. I will stop all her celebrations: her yearly festivals, her New Moons, her Sabbath days—all her appointed feasts. (NIV)

3. Leviticus 15:19, "When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening. (NIV)

B. Jerusalem by her sinfulness had become unclean.

1. Willis observed that this conduct and condition would bring embarrassment, disgrace on her husband.

C. Jerusalem by its sins had brought all these troubles on herself.

1. There was no one to blame but herself.
II. “All who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; . . .”

A. Jerusalem’s sin was spiritual adultery, worshiping idols instead of Jehovah only.

1. Idol worship often involved actual physical adultery as well.

B. Coffman wrote, “In ancient times, the punishment of an immoral woman was a brutal display of her naked body, in which her skirts were tied above her head and she was shamefully scourged out of society.”

1. Nahum 3:5, "I am against you," declares the LORD Almighty. "I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show the nations your nakedness and the kingdoms your shame. (NIV)

2. Isaiah 47:3, Your nakedness will be exposed and your shame uncovered. I will take vengeance; I will spare no one." (NIV)

III. “she herself groans and turns away.”

A. “She turns her back upon her spectators in order to hide herself from their gaze.” (AB via Coffman.)

B. “The proud lady (Jerusalem) has become a fallen woman by participating in the demoralizing rites of the worship of Baal.” (TYN, Vol. 19, p. 209 via Coffman.)

C. Consequently, she (Jerusalem) is suffering a similar shame and humiliation as a convicted prostitute.
Lamentations 1:9, Her filthiness clung to her skirts; she did not consider her future. Her fall was astounding; there was none to comfort her. "Look, O LORD, on my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed." (NIV)

I. “Her filthiness clung to (was in) her skirts; she did not consider (think upon) her future.”

   A. “She took no thought of her doom; she failed to consider the consequences of her actions until it was too late.” (NBCR, p. 660 via Coffman.)

      1. Jerusalem did not think all these adversities awaited her. (House)

   B. Do we carefully consider the results of our lifestyle, where sin will take us?

      1. Remember: We will reap what we sow!

      2. Jerusalem did! . . .most certainly.

   C. Jerusalem’s uncleanness clung to her skirts; that is, she could not rid herself of her filthiness. (House)

II. “Her fall was astounding; there was none to comfort her.”

   A. No friends were left and those who once were her friends now despised and ridiculed her.

III. “Look, O LORD, on my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed.”

   A. Jerusalem now sees the Lord as their only hope of deliverance.
1. Exodus 2:23-25, During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them. (NIV)

Lamentations 1:10, The enemy laid hands on all her treasures; she saw pagan nations enter her sanctuary—those you had forbidden to enter your assembly. (NIV)

I. “The enemy laid hands on all her treasures (precious things); . . .”

A. The heathens looted the temple and the palaces of the rich rulers of Jerusalem.

1. 2 Chronicles 36:10, 19, In the spring, King Nebuchadnezzar sent for him and brought him to Babylon, together with articles of value from the temple of the LORD, and he made Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, king over Judah and Jerusalem. They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there. (NIV)

2. Isaiah 64:11, Our holy and glorious temple, where our fathers praised you, has been burned with fire, and all that we treasured lies in ruins. (NIV)

II. “she saw pagan nations enter her sanctuary –”

A. The Babylonians totally desecrated and destroyed God’s holy temple.
1. No Gentile was allowed to enter the temple/sanctuary and only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place and he could enter the Most Holy Place only one time a year, that being on the day of Atonement. (See Coffman.)

B. The Law of Moses and the prophets limited those who could enter the temple.

1. Deuteronomy 23:3-6, No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation. For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in Aram Naharaim to pronounce a curse on you. However, the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam but turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them as long as you live. (NIV)

2. Ezekiel 44:9, This is what the Sovereign LORD says: No foreigner uncircumcised in heart and flesh is to enter my sanctuary, not even the foreigners who live among the Israelites. (NIV)

III. “those you had forbidden to enter your assembly.”

A. Zion was totally amazed, appalled, at the presence of heathen enemies in the temple.

B. The Holy of Holies was desecrated, polluted, defiled!

Lamentations 1:11, All her people groan as they search for bread; they barter their treasures for food to keep themselves alive. "Look, O LORD, and consider, for I am despised." (NIV)
I. “All her people groan as they search for bread; . . .”

A. Hunger became a major problem.

1. Lamentations 2:11, 20, My eyes fail from weeping, I am in torment within, my heart is poured out on the ground because my people are destroyed, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city. "Look, O LORD, and consider: Whom have you ever treated like this? Should women eat their offspring, the children they have cared for? Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord? (NIV)

2. Lamentations 4:10, With their own hands compassionate women have cooked their own children, who became their food when my people were destroyed. (NIV)

3. Lamentations 5:9-10, We get our bread at the risk of our lives because of the sword in the desert. Our skin is hot as an oven, feverish from hunger. (NIV)

B. Famine was an urgent problem.

1. Lamentations 1:19, "I called to my allies but they betrayed me. My priests and my elders perished in the city while they searched for food to keep themselves alive. (NIV)

2. Lamentations 2:19, Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street. (NIV)
3. Lamentations 4:3-5, 7-9, Even jackals offer their breasts to nurse their young, but my people have become heartless like ostriches in the desert. Because of thirst the infant's tongue sticks to the roof of its mouth; the children beg for bread, but no one gives it to them. Those who once ate delicacies are destitute in the streets. Those nurtured in purple now lie on ash heaps. Their princes were brighter than snow and whiter than milk, their bodies more ruddy than rubies, their appearance like sapphires. But now they are blacker than soot; they are not recognized in the streets. Their skin has shriveled on their bones; it has become as dry as a stick. Those killed by the sword are better off than those who die of famine; racked with hunger, they waste away for lack of food from the field. (NIV)

4. Lamentations 5:6, We submitted to Egypt and Assyria to get enough bread. (NIV)

II. “they barter (trade) their treasures for food to keep themselves alive.”

A. “Treasures” here may mean children, according to Ash via Coffman, and this passage may be saying these starving people traded their children for food.

B. In any event, Jerusalem was in such dire straits she was willing to trade her most valuable possessions for food to avoid starvation.

Note: Verses 1-11a are written in the third person as an onlooker. In verse 11b there is a dramatic shift to the first person in which the desolate city of Jerusalem is the speaker. Consequently, the chapter has been divided into paragraphs; viz., (1) verses 1-11a and (2) verses 11b-22. God is seen as the one responsible for what happened to Jerusalem. (Coffman)
III. “Look, O LORD, and consider, for I am despised.”

A. House wrote, “Her reversal of fortunes gnaws at her, and the shame associated with it causes her added anguish.

1. Jerusalem’s situation was severe and her plea earnest, House stated.

B. Where could they go in these extreme times but to the Lord?

Note: “This passage begins the chapter’s second major section,” House noted.

Lamentations 1:12, "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look around and see. Is any suffering like my suffering that was inflicted on me, that the LORD brought on me in the day of his fierce anger? (NIV)

I. “Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?”

A. Jerusalem was experiencing horrendous suffering and nobody cared!

II. “Look around and see.”

III. “Is any suffering like my suffering that was inflicted on me, that the LORD brought on me in the day of his fierce anger?”

A. WYC via Coffman wrote, “Most modern commentators ignore the severity of the divine nature.”

1. Ancient Jerusalem, to its lasting regret, made this mistake as well.
2. Behold the goodness and severity of God, not just his goodness.

B. Jerusalem seeks sympathy by describing the severity of its affliction, suffering.

C. Jerusalem here confesses that it is the Lord who has brought these conditions upon it and will admit that their adversities have come upon them because of their sins.

Lamentations 1:13, "From on high he sent fire, sent it down into my bones. He spread a net for my feet and turned me back. He made me desolate, faint all the day long." (NIV)

I. “From on high (heaven) he sent fire, sent it down into my bones.”

A. Willis observed that Jerusalem, likened here to a person’s body, is afflicted completely, in the bones, feet, neck.

B. Affliction of Jerusalem comes in the figures of fire, a net and sickness.

C. The Bible speaks of “the day of his fierce anger” under different figures and situations.

1. Isaiah 13:14-16, Like a hunted gazelle, like sheep without a shepherd, each will return to his own people, each will flee to his native land. Whoever is captured will be thrust through; all who are caught will fall by the sword. Their infants will be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses will be looted and their wives ravished. (NIV)
2. Lamentations 2:12-15, They say to their mothers, "Where is bread and wine?" as they faint like wounded men in the streets of the city, as their lives ebb away in their mothers' arms. What can I say for you? With what can I compare you, O Daughter of Jerusalem? To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you, O Virgin Daughter of Zion? Your wound is as deep as the sea. Who can heal you? The visions of your prophets were false and worthless; they did not expose your sin to ward off your captivity. The oracles they gave you were false and misleading. All who pass your way clap their hands at you; they scoff and shake their heads at the Daughter of Jerusalem: "Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?" (NIV)

3. Genesis 19:23-29, By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land. Then the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the LORD out of the heavens. Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation in the land. But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the LORD. He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and he saw dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace. So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived. (NIV)

II. “He spread a net for my feet and turned me back . . .”

A. . . . as if Jerusalem had been a wild beast. (The Pulpit Commentary).
1. Psalm 35:7, Since they hid their net for me without cause and without cause dug a pit for me, (NIV)

2. Jeremiah 18:22, Let a cry be heard from their houses when you suddenly bring invaders against them, for they have dug a pit to capture me and have hidden snares for my feet. (NIV)

3. Hosea 7:12, When they go, I will throw my net over them; I will pull them down like birds of the air. When I hear them flocking together, I will catch them. (NIV)

   B. Jerusalem was captured, turned back, could no longer move as desired.

III. “He made me desolate, faint all the day long.”

   A. Jerusalem was left sad, lonely, filled with grief, ruined, laid waste, gloomy, deserted, disconsolate, weak, sick, faint . . . and nobody cared or lifted a finger to help.

Lamentations 1:14, "My sins have been bound into a yoke; by his hands they were woven together. They have come upon my neck and the Lord has sapped my strength. He has handed me over to those I cannot withstand. (NIV)

I. “My sins have been bound into a yoke; by his hands they were woven together.”

   A. These people definitely reaped what they had sown and so will we!

   B. Israel had enslaved native people of Palestine and now Israel is being enslaved by Babylon!
C. Jerusalem’s sins became a yoke about their necks!

D. Jerusalem is suffering, but she knows God is right to afflict them. (See Coffman.)

E. Jerusalem’s sins have been woven together so that the “rope” with which she was bound was absolutely impossible to break. (See Clarke.)

F. “The transgressions of Jerusalem were likened to a heavy yoke they were forced to wear.” (The Pulpit Commentary)

II. “They have come upon my neck and the LORD has sapped my strength.”

A. Jeremiah 28:2-3, "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two years I will bring back to this place all the articles of the LORD's house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon removed from here and took to Babylon. (NIV)

B. Jeremiah 28:5-17, Then the prophet Jeremiah replied to the prophet Hananiah before the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD. He said, "Amen! May the LORD do so! May the LORD fulfill the words you have prophesied by bringing the articles of the LORD's house and all the exiles back to this place from Babylon. Nevertheless, listen to what I have to say in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: From early times the prophets who preceded you and me have prophesied war, disaster and plague against many countries and great kingdoms. But the prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true." Then the prophet Hananiah took the yoke off the neck of the prophet
Jeremiah and broke it, and he said before all the people, "This is what the LORD says: 'In the same way will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon off the neck of all the nations within two years.' " At this, the prophet Jeremiah went on his way. Shortly after the prophet Hananiah had broken the yoke off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: "Go and tell Hananiah, 'This is what the LORD says: You have broken a wooden yoke, but in its place you will get a yoke of iron. This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will put an iron yoke on the necks of all these nations to make them serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and they will serve him. I will even give him control over the wild animals.' " Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, "Listen, Hananiah! The LORD has not sent you, yet you have persuaded this nation to trust in lies. Therefore, this is what the LORD says: 'I am about to remove you from the face of the earth. This very year you are going to die, because you have preached rebellion against the LORD.' " In the seventh month of that same year, Hananiah the prophet died. (NIV)

III. “He has handed me over to those I cannot withstand.”

A. Jerusalem was totally overwhelmed by the power of their conquerors.

Lamentations 1:15, "The Lord has rejected all the warriors in my midst; he has summoned an army against me to crush my young men. In his winepress the Lord has trampled the Virgin Daughter of Judah. (NIV)

I. “The LORD has rejected all the warriors in my midst; . . .”

A. The Lord had contempt and scorn for Jerusalem’s warriors.
1. Psalm 119:118-120, You reject all who stray from your decrees, for their deceitfulness is in vain. All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross; therefore I love your statutes. My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws. (NIV)

2. Jerusalem’s military was useless in this situation.

II. “he has summoned an army (assembly) against me to crush my young men.”

A. This “army” refers to the Babylonians whom God used to destroy sinful Jerusalem.

1. Psalm 119:18-20, Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. I am a stranger on earth; do not hide your commands from me. My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times. (NIV)

2. Jerusalem may have thought God had betrayed them, but actually they had deserted the Lord.

III. “In my winepress the LORD has (trodden) trampled the Virgin Daughter of Judah.”

A. The fact that the Lord had brought suffering and pain on his people increased their agony. (See Willis.)

1. Isaiah 13:3, I have commanded my holy ones; I have summoned my warriors to carry out my wrath—those who rejoice in my triumph. (NIV)

2. Isaiah 63:3, "I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood
spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. (NIV)

3. Joel 3:13, Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow—so great is their wickedness!" (NIV)

B. “The choicest youth of Judah are to be cut off like grapes from the vine.” (The Pulpit Commentary)

C. “Virgin daughter’ is a frequent figure to express inviolate security.” (The Pulpit Commentary)

1. Jeremiah 14:17, "Speak this word to them:" 'Let my eyes overflow with tears night and day without ceasing; for my virgin daughter—my people—has suffered a grievous wound, a crushing blow. (NIV)

2. “The Virgin Daughter of Judah” and “Daughter of Zion” speak to total destruction of the Southern Kingdom. (See House.)

Lamentations 1:16, "This is why I weep and my eyes overflow with tears. No one is near to comfort me, no one to restore my spirit. My children are destitute because the enemy has prevailed." (NIV)

I. “This is why I weep and my eyes overflow with tears.”

A. Coffman mentioned that the repetition found in this verse is characteristic of Jeremiah’s style.

1. Jeremiah 4:10, 19, Then I said, "Ah, Sovereign LORD, how completely you have deceived this people and Jerusalem by saying, 'You will have peace,' when the sword is at our throats." Oh, my anguish, my anguish!
I writhe in pain. Oh, the agony of my heart! My heart pounds within me, I cannot keep silent. For I have heard the sound of the trumpet; I have heard the battle cry. (NIV)

2. Jeremiah 6:14, They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace. (NIV)

3. Jeremiah 22:29, O land, land, land, hear the word of the LORD! (NIV)

II. “No one is near to comfort me, no one to restore my spirit.”

A. Instead of comfort and encouragement, Jerusalem was provided human deception and cruelty.

III. “My children are destitute because the enemy has prevailed.”

A. All of Judah and Jerusalem including “sons,” “strong men,” “chosen ones,” “virgin daughter” and “children” all are suffering. (See House.)

B. Their situation was altogether bleak!

Note: Jerusalem now attempts to regain the Lord’s attention and favor. Jerusalem focuses on the Lord. (See House.)

Lamentations 1:17, Zion stretches out her hands, but there is no one to comfort her. The LORD has decreed for Jacob that his neighbors become his foes; Jerusalem has become an unclean thing among them. (NIV)

I. “Zion stretches out her hands (like a beggar), but there is no one to comfort her.”
A. Willis regards this verse as an intertude in which Jacob (masculine gender) is mentioned showing Jerusalem that she is part of a nation of people belonging to the Lord.

B. Since the Lord was justified in destroying the nation, Willis stated, he is certainly justified in destroying Jerusalem.

C. No one answered Jerusalem’s prayers for help in her time of distress. (See Clarke.)

1. Jeremiah 4:31, I hear a cry as of a woman in labor, a groan as of one bearing her first child—the cry of the Daughter of Zion gasping for breath, stretching out her hands and saying, "Alas! I am fainting; my life is given over to murderers." (NIV)

D. “This is the gesture of supplication and entreaty.” (The Pulpit Commentary)

1. Psalm 28:2, Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands (NIV)

2. Isaiah 63:4, For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come. (NIV)

3. Isaiah 65:2, All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations- (NIV)

II. “The Lord has decreed (commanded) for (concerning) Jacob that his neighbors become his foes; . . .”
A. Isaiah 23:11, The LORD has stretched out his hand over the sea and made its kingdoms tremble. He has given an order concerning Phoenicia that her fortresses be destroyed. (NIV)

B. “The neighboring peoples, who ought to be sympathetic and friendly, gloat over the spectacle of his calamities.” (The Pulpit Commentary)

C. “Jerusalem, Zion and Jacob are all considered synonymous at this point,” House wrote.

1. “Relief must be applicable to the whole people, not just Judah or Jerusalem,” House further stated.

III. “Jerusalem has become an unclean thing (as a menstruous woman).

A. Jerusalem thought they would, could never be conquered, destroyed, were untouchable, inviolable. (Willis)

1. Jeremiah 24:1-10, After Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah and the officials, the craftsmen and the artisans of Judah were carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the LORD showed me two baskets of figs placed in front of the temple of the LORD. One basket had very good figs, like those that ripen early; the other basket had very poor figs, so bad they could not be eaten. Then the LORD asked me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" "Figs," I answered. "The good ones are very good, but the poor ones are so bad they cannot be eaten." Then the word of the LORD came to me: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Like these good figs, I regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I sent away from this place to the land of the Babylonians. My eyes will watch over them for their good, and I will bring them back to this
land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them. I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart. 'But like the poor figs, which are so bad they cannot be eaten,' says the LORD, 'so will I deal with Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials and the survivors from Jerusalem, whether they remain in this land or live in Egypt. I will make them abhorrent and an offense to all the kingdoms of the earth, a reproach and a byword, an object of ridicule and cursing, wherever I banish them. I will send the sword, famine and plague against them until they are destroyed from the land I gave to them and their fathers.' " (NIV)

2. Ezekiel 11:14-16, The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, your brothers—your brothers who are your blood relatives and the whole house of Israel—are those of whom the people of Jerusalem have said, 'They are far away from the LORD; this land was given to us as our possession.' Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.' (NIV)

B. Jerusalem had become unclean and would, consequently, be destroyed.

1. Jerusalem was not immune to the effects of sin!

C. Jerusalem was regarded as a menstrual woman who was considered to be ceremonially unclean and whom no one would touch, help or comfort.
1. Leviticus 15:19-27, "'When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening. "'Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. Whoever touches her bed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. Whoever touches anything she sits on must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, he will be unclean till evening. "'If a man lies with her and her monthly flow touches him, he will be unclean for seven days; any bed he lies on will be unclean. "'When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period. Any bed she lies on while her discharge continues will be unclean, as is her bed during her monthly period, and anything she sits on will be unclean, as during her period. Whoever touches them will be unclean; he must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. (NIV)

2. Jerusalem’s sins made her unclean.

   a. Isaiah 30:22, Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them, "Away with you!" (NIV)

   b. Isaiah 64:5, You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when
we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved? (NIV)

c. Ezekiel 7:19, "Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Will it thrive? Will it not be uprooted and stripped of its fruit so that it withers? All its new growth will wither. It will not take a strong arm or many people to pull it up by the roots. (NIV)

d. Ezra 9:7, From the days of our forefathers until now, our guilt has been great. Because of our sins, we and our kings and our priests have been subjected to the sword and captivity, to pillage and humiliation at the hand of foreign kings, as it is today. (NIV)

Note: This final section of chapter 1:18-22 is a detailed prayer to the Lord. Others had not helped. Now they turn to God for help. (See House.)

Lamentations 1:18, "The LORD is righteous, yet I rebelled against his command. Listen, all you peoples; look upon my suffering. My young men and maidens have gone into exile. (NIV)

I. “The LORD is righteous, yet I rebelled against his command.”

A. Jerusalem rebelled against the righteous husband who would have protected her.

1. Her sinful “lovers” had no interest in protecting her.

2. She was left to suffer alone for her unfaithfulness.
B. It was just that a righteous husband would allow his unfaithful wife to suffer the penalties for her sins that she might repent and return to a life of purity.

1. “God has not punished without cause,” House wrote.

2. The righteous husband gave Jerusalem what she deserved.

3. **Psalm 51:6**, Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. (NIV)

C. Jerusalem made no excuses for her sins, a definite step in the right direction.

II. “Listen, all you peoples; look upon my suffering.”

A. Look, everybody. See my suffering. This is what sin will do to you!

1. **Psalm 49:2**, both low and high, rich and poor alike: (NIV)

2. **Micah 1:2**, Hear, O peoples, all of you, listen, O earth and all who are in it, that the Sovereign LORD may witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. (NIV)

3. **1 Kings 22:28**, Micaiah declared, "If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me." Then he added, "Mark my words, all you people!" (NIV)

B. Take notice, all you nations, because my suffering will fall on you also if you continue in sin. (See House.)

III. “My young men and maidens have gone into exile.”
A. Jerusalem’s grieves have been intensified by the captivity of its young men and maidens. (See House.)

B. Which nations gave heed to Jerusalem’s advice?

Lamentations 1:19, "I called to my allies but they betrayed me. My priests and my elders perished in the city while they searched for food to keep themselves alive. (NIV)

I. “I called to my allies (lovers) but they betrayed (deceived) me.

A. The Egyptians and others (former allies) would now have nothing to do with Jerusalem.

1. “They pledged military help, then left her all alone,” House wrote.

2. Jeremiah 22:20, 22, "Go up to Lebanon and cry out, let your voice be heard in Bashan, cry out from Abarim, for all your allies are crushed. The wind will drive all your shepherds away, and your allies will go into exile. Then you will be ashamed and disgraced because of all your wickedness. (NIV)

3. Jeremiah 30:14, All your allies have forgotten you; they care nothing for you. I have struck you as an enemy would and punished you as would the cruel, because your guilt is so great and your sins so many. (NIV)

4. Ezekiel 16:33, 36-37, Every prostitute receives a fee, but you give gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from everywhere for your illicit favors. This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because you poured out your wealth and exposed your nakedness in your
promiscuity with your lovers, and because of all your detestable idols, and because you gave them your children's blood, therefore I am going to gather all your lovers, with whom you found pleasure, those you loved as well as those you hated. I will gather them against you from all around and will strip you in front of them, and they will see all your nakedness. (NIV)

5. Ezekiel 23:5, 9, 22, "Oholah engaged in prostitution while she was still mine; and she lusted after her lovers, the Assyrians-warriors "Therefore I handed her over to her lovers, the Assyrians, for whom she lusted. "Therefore, Oholibah, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will stir up your lovers against you, those you turned away from in disgust, and I will bring them against you from every side- (NIV)

B. Jerusalem sought to please her “lovers,” allies, instead of seeking to please God. (See House.)

III. “My priests and my elders perished in the city.”

A. This was a terrible famine.

1. Otherwise, the priests and elders of all people, would have had sufficient food to sustain life.

B. “They have succumbed to hunger ‘while they sought food for themselves,’ ” House wrote.

1. Their own priests and elders could not even help themselves, much less Judah and Jerusalem.

III. “while they searched for food to keep themselves alive.”
A. These people died (perished) as they searched for food.

Lamentations 1:20, "See, O LORD, how distressed I am! I am in torment within, and in my heart I am disturbed, for I have been most rebellious. Outside, the sword bereaves; inside, there is only death. (NIV)

I. “See, O LORD, how distressed I am! I am in torment within, . . .”

A. Jeremiah 9:21, Death has climbed in through our windows and has entered our fortresses; it has cut off the children from the streets and the young men from the public squares. (NIV)

B. Deuteronomy 32:25, In the street the sword will make them childless; in their homes terror will reign. Young men and young women will perish, infants and gray-haired men. (NIV)

C. Calamity in every form (war, death, pestilence and famine) are everywhere in Jerusalem and Judah as well as in their very hearts and souls.

1. Jeremiah 9:21, Death has climbed in through our windows and has entered our fortresses; it has cut off the children from the streets and the young men from the public squares. (NIV)

2. Lamentations 2:11, My eyes fail from weeping, I am in torment within, my heart is poured out on the ground because my people are destroyed, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city. (NIV)

3. Job 16:16, My face is red with weeping, deep shadows ring my eyes; (NIV)
II. “and in my heart I am disturbed, (made to boil) for I have been most rebellious.”

A. In her distress, Jerusalem repented and set about to return to God.

B. Jerusalem was emotionally tormented, was suffering “inner turbulence.” (See House.)

III. “Outside (in the streets), the sword bereaves; inside (in the house), there is only death.

A. Jeremiah 9:21, Death has climbed in through our windows and has entered our fortresses; it has cut off the children from the streets and the young men from the public squares. (NIV)

B. Jeremiah 15:1-9, Then the LORD said to me: "Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Send them away from my presence! Let them go! And if they ask you, 'Where shall we go?' tell them, 'This is what the LORD says: "Those destined for death, to death; those for the sword, to the sword; those for starvation, to starvation; those for captivity, to captivity.' "I will send four kinds of destroyers against them," declares the LORD, "the sword to kill and the dogs to drag away and the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy. I will make them abhorrent to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what Manasseh son of Hezekiah king of Judah did in Jerusalem. "Who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem? Who will mourn for you? Who will stop to ask how you are? You have rejected me," declares the LORD. "You keep on backsliding. So I will lay hands on you and destroy you; I can no longer show compassion. I will winnow them with a winnowing fork at the city gates of the land. I will bring bereavement and destruction on my people, for they have not
changed their ways. I will make their widows more numerous than the sand of the sea. At midday I will bring a destroyer against the mothers of their young men; suddenly I will bring down on them anguish and terror. The mother of seven will grow faint and breathe her last. Her sun will set while it is still day; she will be disgraced and humiliated. I will put the survivors to the sword before their enemies," declares the LORD. (NIV)

C. Jeremiah 43:11, He will come and attack Egypt, bringing death to those destined for death, captivity to those destined for captivity, and the sword to those destined for the sword. (NIV)

D. Leviticus 26:22-25, I will send wild animals against you, and they will rob you of your children, destroy your cattle and make you so few in number that your roads will be deserted. "If in spite of these things you do not accept my correction but continue to be hostile toward me, I myself will be hostile toward you and will afflict you for your sins seven times over. And I will bring the sword upon you to avenge the breaking of the covenant. When you withdraw into your cities, I will send a plague among you, and you will be given into enemy hands. (NIV)

E. Ezekiel 5:17, I will send famine and wild beasts against you, and they will leave you childless. Plague and bloodshed will sweep through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I the LORD have spoken." (NIV)

F. Ezekiel 14:15-17, "Or if I send wild beasts through that country and they leave it childless and it becomes desolate so that no one can pass through it because of the beasts, as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters.
They alone would be saved, but the land would be desolate. "Or if I bring a sword against that country and say, 'Let the sword pass throughout the land,' and I kill its men and their animals, (NIV)

Lamentations 1:21, "People have heard my groaning, but there is no one to comfort me. All my enemies have heard of my distress; they rejoice at what you have done. May you bring the day you have announced so they may become like me. (NIV)

I. “People have heard my groaning, but there is no one to comfort me.”

A. Sin produces unhappiness, groaning!

1. Don’t ever doubt it!

B. Jerusalem’s sins were publicly known, but no one offered to help her.

II. “All my enemies have heard of my distress; they rejoice at what you have done.”

A. All of Jerusalem’s enemies rejoiced at her troubles, exulted in her miseries. (See Clarke.)

III. “May you bring the day you have announced (foretold by the prophets) so they may become like me.”

A. Jerusalem prayed that proud, arrogant Babylon would receive what they had heaped upon Jerusalem.

1. Jerusalem’s prayer was answered in due time.

2. Babylon did get hers!
B. House wrote, “Such prayers against enemies are fairly standard in psalms of lamentation.”

1. Psalm 79:12, Pay back into the laps of our neighbors seven times the reproach they have hurled at you, O Lord. (NIV)

2. Psalm 83:14-15, As fire consumes the forest or a flame sets the mountains ablaze, so pursue them with your tempest and terrify them with your storm. (NIV)

Lamentations 1:22, "Let all their wickedness come before you; deal with them as you have dealt with me because of all my sins. My groans are many and my heart is faint." (NIV)

I. “Let all their wickedness come before you; . . .”

A. Jerusalem’s prayer was eventually answered: Babylon is no more, Assyria is gone.

II. “deal with them as you have dealt with me because of all my sins.”

A. Isaiah speaks of Babylon’s condition after God had answered Jerusalem’s prayer of imprecation. (See The Pulpit Commentary.)

1. Isaiah 47:1, 8, "Go down, sit in the dust, Virgin Daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground without a throne, Daughter of the Babylonians. No more will you be called tender or delicate. "Now then, listen, you wanton creature, lounging in your security and saying to yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me. I will never be a widow or suffer the loss of children.' (NIV)

III. “My groans are many and my heart is faint.”
A. Westermann via House wrote, “In other words, the traditional theme of a plea for reprisal against enemies has indeed been adopted, but here it is associated with an awareness of the singular set of circumstances. The plea for reprisal grows directly out of the experience of having been decimated. No one yet dares voice a plea for Israel’s restoration. Such pleas will come later in the book.”

1. Lamentations 5:21-22, Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may return; renew our days as of old unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure. (NIV)

Conclusion:

I. Sin leads to destruction, devastation.

A. Jeremiah 18:10, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it. (NIV)

B. “Wickedness is offensive to God; God will most certainly punish it.” (Coffman)

C. Sin has left Jerusalem desolate, deserted, defeated, religious festivals unattended, . . .

1. Jerusalem’s troubles need never have happened!

II. To return to God and his blessings, sincere repentance is an absolute necessity!

III. Only because of God’s merciful character can sinful people hope for God’s forgiveness.
A. Daniel 9:9, The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; (NIV)

B. 1 Timothy 1:13, 16, Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. (KJV)

C. Romans 9:14-18, What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. (KJV)

D. Ephesians 2:4-6, But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: (KJV)

E. Matthew 9:27-31, And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. But
they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country. (KJV)

F. Matthew 20:29-34, And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him. (KJV)

G. Luke 17:11-19, And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole. (KJV)
Questions

on

Lamentations 1:1-22

(Questions based on NIV text.)

1. Why is it appropriate to entitle this lesson, “Jerusalem the Widow”?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. What is an *acrostic*? In what way can Lamentations 1 be designated an *acrostic*? ______________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. What topics, according to Willis, are addressed in Lamentations 1?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. In what genre(s) is Lamentations 1 written? ______________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
5. How many times is the word *all* used in Lamentations 1? To what does it refer? __________________________________________

6. How had Jerusalem’s condition changed?

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7. “_____________________” is the characteristic introduction to an __________________ or __________________. __________________ is truly a __________________________. __________________.
8. Define provinces, lovers, strait, large places, and Zion. ___________

9. Following the fall of Jerusalem, in what three (3) directions did its citizens go into exile? ____________________________

10. How had the roads to Zion changed? ____________________________

11. How had Jerusalem’s foes become her masters? Who were these foes? ____________________________
12. The ___________________ brought  ________________________
_________________ because of her many  ________________________.

13. Of what did Judah’s and Jerusalem’s distress, suffering consist? ___
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
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14. What is meant by Daughter of Zion and Virgin Daughter of Judah?  
How are they the same? . . .different? ___________________________
________________________________________________________
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15. What had happened to Judah’s princes? (See 1:6) __________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
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16. To what do “the days of old” refer? ____________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
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17. When ___________________’s ____________________ _____ fell
into _____________________ __________________________, to make
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
there was no one to ______________ her, no one to _______________ with her in her ______________. Her ______________ looked at her and ______________ at her _________________.

18. Being ______________ at, ______________, by the _______________ ________________ ________________ __________________________ must have been a __________________ part of ______________’s ________________.

19. In what ways(s) had Jerusalem become unclean? In what ways had Jerusalem become guilty of “spiritual adultery”? What was appropriate punishment for adultery in ancient times? Was Jerusalem’s punishment appropriate? ____________________________________________________________

20. ______________ took no ________________ of her _________________. she ________________ to consider the ______________ of her ________________ until it was ________________

21. Jerusalem’s uncleanness clung to her clothes. How can we rid our clothes of the stench of our sins? ____________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________
22. “_______________________, O _____________________, on my _____________________, for the _____________________ has _____________________.

23. Of what treasures had Jerusalem’s enemies taken possession?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

24. Gentile pagans had entered the sanctuary. How serious was this? How did the people of Jerusalem feel about this? ______________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

25. How severe was the famine faced by Judah and Jerusalem? _______

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

26. Lamentations 1 was written/spoken by several people/groups to several listeners.

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27. In regard to the sick, needy, downtrodden, lost and imprisoned, “Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?” ______________________________

28. How severe is God’s divine nature? Do we accurately reflect God’s goodness and severity in our preaching/teaching? ______________________________

29. Who brought all these woes on Judah/Jerusalem? ______________________________

30. God sent down ____________________ from ____________________, ____________________ a ____________________, and bound ____________________’s ____________________ into a ____________________. Jerusalem was figuratively afflicted in its ____________________, ____________________ and ____________________.

31. Under what figures does the Bible speak of “the day of his fierce anger”? ______________________________
32. _______________ was left _______________, ____________, filled with ________________, ________________, ________________, ________________, ________________, ________________, ________________, ________________, ________________, ________________, . . .and nobody _______________ or _______________ a _______________ to help. This is what sin will do to you! Don’t ever forget it.

33. _______________ had been handed over to those they could _______________ _______________. _______________ had been _______________ _______________ by the _______________ of their ________________

34. _______________’s _______________ was _______________ in this ________________. God _______________ an _______________ (______________) against Jerusalem that _______________ its ________________

35. The _______________ _______________ the _______________ _______________ in his ________________. the fact that the _______________ had brought _______________ and _______________ on his ________________ increased their ________________. ________________ _______________ and her ________________ _______________ with ________________

36. Jerusalem realized that no one was near to _______________ her, no one was available to _______________ her ________________. Her ________________ were ________________.
37. _____________ thought they would, could never be ____________, ____________, ________________, were ____________, ________________. However, ________________ had become ________________ and would, consequently, be ________________. ________________ was not _________________ to the ________________ of ________________.

38. Jerusalem realized the ________________ was ________________ in punishing her because Jerusalem had ________________ against the ________________’s _________________. Jerusalem was left to ________________ alone for her ________________. Jerusalem made no ________________ for her ________________, a ________________ ________________ ________________ in the ________________ ________________. ________________ had been most ________________.

39. ________________ in every form (______________, ________________ and ________________) are everywhere in ________________ and ________________ as well as in their very ________________ and ________________.

40. Outside, ________________ the ________________, the ________________ ________________; inside, ________________ the ________________, there is only ________________.

41. How would you feel if you had enemies who rejoiced at your distress? __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
42. _____________________ _________________________ ____ that
_____________________, __________________ __________________
would receive what they had ________________ upon _____________.

43. Was it right for Jerusalem whose sins had brought agony on herself
to pray to God to destroy Babylon? Was this retaliation customary
among God’s people in the Old Testament? ______________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

44. _____________________ _________________________ ______________________
______________ _______________. To return to ________________ and his
____________________, __________________ ___________________ is an ____________________ ______________________.

45. Only because of ____________________’s __________________ can
______________________________ ____________________ ________ for ____________________’s ________________________.