Well, it's appropriate that having looked at Jeremiah, we go on to look at Lamentations. They're put together in your Bible precisely because here we have Jeremiah ***WEEPING***. It's one of the saddest books in the whole Bible. I would put it alongside Job. But Job is sad because of a ***PERSONAL*** tragedy, whereas Jeremiah is weeping over a ***NATIONAL*** catastrophe, something that has happened to his whole people, his whole nation, and particularly to the ***CITY*** which he loves Jerusalem. It's written in ***TEARS***. I remember receiving a letter from a man who after he became a Christian, was living in a country where it was a dreadful thing to become a Christian, and they burned his house down with his wife and children inside. They all perished in the fire. And he wrote to tell me about this, and he wrote with blue ink, and I can see the air mail letter now. And the drops of his ***TEARS*** were on the letter, and the ink was running. And yet he was able to say, "I forgive them because Christ forgave me." That was a country where it really cost you your life, or the life of your family to become a believer in Jesus.

And I just feel when I read Lamentations, you can see the ***TEARS*** dropping on the page and making the ink run. Here's a man ***WEEPING*** his heart out. In the ***GREEK*** translation of the Old Testament, it's called simply, "***TEARS***." In the ***HEBREW***, of course, it's simply called, "***HOW***," because that's the first word on the scroll... "***HOW***." But in Greek it's called, "***TEARS***." And the ***LATIN***, from which we get the word, ***'LAMENTATION'*** is also the word for ***TEARS***.

So, here we have a very ***SAD*** book. You can only manage to find a few crumbs of ***COMFORT*** in it. It's really written when he saw the city of Jerusalem absolutely ***DESOLATED***, if you can get a picture of ***HIROSHIMA*** in your mind, and then think that Jeremiah was looking at the city of God, ***JERUSALEM***, and the ***TEMPLE***, and that's all he saw--- the whole thing pulled to the ground and ***BURNT*** and ***DESOLATE***. It'd been a terrible siege--- the last one, ...Terrible!!! Mothers were eating their own babies and even eating the after birth of women who were giving birth--- they were desperate. The whole thing is so, so ***SAD***. And so, he ***WEEPS***.

Now we know Jeremiah was a ***POET***, because most of his prophecies were in poetic form. We know he was also ***MUSICAL***, and he wrote songs. There is this astonishing relationship between ***PROPHECY*** and ***MUSIC***---the spirit of prophecy inspires poetry and music. When ***ZECHARIAH*** prophesied, he asked people to play music to him and then he would prophesy. ***EZEKIEL*** did the same. And ***DAVID*** was the biggest prophet (in a sense) in the Old Testament after Moses and Elijah. David when he died, thanked God that he'd been a prophet and the sweet singer of Israel. And whenever he appointed a choir master, he always appointed a prophet to lead the choir. My how much you need to do that. There used to be a saying in the church circles in which I was brought up, "If the devil wants to join your church, he joins the choir," because when music gets out of hand and becomes professional, it doesn't serve God. And that's why David was careful to say*, "I want singers who are seers."* And people like Asaph he appointed his choir master because he was prophetic, and he could see things God's way. And oh, happy are you if in your church the musicians are prophetic and see things from God's point of view. I'm sorry we just give young inexperienced Christians charge of the music. It is so wrong. They are not mature enough to see what God wants out of music, and it's not fair on them.

Anyway, Jeremiah did compose songs; and he did compose another ***LAMENT*** which is actually mentioned in the book of Chronicles. And it was when the boy king Josiah---mistakenly against the word of the Lord---thought he could defeat the Egyptians and was killed at Megiddo. And, just as David lamented over Saul and Johnathan when they were killed in battle against the Philistines, Jeremiah composed a ***LAMENT*** for the whole nation to sing when the boy King Josiah was dead and the promise of his reign brought to an untimely end. So, Jeremiah was used to writing these songs and here we have a song written by someone who was there. It's written by an ***EYEWITNESS*** (i.e., Jeremiah himself!)

And I want you to see Jeremiah standing, looking at the wrecked buildings and the deserted streets of this city. Everybody's been taken, the Babylonians have left him alone. And you can hear him as he stands there saying, *"Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by... aren't you touched,"* he says *"by such a dreadful sight???"*... because there were still people somewhere in the land, and he would see them wandering past? *"Is it nothing to you, you that pass by???"*

That's how it opens, and it's a remarkable ***LAMENT***. He's saying, *"Look... see... take a look."* Doesn't it touch the very depths of your being? And yet the whole thing is, in a sense, artificially put together. It's ***COMPOSED***. It's not just pouring out his feelings. It's very carefully ***STRUCTURED***. For once, the chapter divisions are in the right place ...hallelujah! And in fact, it is composed of five songs ---***FIVE LAMENTS***. And they are very beautifully and carefully put together.

***Five Emotional Poems With an Acrostic Framework***

Now here's a bit of a ***CONTRADICTION***. On the one hand, here he is pouring out his feelings over the city, and yet he is putting them together in a rather artificial way. And the device he uses is what we call ***ACROSTIC***. And an acrostic is using the letters of the alphabet as a kind of ***FRAMEWORK*** of your song or poem. And these five poems---at least four of them---are acrostic poems. And therefore, they are either 22 verses, or multiples of 22 verses, since there are only 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet (where there are 26 in ours). Ours is A, B, C, D, E, F G and so on ... 26 letters. But the Hebrew only has 22. And incidentally, the Hebrews hadn't any ***VOWELS*** (A,E,I,O and U). They only used ***CONSANANTS***. So *'rabbit'* was spelled *'R-B-T'*. So, they used these 22 consonants, and they just didn't use vowels. So, that's why it's about 22 compared to our 26.

***The Structure of the Five Poems***

The ***FIRST POEM*** has 22 verses---one for each letter---and three lines to each verse. So, each of the three lines begins with the letter A in the first verse, and then the next verse is three lines beginning with B ... and so on. So, that's what we mean by an ***ACROSTIC***. Similarly, the ***SECOND*** ***POEM*** he wrote to be sung, is also an acrostic of 22 verses with three lines to each verse. And each verse begins with one letter. But the ***THIRD POEM*** is much longer, and there are 66 verses in which each of three verses is ... sorry I misled you here. The three lines don't all begin with the letter. The ***FIRST LINE*** begins with the letter. And the first line begins with the letter. But here we have three verses for each letter and each with three lines. So, it's three times as long. And that's the major chapter (i.e., the third chapter) that we are going to look at. The ***FOURTH CHAPTER*** goes back to 22 verses with two lines to each verse now. But again, the first line begins with the next letter of the alphabet. The only one that doesn't follow the letters of the alphabet is the ***LAST ONE*** (i.e., the ***FIFTH ONE***), and it's not acrostic. But in fact, it is still 22 verses. So, that there is a kind of ***ARTIFICIAL CONSTRUCTION*** here---there's something that's been thought through.

***Why Did He Use the Alphabet?***

And just as a little experiment, I was asking myself, "Why did he use such a strange device as the ***ALPHABET*** to express his feelings?" I tried to think, "Well, did that make it easy to remember?" ... possibly. And then I thought, "Well, does this kind of express his ***TOTAL GRIEF***---his 'A to Z' grief---as if he's saying, *'It's just, you know, alpha to omega. It's beginning to end, it's just total grief.' "* I thought, "No, that doesn't quite make sense --- running the whole gamut of his feelings." And then I tried a little experiment, and I don"t know what you'll think of this. I took a piece of paper (there it is), and I wrote down A, B, C, D, E, F, G ... the 26 letters of our alphabet. And I thought, *"I wonder if that would help me to pour out the* ***TEACHING*** *of Lamentations---the* ***THEMES*** *of lamentations. I wonder if an alphabet helps you to express yourself when you can't put things into words."* And I found that's exactly what it does. And it took me less than two minutes to write out Jeremiah's Lamentations against the letters of the English alphabet. And I thought, "So that's why he probably used it: because he was finding it so difficult to put his feelings into words that he just wrote down the alphabet." And I found that it's much ***EASIER*** to compose a ***LAMENTATION*** when you've got a bit of a start with the ***LETTER***. Do you follow me? Because that ***LIMITS*** the words you can use. And I just say that this took about a minute and a half to write. I'm not claiming it's great. But I just found it ***FLOWED***, because the letter gave me something to hang my thoughts on. Do you follow? So, I just read it through, but actually I think it ***SUMMARIZES*** the whole book of Lamentations.

So, I wrote A, B, C, D and then I began to just write. ***(A) AWFUL*** is the sight of the ruined city. ***(B) BLOOD*** flows down the streets. ***(C) CATASTROPHE*** has come to my people. ***(D) DREADFUL*** is their fate. ***(E) EVERY*** house has been destroyed. ***(F) FAMILIES*** are broken forever. ***(G) GOD*** promised he would do this. ***(H) HOLY*** is his name. ***(I) I*** am worn out with weeping, ***(J) JUST*** broken in spirit. ***(L) LET*** me die like the others, ***(M) MY life*** has no meaning. ***(N) NEVER*** again will I laugh, ***(O) OR*** dance for joy. ***(P) PLEASE*** comfort me, Lord. ***(Q) QUIETEN*** my spirit. ***(R) REMIND*** me of your future plans. ***(S) SAVE*** your people from despair. ***(T) TELL*** them you still love them. ***(U) UNDERSTAND*** their feelings. ***(V) VENT*** your anger on their destroyers. ***(X) EXTERMINATE*** our enemies. ***(W) WE*** will again exalt your name, ***(Z) ZEALOUS*** for your reputation.

And I found that I've covered ***EVERY NOTE*** that is sounded in Lamentations; and just putting down the alphabet helped me to do that. And I just felt I understood why he used the ***ALPHABET***. He was wanting to get his feelings down on paper, but not knowing where to begin. And so, he just wrote down the alphabet and said, *"That'll help me get going."* And I just sensed---maybe I'm wrong---I just sensed, "Hey, I think that's why he did it. It just helped him to get it out and to think of a word that began with the next letter to move him on." Well, you can make of that what you will, but we need to ***REMEMBER THE PAST*** to learn from it.

***It Was Written to Encourage Others to Grieve With Him***

I then began to ask ***WHY*** did he write all these? And I realized he wanted others to ***WEEP WITH HIM*** and to ***SING*** these songs. And I think he wanted to send them to the people taken away in exile that they might express their feelings too. One of the most important things when you've gone through a disaster, is to express your feelings---***TO GRIEVE***. It is cruel to the bereaved to say, "Oh, she was so brave, she never shed a tear." That is so wrong. We need to ***HELP*** people to get it out. And both the ***JEWS*** and the ***CATHOLICS*** are the best at handling bereavement, because they have a tradition of wakes, when they ***ENCOURAGE TEARS***. And throughout the Bible, tears are encouraged: "Get it out; don't suppress it."

But I'm afraid English public-school ***STOICISM***---taken from Greek stoicism---says, "Don't wear your heart on your sleeve," and you know, "Keep a stiff upper lip." I'm afraid we admire people who ***DON'T WEEP*** in western civilization---which comes from Greece, from ***GREEK*** ***THINKING***, and not from Hebrew thinking. An American Vice President broke down in tears at one of his election meetings. His name was off the list immediately. We don't want a president who cries. Same thing happened to Bob Hawke in Australia. He went onto television and the interviewer asked him about his drug addict daughter. And he burst into tears. And I'm afraid the tough Australians looked down on Bob Hawke from the none. But in ***ISRAEL***, a man would never be able to be prime minister unless he can weep over the grave of an Israeli soldier. Because in Israel---in ***HEBREW THINKING***---it takes a man to weep. Interesting, isn't it? That's why ***JESUS*** wept openly over Jerusalem, as ***JEREMIAH*** does here. It's not a sissy thing to do, it's a ***MANLY*** thing to do: to be able to ***CRY***.

***First Poem Pronoun: 'SHE'---The City and People***

Well, let's look at the poems. The next thing I noticed about the poems was that the ***PERSONAL PRO***NOUN changes with each chapter. The ***FIRST POEM***, the personal pronoun, is ***'SHE'***, referring to the ***CITY*** and to the ***PEOPLE*** of the city, who are called 'daughters of Jerusalem'. And cities are seen as feminine... and the people of the city are seen as feminine. That's even a tradition in English, but it is in Hebrew. And so, cities are ***FEMALE***. And at the end of the book of Revelation, Babylon is ***'SHE'***, the filthy prostitute and Jerusalem is ***'SHE'***, the bride coming down out of heaven. So, that's about the city and its inhabitants.

***Second Poem Pronoun: 'HE'---God***

Then in the ***SECOND POEM***, the personal pronoun is all ***'HE'*** and it is a poem about the person who's ***CAUSED*** all this disaster: ***'HE'***--it's about ***GOD***.

***Third Poem Pronoun: 'i'---Jeremiah***

And then the ***THIRD POEM***, the longest becomes very personal. And it's all about ***JEREMIAH*** himself. ***"I"*** becomes very personal.

***Fourth Poem Pronoun: 'THEY'---Babylon***

And then (the ***FOURTH POEM***) his vision goes out to the nations, and he talks about ***'THEY'***. He's talking about those who have attacked the city.

***Fifth Poem Pronoun: 'WE'---the Exiles***

And finally (the ***FIFTH POEM***) he identifies with the people who have gone into ***EXILE***---who will one day return---and talks about ***'WE'***.

Now again, you can see when you studied the Bible carefully, notice ***LITTLE WORDS***. Notice the ***PERSONAL PRONOUNS***---they're a clue to what it's all about. Do you see? If you just read through Lamentations--- you've probably done so---you can just read it through and not notice that you've got ***FIVE*** very different ***THEMES*** here. I've given them a different title.

***The Five Themes of the Poems***

The ***FIRST POEM*** I've called ***'CATASTROPHE'***. Look at the ruined city and her daughters. The ***SECOND POEM*** I've called, "***CAUSE***." He did it... God did it; and he did it because of our sin. The ***THIRD POEM***, the "***Cure***." And he realizes in himself that God's ***MERCY*** is still available, and his ***FAITHFULNESS*** is still there. And he cries out for that faithfulness. I'll come back to all these. Next (the ***FOURTH POEM***), the ***'CONSEQUENCES'***. What will happen as a result of all this? And finally (the ***FIFTH POEM***), the ***'CRY FROM HIS HEART'***... cry from his heart, *'We'*. And he pleads for the future of his people.

***Poem 1: 'Catastrophe'***

Very moving these poems. Let's just go through them in a greater detail. I don't think I need to say more about the ***FIRST***---the ***'CATASTROPHE'***---you know what it was. The whole city had been besieged and then destroyed, taken down stone by stone. The ***TEMPLE*** was gone, the ***HOUSES*** were gone, the ***PEOPLE*** were gone. It was just a ruin... empty... ***DESOLATE***. And the description of it in that first poem is vivid.

***Poem 2: The 'Cause'***

Then the ***SECOND POEM***, he faces the fact that it need ***NEVER HAVE HAPPENED***! That's what makes him really sad---that it could have been avoided. Even had his advice been taken to ***SURRENDER*** to the Babylonians and not try to hold out against them, the city would still be standing. That's what gets him. It was also ***UNECESSARY***. Now, when you see people ruined because they didn't take your advice, that is so painful... when you knew you could have helped them to ***AVOID IT ALL***. And that second poem brings out this ***MENTAL ANGUISH*** of Jeremiah... that God had had to do it because God ***PROMISED*** to do it. But he could have changed his mind had they ***REPENTED***. The frustration of that---of the ***WASTED OPPORTUNITY*** that he'd given them---comes out very much in that second poem.

And in every poem, the ***ANGER OF GOD*** is mentioned---five times--- because there comes a time when God's anger ***BOILS OVER***. There are ***TWO KINDS*** of anger in the Bible. There's the anger that ***GOES IN*** and the anger that ***COMES OUT***. (And I'm gonna ask you in a moment which kind of anger YOU have problems with.) When it ***GOES IN***, you just go quiet and silent, and it burns away inside, and it is ***SLOW ANGER***. It simmers and it can simmer for a long time. Then there's a kind of ***QUICK TEMPER*** that comes out and ***BLAZES AWAY***, and it's over with. I don't know which kind of anger you prefer to live with, but I'm sure you have one or the other problems... some of you might even have ***BOTH***. Let's have a show of hands. Those who find that their anger tends to ***GO IN*** and that simmers inside and those who have problems with an anger that ***COME OUT*** suddenly---and notice that I didn't put my hand up either way... probably the second.

But which kind of anger do you think ***GOD'S ANGER*** is--First or the Second? The answer is ***BOTH***. You wives, have you ever put a pan of ***MILK*** on the stove and forgotten about it... and ***SUDDENLY*** you're rushing around the kitchen like a mad woman to get the pan of, and it's all burning. Had you stayed there and watched it, that wouldn't have happened because you'd have seen it ***SIMMERING***, right? You'd have seen it coming up, and you could have saved the situation. The whole emphasis in the Bible on ***GOD'S ANGER*** is, if you watch it ***SIMMERING***, you can stop it ***BOILING OVER***. But if you're not watching God carefully and you don't see it ***SIMMERING***, you won't notice it until it ***BOILS OVER,*** and the disaster happens. Do you see?

That comes out in Paul's teaching in Romans on the ***WRATH OF GOD***. It's the same teaching. And what he says in Romans one, is that God's anger is ***ALREADY SIMMERING***, and the signs of its simmering are there. And he gives you the ***SIGNS*** to look for, one of which is increasing homosexuality. Did you realize that's a ***SIGN*** of God's anger is ***SIMMERING***? Read Romans one; the people exchange natural relationships for unnatural. Another ***SIGN*** is antisocial behavior and breakdown of family life. These are all ***SYMPTOMS***, If you're watching, that show God's anger is ***SIMMERING*** against a people. And all that's going to go on until it ***BOILS OVER***, and then everybody will know He's ***ANGRY***. Book of Revelation, same thing.

And so, we have this ***ANGER OF GOD*** in all these five poems. And Jeremiah's problem is, when it was ***SIMMERING***, nobody would take it seriously. That's why it ***BOILED OVER*** and the ***CRISIS*** came. My, how we need to be ***AWARE*** of God's feelings, so that we are ***AWARE*** when it's ***SIMMERING*** against us, so that it doesn't ***BOIL OVER***. But that's the ***ANGER OF GOD***.

***Poem 3: The 'Cure'***

Now the ***THIRD POEM*** is the personal one... and there's a lovely phrase in it that we're gonna sing in a moment, because it's become one of our favorite ***HYMNS***.

He realizes that God could have wiped out ***ALL*** the people as well in His anger, but He ***HADN'T***. He sent them to Babylon, but they were still alive. The ***PEOPLE*** had not been ***EXTINGUISHED***. The ***NATION*** was still a nation. And he said, *"It's of your* ***MERCIES*** *that we are not* ***CONSUMED****."* ‘*Consumed’* means *'totally destroyed'*. And God's mercy, he praises in that third poem. The ***ANGER*** is still there, but he praises His ***MERCY***.

Now, sometimes I feel like a Christian first thing in the morning... not often, but sometimes when I wake up, I feel like a Christian. I don't feel like a Christian in the middle of the night when Australians love to phone me up. And they don't get a very Christian response at my end of the phone. In fact, one man rang me up and he said, "I thought I'd catch you just before you got to bed," and this was three in the morning. He said, "I've got a new watch that tells me what time it is all over the world." And I said, did you set the watch? But anyway, sometimes when I wake up in the morning, I feel like a Christian. So, I go downstairs to make the tea. See, my wife always had a daily fix. I didn't, until I got married. But now I have to have this daily fix to get going. And so, I go down and I go out of the front door (when there's no milk in the fridge) and I pick up two bottles of milk, walk back in with them. It's cold out there. And I never do it without thinking of a verse in Lamentations chapter three, "*Your* ***MERCIES*** *are fresh every morning."* And I come back in and I just run quickly through my mind, the ***MERCIES*** of God.

I'm fairly fit for an old-age pensioner. That's a ***MERCY***, It's not a right. I've got work to do. That's not a right, that's a ***MERCY***. We've got a home to live in---a roof over our heads. That's not a right, that's a ***MERCY***, because I don't deserve any of them. And you're able to say, *"Father, your* ***MERCIES*** *are fresh every morning; great is your* ***FAITHFULNESS****."* You see, the world lives by merit, M-E-R-I-T. We live in a ‘meritocracy’. You get what you work for. But in the kingdom of heaven, the basis of life is M-E-R-C-Y, mercy. The world talks about ***RIGHTS*** and holds its fists like this: "I demand my rights!" The Christian says, "I have no rights, I don't deserve a thing, therefore, what I receive is a ***MERCY***." "

*“And Your* ***MERCIES*** *are fresh every morning."* It's a beautiful phrase. And it's right there in the ***MIDDLE*** of this very personal poem that's about his ***OWN FEELINGS***. And he manages to get over the grief by realizing that God has not consumed ***EVERYBODY***, and that in His ***MERCY*** He's kept some of them alive; and that, *"His* ***MERCIES*** *are fresh every morning."* I love that poem. We're gonna sing about it in a moment. Then he moves on.

***Poem 4: The 'Consequences'***

Now it's ***'THEY'***. He's talking about other people, not about himself now. And he recalls that when people ***REPENT***, God can ***CURE*** the problem; but that if they ***DON'T***, He has to ***PUNISH***. I'm sorry, I'm getting a little mixed up, not cure, that the ***CONSEQUENCES of NOT REPENTING*** are what he's seen. And he wants everybody to know this---***THEM*** out there. He wants the message to get right out.

***Poem 5: The 'Cry From His Heart"***

And then he moves on from that to the ***CRY***. And the last (***FIFTH***) poem is simply a ***PRAYER***. It's a plea for God's mercy to ***RESTORE*** the nation one day and put them back in their land.

***Other Themes: The 'Mercy of God' and 'Sin'***

The ***OTHER THEME*** that comes in all five, apart from the anger of God and the wrath of God, is the ***MERCY*** of God.

And there is ***ANOTHER THEME*** that comes all the way through too. And that is the word ***'SIN'***. I read a statement recently I couldn't believe, and I checked it out and it's true that almost every page of the Old Testament has ***'SIN'*** in it. Sometimes just the WORD, sometimes the ***ACTION***. But the ***OLD TESTAMENT*** is full of ***SIN***. ***NEW TESTAMENT'S*** full of ***SALVATION***. There is salvation on almost every page. But in the Old Testament it's ***SIN***. And Jeremiah acknowledges honestly its ***'SINS'*** that have done all this. But he cries to God for ***MERCY***. ***SIN*** deserves punishment, but he's crying to God for something more than they deserve: the ***MERCY*** that will ***RESTORE*** them. That's why we call this book ***'LAMENTATIONS'*** (plural), because it's really ***FIVE*** different songs of lament and sorrow.

***Jewish Annual Reading of The Book of Lamentations***

Now let's move on. To this very day the whole of Lamentations is sung ***ONCE A YEAR*** in every synagogue. It's sung on the particular date, the 9th of Aviv, A-V-I-V. But it's pronounced like a 'V'. On the ninth of Aviv---which is the month of July in our calendar---it is sung every year, because that is the ***EXACT DATE*** on which the Babylonians destroyed the temple.

And so, every year to this day, Jews who remember the Exodus in the Passover, they remember the ***LOSS OF THE TEMPLE*** on the ninth of Aviv. Every July you can go to the synagogue, and you'll hear them sing---and they sing it in such a ***MOURNFUL*** voice. When you hear a rabbi ***LAMENTING***... boy, I've never heard such music to go through your heart. I once had to speak outside the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem (that's the memorial to the Holocaust... 6 million dead), and there were hundreds of Jews and Christians in the courtyard outside against the row of trees which commemorate the righteous gentiles. There's a tree for Corrie Ten Boom, for example, and others who saved Jews in the Holocaust. And I stood there, and it began with Mervin and Mella Watson from Canada singing and playing a lament. And Mella Watson just stood up with her violin, and she just played in the ***SPIRIT OF LAMENT***. Then a rabbi got up with a beard, and he sang ***LAMENTATION***. I've never heard anything like it. And then I had to speak after that. And we were going to do it two days running. But God was so powerfully present on that one day, that we couldn't repeat it. I said, "I can't do that again." And it was so powerful. There's something about ***LAMENTING***. And all their history seemed to come out in their dirge. And you'll hear that if you go to a synagogue every July. The amazing thing is that the ninth of Abib---or *'Aviv'*, as we should call it---is not only the day they lost the ***FIRST TEMPLE***, it's the same day identically that Titus came in AD 70 and smashed the ***SECOND TEMPLE***. On the exact date when they were lamenting the loss of the ***FIRST***, they lost the ***SECOND***. And Jesus, of course, ***PREDICTED*** that.

***Parallels Between Jeremiah and Jesus***

Which brings me to a very ***IMPORTANT POINT***. Just as ***JEREMIAH*** came to warn them about the ***FIRST*** loss of the temple, ***JESUS*** came to warn them about the ***SECOND***. And that is why ***JESUS*** and ***JEREMIAH*** have been bracketed ***TOGETHER*** so often. When Jesus said to the disciples, *"Who do men say that I am?"* They said, *"Well, some say you're* ***JEREMIAH*** *come back. You're a reincarnation of Jeremiah."* Now why would they make that link? Well, because Jesus himself made it. He was the *'good shepherd'* whom Jeremiah had predicted. He was the *'Davidic king'*, he was the *'redeemer'*, the *'great physician'*. But even more Jeremiah's life was a ***PERFECT PARALLEL*** to Jesus' life. *"A man's foes shall be there of his own household".* That's Jeremiah's word. That's Jesus... because the first time they tried to kill him was in the little town of Nazareth where he'd been brought up and they tried to throw him off a cliff.

The ***PARALLEL*** is remarkable. Jesus escaped five assassination attempts. Like Jeremiah, his life was very near the end... more than once they tried to stone him, they tried to throw him off a cliff. You read, there were ***FIVE ATTEMPTS***, but Jesus always got free and said, *"My time has not come yet."* And when Jesus cleansed the temple and went in with a whip against the Jews---who were turning the temple into a greedy money changer's center---what did he say, but quote Jeremiah; *"How dare you make my father's house into a den of thieves."* ***JESUS*** was a ***JEREMIAH***. And in the popular mind they saw this. And so, he spoke to them... he said, *"You stone the prophets, and then you erect their memorials."* Jeremiah himself at one stage said, *"I feel like a lamb led to the slaughter."* Who does that remind you of? One of the most ***AMAZING*** ***COINCIDENCES*** is this: on the north side of Jerusalem is a cave where there is a very strong Jewish tradition which calls it *'Jeremiah's grotto'*, because they believed that that's where Jeremiah went to pray when he was lonely and hurt and in pain, and you can go and see that grotto. It's a cave in a hill called Golgotha. It's just around the corner from the garden tomb and the face of the skull. *'Jeremiah's grotto'* is next door to where we believe Jesus died on the cross.

I once spent a night in that hill---inside the hill. I slept all night in a cave next to the tomb. I didn't sleep a wink. It was the most unusual experience, lying on a camp bed in that cave near where Jeremiah prayed... and just underneath where the cross was... and next to the empty tomb. Jeremiah is linked with Jesus all the way through. One of the things Jesus said on His way up to Calvary is one of the tests I often give when I want to test whether people know the Bible. I say, "I'm gonna give you a a text ...or a statement; I want you to tell me if it comes from the New Testament, the Old Testament, or William Shakespeare." Then I take a vote on it. And the statement is this, *"If they do these things in the* ***GREEN TREE****, what shall be done in the* ***DRY****?"* And it's what Jesus said as He carried His cross, when He said, *"Daughters of Jerusalem, don't weep for me, weep for yourselves; for the days are coming..."* And He was pointing to AD 70, just 40 years ahead---40 years being the ***TIME*** OF ***TESTING***. And God gave the Jews 40 years to respond to His crucified and risen son. But they didn't. And 40 years later, the temple was pulled down again. An amazing ***PARALLEL***.

***Two Reasons Why Lamentations Is In the Bible***

But I want to ***FINISH***. ***WHY*** is the book of Lamentations in our Bible? Why do we need to read it? Well, there are ***TWO REASONS***. **1)** ***ONE*** is that the ***CHURCH*** could suffer the ***SAME FATE***. There are ***TWO DESTINIES*** held before believers in the New Testament. ***ONE*** (possible destiny) is, "*weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."* Whenever Jesus said that He was talking to ***BELIEVERS***---His own disciples. And (***TWO***) the other possible destiny for us, as the people of God, is: *"God will wipe away all tears from their eyes."* And in a sense, the two destinies facing us are ***WEEPING FOREVER***, or having God ***WIPING AWAY THE TEARS***. Love that verse. I just see God taking a great big hanky out and saying, *"There's no need to cry anymore. Come here, I'll wipe away the tears."* That's what a good father does. And that phrase occurs twice in the Book of Revelation: *"And God shall* ***WIPE AWAY*** *all tears."* You either weep ***FOREVER*** or you have your tears ***WIPED AWAY***.

And not only that, but **2)** ***THE WORLD*** is facing this, because the book that quotes Jeremiah and Lamentations more than any other is the ***BOOK OF REVELATION***. Half of the quotes from Jeremiah are in the Book of Revelation. And they're applied to the city of ***BABYLON***, which is the final world finance center---the city that's going to be destroyed. And when Babylon is destroyed, the ***WORLD*** will weep over it. But it says, the ***CHRISTIANS*** will sing the ‘*Hallelujah Chorus’*. Very few people ***listening*** to Handel's Messiah and that magnificent *"Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah,"* (do you know, the chorus?) realize that it's a celebration that the World Stock Exchange has ***GONE BUST***, and that the world banks have all ***GONE BANKRUPT***---that the whole system that man was building up has ***COLLAPSED***. I tell you, the only people singing in that day will be the ***CHRISTIANS***. Nobody else will be. They'll all be ***WEEPING*** and ***MOURNING***.

And so, this Revelation chapter 18 finishes with quote after quote from ***JEREMIAH*** and ***LAMENTATIONS***, and finishes, *"Woe, woe, oh great city. In one hour, she has been brought to ruin."* So, it's an appropriate song, which one day the ***WORLD*** will sing. But when the world sings it, ***WE'LL*** be singing the *'Hallelujah Chorus'*, because God will bring a new city down from heaven to earth---the ***NEW JERUSALEM***, like a bride adorned for her husband. That's where we're gonna live on a ***NEW EARTH***, in a **NEW JERUSALEM**... forever and ever with our Father, His Son, and the Spirit. Amen.