

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 62.1%

Weekly Readings will cover:

Sunday: 2 Kings 25:22, Jeremiah 39:11 – 18 & Jeremiah 40:1 – 6

Monday: Introduction to Lamentations and Lamentations 1

Tuesday: Lamentation 2

Wednesday: Lamentation 3

Thursday: Lamentation 4

Friday: Lamentation 5

Saturday: Introduction to Obadiah & Obadiah 1

Current # of email addresses in the group: 627

This next week we start and finish two new books: Lamentations & Obadiah!  
I hope you each have a great week!

Current and archive of this reading program is available at:

<https://www.ucg.org/congregations/san-francisco-bay-area-ca/announcements/audio-links-re-three-year-chronological-deep>

The audio archive information is also available on our UCG Bay Area YouTube page here:  
[https://youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792?si=EA\\_tacLBfv1XR3jH](https://youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792?si=EA_tacLBfv1XR3jH)

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<https://www.youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792/playlists>

### **3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 95**

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 638 – SUNDAY: May 11<sup>th</sup>

2 Kings 25:22, Jeremiah 39:11 – 18 & Jeremiah 40:1 – 6

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Jeremiah's experience provides a wonderful lesson for all Christians. No matter what we face in life, we can count on God seeing us through—sometimes in the most unexpected of ways.

After decades of living under constant threat to his life and having just spent the past two years in prison, Jeremiah is at last set free—by the Babylonians of all people. While God was ultimately behind this, it nevertheless makes sense politically on a human level. In its note on [Jeremiah 39:11-14](#), The Expositor's Bible Commentary explains: "Undoubtedly the Babylonians had favorable information about Jeremiah and probably considered him a sympathizer. Besides, those who had deserted Judah in the siege gave a report of him. Jeremiah's advice about submitting to Babylon even during the siege had been proclaimed over so long a time that it could not have escaped the attention of the Babylonian authorities. They realized that he was no threat to them. Paradoxically he was treated better by foreign invaders than by his own countrymen whom he so dearly loved (v. 12)."

Moreover, "Prophets whose words were deemed verified were generally treated well by peoples of the ancient Middle East" (Nelson Study Bible, note on 40:2-3). In any case, "word was passed along (v. 13) to release Jeremiah from the courtyard of the guard and entrust him to Gedaliah, the appointed governor, with whom he was to remain (v. 14). Gedaliah was the son of Ahikam, who had been active in saving Jeremiah's life [during Jehoiakim's reign] (cf. 26:24). For three generations [Gedaliah's] family had been true to the word of the Lord that came through his prophets" (Expositor's, note on [Jeremiah 39:11-14](#)). Gedaliah's father Ahikam and his father Shaphan had both served as important officials during Josiah's reign (see [2 Kings 22:12](#); Chronicles 34:20).

"Since Nebuchadnezzar was fond of Jeremiah, Gedaliah's [well-known] relationship with the prophet could have influenced Nebuchadnezzar's choice of him as governor of Judah" (Mastering the Old Testament, Vol. 9: 1, 2 Kings by Russell Dilday, 1987). Moreover, "of the prominent men of Jerusalem, only Jeremiah and Gedaliah were left behind ([2 Kings 25] v. 22; cf. [Jeremiah 39:11-14](#))... Accordingly

Gedaliah, who probably had the needed training, seemed the logical choice to be Babylon's governor designate over the newly formed district" (Expositor's, note on [2 Kings 25:22-24](#)).

Remarkably, archaeology has confirmed Gedaliah's importance: "A clay seal-impression found at Lachish reads: 'Belonging to Gedaliah, who is over the house.' The title 'who is over the house' was reserved for the highest office at the royal court next to the king. In the Bible, this title was held by Shebna, under king Hezekiah, until Shebna was reduced in rank to a scribe ([Isaiah 22:15-7](#); [Isaiah 36:3](#); [2 Kings 18:18](#))" (Walter Kaiser Jr., A History of Israel, 1988, pp. 405-406).

[Jeremiah 39:11-14](#) and [Jeremiah 40:1-6](#) give us two accounts of Jeremiah's release, and some have seen a contradiction between them. "But," notes Expositor's, "the passages may be harmonized in this way: (1) at the command of Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah was released from prison and committed to the care of Gedaliah; (2) while captives were being transferred to Babylon, Jeremiah mingled with the people (cf. 39:14) to comfort and instruct them in their new life (3) in the confusion of the mass deportation, Jeremiah was not recognized by the soldiers who placed him in chains with the others; and (4) at Ramah [about five miles north of Jerusalem] he was recognized by officials and released (40:1)...Perhaps the situation was that those who had not borne arms, among them Jeremiah, were taken by the Babylonians to Ramah as prisoners until Nebuchadnezzar decided their fate. Later, when Nebuzaradan came to Jerusalem to carry out the king's commands regarding the city, at the special order of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan sent for Jeremiah from the prisoners taken to Ramah, freed him, and allowed him to choose his residence. In a condensed account, Jeremiah's release from his imprisonment might be spoken of as a sending for him out of prison, even though at the exact time of his liberation he was not in the courtyard of the palace guard in

Jerusalem but had already been carried away to Ramah as an exile" (note on 39:11-14).

Nebuzaradan recognizes that Judah's fall is the result of the Jews' sin against their God. "Consider the irony of a foreigner stating the truth concerning the reason for Jerusalem's destruction" (Nelson Study Bible, note on 40:2-3). Releasing God's prophet, Nebuzaradan gives him the choice of where to go. Apparently God told Jeremiah what to do or the mention of the "word...from the LORD" in verse 1 seems out of context. (Perhaps verse 1 should properly read, as in the NIV, "The word came..." rather than the NKJV rendering, "The word that came...")

The prophet goes to the new provincial capital of Mizpah to serve under Gedaliah, "staying with his people not far from his hometown [of Anathoth] and the property he had purchased while in the court of the prison ([Jeremiah 32:1-15](#)). Mizpah was about eight miles north of Jerusalem," and thus just a few miles north of Ramah (Nelson Study Bible, note on 40:6).

But before leaving, Jeremiah has a message to relay that God had given him while he was still in prison. During Jeremiah's terrible ordeal in the prison dungeon or cistern, a lone voice had cried out to rescue him—the voice of an Ethiopian eunuch for whom we don't even have a real name. He is simply referred to as Ebed-Melech, meaning "the king's servant." For reasons that are not explained, Zedekiah made an uncharacteristic decision and Jeremiah was taken out of the cistern. Notice, too, that Ebed-Melech's faith was a key element in this story ([Jeremiah 39:18](#)). Being a foreigner didn't exempt him from God's grace and care. As the apostle Peter would later come to understand, "God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" ([Acts 10:34-35](#)).

The contrast between most of the Jews at that time and Ebed-Melech illustrates an important principle—that loyalty to God is

ultimately an individual matter, not a collective one. A Christian's salvation depends on his own dedication to, and personal reliance on, God—not a particular nationality at that time or membership in a specific church organization today (compare [Philippians 2:12](#)). God had promised the Israelites that if they obeyed Him, they would be blessed. But He also promised that foreigners who lived in Israel would share in Israel's blessings if they, too, followed Him ([Exodus 12:49](#); [Leviticus 19:34](#); [25:35](#)). He chose Israel in the first place not to make them an exclusive race, but rather to make them into a model people whereby all nations could learn of His ways and receive His benefits.

Like Jeremiah's faith, Ebed-Melech's was rewarded by God—as our own faith will be if we put our trust in Him.” [END]

### Day 639 – MONDAY: May 12<sup>th</sup>

Introduction to Lamentations and Lamentations 1

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “The author of Lamentations is not named in the book, but it is traditionally attributed to the prophet Jeremiah. "In fact, some copies of the ancient Greek Septuagint translation begin the book with these words: 'And it came to pass, after Israel [i.e., the remnant of Israel—Judah] had been carried captive, and Jerusalem became desolate, that Jeremiah sat weeping, and lamented this lamentation over Jerusalem.' Crediting Lamentations to Jeremiah is based on the following considerations: (1) Jeremiah was known as a composer of laments (see [2 Chronicles 35:25](#)). (2) Jeremiah was the prophet who mourned, 'Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!' (see [Jeremiah 9:1](#)). (3) In [Lamentations] 3:1, the author seems to identify himself with Jeremiah when he says, 'I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath.' (4) There are many linguistic

similarities between Lamentations and Jeremiah" (The Nelson Study Bible, introductory notes on Lamentations.)

"In the Talmud (Baba Bathra 15a), this book is called qinot ('Lamentations')... The name commonly used in Hebrew, however, is ekah ('How'), the first word of the first, second, and fourth laments [that is, chapters 1, 2 and 4]. In the Hebrew canon it stands in the Writings as the third of the Megilloth, or Scrolls, between Ruth and Ecclesiastes" (Expositor's Bible Commentary, introductory notes on Lamentations). We are reading it now to keep it in the context of its writing in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

"The five chapters of Lamentations are five poems with ch[apter] 3 as the midpoint or climax. Accordingly, the first two chapters build an 'ascent,' or crescendo, to the climax, the grand confession of [Lamentations 3:23-24](#): 'Great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion.' The last two chapters are a 'descent,' or decrescendo, from the pinnacle of ch[apter] 3... The poetry of the book enhances its purpose and structure. Chapters 1 through 4 are composed as acrostics of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each verse or group of verses begins with a word whose initial letter carries on the sequence of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. This would be similar to an English poem in which the first line begins with A; the second begins with B, and so on. One purpose of this device was probably to aid in memorization of the passage. The acrostic also suggests that the writer has thought things through and is giving a complete account of the subject" (Nelson Study Bible, introductory notes on Lamentations).

While chapter 1 is a perfect acrostic, chapters 2-4 are slightly imperfect, and oddly enough for the same reason. In each case the 16th and 17th letters of the Hebrew alphabet (ayin and pe) are swapped—for what significance we don't know. The acrostic in chapter 3 comes in groups of three—that is, each of the first three



verses begins with the first Hebrew letter aleph, each of the second three with the second letter beth, etc. (see Expositor's, introductory notes on Lamentations). And then there is the mysterious chapter 5, intriguingly not an acrostic even though it still seems to divide up into 22 verses. "That chapter 5 has twenty-two verses has caused some to suggest that the laments were first written in normal verse and then rewritten to include the acrostic. This idea is ingenious but unprovable" (same note).

Other laments are written in various books like the book of Psalms, but this is the only book solely devoted to lamenting. Orthodox Jewish custom requires that this book be read aloud on the fast of Tisha b'Av, the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Ab—the traditional day on which the temple of Solomon was destroyed in 586 B.C. and on which the second temple was destroyed by the Roman army in A.D. 70. Jeremiah was present at the destruction of Solomon's temple as Jerusalem was overrun and sacked by the Babylonian armies. He saw the horrifying imagery described in the book. And yet the terrible suffering portrayed seems to reflect even more than what occurred at that time. It evidently anticipates suffering that was, and still is, yet to come—for the judgment described here is what is to befall "all the dwelling places of Jacob...every horn of Israel" ([Lamentations 2:2-3](#)), not just Judah. The book, as we will see, calls for the coming of the Day of the Lord and the final judgment on Israel's enemies. Yet there is no question that the ancient anguish and suffering of Judah is also vividly revealed in the pages of this deeply emotional account.

In its introductory notes on the book, The Bible Reader's Companion (Lawrence Richards, 1991) states: "Lamentations does maintain a consistent theological outlook: Judah's [and later all Israel's] loss can be traced to God's sovereignty, His justice, and His commitment to a morality which His people abandoned. Yet Lamentations is primarily a book that plumbs the depths of human sorrow, not from an individual's perspective, but from the

perspective of an entire people. Reading the book we experience something of the overwhelming sense of despair that can grip communities and even whole nations. Even the prayers recorded in Lamentations are desperate prayers; cries of anguish rather than affirmations of hope. It is terrible as well as wonderful to be human. It is terrible indeed if we surrender to our human bent to sin. The day must come when we will look back on our lost opportunities, and realize that the misery we endure now is a consequence of our own chronic craving for sin. If nothing else, reading the Book of Lamentations reminds us the pleasures of sin are at best momentary, the painful consequences lasting and deep."

The Desolation and Misery of Jerusalem

"The first dirge (1:1-22) focuses on the city of Jerusalem. The poet sees the city as a grieving widow, bereft of her children, dirty, poverty-stricken, and despised, bitterly remembering happier times (vv. 1-11b). The tearful city cries out to God. She describes the utter contempt others have for her, hoping desperately to awaken God's compassion (vv. 11c-16). The poet cries out too (v. 17), and then records Jerusalem's confession. It is Zion's own sin that caused God to judge her with the present distress" (Bible Reader's Companion, chapters 1-3 summary).

Jerusalem should be understood literally as the ancient city in which Jeremiah dwelt—spoiled by the Babylonian invasion. But it also represents all Judah—and even Jacob (verse 17), meaning all Israel. Again, this points to the time of the end, when Israel and Judah will be punished together during the time of "Jacob's trouble," the "great tribulation" ([Jeremiah 30:7](#); [Matthew 24:21-22](#)).

In [Lamentations 1:5](#) it is "recognized that Jerusalem's disasters were a result of her breach of the covenant; here [in verses 8-9] she is compared to a debased, slatternly harlot, shamelessly exposing her nakedness and indifferent to the marks of menstrual blood—'filthiness'—on her garments, while 'people shake their heads at her'... Since harlotry is repeatedly used for Israel's idolatry and Baal



worship, it is obviously implied here" (Expositor's Bible Commentary, note on verses 8-9).

Verse 9 says, "She did not consider her destiny; therefore her collapse was awesome." Failing to consider her destiny could be understood in one of two ways. It might mean that she did not think about the wonderful destiny God intended for her. As [Proverbs 29:18](#) says: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (KJV). Or it might mean she did not consider where her actions would lead—what she had essentially destined herself for. As Moses said, "Oh, that they were wise, that...they would consider their latter end!" ([Deuteronomy 32:29](#)). The fact that the people have no comforter ([Lamentations 1:9, 17, 21](#)) is that they have cut themselves off from God, the true Comforter (see [2 Corinthians 1:3-4](#)). They spread out their hands (verse 17), meaning they pray, but there is no response. [Proverbs 1:24](#) and verse 28 explain that God will neither hear nor respond to the pleas for help of a people that repeatedly refuse His guidance.

The end of verse 11 through verse 16 and verses 18-22 give us the words of the people themselves as they describe their desperate plight. In verses 21-22 a glimmer of recognition is given to the glee with which the enemies of Israel attacked and destroyed. Although God did use Egypt, Assyria and Babylon as well as other nations against Israel—as He will again in the future—He neither overlooked nor forgot the pleasure they took in their task of destruction (as will be the case when He again uses them to punish end-time Israel). The call is made for God to "bring on the day You have announced, that they may become like me." This is a plea for the coming of the Day of the Lord, the end-time period during which the enemies of Israel and Judah will themselves be punished. God will avenge His people. As Isaiah wrote of that time still ahead of us: "For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion" ([Isaiah 34:8](#)). No doubt the Israelites in the Great Tribulation will be crying out for this deliverance." [END]

Day 640 – TUESDAY: May 13<sup>th</sup>

Lamentations 2

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “The second dirge (2:1-22) emphasizes the destruction God caused in unleashing His anger on the Holy City... A grimly determined God has laid Zion waste, rejecting His city and its temple (vv. 1-9). In utter agony, Zion's proud inhabitants have crumpled to the ground. They are terrified, tormented, and stunned; shattered by the events which have at last revealed the futility of false prophets' reassurances. God has done as He promised and planned (vv. 10-17). The writer calls his people to prayer (vv. 18-19), and they cry out, describing their condition in pitiful terms, and acknowledging God as the cause of their pain (vv. 20-22)” (Bible Reader's Companion, chapters 1-3 summary). This is a bold reminder of the fact that God desires worship that comes from a converted heart, not that which comes from ritual or a building—even ritual He instituted and a building He blessed!

In verse 2 we see that destruction has come on “all the dwelling places of Jacob,” including, but not limited to, “the strongholds of the daughter of Judah.” Verse 3 shows God having cut off “every horn of Israel,” the horn being a symbol of strength and power. God “has blazed against Jacob like a flaming fire.” As noted previously, the book of Lamentations concerns not only what happened to ancient Judah, but also what will befall both Judah and Israel in the end time. This is startling to consider, when one realizes it encompasses the most powerful nations of the past 200 years—the former British Empire and the present superpower of the United States.

The beginning of verse 6 is perhaps better translated, “He has done violence to His tabernacle, as if it were that of a garden...” That is, as Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary quotes Calvin in its note on

verse 6, "His tabernacle (i.e., temple) as (one would take away the temporary cottage or booth) of a garden."

Verse 9 laments, "The Law is no more, and her prophets find no vision from the LORD." The Nelson Study Bible comments in its note on this verse: "These words do not suggest the end of the Law, but rather the ceasing of the work of the Law in the lives of the people for their blessing (see [Deuteronomy 6:1-3](#))... Divinely appointed instruction ceased for both the nation and the individual. This is not to say that the Law or prophecy were no longer available. God spoke to Jeremiah ten days after the prophet requested a word from God (see [Jeremiah 42:4-7](#)); furthermore Ezekiel and Daniel prophesied during the 70 years of the Exile."

In [Lamentations 2:11](#) we see the writer of the book—again, probably Jeremiah—with eyes swollen shut from weeping over what is happening to his people. As a true servant of God who cares deeply for the people he is sent to minister to, he is sick with grief to the point of vomiting. And yet this sense of overwhelming grief may not just be the mindset of the book's writer, as it is inspired by the ultimate author—God Himself. God does not miss anything—not the cries of infants or their mothers. He is afflicted when His people are afflicted (as [Isaiah 63:9](#) makes clear: "In all their affliction He was afflicted."). Indeed, as we will see in the next chapter, "He does not afflict willingly" (3:33).

So why does He persist in the affliction? Besides being just and fair, God knows the punishment is totally necessary. Jesus prayed to His Father on the night before His crucifixion, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But that was not to be. Sometimes there is no alternative. God is working towards an everlasting plan, and punishment and suffering are sometimes necessary to produce positive results that last for eternity. The destruction and suffering of Israel is a lesson that all mankind can and will benefit from (compare [1 Corinthians 10:6-7](#)). Even this study of these words is part of their benefit! When we have trials today and God allows

them, His purpose is always a greater one of eternal good for the one afflicted ([James 1:2](#)).

Of course, in the midst of affliction, the suffering is hard to bear—and difficult for those trying to provide comfort. "How shall I console you?" the book asks. "Jeremiah had no words to help the grieving women of Jerusalem as they looked helplessly on their dying babies" (Nelson Study Bible, note on [Lamentations 2:13](#)). Again, we should remember that God too, not just His prophet, grieved over what He decided had to be done in response to the rebellion of the nation. In this sense, we should view the book of Lamentations as not just the lamenting of Jeremiah and the people of Israel, but also of God Himself.

This situation is so dire that the mothers have actually cannibalized their children (verse 20), just as God had warned would happen in the terrible siege conditions that would result from His people forsaking Him ([Deuteronomy 28:52-57](#)). We will see this mentioned again in Lamentation 4:10. This horrifying act had been perpetrated in past siege conditions (see [2 Kings 6:28-29](#)). And, as shocking as it is to contemplate, it will yet happen again at the end of the age. This is a sobering picture of where disobedience leads. May we learn the lesson—and avoid the consequences—as we approach the terrible times that lie just ahead of us all." [END]

Day 641 – WEDNESDAY: May 14<sup>th</sup>

Lamentations 3

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "The third lament is 66 verses long, as each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet is used to begin three consecutive verses. This dirge details the personal complaint of the poet. The writer identifies himself in the opening verse as "the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath." Again, the book is traditionally ascribed to Jeremiah, and that seems likely. Yet there is clear identification throughout with the entire nation

(verses 40-47 even being written in first person plural). However, the words of this chapter could not have been written by just anyone.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary does not agree with the assessment of some "that 'every man' is speaking. It would be an exceptional Israelite who could use this language, and some of his experiences could hardly be generalized. The commentary [here] is based on the assumption that Jeremiah is speaking... The reminiscences of many psalms [in what is written] is one of the arguments used against authorship by Jeremiah. Behind this lies—consciously or unconsciously—the supposition that many of these were written later than the prophet, an assumption that modern psalm-studies have almost completely dissipated. If the prophet adopted the difficult treble acrostic...as a curb on his anguish, the adoption of familiar phrases from the Psalms, especially from the psalms of lamentation, should create no psychological or literary difficulty in the ascription of this lament to him" (note on Lamentations 3). Verses 1-18 appear to describe Jeremiah's own suffering at the hands of his people—ultimately ascribed to God since He has ultimate oversight of all things. Verses 6-9 seem to describe the time Jeremiah spent in the prison dungeon. The statement "He shuts out my prayer" in verse 8 may recall God forbidding Jeremiah to pray for Judah's deliverance (see [Jeremiah 11:14](#); [Jeremiah 14:11](#)). Of course, it may also refer to times Jeremiah called on God to rescue him and didn't immediately hear from Him. Yet we can also see in these verses the entire nation describing its plight of being bound in the chains of Babylonian captivity. (There is some irony, and justice, in the comparison in that the people are crying out in their affliction just as Jeremiah cried out over what they did to him.)

Verses 10-12, about God being like a bear or ambushing lion who has torn in pieces, seem more a reference to what the nation experienced. Yet Jeremiah may have felt this way at times during

his own suffering, thinking that God was responsible for it since He could have prevented it if He chose to. Verse 14's statement "I have become the ridicule of all my people" fits Jeremiah and does not seem to fit the Jews as a whole. Nevertheless there is a parallel in that the Jewish nation became the ridicule of all the nations around them. We should also bear in mind that what happened in Jeremiah's day—to himself and his people—was a forerunner of what all Israel will experience at the end of the age.

Regarding verse 16, "some suggest the feeding on gravel and dust (or ashes) [is] in mockery; some, the violent grinding of the face in the ground by others. The latter seems the more probable. Yet again it could be argued that it refers to the type of bread made from the sweepings of the granary floor that Jeremiah must have received toward the end of the siege" (Expositor's, note on verse 16). In verses 19-20 it appears that Jeremiah is praying, "Remember all the terrible things I've gone through. I remember them—and, alas, I feel worse than I did before." Then, in verse 21, he seems to recover, saying essentially, "But!...I also remember how I came through it all." That is, "I survived—You have not abandoned me." "Jeremiah's remembrance of God's faithfulness brought about a change in the prophet's emotions. As long as we contemplate our troubles, the more convinced we will become of our isolation, our hopelessness, our inability to extricate ourselves from the present trouble. But when we focus on the Lord, we are able finally to rise above, rather than to suffer under, our troubles" (Nelson Study Bible, note on verse 21).

Verse 22 is truly remarkable. Jeremiah expresses his conviction that in all the troubles, God is yet being merciful. For the entire nation to be totally exterminated would be justice—because the penalty for sin is death—but God continually shows mercy. "This verse seems to contradict all that had been written up to this point (see 2:1-5). Yet the very fact that there was a prophet left to write these words and a remnant left to read them show that not every person in



Jerusalem had been consumed. The fact that there was a remnant at all was due to the mercies and compassions of God. Even in His wrath (2:1-4), God remembers to be merciful" (note on 3:22). Indeed, God's compassions "are new every morning" (verse 23). "Every day presents us with a new opportunity to discover and experience more of God's love. Even in the midst of terrible sorrow, Jeremiah looked for signs of mercy" (note on verse 23). And then the pinnacle confession: "Great is your faithfulness" (verse 23). "Here is the heart of the Book of Lamentations. The comforting, compassionate character of God dominates the wreckage of every other institution and office. God remains 'full of grace and truth' in every situation (see [Exodus 34:6-7](#); [John 1:14](#))" (note on [Lamentations 3:23](#)). Verses 22-24 are like a balm on a sore. Jeremiah is reminding himself of the true good and loving nature of God. That is one vital point that will strengthen a person throughout a trial.

This is not the mere painting of a happy face over a grievous situation. There is great blessing for those who wait on God (verse 25). "The idea here is the acceptance of God's will and His timing (see [Psalm 40:1](#); [Isaiah 40:31](#))" (note on [Lamentations 3:25](#)). This idea carries through to verse 33 and helps us to understand the meaning of verse 27, which states that it is good to bear the yoke while young. The idea is that of a person of full vim and vigor willingly and humbly accepting the judgment God has placed on him. This is more clearly stated in verse 28. Putting one's mouth in the dust in verse 29 means willing lying prostrate on the ground with, by implication, the conqueror's foot on one's back.

In verse 30, we see the idea of turning the other cheek in the face of oppression and maltreatment, just as Jesus would later direct the Jews of His day to do ([Matthew 5:39](#)). The point in Lamentations 3 is that we must not fight the judgment of God. We must bear it willingly and patiently, waiting on Him, with full hope and trust in the next verse: "For the LORD will not cast off forever" (verse 31).

This is exactly why God's message to the Jews of Jeremiah's day was that they surrender to Babylon. Whatever the chastening, we must remember that it is only a temporary condition. God is full of mercy and compassion (verse 32). He does not afflict men willingly or easily (verse 33), but only when He, in His omniscience, deems it absolutely necessary. It hurts God to hurt His people—just as it does human parents to discipline their children. As many scriptures show, after Israel is humbled and repentant, God's plan is to regather and restore His nation.

Jeremiah uses his own experiences that kept him humble to show the way that his people could once again regain the blessings of God. Verses 40-41 are a call to self-examination and change, which will renew the relationship with God. That is the path for all people ultimately. Repentance is required. This was the answer the apostle Peter gave to the Jews of his day in [Acts 2:38](#): "Repent and be baptized." Action is required to "be saved from this perverse generation" (verse 40). So, too, Israel was encouraged to act. When the people lament their suffering at the hands of their enemies in verses 46-47 of Lamentations 3, Jeremiah in verses 48-51 again describes his own uncontrollable weeping and grief over what they must endure. He then looks back at his own sufferings at the hands of enemies (verse 52)—those enemies being some of the same people he is now weeping for. Jeremiah's time in the cistern or dungeon is evidently referred to in verse 53 and 55, though the pit could also figuratively represent any dire situation. It appears that in verses 52-66 Jeremiah's personal situation is again being used to represent the situation of the whole nation. His words in verses 55-58 are words of hope. God rescued Jeremiah in the past—and He would do so again. Just the same, God had rescued the Israelites in the past—and He will do so again.

Though calmed through renewed hope, Jeremiah "cannot contain a last cry to God to judge those enemies whose brutality has brought him and his people such pain (vv. 58-66)" (Bible Reader's

Companion, chapters 1-3 summary). Again we can see the irony and justice here. Jeremiah was personally referring to what many of his own people had done to him—and that they deserved to be judged. And they are judged—by the enemy nation God has brought against them. Now they plea for justice using Jeremiah's own words. (In the last days, we can perhaps imagine true Christians crying out over persecution they experience from fellow Israelites—and later those same Israelites crying out in the same terms over what they will suffer at the hands of end-time Babylon.)

Serving God included suffering for the prophets just as it did for the apostles of Christ centuries later. Christians today also suffer for their beliefs and their work, as well as in the normal course of life. Yet there is a purpose to all of these experiences as each human being is carefully prepared for a future that is much more wonderful and rewarding than anything we can comprehend. Even Jesus was made perfect for a position in the future through what He suffered ([Hebrews 2:10](#), [Hebrews 5:8](#); [1 Peter 5:10](#)). [James 1:2](#) tells us to rejoice when we face a trial. It takes a strong belief in God's overshadowing care for a follower to accept that the negatives that often come will ultimately work toward his good (see [Romans 8:28](#)). Almost all of the prophets of God, and in all likelihood all His people who have suffered, have at times experienced moments of weakness and discouragement. Depression was the result for a time. God also experiences hurt and is afflicted by the suffering of His children. But there is purpose to it all. We learn genuine empathy for the sufferings of others by sharing their experiences. Paul wrote of how the experience of suffering, coupled with God's comfort during the trial equips us to serve others ([2 Corinthians 1:3-4](#)). Sometimes, we also have to learn the hard lesson that giving in to Satan's temptations or to our human nature brings painful consequences. Jeremiah felt forsaken at times—and we see his depth of feeling over it portrayed in this powerful book. There

are profound lessons for all of us in his experiences and in his emotions." [END]

## Day 642 – THURSDAY: May 15<sup>th</sup>

### Lamentations 4

#### Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Lamentations 4 gives graphic descriptions of the result of a long siege. Children are starving (verse 4), the noble and genteel have lost their arrogance (verses 5, 8), and the dead are better off than the others (verse 9). Most horrible of all is the cannibalism that is described in verse 10. One can only imagine the horrors that were taking place. Jeremiah witnessed them in graphic detail, and God did too. The sorrow and anguish of even the most sinful and evil human being is not lost to God's knowledge and enduring love. Hope is always extended—hope that the excruciating experiences will cause a stubborn and unyielding people to make lasting and permanent changes in all they think and do.

Some have objected to the wording of verse 1—“How the gold has become dim!”—because gold does not tarnish. However, “since the second line refers to the destroyed temple, we can easily see a reference to its gold-covered panels and golden vessels so covered with dust that their value is no longer discernible” (Expositor's Bible Commentary, note on verses 1-2). Moreover, the gold and stones of the temple are also used here to typify God's people—who were far more valuable than the physical temple (see verse 2). Yet they are discarded as broken pottery.

The siege of Jerusalem was so severe that no one was exempt, even those who were considered to be especially holy—the Nazirites, who were specially consecrated to God (verses 7-8; see [Numbers 6:1-21](#)). Interesting to note here is the skin color of these people. There are some today who argue that the ancient Israelites and Jews were black, brown or olive in color.

Yet [Lamentations 4:7](#) describes those in good health among them as "brighter than snow and whiter than milk...more ruddy in body than rubies." Chambers Concise Dictionary defines "ruddy" as "red; reddish; of the colour of healthy skin in white-skinned peoples" (1988). King David was also described as "ruddy and of a fair countenance" ([1 Samuel 17:42, KJV](#)). This is not the red of Native Americans but of Caucasian peoples with "ruby-red cheeks." Consider that the Jews of today are also white. The phrase "like sapphire in their appearance" in [Lamentations 4:7](#) must denote shiny skin as opposed to bluish coloring. The fact that the ancient Israelites were white supports the identification of northwest Europeans as their descendants (see our free booklet [The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy](#) for more on this identification). Yet in the terrible siege conditions the skin of the people, even the Nazirites, has become black and dry (verse 8) from malnourishment and lack of water.

Verses 13-20 describe the culpability of a corrupt religious leadership. "The guilt of prophets and priests was incurred in a variety of ways. They incited the leadership to resist Babylon and so brought disaster on the city. They also were responsible for the death of at least one prophet whose message was like that of Jeremiah ([Jer. 26:20-23](#)). Finally, [Ezek. 22:1-22](#) shows that the concept of 'bloodguilt' was quite broad, and included acts which threatened the well-being and thus shortened the lifespan of another. The active hostility of the religious leadership to Jeremiah and their indifference to the needs of common men, as well as their destructive meddling in politics, all contributed to the corruption of Jewish society and made judgment inevitable" (Bible Reader's Companion, note on [Lamentations 4:13-16](#)). The religious leadership of the nations of Israel in the end time will be likewise culpable. In verse 17, the people have watched for a nation that could not save them. In Jeremiah's day, this referred to the Jews looking to

Egypt for deliverance—a deliverance that never came. Even some time after Jerusalem's fall, the Jewish remnant in the Holy Land will, as we will see, seek refuge in Egypt against God's command—and suffer the consequences.

In verse 20, we see that the people looked to their Davidic king as their life breath. For besides looking to their king as their deliverer, they considered the Davidic dynasty as inviolable. While this was true in the sense that the dynasty would not end, it was not true in the sense of trusting any particular king as being unassailable. That was clearly a foolish conclusion considering what had happened to previous Davidic rulers. And indeed, a worse fate befell Zedekiah and his sons. Moreover, as we know, God was in the process of removing the Davidic dynasty from the nation of Judah. Living under a divinely established king did not immunize them against needing to fear and obey God individually—any more than living in nations blessed by God today guarantees that everything will always go well, either for the nations or its citizens individually. Focusing upon being part of a "chosen" group takes one's eyes off of personal responsibility.

The chapter ends with a surprising reference to Edom, the perennial enemy of Israel. The Edomites routinely rejoiced over calamity that came upon God's people. Indeed, as other passages show, this enmity will persist to the very end of the age. Edom will even be part of the forces arrayed against Israel at that time. In verses 21-22, God basically says to Edom, "Rejoice while you can—you're next!"

Yet, as verse 22 states, Zion's punishment will be accomplished. This was not ultimately fulfilled in Jeremiah's day. The punishment of Zion was not yet over. It was finished for that moment, but destruction would happen again more than six centuries later under the Roman armies. Israel is still rebellious and is not yet turned to God. Scripture indicates a final great punishment for Israel as the return of Christ draws near. How difficult it seems to be for mankind



to learn and to change. In fact, it takes a miracle and direct intervention by God through the gift of His Holy Spirit. Israel will undergo the terrible Great Tribulation that lies ahead, but God will draw the line before complete destruction has occurred. And when He intervenes on Israel's behalf, He will judge Israel's enemies."  
[END]

Day 643 – FRIDAY: May 16<sup>th</sup>

Lamentations 5

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “The final dirge ([Lamentations 5:1-22](#)) is a cry for relief. This poem is not an acrostic, and the use of some 45 Hebrew words ending in u bolsters the sense of lament. The poet cries out to God to act in view of the dread conditions of His people” (Bible Reader's Companion, chapters 4-5 summary).

Verse 6 mentions the people giving their hand to the Egyptians and the Assyrians. Yet the Assyrian Empire had long before fallen to the Babylonians. The reference may be to the sin of past generations, as verse 7 notes that their “fathers sinned.” Yet it may also indicate events of the end time, when Assyria will again be a dominant power—a major component in the Babylonian empire of the last days.

In verse 16, we find the people full of remorse over their sin. Things seem hopeless indeed. But all is not lost, as we see in the last verses of the chapter. The writer, probably Jeremiah, recognizes on behalf of the people that “God's eternal rule and reign are a hope and support during the bleakest moments of suffering and despair (see [Psalm 80:1](#), [2](#); [89:3](#), [4](#); [103:19](#))” (Nelson Study Bible, note on [Lamentations 5:19](#)).

Yet, as verse 20 asks, why must deliverance be so long away? None of the prophets could have foreseen centuries and millennia passing before God brings this evil age to an end. The history of the Jews tells of the plaintive condition that these people of God—the

survivors of Jerusalem, we might say—have lived under for such a very long time. History does not record any other single small group of people who have been hounded and persecuted from place to place almost all over the world—while yet waiting for their God to rescue them. The final chapter of Lamentations is the cry of human beings about to return to their God in the full understanding of their sin and God's great mercy and love toward them.

The plea of verse 21, "Turn us back to You, O LORD," is a recognition of the fact that God Himself must lead us to repentance. As Jesus Christ explained, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" ([John 6:44](#)). [Acts 5:31](#) states that God must "grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (NASB). And [2 Timothy 2:25](#) confirms that God must "grant...repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth" (NASB). He must remove the spiritual blindness that has come upon all human beings through the deceptive efforts of Satan the devil and their own corrupted human nature (see [2 Corinthians 4:3-4](#); [Revelation 12:9](#); [Romans 7:15-23](#)). God must reveal to us His truth, and help us to see the error of our ways. We will never come to fully realize our depraved condition apart from God's revelation.

The final verse of Lamentations seems an odd statement and quite a down note to end on. Yet it does make sense in context—and is not so negative after all. The people, through Jeremiah most likely, have acknowledged their sins and the fact that their punishment was deserved. Now they ask for God to give them repentance—to help them turn their lives around. To that they essentially add: "...unless you really have utterly rejected us." But it is already recognized in the book that this is not the case (see 3:31)—which means that the final addendum is, in effect, saying, "...unless, contrary to what You have promised, You really have utterly rejected us." Yet rather than doubting God, as it might seem, this statement implies trust that He will act to defend His integrity. In

that sense, the statement is intended to prod Him to fulfill His promises to restore Israel. Ultimately, He surely will." [END]

## Day 644 – SATURDAY: May 17<sup>th</sup>

Introduction to Obadiah & Obadiah 1

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Nothing is known of the prophet Obadiah beyond the words of his prophecy. His name, meaning "Servant of the Eternal," may have been a name or it may have simply been used as a title. As to when he lived and preached, while most modern scholars date his book to the time immediately following the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., "some scholars date the book very early, in the mid-ninth century b.c., following raids by the Philistines and Arabian tribes during the period of King Jehoram of Judah (see [2 Chronicles 21:16-17](#)). This date would make the Book of Obadiah the earliest of the prophetic books" (Nelson Study Bible, introductory notes on Obadiah). Under inspiration, the prophet Jeremiah later utilizes some of Obadiah's prophecy in his own prophecy against Edom (see [Jeremiah 49:7-22](#)). As mentioned, Edom or Esau rebelled in the days of King Jehoram against Judah, and they would continue to be in revolt (see [2 Kings 8:20-22](#)). The book of Obadiah describes in more detail the future of Edom. Indeed, the prophecy of Obadiah is clearly for the end time, as the reference to the "day of the Lord" shows (verse 15; compare [Joel 2:1-2](#))—as well as the references to the return of all Israel, the ultimate defeat of Edom and the establishment of the Kingdom of God (verses 17-21).

The Identity of Edom

Yet who is Edom today? As discussed earlier, Edom is another name for Esau ([Genesis 25:30](#)). Esau and his descendants originally lived in the region of Mount Seir ([Genesis 36:8-9](#)), southeast of Judea, in what is now southern Jordan, around the city of Petra. The Greeks and Romans called this area Idumea (i.e., Idum = Edom). Because

the Bible refers to end-time Jordan as "Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon" ([Daniel 11:41](#)), it is evident that many Edomites must still live there. It should also be noted that Idumea extended into southern Judah: "The Edomites were gradually pushed into the southern half of Judea, including the region around Hebron, an area which the Greeks later called Idumaea" ("Idumaea," Unger's Bible Dictionary, 1966). (The biblical king Herod the Great was an Idumean—an Edomite). One of Esau's grandsons (and a tribal chief) was Amalek ([Genesis 36:10-16](#)), who became father of the Amalekites. Some rabbinical schools in Israel teach that the Palestinian Arabs—the most fervent adversaries of the modern Israeli state—are Amalekites. In light of the prophecy in [Exodus 17:16](#) of conflict between the Amalekites and Israelites from generation to generation, there may be considerable validity to this identification (see also [Obadiah 10](#)). Jordan's population is heavily Palestinian, and many of the Palestinians in Jordan and Israel are evidently Edomite by descent.

This identification of the Palestinians becomes clearer from a careful reading of [Obadiah 19](#). It is speaking of territories—that those who control particular territories in the Holy Land will come to possess additional territories there. In context, we can see that Israelites in this verse are retaking areas that the Edomites have stolen. Fascinatingly, the areas listed as doing the taking here are areas that are today populated by Jews. The areas being taken back are now populated by Palestinians—thus apparently identifying the Palestinians as Edomites, at least in large measure. Notice: "The South [the Negev, now held by the Israelis] shall possess the mountains of Esau [southern Jordan and perhaps the area of Hebron, the southern West Bank now populated by Palestinians], and the Lowland [the Shephelah, or lower hills between the central hill country to the east and the coastal plain to the west, now populated by Jews] shall possess Philistia [most of which is now the Gaza Strip, territory now held by Palestinians]. They [the Jewish

Shephelah inhabitants] shall possess the fields of Ephraim and the fields of Samaria [the northern West Bank, now occupied by Palestinians]. Benjamin [the area around Jerusalem, presently held by the Israelis] shall possess Gilead [northern Jordan]."

But Edom's descendants may be found elsewhere as well. Besides their sedentary life in the Mount Seir region, some of them appear to have become nomadic, ranging over vast territories as early as patriarchal times. A text from the ancient city of Ugarit, on the northern Syrian coast, mentions "the well-watered land of Edom," which was evidently in some proximity. Later, in the sixth century B.C., Nebuchadnezzar carried many Edomites of the Mount Seir region away captive to Babylon and other Babylonian territories. Perhaps that is why we find the city of Basra in Iraq—possibly a slight variation of the biblical Edomite city of Bozrah ([Genesis 36:33](#); [1 Chronicles 1:44](#); [Isaiah 34:6](#); [Isaiah 63:1](#)). It is thus likely that there are still Edomites in Iraq and scattered throughout the Middle East. During the laxity of Persian rule, Edomite wandering appears to have resumed. The chief tribe of Edom was Teman (see [Obadiah 1:9](#)), named after Esau's eldest grandson ([Genesis 36:10-15](#)). And the rocky plateaus of Persia and Turkestan eventually became known as the land of Temani. In Turkestan in Central Asia was a city named Amalik, seemingly after Amalek. The name of Teman appears to have come down to us in the form of the name Ottoman—that is, the Ottoman Turks (only the vowels in spelling being changed over the centuries). While the Turks appear to be a somewhat mixed people, it does seem that a large number of them are Edomites. The historical Hor Turks may be named after the Horites, who were closely associated with the Edomites in Genesis 36.

Perhaps most surprising is to find that elements of Edom may be found in Europe. The Jewish Talmud says that Edomites settled very early on in southern Italy. It is believed by many Jews that the people of Edom became dominant among the early Romans,

establishing themselves as the ruling elite among them and later among the Germans. There may be some truth in this, as Isaiah 34 and 63 describe the ultimate destruction of end-time Babylon (a power bloc led by a final resurrection of the Roman Empire) as the destruction of Edom and the Edomite capital of Bozrah. However, Edomites in Europe would seem to make up a rather small percentage of the population there.

#### The Fate of Edom

Despite their self-imagined greatness and pride, God says he will make the Edomites small and despised among the nations ([Obadiah 2](#)). Their dwelling in the "clefts of the rock" ([Obadiah 2](#); [Jeremiah 49:16](#)) may refer to the rock-hewn city of Petra mentioned earlier (the word for "rock" being the Hebrew Sela, equivalent to the Greek Petra), and perhaps other rock fortresses. High above Petra and on other mountains of Edom were high places for worship, lookouts and refuge. "Some of the mountain peaks of Edom reach over six thousand feet; Jerusalem [by comparison] is about 2,300 feet above sea level" (Nelson Study Bible, note on [Obadiah 3](#)). Yet the Edomites would be brought down—not just physically, but figuratively from their exalted prideful arrogance ([Obadiah 4](#); [Jeremiah 49:16](#)).

In [Obadiah 5](#) God says that grape gatherers or even thieves would take merely their fill—not everything. But God will go way beyond this. Edom will be utterly laid bare, completely plundered of everything and everyone ([Obadiah 6](#); see [Jeremiah 49:9-10](#)).

In verse 7 of Obadiah we see Edom in a "confederacy"—an alliance—perhaps the same one prophesied in [Psalm 83:1-8](#). In any case, we see that the Edomites' allies will turn on them. Yet the Edomites won't be able to see it. Their "wisdom" or cunning (as the Hebrew could also be rendered) and understanding will not reveal it—as God will confound and destroy them ([Obadiah 8-9](#); [Jeremiah 49:7](#)). [Proverbs 24:17](#) says, "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles." A comparison of that



principle with [Obadiah 12-14](#) shows one of the major reasons God is and will be angry with Edom. In the past invasions of Israel and Judah, Edom has often cheered it on and even participated, as will again be noted in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on [Amos 1:11-12](#) (another prophecy of Edom). Apparently, the Edomites of the end time will continue in the same pattern, cutting off the escape of Israelites, contributing to their devastation and turning them over to the enemy ([Obadiah 10-11, 13-14](#)).

Yet Edom will pay dearly—as will all nations that have dealt maliciously with God's people (verses 15-16). But it will be particularly bad for Edom. At the time of Christ's return, Obadiah tells us, the land of Edom will be destroyed, and it appears from verse 18 that, at that time, none of the physical descendants of Esau will survive. (We will examine this matter further when we later read the prophecy of Edom in [Jeremiah 49:7-22](#).)

This does not mean, however, that none of the Edomites will ever be in the Kingdom of God. They will be raised in the second resurrection, which will take place after the Millennium of Christ's reign ([Revelation 20:5](#)), and which is commonly referred to in the Church of God as the "Great White Throne Judgment" (see verses 11-12). At that time, everyone who has not been called by God in this age prior to Christ's return will be given an opportunity to accept God's way of life and enter into His Kingdom. And those of the first resurrection at Christ's return—the comparatively few called and faithful people of this age—will be there to help guide and teach those who will be raised in that second resurrection.

As we've seen, Obadiah evidently concerns the Israelites retaking Palestinian territories at the return of Christ. Verse 20 then concerns the redistribution of the land to all of Israel and Judah returning from captivity. The "land of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath" is perhaps the entire Holy Land, stretching up into former Phoenician territory in modern Lebanon—though it could be that only northern Israel is here denoted as the land for the returning house of Israel.

Then notice the "captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad." The last word here may come from sephar, "which in the Aramaic vernacular would denote furthestmost limit or seacoast" (Seth Ward, "On the History of the Term 'Sepharad,'" Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture). By early medieval times, the Jewish people of Spain were referring to themselves as Sephardic Jews, evidently from this term. Perhaps it refers to the Jews who have been scattered since the Diaspora. They return to possess the cities of the Negev.

Finally, observe again this very encouraging promise at the end of the book of Obadiah: "Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's" (verse 21). Who are these "saviors," or deliverers, who judge? Describing the time of Jesus Christ's return, [Daniel 7:22](#) says, "Judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (KJV). Yes, God's saints, glorified as divine kings and priests, will be given the privilege of playing a part in saving Israel and the rest of mankind. What an awesome future!

Regarding the closing words of the prophecy, "the kingdom shall be the Lord's" ([Obadiah 21](#)), The Nelson Study Bible says this in its note on the verse: "These were Obadiah's last words against all human arrogance, pride, and rebellion. Edom had thought itself indestructible; but the Lord humbled that nation and restored the fallen Judah [and will do so in a far greater way for all Israel in the future]. Many people are tempted to consider themselves beyond the reach of God. But God will bring them low, just as He will lift those who humble themselves before Him. And one great day, He will establish His just rule over all." [END]