



dates of the book
587-538 BC

history notes

Josiah was the last good king of Judah, the Southern Kingdom. When he died, Judah went back to idol worship. Israel, the Northern Kingdom, already was captured by Assyria. When Assyria fell, Babylonian forces took control.

2 Kings 25:1-21 describes the destruction of the Temple, in which Lamentations has its roots.

author

We do not know who wrote Lamentations, because no name is assigned to it. Tradition says Jeremiah wrote it, but we don't have strong evidence to say he did or didn't. It might be intentional the author left off his name so the book could be attached to the people of Israel rather than a specific person.

FIVE KEY THINGS ABOUT THIS BOOK

- The word **lament** means a passionate expression of grief or sorrow. Lamentations is a collection of these expressions in poetry form.
- The **historical setting** of Lamentations captures the emotions surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC. The author attempts to communicate the immense pain by stretching language to its limits. He uses strong poetic language to remind Israel and retell the story for generations so the devastation of disobeying the Lord will not be repeated. Lamentations also gives a voice to those who are suffering.
- Lamentations is **written as five prayers**. They are similar to psalms, but are specifically psalms of lament. The five laments deal with the destruction of Jerusalem and the pain Israel feels at losing their home, the place where God was supposed to dwell. Lamentations acknowledges this is a painful experience, but claims it is Israel's own fault for being unfaithful toward God.
- **Chapter 3** is the center of the book. Lamentations finds its center in 3:21-24, which talks about God's faithfulness. The book reminds us that God is faithful even when we haven't been faithful and that in the midst of suffering God, loves us in ways we don't deserve.
- **Lamentations** is transparent about the reality that bad things happen, yet God still has love and mercy.