



Lesson 8 April 24th, 2021

A Plea for Restoration

Middle/High School

Study Scripture – Lamentations 5

Background Scripture – Lamentations 1-4

Key Verse:

Restore us to You, Lord, so that we may be restored; Renew our days as of old.

Lamentations 5:21

INTRODUCTION

Have you been getting the cold or the flu on a regular basis? Or have you had a serious illness for a while, or have you known people who have got a serious illness for a while which is very painful and causes a lot of suffering?

If you have been gone during any of these situations you know that you need medicine.

Medicine often tastes awful and sometimes it takes a little bit of time to work. Sometimes a doctor and the nurses have to keep reminding people that they should take the medicine regularly and follow instructions that they have given them.

But we know that sometimes people are stubborn and think that they know it you what is good for their sickness and do not want to listen to people who know better than they.

Sometimes they just don't care about themselves and are prepared to put up with the punishing symptoms that they feel because they think that they should spend their time and energies paying attention to other things.

We are now looking at a case like that. This was the case of Israel and Judah. They had been helped by God through all kinds of difficulties and knew the laws and Commandments of God. But human nature being what it is these people did not really care about making good choices and following what God told them to do. It was only when they got into serious trouble that they remembered God and called out to Him for help. Sometimes God answered their pleas quickly, but sometimes He took a long time to correct the terrible situation that they were in. But more often than not as soon as God helped them out of trouble and pain and shame went back to the old ways and did everything that God did not like. They went right back to idolatry, serving other gods, treating the people in their country and strangers that came in to visit them badly, oppressing the widows and orphans, offering to God sacrifices of animals that were lame and sickly, animals that they could not sell to anybody even if the price was low, and in addition, not making their contributions for the upkeep of the Temple of God.

In case you think that the behavior of Israel and Judah was extremely awful, before you condemn them, have a look at yourself.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote the book that we are starting today, and it is called Lamentations. Note to lament means something specific. The prophet Jeremiah cried over the sins of the

people of Israel and Judah and his tears would never stop even though he pleaded to God to help the people.

So we have asked you questions to force you to look at yourself and to see whether there are continuing issues about your life and your soul.

Have you ever done actions and made foolish and careless and bad decisions which have caused you pain, shame, and suffering?

Have you ever been disgraced by things that you have done?

Have you ever been traumatized by what has happened to you to the point where the shame makes it hard for you to heal?

Have you ever felt at that time that even though you pray God is silent and seemed to have turned His back on you? Does your feeling of guilt amplify your pain and shame?

If you have this book of Lamentations teaches you that you must face shame head-on especially when it seems that God does not always heal your pain, your trauma and feeling of guilt and shame as quickly as you want.

All of Scripture is written to teach us certain lessons. This book of Lamentations was written to teach us specific things. It was written by the prophet Jeremiah after the glorious and elaborate Temple in Jerusalem built by Solomon was destroyed in 586 B.C. Jeremiah makes clear in his book which bears his name that the people of Israel had brought judgments on themselves because of their sinfulness. The judgment of God as predicted by Moses in Deuteronomy as well as the prophets had finally come to pass.

The Book of Deuteronomy especially chapter 28, and other Scriptures warned the people of Israel that the judgment of God would come on them if they continued in idolatry and breaking the Commandments of God as it suited them.

The Lord God of Israel had done an incredible amount for His people and they had lived with great promises for what God would do in their lives. They had been warned over and over again that they would forfeit the promises of God because of carelessness and foolish choices.

So the first lesson we could get from this book is that we must examine ourselves and make our mistakes and our devastating failures caused by our bad decisions teach us valuable lessons which would benefit us in the future.

It is clear that the judgment of God on Israel had come because they had turned their back on God to worship other gods.

We therefore can very well ask the question as to whether the pandemics and the natural disasters that are increasingly happening reflect the judgment of God on a world that has by and large turned their backs on God to worship other gods and concentrate on meeting their needs, exalting their scientific and technological ability, making their materialistic interests and their pursuit of wrongs actions and attitudes paramount. Should we consider that what is happening around us in the world represent God's judgment on the world?

Some people think that the current natural calamities we are seeing like earthquakes, storms, volcanic eruptions, climate change, all kinds of diseases and pandemics are happening because of our turning away from God. Others disagree and just consider that these are natural things. The decision is yours. In any case when bad things like this happen there is a reason for lament just as Jeremiah lamented over the condition and the suffering of his people when they were captured by the Babylonians. The condition of their life became extremely horrible.



We should like Israel consider that we deserve afflictions because of our rebellion against the Lord and think about whether we too will perish. The fact is that if there is indeed an Almighty God who is the Creator of Heaven and earth, our puny abilities and our grandiose thoughts about ourselves will not stand before Him. It is advisable that we consider who God is and make every effort to obtain His Great Salvation.

We should make every attempt not to forget that there is a state called eternity and there is only way to enjoy Eternity with God.

This is important because it is hard to live without hope. We cannot survive without hope and we cannot be successful without hope for we have to have something to look forward to. That is the position that the people of Israel and the prophet Jeremiah found themselves in.

We must also consider what God is like and what is involved in His relationship with those that believe in Him and what this relationship entails.

We like to think that God is love and that God is a God who has compassion and constant, infinite, unchanging, and dependable mercy. We like to think that you can call on God when everything around you is falling apart for He is sovereign and not a capricious God who will hug you one minute and then slap you around the next minute. When you're helpless He is like a loving parent, caring and protecting when you are sleeping or when you're awake. Because you're in a covenant relationship God blesses you when you're on your best behaviour as well as when you're falling short. He knows that you have mortal ills which prevail sometimes. So we advise care in what you are doing.

But as Deuteronomy reminds us a covenant is really a two-way street. You have responsibilities. The Spirit of God enables you to follow the Commandments of God. You are never alone because God is there with you to help and sustain you. You have to fulfill the requirements the Covenant has for you.

In addition, we have to face the question of whether our **God causes** grief. Jeremiah made it quite clear. We like to think that it is enough that we can accept that God does not just cause bad things to happen to good people even though He is a loving God. But it is quite another thing to think that He takes the initiative to cause grief.

Therefore in our Study we have to bear in mind the passage in Lamentations which says God causes grief but note at the same time the prophet states

“For he does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men”.

For Jeremiah nothing happens apart from God for God is all-knowing and all-powerful and He is in charge.

In the modern world people think that God does not cause grief but simply might allow it. This idea shields us from grief or pain or hardship. For some any other way to think is too hard. It is however likely that we think that way because deep in our mind we really think that the world would be better if we made the decisions and call the shots. But as one writer says this idea that we like so much is really a problem. He reminds us:

“Face it, if were up to us, we’d live in Camelot, where it only rains after sundown and then, in just the right proportions, Yet, here is the problem: as much as we hate to admit it, it’s the hardships of life that make us strong, not the pleasures. Through the agony of pain and loss we grow closer to God and each other. The apostle Paul puts it this way:



“We also rejoice in our suffering, knowing that suffering works perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope: and hope doesn't disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit was given to us”. (Romans 5:3-5)”.

So as we look at the book of Lamentations, we need to remember the warnings of God as well as the patience of God, as Lamentations 2: 17 states:

***“The Lord has done what he purposed;
He has carried out his word,
which he commanded long ago; little
He has thrown down without pity;
He has made the enemy rejoice over you
and exalted the might of your foes”.***

So does hardship help? In stark and powerful imagery Jeremiah looks at the devastated city of Jerusalem and in a very artistic and poetic form tells us how we can forfeit the promises of God by foolish choices. He looks at it and that they were in chaos and he makes sense of it by way of a lament, showing us that there is order even when we see chaos.

It is interesting to note that the pain of captivity in pagan Babylon cured the Jews of their love of idolatry. After the Return they generally never practised idolatry. Indeed they had other sins but not that old sin.

So maybe pain helps us come closer to what God wants of us.

We are reminded that this day when the Babylonian armies invaded, and Jerusalem fell the Jews reacted by accepting the significance of this Lament and one writer comments:

“Ongoing Jewish tradition enshrines this history by reading the book on the ninth of Ab (July/August), the day on which the final Fall of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 C.E. is remembered. It is a solemn day, when hopes seemed distance and God silent....

The poem unashamedly a scribes the horrors directly to God. It begins,

“I am the warrior who has seen the woe by means of the anger of God's rod (Lamentations 3:1).

God has brought Jerusalem's disaster, and the succeeding 19 verses find this subject of their actions to be God's alone...

These texts will not help us argue the origins of the world's agonies, but they will help us reflect on what we can do to face them and live with their reality. This may be the most important lesson we need to learn”.

It is probably very hard for some of us to understand why Israel got into the position that they did. The prophet Isaiah summed it up in Isaiah chapter 1 as he foretold the condition in Israel and their inability to change:

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth!

For the Lord has spoken:

***“I have nourished and brought up children,
And they have rebelled
against Me;***

The ox knows its owner

And the donkey its Master's crib;

But Israel does not know

My people do not consider”.



***Alas, sinful nation,
A people laden with iniquity,
A brood of evildoers,
Children who are corrupters!
They have forsaken the LORD,
They have provoked to anger
The Holy One of Israel,
They have turned away
Backward”.***

Many hundreds of years after this ministry of Isaiah God called Jeremiah and in the very first chapter of his book God asked Jeremiah what he saw in vision and Jeremiah told God that he saw a boiling pot facing away from the north. God then told Jeremiah that out of the north calamity would come on all of the inhabitants of the land for God would utter His judgments against the people because of their wickedness, because they had forsaken God, burned incense to other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.

What Israel did was too horrible to contemplate but the prophet Ezekiel in stark language tells us how the nation and its leaders had degenerated. We should pay attention to this passage in Ezekiel 8 so that we understand what happened then and what is happening now.

We should note specifically what the LORD God appeared like to the prophet so we should never think that we are to treat what God is as if He is like a joke so that we can break His commandments willy-nilly and do what we like to do. Let us look at Ezekiel's experience. When we remember that Ezekiel and many of Israel were in captivity in Babylon and yet were unrepentant it gives us good reasons for Jeremiah's lament over his people's fate. Note that in Ezekiel's prophecy he gives us a startling and extraordinary look at what God appears to be like. This appearance makes us understand clearly that we should not joke around with God for His power is amazing and out of this world, the extent of which We could never really imagine. This part of Scripture which you might never have ever looked at is quite long, but it might be helpful for you to read it carefully. The prophet stated:

“And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house with the elders of Judah sitting before me, that the hand of the LORD GOD fell upon me there.

Then I looked, and there was a likeness, like the appearance of fire-- from the appearance of His waist and downward, fire; and from His waist and upwards, like the appearance of brightness, like the color of amber.

He stretched out the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my hair; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the main gate of the inner court, where the seat of the image of jealousy was which provokes to jealousy.

And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there like the vision that I saw in the plain. Then he said to me, “Son of man, lift your eyes now toward the north”. So I lifted my eyes toward the north, and there, north of the altar gate, was this image of jealousy in the entrance.



Furthermore He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abomination that the house of Israel commits here, to make Me go far away from My sanctuary? Now turn again, you will see greater abominations".

So He brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked there was a hole in the wall. Then He said to me, "Son of man, dig into the wall", and when I dug into the wall, there was a door.

And He said to me, "Go in and see the wicked abominations which they are doing there".

So I went in and saw, and there-- every sort of creeping thing, abominably beasts, and all of the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed all around on the walls.

And there stood before them seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel, and in their midst stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan. Each man had a censor in his hand, and a thick cloud of incense went up.

Then He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the room of his idols? For they say, 'the LORD does not see us, the LORD has forsaken the land'".

And He said to me, "Turn again, and you will see greater abominations that they are doing".

So He brought me to the door of the north gate of the LORD's house; and to my dismay, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz.

Then He said to me, "Have you seen this, O Son of man? Turn again you will see greater abominations than these".

So He brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about 25 men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east.

Then He said to me, "Have you seen this, O Son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit there? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose.

"Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity, and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them".

We are therefore looking at a nation and its leadership that had turned away from the Commandments of God and the Covenant with God. This they had done despite the constant warnings and message of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel as well as other prophets. So we read in Ezekiel 10 the very sad scene where the cherubim and the glory of the Lord departed from the temple.

Over and over again the prophet denounced Israel for their idol worship which the prophet described as spiritual harlotry. He condemned outright their slaying their children and offering them as sacrifices in the fire to the pagan gods. It was that bad.

Ezekiel 16 and other chapters outlined in great detail what would happen at the hands of their enemies with whom they had committed harlotry. Even when the prophet Jeremiah warned King Zedekiah not to fight the Babylonians who had been sent by God to discipline the nation, he did exactly what the prophet told him not to do and when the Babylonians broke into the walls of Jerusalem he fled with his friends and courtiers to try to escape leaving the people behind helpless. But his attempt to escape was in vain. He was captured, his sons slain before



his eyes, his eyes torn from its sockets, and in chains he was dragged to Babylon. The people were therefore destroyed, the Temple was destroyed, and the city of Jerusalem was destroyed. It is now very important to know the significance that the Scriptures ascribe to Jerusalem.

The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. (Psalm 87:2-3).

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee: (Psalm 122:6).

Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord. (Psalm 135:21).

For the LORD hath chosen Zion. He hath desired it for his habitation. (Psalm 132: 13).

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness.

Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. (Psalm 48:1-3).

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (Isaiah 2:3).

The people of Israel and its leaders very well knew these things but yet they chose their own way. So disaster came as predicted. The punishment of their iniquity was accomplished.

And as to be expected from the weeping prophet we have as the Dictionary describes “**the passionate expression of grief or sorrow: weeping**”.

THE TEXT

Verse 1. Jeremiah well knew that God knew what was happening to Jerusalem but yet he prayed at the point of despair that God would look on them and see the scorn and the reproach because of what had happened to them. Those near and far nations were mocking them, and all of the ancient hatred of Edom and all the other nations were poured out. Psalm 89: 50-51 reflected this horrible perfectly.

The prophet Jeremiah then listed in detail what has befallen the nation. The nation was a disgrace and in a situation that they did not want to be seen in. As Isaiah 47:3 explained their nakedness was uncovered and their disgrace was seen.

Would you be able to do as Jeremiah turning to God and asking Him to remember what has befallen you and look at your disgrace? Would you be so honest when speaking to God or even when speaking to others when you're testifying? Or are you too ashamed to admit your guilt and your pain?

Verse 2. As we begin this list the prophet recalls that the inheritance that God had given to the tribes of Israel were now in the possession of strangers. The Promised land, their houses, farms, and vineyards were taken away from them. They had been displaced.

Verse 3. Their family structure had been destroyed and everything had fallen apart. Everything was broken. They had no family to depend on. They had become like orphans. Jeremiah 39 made it clear to us that the only people left in the land of Judah were the very poor, those at the bottom rung of the society. They could not defend themselves and you're pretty helpless. All the other mighty men and the leaders were taken away into captivity or simply killed. Or they could do was to weep by the rivers of Babylon when they remembered Zion.



The women who survived were now widows for the men had been killed or taken away. They were no help to the struggling women. Everybody was on their own just like orphans, fatherless.

Verse 4. Everything that they were given had to be paid for. Their oppressors controlled everything and taxed everything and so when they wanted water or wood, the basic things for survival, they had to pay a very high price for them. Nothing was free anymore. The people left in the land did not control anything, but they had to pay the Chaldeans for whatever it was that they used. Even though they were planting their crops, the food did not belong to them and they had to pay the Chaldeans. They could not help themselves to anything and even if they wanted water from the streams and rivers they had to pay. They were being oppressed.

Verses 5-6. The Babylonians chased after them and they could not escape, and they had no rest. They had had treaties with the Assyrians and the Egyptians and expected military help from them but now these former allies were very sparing with the food that they offered them. They have to labour for whatever they were getting, and they had no rest.

We note in Jeremiah 43 that Egypt became a place to which the refugees had gone and even Jeremiah was taken there by some Judean rebels against his own will. The Assyrians and the Egyptians were of little real help for they could not contend with the Babylonians who had them under tremendous military pressure.

Verse 7. Note the popular proverb that their fathers had sinned and because of that they were no more, and they had to bear their iniquity.

God had to deal directly with this proverb which stated

***“The fathers have eaten sour grapes,
and the children's teeth are set on edge?”***

In Ezekiel 18 we see that God had forbidden the use of that proverb in Israel, rejecting this grievous error as one writer puts it: **“of believing in communal or family salvation or damnation”**.

There are some today that teach this forbidden proverb and speak glibly of generational curses. But God forbids that kind of error and makes it clear that the individual has responsibility before God.

In the very strongest term possible God said:

“As I live”, says the Lord God, “you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel.

Behold, all souls are Mine;

The soul of the father

as well as the soul of the son are Mine;

The soul who sins shall die.

But if a man is just

and does what is lawful and right....

If he has walked in my statutes

and kept my judgments faithfully—

He is just;

He shall surely live!

Says, The Lord God”.

The prophet went on to in detail make it clear that if a man has a son who did all kinds of evil such as idolatry, murder, oppressing the poor and needy, robbery, and exacted usury among



other sins, that son will not live, and his blood would be on him. If however a man has a son who sees his father commit all kinds of evil and does not follow his father 's doings he will surely live. The father will die for his own iniquity and his son will not bear the guilt of his father nor will the father bear the guilt of his son. Everyone will be on their own.

In addition God made it clear that if a man was doing wickedness and if he did turn from it, now changing and obeying the statutes of God that man would live. His sins would not be remembered for God did not have any pleasure in the death of the wicked. God wants men to turn away from his evil ways and live.

But on the other hand if a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and begins to do iniquity, the righteousness that he had done would not be remembered and he would die.

Every man would be judged for his own sins. God therefore requires that all men turn from their transgressions and get themselves a new heart and a new spirit so that they would not die, for God did not have any pleasure in the death of one who dies in their transgressions.

One writer makes this interesting comment:

“Nations, as such, cannot be punished in the other world; therefore national judgments are to be looked for only in this life. The punishment which the Jewish nation had been meriting for a series of years came now upon them, because they copied and increased the sins of their fathers, and the cup of their iniquity was full”. (Clark).

But we note that God through the prophets warned nations not to oppress other nations or do iniquitous things to others for they would be punished and destroyed. What they did to others would be done to them by others. This condemnation of the nations like the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Amorites, the Philistines, the Egyptians and others are quite clear.

It would be good if we did everything we can to steer our nation away from unrighteous deeds for we do not want the wrath of God to affect our beloved nation and us.

Verses 8-9. Those who had previously been under their thumb were now the rulers. The poor and old people left in the land who previously no one would pay attention to were now the rulers and they would turn around and oppress those that had been better than they were before.

Some of those who had initially escaped the Babylonian attack and had returned to fight and had come back to assassinate those that the Babylonians had left in control of the now desolate land were not capable of saving the nation. No one could deliver the nation of Israel from the hands of these people.

We know that Jeremiah argued with these people but that did not help for though Jeremiah was in no danger from the Babylonians, these rebels from Judah eventually dragged him off with them into the land of Egypt.

It was so bad under the Babylonian occupation that everything was controlled and simply getting food was a risky venture. If the people in the land went out into the wilderness to forage for wood and food and to plant, the Babylonian forces or bandits would simply capture and kill them and take what they had found.

Verse 10. Famine was severe in the land and it affected the skins, and the skins of the people were literally scorched as is the case when there is general starvation. Their skins had become hot for famine had brought fevers.

Verse 11. Jeremiah was miserable and his misery reflected what was happening in the land of Judah. The once powerful nation had now become a slave nation and her splendour had



departed. It was so bad that before the Babylonians captured the land, the starving people had resorted to eating their children. Cannibalism was a serious problem. See Lamentations 4:10. The women had been raped by their conquerors and the women of Judah had been defiled. Jeremiah 2:10 tells us that the virgins of Jerusalem bowed their heads to the ground. Verses 12-13. The princes were tortured and killed. There were hung up by their hands. There was no respect shown to the elders. They too were killed or if they were strong enough were dragged off to slavery. The older boys were put to work grinding corn and the young boys were commandeered to carry loads of wood. Nobody escaped servitude and hard labour. Verses 14-15. The structure of society had completely broken down. The practice of the elders gathering at the gates of the city to render decisions and to make sure that the people were obedient had completely stopped.

In Jeremiah 7:34 the prophet had warned the people that because of their constant sinning God would cause to cease the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness and the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride in the streets of Jerusalem. This had now come to pass. There was no joy in the hearts of the people for the country was made desolate. There would be no more dancing but there would only be mourning.

Verses 16-18. The calamity had come upon them because they have sinned. Sin had brought judgments. Their hearts were now weak, and their eyes were dimmed. The crown of glory had departed from the nation and nobody respected them anymore. All of this could be traced back to their foolish choices.

Mount Zion was now desolate and a place where wild animals walk up and down.

We can imagine the situation when the exiles returned from Babylon eventually. The people were so overwhelmed by the sad condition of the place that they barely wanted to lay the foundations of the Temple and to build a temple to their God. Many years would pass, and a lot of effort put in to correct that sad situation. We read that God had to bring people not living in the land such as Ezra Nehemiah to restore the walls of the city and to put in place a structure for the nation. It was a horrible time.

One can imagine the extent of the opposition from the surrounding nations and opposition from those that had compromised themselves with the pagans who lived among them. It is hard for us to contemplate Judah had been destroyed. But Jeremiah knew that this would happen and therefore he would say:

***“My eyes overflow with rivers of water
For the destruction of the daughter of my people.
My eyes flow and do not cease,
without interruption” (3:48-49).***

Verse 19. So Jeremiah prays for restoration and for God to remember his people. Jeremiah begins by acknowledging that God is still on His throne. But note carefully that Jeremiah makes it clear that God's throne remains forever, and it lasts from generation to generation. He knew well Psalms 45:6.

God's throne is in Heaven and though the earthly place of God's throne which was in the Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed and anything valuable in it had been taken to Babylon, that did not affect the fact that God's throne endures.



You might therefore think that because the evil people and rulers of the world seemed to be dominant and continually oppress the people of God that they would get away with it, but the fact is that they will never stop the throne of God from enduring forever.

As Psalm 2 says God that sits in the heavens shall laugh and hold these people in derision.

Verses 20-21. Jeremiah therefore asks the questions that we always ask when we are so full of pain, namely Why?

But note that Jeremiah's emphasis is that God seems to have forgotten and forsaken His people. But Jeremiah knows of course that God has not done that for he predicted through Jeremiah that Israel and Judah would be in captivity for 70 years and then they would return to their land.

We too know of course that God has not done that and after the time of trauma during which the people of God think that they have been left alone they feel that way because they are suffering the effects of shame, God will respond to prayer and our patience and help His people.

We therefore must ask God to fix the problem for us for our shame and pain will paralyze us to such an extent that we will not be able to do anything that would last for a long time.

So the first step is to ask God to fix the problem and to take our shame and pain away. He is willing to do that and is waiting for us just as He waited for the people of Judah. So invite God to look at your disgrace and ask for restoration.

Jeremiah asked God to turn the people back for he knew that when God restored the restoration would be full and complete and his people would be renewed and live as in the old days.

But we hear the plaintive cry of this weeping prophet for in verse 22 he stated:

*"Unless you have utterly rejected us,
and are very angry with us!"*

CONCLUSION

Jeremiah, though he knew the nature of God, was still full of fears about what would happen to his people. He was unlike us today in many respects for he knew that God was a terror as the Apostle Peter tells us. We think that God is not a serious God. We think that because God loves us it gives us the opportunity and the ability to do whatever we want. Maybe a little fear of God would be good for us.

It is really a shame to see how we behave. We treat God casually and we make fun and joke with Him, intermarry with pagans, treat His Sabbath lightly, ignore many of His Commandments, oppress the poor and fatherless, leave God and turn our backs, refuse to bring up our children in the ways of God so that when they grow up they would be attracted to all kind of idolatrous behaviour.

When we examine ourselves, we really are rebellious. We have not learned to distinguish between the holy and unholy and we do not know the difference between the unclean and the clean. We even think that there is no difference. Our "prophets" prophesy what is not in Scripture and give us false visions which we like to hear.

It is therefore recommended that we examine ourselves and make sure that God and the ways of God are our priority.



Jeremiah has listed the things that God might do to those who are like the rich man who ignored Lazarus, the foolish servant and the foolish virgins.

But we are encouraged to ask for restoration from God even though sometimes we might feel uncertain about God.

But we should know that God is not exceedingly angry with us and we know from Ezekiel 18 that God will do what is right with us for He is a fair God. God does not want people to perish and will do exceedingly to have the wicked turn to him and forsake their wickedness. That chapter in Ezekiel is a beautiful chapter for it gives us a lot of assurance.

God does not want you to be away from Him or to stay outside of the Covenant with Him. He wants you to be led by the Spirit so that there would be no condemnation for you.

But the One who has the keys of Hades and of Death has warned us not to leave our first love, to remember from where we are fallen and repent and do the first works. He warned the church at Thyatira to avoid sexual immorality whether in mind or in body. Jesus warned about the power of our desire for material things instead of buying from Him gold that is refined in the fire.

There might be some that think that this calamity would have happened to Israel and not to us, but the Apostles have warned us not to have that attitude. The things that were written about Israel were written for our instruction.

We therefore should remember that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is merciful and loving but He wants obedience and purity of life.

We would never advise you to play games with God for they will not work. As one writer advises:

“There is nothing better than to adopt the cry of the prophet, and ask God to turn the soul, and renew its blessed and holy experiences. There will be no doubt of our being turned, if he turns us”. (Morgan).

We have in front of us a powerful model of lamentation. If we know Jesus, we can go to Him with the same honesty and transparency of the prophet knowing that God has made a way for us to be restored to Him. So as one writer says:

“There is no “unless” in our lament. We lament in hope”.

