

Study questions (Lamentations)

1. What is the theme of Lamentations?

The theme of the book is sorrow over the consequences of sin with hope for undeserved mercy rooted in God's great covenant faithfulness that is new every morning (3:23).

2. What are the two grounds of the prayer of chapter 5?

The final chapter is a prayer in two parts. First, the petition is grounded in Zion's disgrace pleading what has happened as a basis for God's compassion. Second, the petition is grounded in the sovereignty of God who rules from generation to generation and who is able to restore Judah to himself that they may return if he so chooses (5:19-22). Note the argument with a missing part expressed in the prayer:

If you have not utterly rejected us

Missing part: and you have not (cf. 3:21-23)

Then restore us to yourself

God must mend the breach between us and Him, between sinners and Himself, and He purposes to do so even through judgment.

3. What is the cause of the captivity in relation to the covenant (cf. Rom 9, has God's covenant word failed?)?

This captivity has not come upon Judah in spite of God's covenant. It is not that God failed to keep his word. It has come because of it (covenant curses), due to Zion's sin. Moreover, here is the place for hope for God has set it before himself to save Israel. Even in her disobedience, she is not consumed for his compassions never fail (3:22-26). This is like Job resting in the sovereignty of God as bottom line (42:2) and Isaiah acknowledging that unless God has left us a seed we would be like Sodom and Gomorrah (Isa.1:9). The writer is committed to sovereign mercy.

4. Given that we suffer both corporately and individually because of our sin, how can we utter the words of Lamentations 3:24-26?

The night of God's judgment is hard and painful but God's mercies are new every day and joy truly comes in the morning. His throne endures from generation to generation and his compassions never fail (Lam. 5:19; 3:22). Therefore, we can have hope and say the words of Lamentations 3:24-26.