
QT Questions—for Lamentations

(Here's a short introduction to the book of Lamentations from my Study Bibles.)

- Lamentations is set just after Jerusalem's destruction by the Babylonians in 586 BC. The book is composed of five poems that mourn the catastrophe. In Lamentations, the poet grieves, yet still has faith—crying out to God for mercy.
- The book of Lamentations confirms that the world, sadly, is full of suffering due to sin's presence. The full effect of sin, and thus suffering, is held back only by God's intercession. When God removes His hand of protection from Jerusalem, after years of waiting for the people to turn to Him, the city falls. And in its destruction is a glimpse of what it is like to live without God's protection. Lamentations does not explain away tragedy; it confronts it. Lamentations portrays the raw experience of humanity by expressing loss with full force and then mourning it. The pain is so vivid and fresh that the book ends in devastation. For those who had experience the invasion of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, a hopeful future was nowhere on the horizon.
- Lamentations shows the need for all people to turn to God; He is our hope. This is the only sort of resolution that Lamentations offers. The book's final verse can be translated as a question: "Have You abandoned us, and are You angry with us beyond measure?" There is no answer, but the poet still expects to hear from God someday. In times of suffering and despair, we wait upon God—even when the way forward is unclear.

Lam 1 (1/17/25)

(*Please answer the questions as best as you can.)

1. From v. 1, can you continue the descriptions of fullness to emptiness you have experienced or seen in life; can you specifically apply v. 18 into your life and explain what they were; what more do you see in God's word and what do you learn?
- In v. 9, we are told, "Her filthiness clung to her skirts..." If we could imagine the sins we commit or say or think are filthiness that gets stuck to our shirts or pants, we wouldn't wear them, right? We see how dirty that makes us, and if we were meeting people, they too will see the filthiness we have. We would wash them or if we can't get rid of the filth, we would throw them away. But, unlike our clothing, spiritually, none of that happens, for we just keep wearing the filth stuck to us. How deplorable, isn't it? That's what is happening to us when we are sinning and leave it at that. Sin does not float away, but they get stuck to our skirts. Amazingly, what is unclean-able, what is unremovable for us, our God, Jesus, came to do. He cleansed our filthiness. He removed our sinfulness. He forgave our sins. He paid the debt of our sins to the holy Father for us. And because Jesus cleansed us from all of our sins, they cannot ever cling to our skirts, or remain in our hearts. For what Jesus removes, none can stay, none can cling, none can get stuck to us, ever again. If we believe by faith that Jesus death on the cross was for my sins, then the once clinging filthy sins of ours, are washed away from us forever. We are whiter than snow because Jesus shed His blood for us, in His amazing love for you and me.

Lam 2 (1/18/25)

(*Please answer the questions as best as you can.)

1. From vv. 1-8, will you list all the ways God says He will do to His people; can you explain v. 14, how it is true today and how it is applicable to your life; what do you learn?
 - This chapter is filled with words and expressions that our God have used previously to bless, but here, He is not. It opens with the expression, “How the Lord has covered Daughter Zion with the cloud of His anger!” The covering of cloud is clearly a direct reminder of His cloud covering His people, when God led them out of Egypt through the desert. Day by day, day and night, for 40 years, not one day of exception or failure or forgetfulness, God covered His people with the cloud to protect them from the sun, with the pillar of fire to warm them through the night, and with the cloud to guide them every step through the mapless desert into their Promised Land. The covering of the cloud was clearly God’s sign and reminder of His blessings. But here, God tells His people, He is covering them with the cloud of His anger. Not a blessing, but anger is what the Lord had decided to cover His people with. He will rain on them anger. He will lead them in anger. Anger from God is what the people deserved, because they repeatedly rejected, refused, ignored, forgot, did not care, and disobeyed God’s word. They did what they wanted, and not what God had planned for them, not what God had designed for them. God desired to bless them, but instead, they chose sin over God. So, the cloud of anger hovered over them wherever they were, wherever they went. Oh, we must humbly learn, God does not get angry easily. But, if we have provoked our God to His anger, may we give ourselves no rest, but day and night, may our tears flow for our sinfulness, and may we desperately seek God’s mercy, despite how well we know we don’t deserve it (v. 18). But, yet, we will cry because without His mercy, we are lost.

Lam 3 (1/20/25)

(*Please answer the questions as best as you can.)

1. Our much beloved hymn, Great is Thy Faithfulness, is from vv. 22-23, can you explain under what context these words come from and how can this be applied to you; which other words in this chapter captures your heart and why?
 - In v. 38 we hear, “Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come?” We are told, not just the good things, but also calamities are from the Lord. We love the good things from the Lord, but how are we to accept calamities from the Lord? Let’s understand, God is never a doer of evil. He will never send calamities to simply make our lives miserable. So, when God does send calamities, it is for good reasons. God will never punish anyone who did not deserve such punishment. In other words, if we are receiving the calamity, it is because we deserve the punishment. Truth be known, until the eternal condemnation in hell, no one actually receives the full weight of God’s punishment for our sins. So, even when we or anyone is punished for our sins, God could have done so much more severely, but He was merciful. Another good reason for God’s calamities or punishments or rebukes or disciplines for God’s people, it is with the purpose “that we may share in His holiness”, by not allowing us to continue in our sinfulness and turn to our God to learn and to follow in His ways (Heb 12:10). Even for people who are not believers, God allows the calamities, so that as they may see the sinfulness of their ways and stop and reflect for better ways. In other words, they are given opportunities to turn from their sin. Of course, on their own, that’s not possible. And this is where God uses His children to be His instrument of grace to the non-believers, to bless them to turn from their sins and turn to God by faith in Jesus as the Christ. God has placed His people in this world, so that He can use us to bless the people around us, to help them stop their sinful ways and bless them to learn of God’s holy ways, as He has first taught

us. Being a friend to our non-believing neighbors is not to just get together to drink coffee and invite them over for a meal. God placed us here to bless them to see the ugliness of their sinfulness, and use us to help them stop and turn to our God in His mercy and grace, just as He has first gifted us.

Lam 4 (1/21/25)

(*Please answer the questions as best as you can.)

1. What is a description God uses to describes His people and her downfall; why did this happen to her, and how will her leaders be treated; what do you learn?
 - After such a dark and hopeless description to what happens to His people, this chapter yet again ends with words of hope, “Your punishment will end, Daughter Zion; He will not prolong your exile. But He will punish your sin, Daughter Edom, and expose your wickedness.” For God’s people, the punishment will come to an end, and there will be a day of restoration coming. And that is true for all God’s people, living today as well. We will do well to learn and remember, though we may be painfully disciplined for the foolish sins we keep committing, and yet, those punishments will end, and God will restore us yet again. Strangely, God inserts Edom at the end of this chapter, to tell them, “But He will punish your sin, Daughter Edom, and expose your wickedness.” Unlike God’s people, Edom’s punishment for her sins will ruin her. God will not restore her. Why? What sin did Edom commit? Edom was Judah’s neighbor to the southeast. She gloated over Jerusalem’s downfall (Obadiah 10-18). Let’s learn, God is our Father, and our Father despises the people who gloats, who makes trouble, who harms, who is arrogant over His children. Our Father sees what they do and listen to what He says He will do, “Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is Mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Rom 12:19). Because we know how completely God, our Father, cares for us, we need not take revenge over our enemies, even when we suffer unjustly, nor do we need to cry out for justice, because He knows, He will care for His children more powerfully and justly than we ever can. He knows what we are going through. He knows what to do.

Lam 5 (1/22/25)

(*Please answer the questions as best as you can.)

1. What was the state of the people and why; why did the people think that God has forgotten them; where are the people looking for their deliverance and why there; what do you learn?
 - The ending of this book is hopeful and yet fearful. Their hope lied in their God, in His goodness, “You, Lord, reign forever; Your throne endures from generation to generation.” Because God is their God, they can look up and expect their God to reign. But, when they look down and see how they are, then there’s a reason to be fearful, “Why do You always forget us? Why do You forsake us so long? Restore us to Yourself, Lord, that we may return; renew our days as of old unless You have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure.” Their miserable condition has gone on for a long time, and their suffering has not let up. They feel forgotten and forsaken by God. They know they sinned, and yet, they still want their God to restore them. That’s what children do, even though they know they messed up, they still expect their parents to accept them. That’s who we are, God’s children. We don’t have to be perfect for our Father to accept us. And if these people would look up to God’s

word and remember, then they would have learned, “The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged” (Deut 31:8). To know our God well, is truly our strength and our hope.