

# Tragedy, Faith, and Hope

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**“... faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”**

This is a very familiar verse from Hebrews 11:1 (ESV).

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## 1. Hope in the Face of Tragedy

What is “hope”? How is “hope” related to “faith”? As Christians, our hope is to see the realization of the promises of God – especially the first resurrection which will enable us to participate in the realization of all the other promises. This is our hope. To live for this hope requires faith. Faith is rooted in believing that God will do what he says – that he will carry out his plan as revealed in the Bible.

However, the reality of human existence is tragedy. We have all experienced tragedy in our lives. The world is right now locked in an ongoing tragedy – thousands are dying from coronavirus. Plagues like this have ravaged the world throughout history. Wars have brought untold suffering. This world is about to go into the greatest tragedy of all time: the Beast Power will arise and take the world into a war which will threaten the very survival of the human race. Only the return of the King of kings will prevent the destruction of all humanity – this is our hope, the only hope for the human race.

The prophet Jeremiah witnessed and lived through one of the greatest tragedies of history – the destruction of Jerusalem in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Jeremiah had spent forty years warning the people of the consequences of their sins – they refused to repent. The terms of the Sinai covenant by which the nation of Israel had been created required God to apply the covenant curses. The nation was destroyed. Most people were killed. Some few escaped to captivity or flight.

When it was all over, Jeremiah looked over the ruins of Jerusalem and composed five of the most beautiful poems extant in the Hebrew language. We have these poems in the Book of Lamentations. In these poems, Jeremiah carefully recounts the tragedy, and its cause – the refusal of the people to repent. But through the tragedy, Jeremiah saw the hand of God working out his plan, fulfilling his promises. This provides a basis for faith. Through faith Jeremiah is able to go forward with hope looking to the fulfillment of all God’s promises.

We can draw on the insights Jeremiah has recorded for us and look beyond all tragedies of this life to the glory of God’s promises, to the soon coming establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

## 2. Jeremiah’s Preaching: Hope Anticipated

The Book of Lamentations was written by Jeremiah after some forty years of preaching to the people of Jerusalem (see Jeremiah’s comments in chapter 25 verse 3 through 7, written in 605BC). In addition to warning the people about the consequence of their sins, Jeremiah also received from God, and relayed to the people, many wonderful revelations regarding the working out of God’s plan and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. The book of Lamentations expresses Jeremiah’s feelings after the complete and utter destruction of the city of Jerusalem. Jeremiah’s understanding of God’s plan as revealed in his preaching gave him the capacity to understand the destruction.

### 2.1 Repentance

Repentance was the major theme of Jeremiah’s message to the people of Israel. He carefully laid out for them their sins in violation of the Sinai Covenant. He carefully described the nature of God – his covenant love, his mercy, and his justness. He repeatedly reiterated God’s offers to forgive them, if only they would repent. They refused.

## Jeremiah 4:1-2

"If you return, O Israel, declares the LORD, to me you should return.  
If you remove your detestable things from my presence, and do not waver,  
and if you swear, 'As the LORD lives,' in truth, in justice, and in righteousness,  
then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory." (ESV)

**Situation:** This is likely early in Josiah's reform, while there is still hope that the nation will repent, so around 620BC.

**Comment:** This pericope starts at 3:19 and extends through 4:4. Verse 3:9 expresses God's desire for Israel. Verses 3:20-21 bemoan Israel's apostasy. Verses 3:22-23 allude to the return instigated by Josiah's reform. Verse 3:25 is an expression of repentance. Verses 4:1-2a (lines 1-3 above) express YHWH's desire for true repentance; these lines are the protasis which states the requirements of true repentance. The apodosis is line 4 above: it expresses the potential outcome of true repentance. The allusion to "nations" is to Gn12:3, the promise to Abraham. The antecedent of "him" is YHWH. "bless themselves" carries the sense of "desire the blessing". So, God is saying through Jeremiah, that it is not too late for Israel to repent and for the nation to fulfill the original purpose that God intended for it (see Ex19:5-6, Dt7:6, 14:2, 26:18-19, Ps135:4, Am3:2).

## Jeremiah 5:1-3

Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look and take note!  
Search her squares to see, if you can find a man,  
one who does justice, and seeks truth,  
that I may pardon her.  
Though they say, "As the LORD lives," yet they swear falsely.  
O LORD, do not your eyes look for truth?  
You have struck them down, but they felt no anguish;  
you have consumed them, but they refused to take correction.  
They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to repent. (ESV)

**Situation:** This is likely late in Josiah's reform, when it is clear that the people are NOT repenting, so about 612BC.

**Comment:** These verses introduce all of chapter 5, which goes on to examine in detail the sins of Israel, the refusal of the people to repent, and impending punishment leading to the final destruction of the nation. The root cause of the destruction is as stated in the last two lines above: "... they refused to take correction", "... they have refused to repent".

## Jeremiah 7:5-7

For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds,  
if you truly execute justice one with another,  
if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place,  
and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm,  
then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever. (ESV)

**Situation:** This is very near the end of Josiah's reign or early in Jehoiakim's reign, the reform has failed, so about 609BC.

**Comment:** Chapter 7 is Jeremiah's famous "Temple Sermon". It is time for Israel's final warning, the final opportunity to repent. In spite of their sins and refusal to repent, the people have adopted a dangerous attitude of assuming the YHWH was obliged to protect Jerusalem because his temple was there:

Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD. (Jeremiah 7:4 ESV)

The first four lines above are the protasis: the requirements of repentance. The last line is the apodosis: the possible outcome of repentance. God still holds out the opportunity to be granted the promises to the patriarchs: "... I will let you dwell in this place ..."

## 2.2 Destruction

The Book of Jeremiah contains many prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem and the last vestiges of the Nation of Israel. The destruction is clearly presented as the direct action of God. It is the punishment required by the Sinai Covenant necessary because the people of Israel broke the covenant and refused to repent.

### **Jeremiah 9:11, 16**

I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a lair of jackals,  
and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant.  
I will scatter them among the nations whom neither they nor their fathers have known,  
and I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them. (ESV)

**Situation:** This material likely dates between 609 and 605, the early part of Jehoiakim's reign. Much of the material we have in chapters 8 through 23 probably comprised the scrolls discussed in chapter 36.

**Comment:** These verses are part of a discourse which begins at 8:18 and continues until 9:22. Jeremiah expresses his grief over the condition of his people. He quotes several sayings of YHWH specifying the destruction to result from the punishment to be inflicted by YHWH. The first two lines above clearly foretell the fate of Jerusalem and the other cities. The last two lines make direct reference to the covenant curses (Lv26:33, Dt28:64) the application of which is made necessary by the actions and attitude of the people.

### **Jeremiah 19:7-9**

... I will make void the plans of Judah and Jerusalem,  
and will cause their people to fall by the sword before their enemies,  
and by the hand of those who seek their life.  
I will give their dead bodies for food to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the earth.  
And I will make this city a horror, a thing to be hissed at.  
Everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss because of all its wounds.  
And I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and their daughters ... (ESV)

**Situation:** Again, this material likely dates between 609 and 605, the early part of Jehoiakim's reign.

**Comment:** In chapter 19 Jeremiah is performing a symbolic action. He takes a group of elders and priests outside the walls of Jerusalem, presents this discourse to them, and smashes a clay vessel in front of them. His stated purpose in the action is:

Thus says the LORD of hosts: So will I break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, so that it can never be mended. (Jeremiah 19:11 ESV)

The lines above are part of the word from YHWH that Jeremiah delivered to the people. They make direct reference to the covenant curses (Lv26:17, 29, Dt28:53). This prophecy is directly alluded to in the Book of Lamentations (2:15-16, 20, 4:10)

### 2.3 Jeremiah's Feelings

Much of Jeremiah's feelings displayed in the Book of Lamentations are foreshadowed by his feelings expressed in various soliloquies and prayers recorded in the Book of Jeremiah.

#### **Jeremiah 8:18-19a, 21, 9:1-2a**

My joy is gone; grief is upon me; my heart is sick within me.  
Behold, the cry of the daughter of my people, from the length and breadth of the land:  
"Is the LORD not in Zion? Is her King not in her?"  
For the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded;  
I mourn, and dismay has taken hold on me.  
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!  
Oh that I had in the desert, a travelers' lodging place,  
that I might leave my people, and go away from them! (ESV)

**Situation:** This material likely dates between 609 and 605, the early part of Jehoiakim's reign.

**Comment:** This is likely Jeremiah's early reaction to the actions of Jehoiakim in repudiating Josiah's reform. The cause of his grief is stated in 8:19b in the words of YHWH:

"Why have they provoked me to anger with their carved images and with their foreign idols?" (ESV)

Note Jeremiah uses the term "daughter of my people" as he does in Lamentations. The theme of "weeping" in verse 9:1 is taken up frequently in Lamentations (1:2, 16, 2:11, 18, 3:48-51). In verse 9:2a, (last two lines above) Jeremiah is at the point where he just wants out. In line 6, "the slain ... of my people" may be an allusion to the death of Josiah. This may be one of the "laments" referred to in 2 Chronicles 35:25.

#### **Jeremiah 15:15-18**

O LORD, you know; remember me and visit me, and take vengeance for me on my persecutors.  
In your forbearance take me not away; know that for your sake I bear reproach.  
Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy, and the delight of my heart,  
for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.  
I did not sit in the company of revelers, nor did I rejoice;  
I sat alone, because your hand was upon me, for you had filled me with indignation.  
Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?  
Will you be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail? (ESV)

**Situation:** This could be late in the reign of Jehoiakim, but more likely early in Zedekiah's reign: verses 15:5-8 seem to imply that Jerusalem has been sacked, which places this after 597BC.

**Comment:** In lines 1 and 2 above, Jeremiah expresses his frustration as destruction is looming and Zedekiah's officials are determined to silence Jeremiah. Jeremiah returns to the theme of retributive justice several times in Lamentations (1:22, 3:64-66, 4:21-22). In line 3, Jeremiah expresses his conversion experience, and line 4, the result of conversion – membership in the family of God. Lines 5 and 6 present a familiar requirement of being a member of the family of God: to be in the world but not part of the world. Line 7 expresses Jeremiah's suffering under his current circumstances, and line 8 expresses his despair, verging on shattered faith. In Lamentations 3:18, he expresses the same feeling.

#### **Jeremiah 20:7-9**

O LORD, you have persuaded me, and I was persuaded;  
you are stronger than I, and you have prevailed.  
I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me.  
For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, "Violence and destruction!"  
For the word of the LORD has become for me, a reproach and derision all day long.  
If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,"  
there is in my heart as it were a burning fire, shut up in my bones,

and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.  
(ESV except line 1 “deceived” changed to “persuaded”)

**Situation:** This material likely dates between 609 and 605, the early part of Jehoiakim’s reign. In chapter 20, verses 1 through 6, it is recorded how Pashhur, a temple official, had put Jeremiah in stocks over night.

**Comment:** Once again Jeremiah calls on his conversion experience and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit to deal with the situation and keep going. Lines 1 and 2 look back to Jeremiah’s conversion experience and the ongoing strength provided by the Holy Spirit. Lines 3, 4, and 5 express Jeremiah’s frustration – he preached, warning of immanent destruction, but the people refuse to accept it and mock him. Line 6 expresses Jeremiah’s frustration, resulting in a desire to give up and quit doing the work that God has given him. Lines 7 and 8 describe the inner strength and drive provided by the Holy Spirit which enables Jeremiah to keep going and do the work.

### 3. The Book of Lamentations: Hope Renewed

**Name in Hebrew:** אֵיכָה - ‘ekah: “How”

**Author:** Jeremiah

**Date:** soon after the destruction of Jerusalem; about 585BC

**Rabbinic Judaism:** Lamentations is part of the five-scroll group called the Megilloth. Each book is read on a specific occasion: Song of Songs - Passover; Ruth - Pentecost; Lamentations - 9<sup>th</sup> of Ab (anniversary of destruction of Jerusalem); Ecclesiastes - Tabernacles; and, Esther - Purim.

The Book of Lamentations comprises five beautiful Hebrew poems. Four of the poems are acrostics: each verse starts with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The poems exhibit parallelism on several levels: in general, each line has two parts – the second part is in some way parallel with the first part. There is also parallelism between lines and between verses. The most common forms of parallelism are:

- Synonymous: the second member restates the same thought as the first member
- Antithetic: the second member states an opposite thought to the first member
- Synthetic: the second member develops or enlarges the thought of the first member

The focus of all five poems is the destruction of Jerusalem. Poems one, two, and four deal specifically with the **Tragedy** of the destruction and its cause: the sins of the people of Israel and their refusal to repent. Poem three is the high point of quintet – Jeremiah pours out his innermost feelings and finds basis in the destruction for **Faith** and **Hope**. The fifth poem (not an acrostic) is a prayer for God’s mercy. The book contains several other sub-themes; some of these are highlighted later.

Throughout the poems, Jeremiah addresses God as “YHWH” (LORD) to emphasize the covenant relationship of God with Israel. He uses the name “Adonai” (Lord) to emphasize a personal relationship with God. He uses “Elyon” (Most High) to emphasize the majesty of God.

Throughout the poems, there are many allusions to various Psalms, and other poetic material, even some quotations. This demonstrates Jeremiah’s familiarity with older poetic material.

Throughout the poems four “voices” are identifiable. First, Jeremiah speaks as a disinterested **narrator**. He speaks of Jerusalem in third person singular. Secondly, Jeremiah **personifies Jerusalem** – Jerusalem herself speaks in first person singular. Thirdly, **Jeremiah speaks for**

**himself** in first person singular. Lastly, **Jeremiah identifies himself with Jerusalem**, with the people of Israel, and speaks in first person plural.

### 3.1 Poem 1: Lamentation Over the Fall of Jerusalem

Each verse comprises three lines. The first word in each verse establishes the acrostic.

#### **Verses 1-11** Lament over the state of the city; **narrator speaks**

1. The current state of the city compared to her former greatness
2. The grief of the city
3. The fate of the nation
4. The emptiness of the city
5. The completeness of the punishment
6. The majesty of Jerusalem is departed
7. Her former state remembered (this verse has four lines)
8. Jerusalem's disgrace
9. The depths of disgrace
10. Everything is taken away
11. The depraved state of Jerusalem

#### **Verses 12-16** Jerusalem laments her condition; **personification**

12. Jerusalem's sorrow, from YHWH
13. Jerusalem's punishment, from YHWH
14. Jerusalem's yoke, from YHWH
15. Jerusalem's destruction, from YHWH
16. Jerusalem bitterly weeps over her condition

#### **Verse 17** The **narrator** confirms the condition of Jerusalem

#### **Verses 18-22** Jerusalem acknowledges her sin, and prays for mercy; **personification**

18. Jerusalem recognizes her sin before YHWH
19. Jerusalem looked to "lovers" instead of God
20. Jerusalem's anguish due to rebellion against YHWH
21. Jerusalem's enemies rejoice at her troubles
22. Jerusalem calls for retributive justice on her enemies

### 3.2 Poem 2: The Punishment is according to the Plan of God

Each verse comprises three lines. The first word in each verse establishes the acrostic. The Plan of God is played out according to prophecy, specifically the covenant curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, as preached by Jeremiah.

#### **Verses 1-10** Description of the punishment; **narrator speaks**

1. Adonai has acted
2. Adonai has shown no mercy
3. The wrath of God
4. God himself fought against Jerusalem
5. Adonai has "swallowed" Israel
6. YHWH has destroyed the temple service
7. Adonai has rejected the temple service
8. YHWH carefully planned and executed the destruction
9. Jerusalem is vacant
10. The sorry state of the people

**Verses 11-19** Jeremiah expresses his grief and calls for repentance; **Jeremiah speaks for himself**

- Verses 11 – 13: Jeremiah's grief over the pathetic state of Jerusalem
- Verse 14: A cause of the sin: deception and lies
- Verses 15 – 16: Taunts of neighbour nations
- Verse 17: YHWH has executed his plan
- Verses 18 – 19: Jeremiah calls for repentance (verse 19 has four lines)

**Verses 20-22** Jerusalem laments the actions of YHWH; **personification**

### 3.3 Poem 3: Faith, Hope, the Nature of God, and the Plan of God

In this poem each line is numbered as a verse because the acrostic extends to each line. Each poetic verse is actually three lines, where all three lines begin with the same Hebrew letter.

**Verses 1-18** Jeremiah's personal lament; **Jeremiah speaks for himself**

Jeremiah reflects back over his 40 years of preaching to Israel. As in some of his soliloquies in the Book of Jeremiah, he comes close to despair – almost to the point of his faith having been broken.

**Verses 19-24** Jeremiah prays for personal restoration; **Jeremiah speaks for himself**

- Verses 19-20: Jeremiah implores God to remember his condition
- Verse 21: Jeremiah anticipates the outcome of verses 22 and 23
- Verse 22: Jeremiah keys on two fundamental attributes of God's nature: **הֶסֶד** - ḥesed: "steadfast love", "covenant love", and **רַחֵם** - raḥam: "mercy".
- Verse 23: Jeremiah reflects on God's faithfulness – this restores in him his faith
- Verse 24: Jeremiah realizes the restoration of faith and hope

**Verses 25-39** Reflection on the Nature of God; **narrator speaks**

- Verses 25-27: YHWH is good to a person who seeks him
- Verses 28-30: The beneficial effects of suffering under God's hand
- Verses 31-33: Grief from Adonai is temporary due to his ḥesed and raḥam
- Verses 34-36: Three modes of injustice hated by Elyon
- Verses 37-39: Good and bad are from Elyon according to his plan

**Verses 40-54** Jeremiah prays for repentance on behalf of Israel; **Jeremiah identifies himself with Jerusalem; also, Jeremiah speaks for himself**

- Verses 40-42: Jeremiah pleads for a return to a right relationship with YHWH
- Verse 43-45: God has removed himself from the relationship
- Verse 46-48: Jeremiah's grief over the destruction of the people
- Verses 49-51: Jeremiah's pain due to the grief can only be relieved by YHWH's reconciliation
- Verses 52-54: Jeremiah identifies his personal grief with the grief of Jerusalem

**Verses 55-66** Jeremiah's final prayer of faith; **Jeremiah speaks for himself**

- Verses 55-57: YHWH has heard Jeremiah and replies "fear not"
- Verses 58-60: Adonai has watched over Jeremiah throughout his trials
- Verses 61-63: Plots and taunts of enemies
- Verses 64-66: Confidence in retributive justice



### 3.4 Poem 4: Tragedy Revisited – Personal Guilt Laid Bare

Each verse comprises two lines. The first word in each verse establishes the acrostic.

**Verses 1-11** The guilt of common people, the privileged, and royalty; **narrator speaks**

- Verses 1-2: “Sons of Zion” are compared to precious gold laid waste as clay pots
- Verses 3-4: The people of Jerusalem became so cruel that children were left to starve
- Verse 5: Even the privileged were reduced to penury
- Verse 6: The guilt and punishment of the people is greater than that of Sodom
- Verses 7-8: Royalty were reduced to ugliness
- Verses 9-10: Death by the sword preferred to death by famine
- Verse 11: The destruction is according to the Plan of God

**Verses 12-16** The guilt of the leaders: priests and prophets; **narrator speaks**

- Verse 12: The destruction of Jerusalem was an unbelievable event
- Verse 13: The root cause of the destruction is the sins of the leaders
- Verses 14-15: The leaders became as lepers, shunned by any survivors
- Verse 16: YHWH is through with the leaders; even the most venerable deserve no respect

**Verses 17-20** Jerusalem acknowledges her sin of looking to the world rather than to God; **personification**

- Verses 17-19: The nations that Jerusalem looked to turned on her and ravaged her
- Verse 20: Reliance on a human king proved futile

**Verses 21-22** Retributive Justice and Restoration; **narrator speaks**

- 21. Edom, as the type of the worldly power, will drink the cup of God’s wrath
- 22. When the worldly power has received final retribution, Israel will be restored

### 3.5 Poem 5: Jeremiah Prays on Behalf of the Remnant of Israel

There is no verse structure – each line is numbered as a verse. There is no acrostic.

Jeremiah speaks throughout for Jerusalem; **Jeremiah identifies himself with Jerusalem.**

**Verse 1** Initial plea to YHWH

**Verses 2-6** The sorry state of the people is recounted

**Verse 7** Acknowledgement that sin is the cause

**Verses 8-10** The sorry state of the people is further recounted

**Verses 11-14** The grief of various classes of the people

**Verse 15** The general gloom is from God

**Verses 16-18** The punishment brings sickness of heart – beginning of repentance

**Verses 19-21** Recognition of omnipotence of YHWH and petition for restoration

### 3.6 Major Theme: Tragedy

How lonely sits the city, that was full of people!

How like a widow has she become, she who was great among the nations!

She who was a princess among the provinces, has become a slave. (1:1 ESV)

Her foes have become the head; her enemies prosper,  
because the LORD has afflicted her, for the multitude of her transgressions;  
her children have gone away, captives before the foe. (1:5 ESV)

My transgressions were bound into a yoke; by his hand they were fastened together;  
they were set upon my neck; he caused my strength to fail;

the Lord gave me into the hands, of those whom I cannot withstand. (1:14 ESV)

The LORD determined to lay in ruins, the wall of the daughter of Zion;  
he stretched out the measuring line; he did not restrain his hand from destroying;  
he caused rampart and wall to lament; they languished together. (2:8 ESV)

They cry to their mothers, "Where is bread and wine?"  
as they faint like a wounded man, in the streets of the city,  
as their life is poured out, on their mothers' bosom. (2:12 ESV)

Happier were the victims of the sword, than the victims of hunger,  
who wasted away, pierced, by lack of the fruits of the field. (4:9 ESV)

The hands of compassionate women, have boiled their own children;  
they became their food, during the destruction of the daughter of my people. (4:10 ESV)

### 3.7 Major Theme: Faith and Hope

This is the objective of the Book of Lamentations. The recounting of the of the tragedy was necessary for Jeremiah to deal with the situation. He had spent forty long years warning the people of the consequences of their sins. No one responded. On many occasions, he was cruelly and brutally treated by the very people for whom he had poured out his life in love. Now it had happened. Jerusalem was a desolate ruin. The vast majority of the people were dead. Some were in captivity. Some few had fled to neighbouring nations. Jeremiah was no doubt a mental and physical wreck. These poems describe the inner processes by which Jeremiah dealt with this grief. In the end his faith was strengthened, and he was able to go on in hope.

#### 3.7.1 The basis of Faith is repentance

The LORD is in the right, for I have rebelled against his word; ...  
"Look, O LORD, for I am in distress; my stomach churns;  
my heart is wrung within me, because I have been very rebellious. (1:18, 20 ESV)

Their heart cried to the Lord ...  
let tears stream down like a torrent, day and night!  
Give yourself no rest, your eyes no respite!  
"Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the night watches!  
Pour out your heart like water, before the presence of the Lord!  
Lift your hands to him ... (2:18-19 ESV)

Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD!  
Let us lift up our hearts and hands, to God in heaven:  
We have transgressed and rebelled, and you have not forgiven. (3:40-42 ESV)

#### 3.7.2 Once repentant, one can see the hand of God at work

How the Lord in his anger, has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud!  
He has cast down from heaven to earth, the splendor of Israel;  
he has not remembered his footstool, in the day of his anger. (2:1 ESV)

The LORD has done what he purposed; he has carried out his word,  
which he commanded long ago ... (2:17 ESV)

#### 3.7.3 Recognition of God's actions leads to Faith

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (3:22-23 ESV)

For the Lord will not, cast off forever,  
but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion, according to the abundance of his  
steadfast love;  
for he does not afflict from his heart, or grieve the children of men. (3:31-33 ESV)

I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit;  
you heard my plea, 'Do not close, your ear to my cry for help!'  
You came near when I called on you; you said, 'Do not fear!' (3:55-57 ESV)

#### 3.7.4 In a condition of Faith, one is able to look forward with Hope

Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall!  
My soul continually remembers it, and is bowed down within me.  
But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: (3:19-21 ESV)

"The LORD is my portion," ... "therefore I will hope in him."  
The LORD is good to those who wait for him ...  
It is good that one should wait quietly, for the salvation of the LORD. (3:24-26 ESV)

But you, O LORD, reign forever; your throne endures to all generations.  
Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored!  
Renew our days as of old (5:19, 21 ESV)

#### 3.8 Minor Theme: *The Day of YHWH*

The destruction of Jerusalem is type of the Day of YHWH:  
Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see  
if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which was brought upon me,  
which the LORD inflicted, on **the day of his fierce anger**. (1:12 ESV)

"They heard my groaning, yet there is no one to comfort me.  
All my enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that you have done it.  
You have brought **the day you announced** ... (1:21 ESV)

In the dust of the streets, lie the young and the old;  
my young women and my young men, have fallen by the sword;  
you have killed them in **the day of your anger**, slaughtering without pity. (2:21 ESV)

You summoned as if to a festival day, my terrors on every side,  
and on the **day of the anger of the LORD**, no one escaped or survived; (2:22 ESV)

#### 3.9 Minor Theme: *Retributive Justice*

Let all their evildoing come before you, and deal with them  
as you have dealt with me, because of all my transgressions; (1:22 ESV)

You have heard their taunts, O LORD, all their plots against me.  
The lips and thoughts of my assailants, are against me all the day long.  
Behold their sitting and their rising; I am the object of their taunts.  
You will repay them, O LORD, according to the work of their hands.  
You will give them dullness of heart; your curse will be on them.  
You will pursue them in anger and destroy them, from under your heavens, O LORD. (3:61-66  
ESV)

Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, you who dwell in the land of Uz;  
but to you also the cup shall pass; you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare. (4:21 ESV)

### 3.10 Minor Theme: *Jerusalem as the Mother of her People*

Jeremiah regularly uses the term “daughter” for the people. This foreshadows the New Testament metaphor of “Jerusalem” as the Church, the Mother of Christians (Gl4:26, Hb12:22).

- The term “daughter of Zion” is usually used to refer to Jerusalem herself, which includes the people: 1:6, 2:1, 4, 8, 10, 13, 18, 4:22
- The term “daughter of Jerusalem” is used to refer to Jerusalem herself in 2:13 and 15, which again includes the people
- The term “daughter of Judah” is used in parallel with “Jacob” in 2:21, and in parallel with “Israel” in 2:5
- The term “daughter of my people” is used for the people of Jerusalem in 2:11, 3:48, 4:3, 6, 10
- The term “daughters of my city” is used for the people of Jerusalem in 3:51

### 3.11 Minor Theme: *A Comforter*

Jeremiah bemoans the lack of a comforter for Jerusalem – this foreshadows the New Testament concept of the Holy Spirit as a Comforter (παρακλητος - parakleetos Jh14:16, 26, 15:26, 16:26, 1Jh2:1).

- ... among all her lovers, she has none to comfort her
- ... therefore her fall is terrible; she has no comforter
- ... for a comforter is far from me, one to revive my spirit
- ... Zion stretches out her hands, but there is none to comfort her
- ... They heard my groaning, yet there is no one to comfort me (1:2, 9, 16, 17, 21 ESV)

## 4. Ezekiel’s Preaching: Hope Realized

Ezekiel was born in 623BC. He grew up during Josiah’s reform while Jeremiah was preaching. He witnessed the apostasy of Jehoiakim and was taken to Babylon in the captivity of 597BC. He was almost certainly familiar with Jeremiah’s message. Perhaps he had access to a written version of some of the material in chapters 2 through 6 and the material on the second scroll discussed in chapter 36.

During Jeremiah’s later activity in Jerusalem and Egypt, Ezekiel was in Babylonia dealing with a very different situation. Ezekiel’s commission was to work with the exiles, the “good figs” (Jr24:4), to bring those who would listen (Ez2:5, 7, 3:11) to repentance to form the nucleus of the remnant community to return to the land of Israel and prepare for the first coming of the Messiah. The First Advent made possible the New Testament Church and the possibility of repentance and salvation for all mankind to be realized in the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth when the King of kings returns.

### 4.1 The Second Exodus and the New Israel

#### **Ezekiel 20:40-44**

For on my holy mountain, the mountain height of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, there all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land. There I will accept them, and there I will require your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your sacred offerings. As a pleasing aroma I will accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered. And I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the country that I swore to give to your fathers. And there you shall remember your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves, and you shall loathe yourselves for all the evils that you have committed. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I deal with you for my name’s sake, not according to your evil ways, nor according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD.” (ESV)

**Situation:** Chapter 20 is dated to August 591BC (20:1a). Some of the elders of Israel (exiles) come to Ezekiel to enquire of God (20:1b-4). Then God gives Ezekiel a revelation recounting the history of Israel's apostasy (20:5-31). God ends by telling Israel that due to God's election Israel can never be just another nation (2:32). God then explains that he will refine and purify Israel in preparation for the World Tomorrow (20:33-38), but as for those of the House of Israel who refuse to hear Ezekiel's preaching, they can go and serve their idols (20:33).

**Comment:** This pericope goes straight to the New Israel in the World Tomorrow. In contrast to a history of apostasy, "... all of them, shall serve me in the land. There I will accept them ...". God states his purpose, "... I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations ..." – the New Israel will accomplish the purpose of Old Israel to be an example nation to the world (Is61:6, Jr31:7). All participants in the New Israel will be repentant and converted, "... you shall remember your ways ... you shall know that I am the LORD ...".

## 4.2 The Good Shepherd

### **Ezekiel 34:11-16**

"For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice. (ESV)

**Situation:** In chapter 33 verse 21, a messenger arrives in January 585, some five months after the fall of Jerusalem. God gives Ezekiel a message to return with the messenger to the few remaining people in the area of Jerusalem: the land was NOT theirs to possess (33:23-29). Then God gives Ezekiel a message for those among the exiles who refuse to listen to Ezekiel's preaching: what Ezekiel has been saying will come to pass (33:30-33). God then focuses the message on the "shepherds" – leaders whose responsibility was the welfare of the people. These are the individuals among the exiles who had been, or currently were, in leadership positions (34:1-10).

**Comment:** This pericope deals with the Good Shepherd (Jh10:1-8, 21:15-17). God says "... I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out." This is talking about the general process by which God calls people. Specifically, this pericope looks to the calling of people to the New Israel: "... I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries ...". The participants in the New Israel will be selected from people from all countries. Once gathered to the Land of Israel, they will be spiritually feed with "good grazing" and "rich pasture".

## 4.3 A Covenant of Peace

### **Ezekiel 34:25-31**

"I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land. And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them. They shall no more be a prey to the nations, nor shall the beasts of the land devour them. They shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will provide for them renowned plantations so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land,

and no longer suffer the reproach of the nations. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Lord GOD. And you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Lord GOD.”

**Situation:** Continuing from the previous pericope, God explains that there will be a purification and purging process even among those called to the New Israel (34:17-24)

**Comment:** This pericope begins to talk about the New Covenant, “a covenant of peace”.

Nature and agriculture will be brought back into cooperation with people. God will “break the bars of their yoke” – this yoke is the yoke of sin enslaving all peoples of the world (Lm1:14). The people of the New Israel will be to God “human sheep of my pasture”.

#### 4.4 The Mountains of Israel

##### **Ezekiel 36:8-15**

But you, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to my people Israel, for they will soon come home. For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. And I will multiply people on you, the whole house of Israel, all of it. The cities shall be inhabited and the waste places rebuilt. And I will multiply on you man and beast, and they shall multiply and be fruitful. And I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to you than ever before. Then you will know that I am the LORD. I will let people walk on you, even my people Israel. And they shall possess you, and you shall be their inheritance, and you shall no longer bereave them of children. Thus says the Lord GOD: Because they say to you, ‘You devour people, and you bereave your nation of children,’ therefore you shall no longer devour people and no longer bereave your nation of children, declares the Lord GOD. And I will not let you hear anymore the reproach of the nations, and you shall no longer bear the disgrace of the peoples and no longer cause your nation to stumble, declares the Lord GOD.”

**Situation:** The first seven verses of chapter 36 deal with the situation following the destruction of 586BC. The Edomites had moved West and North into the Negeb because it was vacant. Under their control, this area they would become known as Idumea.

**Comment:** This pericope has very much a dual nature. It looks to the return of the remnant community starting in 538BC as a type of the Second Exodus. The “mountains of Israel” were a primary location of pagan worship before the exile.

#### 4.5 The New Covenant

##### **Ezekiel 36:22-36**

“Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water (see Is52:15) on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations. It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.

“Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt. And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of

being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by. And they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.' Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I am the LORD; I have rebuilt the ruined places and replanted that which was desolate. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it.

**Situation:** Verses 16 to 21 of chapter 36 transition from the fate of the remnant community discussed in verses 8 to 15 above. They describe the fate of Israelites NOT part of the remnant community. As required by the Sinai Covenant, the people of Israel were scattered irretrievably among the nations throughout the world.

**Comment:** This pericope is parallel to Jeremiah 31:31-34 and 32:36-41. These comprise the classic prophecies of the New Covenant. God makes it clear that he is acting according to his plan and for his purpose. The creation of the New Israel is not because of any worthiness of human beings. It is a product of God's covenant love and mercy. All participants in the New Israel will be called, will repent, and will be converted. At the beginning of the World Tomorrow, the Church and New Israel will be coincident. Then through the resurrected saints as members of the God Family and the Church, New Israel, the gospel will be preached to each and every human being on the planet, and all humanity will have the opportunity of salvation.

## 5. Hope

These prophecies describe the realization of our hope as Christians. God holds out this hope for us as the purpose of human life. This hope is in fact the only hope for the survival of the human race. All of the idiotic ideas that people come up with to deal with the world's problems will come to nothing. God's plan, God's purpose will prevail. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the other prophets saw this hope far off. It gave them the strength to go on, to complete the work given to them. We can see the realization of the hope very clearly. We are very close to the realization of this hope – let that give us the strength to endure to the end and complete the work before us.



Summary Chart: The Life and Times of Jeremiah

The Life and Times of Jeremiah

Assyrian Kings:

Asshurbanapal (668-627) Sinsharishkun (629-612) Asshurballit (612-609)  
Asshuretililani (627-624)

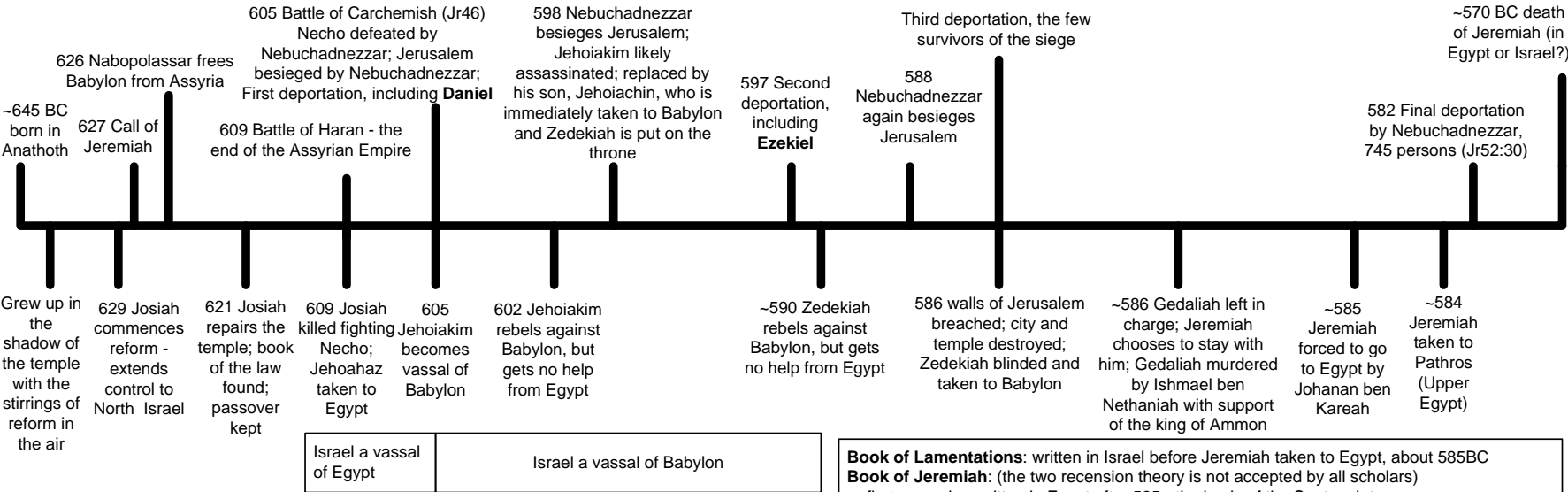
Babylonian Kings: Nabopolassar (626-605) Nebuchadnezzar (605-562)

Egyptian Kings: (26 Dynasty - Sais/Memphis)

Psammetichus I (664-611) Necho II (610-594) Psammetichus II (594-589) Apries (Hophra) (589-570) Amasis (570-526)

Israelite Kings:

Josiah (640-609) Jehoahaz (609) Jehoiakim (609-598) Jehoiachin (598) Zedekiah (597-586) Gedaliah (Governor) (586)



**Book of Lamentations:** written in Israel before Jeremiah taken to Egypt, about 585BC  
**Book of Jeremiah:** (the two recension theory is not accepted by all scholars)  
- first recension written in Egypt after 585 - the basis of the Septuagint  
- second recension written in Israel before Jeremiah's death - basis of the Masoretic Text  
**Book of Ezekiel:** written in Babylon after 571BC

**627-609 BC**  
Jr2: - 6: Josiah's reform: Jeremiah preaches true repentance in support of the reform (2Kg22:, 23:, 2Chr24:, 35:)  
Jr7: Temple Sermon

**609-605 BC**  
Jr26:1-6 Sermon in the Temple Court  
Jr26:7-9,24 Jeremiah brought to trial  
Jr35:1-11 Jeremiah and the Rechabites  
Jr36:1-6, 28-32, 45:1-5 Jeremiah dictates two scrolls to Baruch  
Jr21:11-14, 22:1-30 the end of the Davidic dynasty  
Jr46:1-28 fate of Egypt

**594-593 BC**  
Jr27:1-12 Jerusalem conference of Zedekiah; Jeremiah's yoke  
Jr28:1-11 Jeremiah confronts Hananiah  
Jr29:1-23 Jeremiah sends a letter to the exiles in Babylon  
Jr51:59-64 Jeremiah sends prophecies against Babylon to Babylon with Seraiah

**588-586 BC**  
Jr21:1-2 Zedekiah under siege inquires of Jeremiah  
Jr32:1-5 Jeremiah imprisoned by Zedekiah  
Jr32:6-15 Jeremiah buys a field in Anathoth  
Jr33:1-2 Jeremiah in the court of the guard  
Jr34:1-7 Jeremiah informs Zedekiah of his fate  
Jr37:11-21 Jeremiah imprisoned for leaving the city  
Jr38:1-13 Jeremiah put in a cistern; saved by Ebed-melech  
Jr38:14-28 Jeremiah's final counsel to Zedekiah  
Jr39:11-14 Jeremiah is entrusted by Nebuchadnezzar to Gedaliah  
Jr40:1 Jeremiah taken in chains to Ramah  
Jr40:5-6 Jeremiah released again, returns to Gedaliah at Mizpah

**585-582 BC**  
Jr42:7-22 Jeremiah warns Johanan and the others NOT to go to Egypt  
Jr43:1-7 Jeremiah forced to go to Egypt  
Jr43:8-13 Jeremiah in Taphanhes  
Jr44:15-30 Jeremiah taken to Upper Egypt (Pathros)