

Grieving With Hope

A Series Thru Lamentations — Lesson 6

God Reigns

Chapter 5 closes the book of Lamentations with a prayer. To this point every chapter has included a focal point, meaning a key verse or passage that captures the most significant point of the chapter. Our focal point verses and passages are 1:18, 2:17, 3:22-24, 4:13, and 5:19. In an abbreviated way, these verses tell us the story of Judah's grieving and hope for restoration. While the crescendo of the book is the third chapter – the middle of the chiasm as we have previously discussed – the closing prayer in chapter 5 is the proverbial perfect ending. The book ends with an acknowledgement of the very truth that the people of Judah had forgotten. God is in charge of the whole operation. God reigns, whether we acknowledge that fact or not. I encourage you to read all the focal verses together and observe the movement. There is a turning point in the grieving precisely because the people re-focus on the goodness and sovereignty of God. Nothing else can possibly provide a basis for grieving with hope.

1. **Summary and Outline of Chapter 5:** This chapter is a prayer that had many of the elements of psalms that contain a lament followed by a prayer. Unlike chapters 1-4, chapter 5 is not written as an acrostic using the Hebrew alphabet. Moreover, the 3-line stanzas of chapter 3, which became 2-line stanzas in chapter 4, are in chapter 5 only single line stanzas. The reader is on notice that the decrescendo from chapter 3 is complete, and the people are led to pray for restoration. Walter Kaiser's basic outline (edited) of chapter 5 is as follows:

- Our condition (vv. 1-10) [note the use of first person plural "we" and "our" throughout]
- Our individual suffering (vv. 11-13)
- Our feelings and emotions (vv. 14-18)
- Our questions and petition for restoration (vv. 19-22)

2. **Our Condition (1-10):** The opening verse is critical because it signals that we are reading a prayer, and the request is that God take notice of their condition. What follows catalogues their three major shared calamities: (1) their loss of the land (vv. 2-3); (2) the lack of the necessities of life; and (3) the oppressive ways of their conquerors.

— Note the use of "inheritance" in verse 2 and "rest" in verse 5. What is the relationship between these ideas? (Joshua 1:13, Deut. 3:18-20; also Psalm 95; Hebrews 3:16-4:11)

3. **Individual Suffering (11-13):** These verses highlight atrocities that were experienced by certain individuals.

4. **Feelings and Emotions (vv. 14-18):** These verses highlight the somber outlook (v. 14), loss of joy (v. 15), loss of honor or reputation (v. 16), depression (v. 17), and loss of the temple where God's presence had been manifested.

5. **Questions and a Petition for Restoration (19-22):** Our focal point verse is 19, which is the key to the request — namely the recognition that God is in control. The two questions are found in verses 20 and 22, will God forget them? Will God completely reject them? But the answer no doubt is in Lamentations 3:22-24. God is faithful, His mercies are new every morning, and He is their portion. The prayer asks for God's help, outlines their calamities, confesses their sin (v. 17), recognizes God's sovereignty (v. 19) and specifically requests restoration (v. 21).

6. **More to the Story:** This book thoroughly addresses grieving but is not all of the story. The Bible has much more to say in other places, but that will be a study for another day.