

1. The Lament of Israel (The story of Lamentations is about the fall of Jerusalem—recorded in 2 Kings 25-25. Written not long after it chronicles the grief and suffering of this unimaginable event—the Holy City, the temple where God dwelt; the priesthood; everything sacred; their very identity obliterated by Babylon. The people were left in a state of **shock**. The prophet in Lamentations exposes it all—even borrowing from other biblical lament texts such as Job, Psalms and Isaiah’s suffering servant. The book stands *as a memorial to their pain and confusion*. No one was spared—not even the king—all were suffering great and unthinkable losses—life turned completely upside down. The daughter of Zion mourns; the wrath of God evident; Jerusalem left suffering like a lonely, hopeless old man. It is all there in Lamentations—Jerusalem trying to deal with its own destruction. As one commentator put it, Lamentations **“restores a sacred dignity on human suffering.”** And if we listen to it—it can)
2. Offer Invaluable Understanding of Grief (All of this—suffering, grief, pain, laments—are not topics we typically discuss. Rather we often go to great lengths to avoid them. Yet Lamentations is all about them and we need to—as Solomon noted in *Eccl. 3:4*—there will come times for us all to weep and mourn and here is what Lamentations can do for us in those times)
 - a. Allow us a forum to protest (the laments of the prophet often came in protest form. Why? Questions and confusion is directed to God. It is a way to seek out God in the midst of pain. It is also not uncommon through the pages of the Bible—Job, even Christ. God’s shoulders are large enough to handle our questions; our protests. Let’s take them to him and not allow the suffering to drive us away from him)
 - b. Helps us process our emotions (grief has stages we must endure and there is no need to pretend we are not affected when suffering comes; no need to hold it in. Jerusalem did not. Indeed there is a time to weep. Healing can and will come, but it is a process—one God needs to be involved in front and center even if it is not pretty and we are a mess. That is the picture I get out of Lamentations)
 - c. Captures the paradox of suffering (and this is not the easiest of truths to contemplate. But here it is in this story. The solution for pain, suffering, and grief is not for this world. They will always remain with us. The book ends—**5:19-22**—with this problem unresolved. The plea here is for Jerusalem to be restored and renewed—even still the prophet adds, *unless the Lord has utterly rejected us*. In that horrible moment—even though they brought this upon themselves—it had to feel that way. I am sure many of us know exactly that feeling. See here is the paradox. God reigns, yet suffering continues. God solution is not to eradicate it either, but rather to send his only Son in the midst of it—to offer hope through it. It is a hard fact that we will suffer. That is why Peter teaches us to face suffering as a Christian in 1 Peter 4:16 and to glorify God in it. Not easy at all, but Lamentations demonstrates how to do so with sacred dignity. And in this understanding and throughout this process there real hope—for a better day beyond the suffering. The prophet had this in mind)
3. Lamentations 3:19-26 (So don’t try to grieve alone—to grin and bear it. Process it with God. Lament! But always find your portion in him. His compassion may seem as if it has failed, but it most assuredly hasn’t. Patiently trust and wait—a new morning is coming. It did for Jerusalem and it will for us.)