**LAMENTATIONS**

**The Weeping Prophet**

**What you need to REMEMBER:**

A mantra that runs through Israel’s history is the need for the people to obey God’s instructions and commands. They were repeatedly told that if they were faithful in doing so, life would go well for them. And while there were seasons in which the people did so, a parallel theme of the historical narrative was their persistent failure to do life God’s way.

Like us ‘moderns,’ the ‘ancients’ were prone to think their opinions mattered more than The Creator’s. They tended toward self-justifying rationalizations that let them off-the-hook for their misbehavior, leading them to “do what was right in their own eyes” instead doing what He said. And, when they suffered the consequences, which God warned would surely come, they acted as if some strange and unexpected thing was happening to them. An extreme example of these consequences was when God allowed the Assyrian Empire to conquer and remove the 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel – assigning them to the dustbin of history.

In our journey through the books of the Major Prophets, we’ve already seen how God had raised up two prophets who brought God’s messages to the surviving Southern Kingdom of Judah. Isaiah and Jeremiah spoke forth prophesies that implored the people to change their wrongheaded thinking, attitudes and actions. And, they foretold the doom and destruction that would come upon the people if they failed to correct their course. It’s important to note that their prophesies are interspersed with descriptions of the blessings and benefits that would accompany their repentance. The prophets also foretold the eventual coming of the Messiah who would deliver the entire world from the effects of sin.

In response to their faithful efforts, the people mistreated Isaiah and Jeremiah. This was especially true for Jeremiah who for 42 years was hated and mocked. He experienced profound loneliness, as well as, beatings and imprisonments for his God-given messages because they went against the opinions and desires of the people. Throughout the entire period, the people felt self-justified in their rejection and mistreatment of Jeremiah, but eventually, God justly punished the people for their self-willed rejection of his warnings, commands, and promises.

**What you need to KNOW:**

Lamentations is organically connected to the book of Jeremiah. The book records Jeremiah’s anguished, eye-witness account of the destruction and suffering that he had spent his entire adult life imploring the people to avoid. Lamentations expresses Jeremiah’s broken heart. It was likely written during the three-month period between the burning of Jerusalem (Jer. 39) and the departure of the survivors to Egypt (Jer. 42-43). Jeremiah’s mournful reaction is typified near the beginning of his lament when he said, *“This is why I weep and my eyes overflow with tears. No one is near to comfort me, no one to restore my spirit. My children are destitute because the enemy has conquered us.” (1:16)*

**GET GOING!**

**You will have a chance to connect with the heart of a prophet as you travel through this short book.**