**Old Testament Survey**

**Jeremiah 50-52 Prophecy against Babylon**

1. Jeremiah was commanded to announce to the nations the public humiliation of Babylon. She would be captured and her protecting idols would be put to shame. Babylon would be destroyed by a nation from the north.
2. Jeremiah’s prophecy looked beyond the destruction of Babylon in 539bc to a future destruction that will reverse the fortunes of Israel and Judah. Possibly this prophecy represents a blending of the near and the far. That is, the fall of Babylon and the return of the captives under Zerubbabel merged in the prophetic picture with the future destruction of Babylon and the final restoration of Israel and Judah. Other portions of Scripture also point to this still-future rebuilding of Israel and destruction of Babylon (Zech. 5:5–11; Rev. 17–18). The city of Babylon will be rebuilt only to be destroyed at the end of the Tribulation period before Christ returns to establish His millennial reign.
3. The Lord’s turning against his former agent, Babylon, shows that he has not cast off his covenant people forever. Babylon had made the earth suffer God’s wrath, now she is beyond healing. Vengeance now becomes a dominant theme. The one who had a time of plenty and power now comes to its time for judgment.

**Jeremiah 52 Conclusion**

1. Chapter 52 is nearly identical to 2 Kings 24:18–25:30 and was written sometime after 561 b.c. when King Jehoiachin was released from prison in Babylon (Jer. 52:31). Much of the material is parallel to information recorded by Jeremiah in chapter 39. Why, then, was this chapter added to Jeremiah’s prophecies? Most likely it was to show that Jeremiah’s words of judgment against Jerusalem had been fulfilled and that his words about Judah’s release from the Exile were about to be fulfilled. This final chapter served to vindicate the prophet and encourage the remnant still in captivity.
2. Jeremiah 52:28–30 The fate of the exiles. This section is not included in 2 Kings 25. The author added it here to show that other groups of exiles were taken to Babylon.

**Book of Lamentations**

The Book of Lamentations is a mournful postscript to the Book of Jeremiah. Through the use of five funeral laments, the author grieved over the fate of Jerusalem because of her sin. Yet the book contains more than just the backward glances of a vindicated prophet. “It is a reminder that sin, in spite of all its allurement and excitement, carries with it heavy weights of sorrow, grief, misery, barrenness, and pain. Lamentations both mourns the fall of the city and offers reproof, instruction, and hope to its survivors.

1. **Lamentations 1 The First Funeral Lament:**
* Jeremiah’s first lament established the book’s theme—the sorrow of sin. Five times in chapter 1 he noted that Jerusalem’s cries for help after her fall went unanswered—“there is none to comfort her” (vv. 2, 9, 16–17, 21). The city had turned from the protective care of her God to pursue foreign nations and lifeless idols; and now, at the time she needed the help of others most, she found herself alone.
* As Jeremiah stood surveying the scene of destruction that had once been a thriving city, he began his lament over her desolation. In verses 1–7 he vividly described the extent of her destruction, and in verses 8–11 he explained the cause for her destruction.  After describing what had befallen Jerusalem, Jeremiah explained why it fell. Jerusalem had sinned greatly.
1. **Lamentations 2 The Second Funeral Lament:**
* The second funeral lament opens by focusing on the real cause for Jerusalem’s calamity. God was the One who destroyed the city and its people. In these 10 verses Jeremiah hammered home the reality of God’s judgment on Jerusalem because of her sin. The words Jeremiah used depict an image of God personally overseeing the dismantling of the city. The verb bāla‘ (“to swallow up” or “to engulf completely”) was used four times, perhaps to picture the fire of God’s judgment engulfing the city itself. Jeremiah used other vivid verbs as “hurled down” (v. 1), “torn down” (v. 2), “cut off” (v. 3), “burned” (v. 3), “destroyed” (vv. 5–6), “laid waste” (v. 6), “abandoned” (v. 7), “tear down” (v. 8), “broken and destroyed” (v. 9). These words describe the feeling of havoc and disarray in which Jerusalem found herself.
* God’s anger was also directed against His temple: He has laid waste His dwelling like a garden. The thought expressed by Jeremiah is that God tore down His temple in the same way a farmer would tear down a temporary field hut or booth used to provide shade during a harvest. The feasts, all the sacrifices, and even the altar were affected by Jerusalem’s fall.
* Jeremiah ended the expression of his personal grief by calling on Jerusalem to respond to her calamity as he had. Then he recorded Jerusalem’s plea to God.  In a cry of pain and horror, the city called on God to look and think about her calamity. The starving to death of children was a sickening twist. The siege against Jerusalem was so severe that all her inhabitants were in danger of starvation. In a shocking display of their self-preservation drive, some parents became cannibals and ate their own children.
* The slaughter moved beyond the children to encompass the religious leaders and people of all ages. Priest and prophet alike were slain inside the temple as the Babylonian army rushed in for the conquest. As Jeremiah picked his way through the streets of Jerusalem, he saw bloated corpses among the rubble: young and old lay together in the dust of the streets. When Babylon finally did break through Jerusalem’s defenses, its soldiers were angry because Jerusalem had kept them at bay for 30 months. They made no distinction between age and sex; the bloodthirsty Babylonians butchered uncounted thousands.

**3.  Lamentations 3 The Third Funeral Lament:**

* Chapter 3 is the heart of Jeremiah’s short book. This chapter gives the book a positive framework around which the other chapters revolve. The blackness of sin and suffering in chapters 1–2 and 4–5 serves as a fitting backdrop to display the sparkling brilliance of God’s unfailing love in chapter 3.
* The chapter may be divided into three sections. Jeremiah detailed his afflictions during the time of Jerusalem’s fall (vv. 1–18). But his knowledge of God’s ways in the midst of his affliction produced hope, not despair (vv. 19–40). So, Jeremiah could lead Israel in prayer to God for deliverance, and restoration.
* Jeremiah’s plea for deliverance from the pit was answered. “You came near when I called You.” God intervened on Jeremiah’s behalf and rescued him from certain death in a muddy cistern (Jer. 38:7–13). So, Jeremiah was a living example to Judah of God’s unfailing love and faithfulness (Lam. 3:22–23).

       **4**.  **Lamentations 4 The Fourth Funeral Lament:**

* Chapter 4 parallels the judgment discussed in chapter 2. After describing the response of an individual in the midst of judgment (chap. 3), Jeremiah again returned to survey the scene of calamity in Jerusalem. He contrasted the conditions in Jerusalem before and after the siege (4:1–11), explained the causes for the siege, (vv. 12–20), and gave a call for vindication from Zion (vv. 21–22).
* Jeremiah compared Jerusalem to dull gold and cast-off gems. Then he explained his figurative language. The “gold” and “gems” were the precious sons of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In their former glory they had been as precious as gold, but they were now considered as pots of clay. Clay was common in Palestine; nearly all vessels were made from it. Clay pots were abundant and their value was little. If one broke, it was thrown out and a new one replaced it. Similarly, the people of Jerusalem, God’s precious people, had become worthless.  Sin always makes our lives worthless.
* Because of God’s covenant with Israel (Deut. 28–30) the people could hope for vindication. The last two verses in Lamentations 4 draw a contrast between Israel and her Gentile enemy Edom. Jerusalem could look forward to restoration, but Edom could only expect judgment.

      5.  **Lamentations 5 The Fifth Funeral Lament:**

* The prophet’s final lament breaks the pattern established in his earlier laments. In fact, the entire chapter is more properly a prayer than a lament. Chapters 1–3 each close with a prayer to the Lord (1:20–22; 2:20–22; 3:55–66) but no prayer is included in chapter 4. Therefore, it is possible to see chapter 5 functioning as the prayer following chapter 4 and serving as the book’s concluding prayer.
* The prayer itself is composed of two sections, each of which summarizes the response the remnant needed to make. The first response is a call for God to remember their condition (5:1–18). This section also includes a confession of sin. After the call for God to remember is a call for God to restore Judah (vv. 19–22). In context this is a call to restore both the land of Israel and the blessings of the covenant (Deut. 30:1–10).
* Verse 1 introduces the prayer. The remnant called on God to remember want they had suffered and to look at their present disgrace. Therefore, the people’s call was not just for God to see what had happened, but rather that God see and act on their condition.  Through the use of the first person (“we,” “us,” “our”) the people described the general conditions of suffering brought about by Babylon. Besides losing their property, the people also lost their rights. Their new taskmasters were cruel who cared little for them. Under Babylon’s rule Judah had no rights or means of protection.
* Lamentations 5:11–14 In these verses the subject switches from the first person to the third person (“their”). After speaking of their general conditions of suffering (vv. 2–10), the people described its effects on different groups of individuals. No element of society escaped the judgment. A veil of gloom hung over Jerusalem.
* The joy that had once been there was replaced by sadness and mourning. The glory was now gone. It was lost because of sin. The people were faint from hunger, and their eyes were dim from tears (2:11; 3:48–49). Judah had only herself to blame for her present condition.
* After describing her condition (vv. 1–18) Judah concluded her prayer by calling on God to act (vv. 19–22). The basis for this call was God’s eternal sovereignty: You, O Lord, reign forever. Judah was not suffering because her God had been defeated by the stronger gods of Babylon. Judah’s God was the only true God, and He had caused her calamity. Yet this same God who brought about her destruction also had the power to bring about her restoration, if He chose to do so.
* The specific action the people requested was, “Restore us to Yourself … that we may return.” The people wanted to be restored to the blessings of God’s covenant which included being restored to the land of Israel (Lev. 26:40–45; Deut. 3:1–10). Their ultimate hope for restoration was God’s faithfulness to His covenant promises.
* Thus the Book of Lamentations ends on a note of hope. In spite of severe suffering because of her sin, Judah had not been abandoned as a nation. The hope for the nation was that if she would call on God and confess her sin He would protect her during her captivity (Lam. 3:21–30) and would ultimately restore her as a nation to covenant blessing (5:21).