

THE ONE YEAR BIBLE Reading For October 29:

Lamentations 1:1-2:22:

Though we do not know for sure who wrote this book, tradition has given credit to Jeremiah, at least since the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) included a note prior to verse 1 of chapter 1 with such a claim. Additionally, the subject matter (the fall of Jerusalem, along with the destruction of the temple and the rest of the country) and the exilic time frame of the writing fit with authorship by Jeremiah. Yet, in light of the reality the five poetic chapters give evidence by their differing styles that they may have come from different sources and in light of the reality the book does not specify who wrote it, our best conclusion is that it is anonymous.

The entire book is a poetic lament (in other words it expresses grief) over the destruction of Judah. The first four chapters are each an alphabetic acrostic (like, for example, Psalm 119), meaning that each verse (or in the case of chapter 3, each set of three verses) begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, beginning with *aleph* (the first letter) and ending with the last (or 22nd) letter, *taw*.

Chapter 1 records the devastation of Jerusalem (1-11) and cries for help (12-22). Chapter 2 emphasizes the complete judgment of Jerusalem by God in three parts: The impact of God's judgment (1-10); grief over losses and a call to turn to God (11-19); and finally a plea to God from Jerusalem to see her devastation and act in her behalf (20-22).

One of the most noteworthy aspects of these first two chapters is not just the total devastation of Jerusalem, but the fact that the author sees this as coming from the hand of the LORD (e.g. 1:12, 17; 2:1-8 [note how all the pronouns point to the LORD as ultimately the one behind the devastation]). There is no question that, as Paul says in Romans 1:18, the wrath of God truly is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness.

Philemon:

In this short letter Paul (1) writes to his friend and fellow Christian, Philemon (1), exhorting him to receive back with love and grace a run-away slave by the name of Onesimus (10), who became a believer while Paul was in prison, by his influence (Paul wrote this letter from his house arrest in Rome, cf. Acts 28) and after he ran away from Philemon, his master. In Paul's appeal to Philemon we find great love and compassion, even to the point of the apostle's willingness to pay for Onesimus whatever he might owe to Philemon (18). Though Paul does not advocate the destruction of the slave system here (elsewhere he makes it clear that stealing men and forcing them into slavery is sin, 1 Timothy 1:10), he does call upon Philemon to treat Onesimus as a brother in Christ (16). In addition to learning from this epistle the great love and compassion we should have for fellow believers, we also gain greater insight into how masters/employers should treat their slaves/employees (cf. Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 4:1), and we also learn that in the eyes of Paul what makes an act "free" is not that the final choice remains open to the point of actual decision, nor that the decision has little or no outside influence behind it. Instead, a "free" act is simply one that you truly want to do (see verse 14).

This last point is important for understanding the interplay of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, for it gives room for God, other agents, events, and even one's own sin nature to influence wills, choices, and actions on the part of men (even to the point of future actions being perfectly certain and known by God) and yet, at the same time, for them to be, in one sense, "free". It also explains how that man can be bound in his will to sin and totally unable to see his need for or to trust in Christ for salvation left to himself (Genesis 6:5; Jeremiah 13:23; 19:9; Romans 3:10-12) and yet, in one sense he is still "free" in that the choices he is making to sin really are his choices and really are things he wants to do. So, it is true that the unsaved, unregenerate man is "free" to sin (he does what he really wants to do, not what he is being coerced to do) and yet, he is not free to trust in Christ for salvation—not because God renders him so, but because his heart is such that left to himself, he will never trust Christ and be saved. What first must happen is for the Lord sovereignly to work in his heart to change him that he might repent and trust Christ (cf. Acts 16:14; Titus 3:5).

Psalm 101:1-8:

This psalm of David affirms that he as king will praise God and seek to live a life that is blameless, has integrity, and will not participate in the actions of the wicked (1-4); and what is more he will lead with justice in the land (5-8). What a great example for all us.

Proverbs 26:20:

In the same way that a fire goes out when there is no fuel, so gossip ceases when there are not people to carry on the gossip by continually mentioning it to others. The point is that we are not to be people who spread gossip. Such is the opposite of loving others as God desires us to love them.