***Lamentations 1:1-11 How lonely sits the city That was full of people! How like a widow is she,
Who was great among the nations! The princess among the provinces Has become a slave!***

***2 She weeps bitterly in the night, Her tears are on her cheeks; Among all her lovers She has none to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; They have become her enemies. 3 Judah has gone into captivity, Under affliction and hard servitude; She dwells among the nations, She finds no rest; All her persecutors overtake her in dire straits. 4 The roads to Zion mourn Because no one comes to the set feasts. All her gates are desolate; Her priests sigh, Her virgins are afflicted, And she is in bitterness. 5 Her adversaries have become the master, Her enemies prosper; For the Lord has afflicted her Because of the multitude of her transgressions. Her children have gone into captivity before the enemy. 6 And from the daughter of Zion All her splendor has departed. Her princes have become like deer That find no pasture, That flee without strength Before the pursuer. 7 In the days of her affliction and roaming, Jerusalem remembers all her pleasant things That she had in the days of old. When her people fell into the hand of the enemy, With no one to help her, The adversaries saw her
And mocked at her downfall. 8 Jerusalem has sinned gravely, Therefore she has become vile.
All who honored her despise her Because they have seen her nakedness; Yes, she sighs and turns away. 9 Her uncleanness is in her skirts; She did not consider her destiny; Therefore her collapse was awesome; She had no comforter. “O Lord, behold my affliction, For the enemy is exalted!” 10 The adversary has spread his hand Over all her pleasant things; For she has seen the nations enter her sanctuary, Those whom You commanded Not to enter Your assembly. 11 All her people sigh, They seek bread; They have given their valuables for food to restore life. “See, O Lord, and consider, For I am scorned.”***

Tonight, we’ll begin looking at the Book of Lamentations. I love the Book of Lamentations. It is both startling and encouraging. A judgement and an assurance all at once. It is a book of poetic writing that laments the destruction and desolation of Jerusalem and of Judah. I chose the Book because it is directly related in many ways to what we studied in the Book of Daniel. Jeremiah is thought to be the author of this Book, though his name is not mentioned directly. Jeremiah and Ezekiel were roughly contemporaries of Daniel. We’ll start tonight with the first 11 verses of chapter 1.

 Verse 1 *How lonely sits the city That was full of people! How like a widow is she, Who was great among the nations! The princess among the provinces Has become a slave!**How lonely sits the city –* Jeremiah 52 was once used as a preface to Lamentations. Jeremiah 52:12 says *Now in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month (which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, who served the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.* Jeremiah 52 documents the carrying away captive many Jews, poor and wealthy alike. This would have more than likely included Daniel, Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego. Jeremiah is often called the weeping prophet. He wept over Jerusalem and the destruction he witnessed. In this poetic verse, Jerusalem is envisioned as a weeping widow, *How like a widow is she -* sitting solitary, no comforter to be found. The once great city now emptied and carried away captive, desolate, only a few remaining to dress the vines. *Who was great among the nations, The princess among the provinces Has become a slave!* *–* At one time, King David and King Solomon ruled a great kingdom, ruling the Philistines, the Edomites, and many nations, with tribute coming in – gold and silver by the tons. Now, they are slaves of Babylon paying tribute to Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 2 *She weeps bitterly in the night, Her tears are on her cheeks; Among all her lovers She has none to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; They have become her enemies.**She weeps bitterly in the night –* The Hebrew has the idea of weeping continually in her heart, but the situation is so dangerous and dire that she only weeps openly when she can do so in secret, in the dark. *Among all her lovers She has none to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; They have become her enemies –* She is alone. Those that were her friends and lovers in the good times have deserted her now. Those that openly courted her in sinful rebellion against God have disappeared. But, as we are learning in Wednesday night Bible Study, God sees those that turn their back on His people. His wrath will not be turned away.

Verse 3 *Judah has gone into captivity, Under affliction and hard servitude; She dwells among the nations, She finds no rest; All her persecutors overtake her in dire straits. Judah has gone into captivity, Under affliction and hard servitude –* Israel and Judah have been taken into captivity by the heathen nations. First Assyria and now Babylon. But the Hebrew in this verse also has the idea of people going into exile by choice. Many Jews, as conditions worsened in their nation, chose to migrate to Egypt and other places. Some were taken as captives and slaves into Ethiopia and Syria. Either interpretation serves the same end – Jerusalem is desolate and Jeremiah weeps for what once was. *She finds no rest –* The nation of Israel is deprived of all peace and comfort. Every part of the things they held dear has been taken, Even their Temple has been burned and their religious leaders taken to Babylon. *All her persecutors overtake her in dire straits –* Her enemies have overtaken her. Even those she thought were her friends and lovers have forsaken her in these dire and difficult times. She has been trapped in a very difficult place, deceived by her own lust and blindness to God’s warnings.

*Verses 4-6 The roads to Zion mourn Because no one comes to the set feasts. All her gates are desolate; Her priests sigh, Her virgins are afflicted, And she is in bitterness. 5 Her adversaries have become the master, Her enemies prosper; For the Lord has afflicted her Because of the multitude of her transgressions. Her children have gone into captivity before the enemy. 6 And from the daughter of Zion All her splendor has departed. Her princes have become like deer That find no pasture, That flee without strength Before the pursuer.**The roads to Zion mourn Because no one comes to the set feasts. –* In time past, the ways to Jerusalem were packed with people coming to celebrate solemn feasts. Now, there is mourning because no one comes. The Temple is burned. The Joy of these feasts has been removed. Can you feel the sadness in this? Jeremiah is recalling the crowded streets and wonderful spirit. Now, all seems lost. *All her gates are desolate –* Remember that Nehemiah found the walls and the gates down. The leaders used to sit in the gates and judge or conduct business, as we read in the Book of Ruth. Now, they are deserted, desolate, destroyed. *Her priests sigh Her virgins are afflicted, And she is in bitterness* – The priests oversee no sacrifices and have no Temple to go to. The virgins are afflicted, meaning that the calamities and destruction reach across all ages and social status. The bitterness of what has happened impacts everyone. *Her adversaries have become the master Her enemies prosper –* Jerusalem’s enemies have overtaken her and she is now enslaved to them. This is exactly what Moses prophesied in Deuteronomy 28 – starting in verse 15, when he pronounces what will happen if the children of Israel disobey God. In Deuteronomy 28:43 Moses says - *The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower.* In disobedience of sin there is only slavery to be found. *For the Lord has afflicted her Because of the multitude of her transgressions –* God has afflicted her through the Assyrians and the Babylonians. He sent prophet after prophet to warn and He was ignored. Calamities have arrived carried in on the backs of disobedience. God is righteous and He judges perfectly. Just as He is judging perfectly today, as our unrighteousness and wickedness increases in this nation, while ignoring the warnings of God’s called. *Her children have gone into captivity before the enemy –* Jerusalem’s inhabitants have been carried away, herded like cattle to be enslaved. *And from the daughter of Zion All her splendor has departed –*All the beauty of holiness found among God’s people has departed. *Her princes have become like deer That find no pasture, That flee without strength Before the pursuer. –* At the snap of a twig, the princes flee, with no resistance, no courage. Jeremiah 52:9 *But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and they overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. All his army was scattered from him.* When the Chaldeans broke through the wall, Zedekiah and the army ran, but they found no safety, but were overtaken.

Verse 7 *In the days of her affliction and roaming, Jerusalem remembers all her pleasant things That she had in the days of old. When her people fell into the hand of the enemy, With no one to help her, The adversaries saw her And mocked at her downfall.**In the days of her affliction and roaming, Jerusalem remembers all her pleasant things –* The people look back with fondness on all that they have lost. They remember how God blessed them. As they are now captives and banished, they have lots of time to consider their foolishness. Riches, glory, happiness, honor, protection, favor all found in relationship with God is lost when we break that relationship. God often gives us great clarity against a backdrop of calamities. *The adversaries saw her And mocked at her downfall –* The enemy mocked Israel and mocked God. This will not go unpunished in God’s time. They even mocked the Sabbath day as slothful and God’s feasts as a waste of time.

*Verse 8-9 Jerusalem has sinned gravely, Therefore she has become vile. All who honored her despise her Because they have seen her nakedness; Yes, she sighs and turns away. 9 Her uncleanness is in her skirts; She did not consider her destiny; Therefore her collapse was awesome; She had no comforter. “O Lord, behold my affliction, For the enemy is exalted!” Jerusalem has sinned gravely –* The Hebrew has the idea of willful and deliberate sin. We know that they rose early and stayed up late to worship idols and do all manner of abominations before God. They professed to know God, but failed to follow His commands. Much as we do today. Matthew 15:7-9 Jesus quotes Isaiah 29 – *Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. Therefore she has become vile -* Jerusalem has been removed into captivity.  *All who honored her despise her –* Those that once honored her now despise her. *Because they have seen her nakedness –* God has exposed Jerusalem as the harlot for idol worship she has become. He has brought into the Light her shame and Spiritual adultery she thought was unseen in the dark. Now all can see. *Yes, she sighs and turns away –* Jerusalem is rightly ashamed of what she has become. *Her uncleanness is in her skirts –* Her sin is as obvious to everyone as a bright stain on a skirt, and her punishment is understood. *She did not consider her destiny; Therefore her collapse was awesome; She had no comforter. “O Lord, behold my affliction, For the enemy is exalted!* Judah is humbled in a mighty way. In great sin we find complete ruin.

Verses 10-11 *The adversary has spread his hand Over all her pleasant things; For she has seen the nations enter her sanctuary, Those whom You commanded Not to enter Your assembly. 11 All her people sigh, They seek bread; They have given their valuables for food to restore life. “See, O Lord, and consider, For I am scorned.” The adversary has spread his hand Over all her pleasant things –* The enemy has taken all the idols and riches she worshipped. Her perverse desires have become her downfall. *For she has seen the nations enter her sanctuary, Those whom You commanded Not to enter Your assembly. –* Heathen nations, namely the Babylonians and the Chaldeans, have entered and defiled the sanctuary. The Chaldeans were known to enter the Holy of Holies and this was strictly forbidden, except for the High Priest. *All her people sigh, They seek bread –* Jeremiah 52:5-6 *So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. 6 By the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, the famine had become so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land.* The land once flowing with milk and honey now has no bread and famine is killing the people. *They have given their valuables for food to restore life. “See, O Lord, and consider, For I am scorned –* People have given all their possessions for bread to live. They seek God in a prayer for relief, admitting that they are vile and undeserving of His mercy and grace. Just as we must understand that we are vile and undeserving of God’s mercy and grace. Until we see our unworthiness, we will never fully understand Christ’s sacrifice.

Lamentations has many things to say to us in this day and time. When we look, we know that there are many vile things happening in this country. We understand that we worship idols and possessions instead of God, giving our time freely to the world and stingily to God. We are undeserving of His Grace and Mercy. One must wonder how long before God brings upon us the judgement that we see here in Lamentations. He will not be patient with our sin forever.