



# The G.E.M.

Volume 4 Edition 10

The Grace Electronic Magazine

October 2010

## REMEMBER THE JOY IN SUFFERING

**W**hile I am sitting here putting the finishing touches to this month's newsletter, we are experiencing the first proper storm of the season. The rain, wind, thunder and lightning are raging outside, and this brings to mind the storms we face in life.

Storms like those of the weather can put a damper on the day and create traffic nightmares. And so too do storms of life dampen one's spirit at times. Storms, though they may upset us in one way or another, do have some good in them.

Our theme for the month is based on the book of Lamentations. A book that gives us glimpses of God during the storms of our lives.

Our main article on page 3, *Suffering and Grace*, challenges us to see God in the midst of sorrow.

*Bible Basics* on page 2 gives you some insight into the book of Lamentations itself, and the *Bible Sudoku Challenge* on the back page has you digging a little deeper into the book in search of the answers.

*This Day in History* looks at the life of a man who did his best for the Kingdom of God when faced with a life-threatening situation.

Finally, encourage someone today with a gift from our store, and do not forget that Christmas is not too far away, so start your shopping early. Maybe even prepare for 2011.

So sit back, relax, and enjoy this edition of *The G.E.M.*

Until next time,  
Glyn and Linda. †

*"Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord"*  
(2 Peter 1:2)

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## BIBLE BASICS

### Lamentations

#### *The Book of Laments for Jerusalem*

The book of Lamentations is sandwiched between the books of Ezekiel and Jeremiah. It contains laments over the city of Jerusalem following its desolation and captivity by Babylon and king Nebuchadnezzar.

**Date and authorship:** It is not entirely clear as to the exact date, or who the author of the book of Lamentations was, however it is widely accepted that it was written Jeremiah shortly after Judah was taken into captivity to Babylon.

**Theme:** The book of Lamentations is simply a book of laments for the fall of Jerusalem. Written from a clearly first-hand witness perspective, its theme is one of pain, loss for the nation, yet contains hope for the future.

**Structure:** The book is made up of five poems written in a highly sophisticated style. In the original Hebrew, each line or stanza of chapters 1, 2 and 4 starts with a different, consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Chapter 3 is made up of groups of three single lines (or triad), each of which begins with the same Hebrew letter.

This type of poem is called an acrostic.

Chapter 5 does not follow the pattern of the acrostic, but it still has twenty-two lines.

The outline below reflects the five poems and their basic theme:

	Chapters
Jerusalem in Mourning	1:1-22
Jerusalem in Ruin	2:1-22
Call for Renewal	3:1-66
Restitution to Come	4:1-2
A Cry for Relief	5:1-22

**Jesus in Lamentations:** As you read through the book, you will find many pictures of Jeremiah weeping over Jerusalem, that resembles Jesus weeping in Matthew 23:37.

You will also find pictures/prophecies that reflect Jesus' resembling Him being mocked (2:15 and 3:14-15), drinking vinegar while on the cross (3:19), and His cheek being struck during His trial (3:30).

**Did you Know?** In mid-July every year, on a date to commemorate the fall of Jerusalem, the five somber poems of the book of Lamentations are read aloud by the Jewish people.

In the Septuagint version of Lamentations – the Greek translation of the Hebrew – there is a brief notation that indicates that Jeremiah went and sat on the hillside overlooking Jerusalem as he wrote his lamentations. The same hill where Jesus too wept over Jerusalem.

**Value for Today:** To learn more about the value of this often disheartening book, read the article on page 3, *Suffering and Grace*. †

## JOHN PIPER

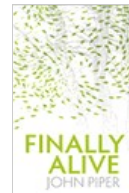
John Piper is pastor for preaching and vision at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He has authored many books on topics that include personal holiness, missions and historical figures, including titles like: *Desiring God*, *When I Don't Desire God*, *A Hunger for God*, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, and *Let the Nations be Glad*.

John is currently in the country for the first ever Rezolution conference in South Africa. Here is a little information about a few other of his titles currently available.

### Finally Alive

"You must be born again." This declaration from Jesus is either deluded or devastating to the one who would be captain of his soul. Not many Biblical realities are better designed by God to reveal our helplessness in sin. But not everyone today is jealous to esteem this miracle for the wonder that it is.

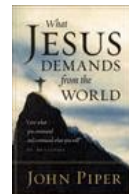
Join John Piper as he explores what it means to be born again.



R 140

### What Jesus Demands from the World

In this book, John Piper has gathered many of Jesus' demands from the four Gospels. He begins with an introduction that puts the demands in a redemptive-historical context, then concisely examines each demand. The result is an accessible introduction for thoughtful inquirers and new believers, as well as meditative meat for veteran believers who want to know Jesus better.



R 120

### Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die

In this book John Piper has gathered from the New Testament fifty reasons, not fifty causes, as to why Jesus came to die. All in order to answer the most important question that each of us must face: What did God achieve for sinners like us in sending His Son to die?



R 85

### Don't Waste Your Life DVD Series

This series is a passionate call for this generation to make their lives count for eternity. John Piper acknowledges the risks for those who seek to accomplish something in life – risks in relationships for the sake of righteousness and authenticity, risks with money for the cause of the Gospel, and risks in witnessing to the truth and beauty of Christ.



R 90 each

Viewers will find their passion for the cross of Christ enlarged as a result of watching this DVD series. †

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

24 October 1869

### Living Water

John Paton's life was molded by his childhood in a little cottage in Kirkmahoe, Scotland. The cottage had ribs of oak, stone walls, a thatched roof, and three rooms filled with 11 children. The front room served as bedroom, kitchen, and parlor. The rear room was his father's stocking-making shop. The middle room was a closet where John's father retired each day for prayer and Bible study. The sound of his father's prayers through the wall made a powerful impression on young John.

Years later, when Scotland's Reformed Church issued a plea for missionaries for the South Pacific, John went to his parents for advice. They told him something they had never before disclosed—he had been dedicated to foreign missions before birth.

John sailed from Scotland April 16, 1858, landing on the islands in November. He found himself among cannibals and endangered again and again. "They encircled us in a deadly ring," he wrote of one incident, "and one kept urging another to strike the first blow. My heart rose up to the Lord Jesus; I saw him watching all the scene. My peace came back to me like a wave from God. I realized that my life was immortal till my Master's work with me was done."

The turning point came when Paton decided to dig a well to provide fresh water for the people. The islanders, terrified at bringing "rain from below," watched with deepest foreboding. Paton dug deeper and deeper until finally, at 30 feet, he tapped into a stream of water. Opposition to his mission work ceased, and the wide-eyed islanders gave him their full respect. Chief Mamoeki accepted Christ as Savior, then a few others made the daring step. On October 24, 1869, nearly 11 years after his arrival, Paton led his first communion service. Twelve converted cannibals partook of the Lord's Supper. "As I put the bread and wine into those hands once stained with the blood of cannibalism, now stretched out to receive and partake the emblems of the Redeemer's love," he wrote, "I had a foretaste of the joy of Glory that well nigh broke my heart to pieces."

Quoted from: *On this Day: 365 Amazing and Inspiring Stories About Saints, Martyrs & Heroes* (electronic edition) by Robert J. Morgan. †

## SHEKEL CARD HOLDERS

### 2010 Shekel Vouchers

All Shekel Card holders be on the lookout for your Shekel Vouchers that will be emailed to you in about a week's time.

This year through your purchases we donated Bibles to a ministry working within the Edenvale Police Station, providing support and teaching of God's Word to the police that protect us, and evangelism of those in the holding cells.

More information about this ministry will be included with your Shekel Voucher.

## SUFFERING AND GRACE

Lamentations is a description of utter despair of the human spirit in the grip of deep distress and sorrow! Though we may never have experienced what Jeremiah did, we can all relate in some way to his sorrow.

Lamentations is also designed to teach us five different lessons of grace through each of its chapters, lessons that often do not learn without sorrow.

### God is Right (chapter 1)

In Chapter 1 we read of desolation and a sense of abandonment in spirit, when all of a sudden the prophet says in Verse 18: *"The LORD is righteous, yet I rebelled against His command."* While Jeremiah sat looking out over Jerusalem lamenting about its demise, he suddenly realised that this was a sign that God is right. So he says, *"I have rebelled against His command."* That is the problem, and the lesson to us all.

Too often we blame God, either directly or indirectly, for whatever happens to us. We express this attitude with words like, "I don't know why this should happen to me! After all, I have done my best, and still these kinds of things happen." By implication we are saying that God is unjust, not right, or is unfair.

However, we know that the Bible teaches us that it is impossible for God to be wrong. Because He is God, it is impossible for any man ever to sit in judgment on God. God is always right.

### God is Faithful (chapter 2)

Seeing the total desolation of Jerusalem Jeremiah is made aware of the thoroughness of God's judgement. God used the armies of Nebuchadnezzar to lay everything to waste. But then he learns another insight, *"The LORD has done what He planned; He has fulfilled His word, which He decreed long ago. He has overthrown you without pity, He has let the enemy gloat over you, He has exalted the horn of your foes"* (v17).

In other words, God is faithful. Jeremiah realises that the judgement was consistent with God's character. If God says He is going to do something, He will do it. Nothing can make Him change. If you study the history of Israel you discover that in the book of Deuteronomy, God warned that He would raise up a nation to come in and devastate the land if they turned from Him (chapter 28). And here in Lamentations we see that He remained faithful to that promise, even though it was not until over four hundred years later that the destruction came.

We even see in Romans 8:32, *"He who did not spare his own Son..."*, that God was so faithful in following through on His promise that He was not even willing to spare His own Son.

And yet that verse ends in glory, *"how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?"* If God kept His word in allowing His Son to die, we can be sure that we too will receive what He has promised us.

Jeremiah learned that God is utterly faithful by the thoroughness of judgment.

### God is Merciful (chapter 3)

In reading of Jeremiah's personal pain, we come to a tremendous passage that is probably the most quoted in the whole book. In the midst of a long wail, he says, *"Because of the LORD'S great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for Him.' The LORD is good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young. Let him sit alone in silence, for the LORD has laid it on him. Let him bury his face in the dust – there may yet be hope. Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace. For men are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though He brings grief, He will show compassion, so great is His unfailing love. For He does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men"* (vv22-33).

This I believe is one of the most beautiful passages in the whole Bible. It reveals the merciful heart of God. We see that even though God allows troubles to come our way, He does not like to bring affliction or grief to His children.

Even while in pain and sorrow, Jeremiah remembered that even though God destroyed Jerusalem and sent its inhabitants into exile because it was heading the wrong way, they were not consumed. He was merciful in that He was keeping them aside in order that the land and the nation would be rebuilt.

### God is Just (chapter 4)

At the end of Chapter 4, the prophet says in Verse 22, *"O Daughter of Zion, your punishment will end; He will not prolong your exile. But, O Daughter of Edom, he will punish your sin and expose your wickedness"* (v22).

The daughter of Zion is Israel. The daughter of Edom refers to the country bordering Israel that was always a thorn in their flesh. In the middle of all the disbelief at the destruction, Jeremiah is reminded that the judgement God has meted out on His people will not last forever, but the judgement on their enemies will. Though in the present circumstances God may seem unfair, in the end His justice will be evident.

### God is Eternal (chapter 5)

In describing the humiliation of the judgment, Jeremiah learns another great truth about God, *"You, O LORD, reign forever; Your throne endures from generation to generation"* (v19).

Jeremiah learns that though man suffers and dies, God is eternal. God is not limited by time. His throne, authority, power, and works endure to all generations.

In a practical sense, Jeremiah has learned that his sufferings too are temporary compared to the everlasting faithfulness, mercy and justice of God. As a result, it would have become easier for him to have been able to endure any further hardships that would come his way. He has seen the worst in life, yet had seen the best in God.

### None are Exempt

One last thing to consider about suffering. All through Scripture we are told that pain and suffering are God's instruments by which He teaches His children. Through suffering comes strength of character.

### Suffering is temporary compared to God

In fact, in Hebrews we read that Jesus, *"Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from what He suffered,"* (5:8). There were things that Jesus, though He was God, had to learn by experiencing suffering and sorrow. Therefore,

since Jesus was not exempt, we must not expect to be.

As Hebrews 12:10 reminds us, suffering is a sign of God's love. He sends it to discipline, teach, and train us.

### Lessons for Today

Often the book of Lamentations is seen as a book that has no relevance for today in that it is a book that causes more depression than we can handle. However, the truths that we learn about God from this book encourage and strengthen us for tomorrow.

When we learn to see pain and suffering in the same way that Jeremiah did, recognising God in the midst of it, we will be prepared to face the challenges of tomorrow.

Think, what lies beyond our suffering? Is not God preparing us now for a better tomorrow both on earth and for eternity? Of course He is. God never does anything without a purpose. That is why it is so important for us to learn how to face our sorrows and to learn what God would have us learn when in the midst of it. †



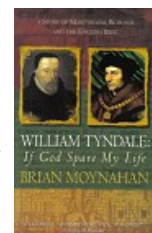
God is always right

## INSPIRATIONAL READ

### William Tyndale: *If God Spare my Life* by Brian Moynahan

The English Bible, the most familiar book in our language, is the product of a man who was driven abroad, hunted, vilified, betrayed, strangled and burnt – the man, William Tyndale.

This is the inspiring biography of a man who risked it all so that you and I could read the Bible in English. A great introduction to this great man of Christian history.



R140

R 119

# THE BACK PAGE

## BIBLE SUDOKU CHALLENGE

### How well do you know the Good Book?

Bible-Sudoku Challenge combines the logic skills to solve a normal Sudoku with Bible trivia.

Begin by answering the Bible trivia questions. Using the answers and placing them in the relevant coordinates, solve the grid on the right. The coordinates for each question indicates where in the grid that starter number is to be placed (e.g. A1).

All answers are from Lamentations.

- How many chapters are in the book of Lamentations?  
(I3, G5, C7, B4, A2)
- In which chapter does the writer say that the punishment of Judah will be greater than that of Sodom?  
(E5, I6, A4, F2, B3)
- On which chapter is the famous hymn *Great is Thy Faithfulness* based?  
(E2, A9, G4, B1)
- In which verse in chapter 4 does the writer say, "Those killed by the sword are better off than those who die of famine"?  
(G1, A5, F6, E8)
- In what verse in chapter 1 does the writer talk about Judah's enemies laughing at her destruction?  
(B6, D7, I2, C8, F1)
- Complete: "The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the — who seeks him"?  
(ch. 3) (H7, E3)
- In which chapter does the writer say that the Lord has withdrawn His right hand at the approach of the enemy?  
(H8, C5, D6)
- In which verse in chapter 2 does the prophet talk of the walls of Jerusalem being torn down?  
(A1, H6)
- In which verse in chapter 5 does the writer mention submitting to Egypt to get bread?  
(C1, B7, D4)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									

**Last Month's Solution**

Trivia: 8 (40:15), 5 (52:22), 6 (34:14), 3 (52:24), 9 (9:23-24), 4 (15:3), 7 (7:1-29), 1 (17:5), 2 (2:13)

Sudoku Grid

8	3	5	6	7	2	4	1	9
7	2	9	3	4	1	6	8	5
1	6	4	9	8	5	7	3	2
6	4	8	5	9	3	1	2	7
3	9	1	7	2	4	8	5	6
5	7	2	1	6	8	9	4	3
2	1	6	8	5	7	3	9	4
9	5	3	4	1	6	2	7	8
4	8	7	2	3	9	5	6	1

Answers in the Next Edition

## GOD'S LIBRARY CARDS

COLLECT THEM ALL - Every month a new Library Card will be released, with facts on many amazing themes of the Bible, e.g. Books, people, places, food and events. Just cut them out and laminate them for easy reference. For additional cards and other related products, contact us.

### 1 CHRONICLES 13

**Key Idea:** Commentary on David  
**Summary:** The life of David from God's perspective  
**Key People:** David, Joab, Abner, Amnon, Absalom  
**Key Places:** Israel, Ramah, Mizpah, Gibeath, Philistia, Hebron, Jerusalem  
**Strange but True:** No mention of David's sin with Bathsheba.  
 A king who was killed for seeking advice from a witch (10:13-14).  
 A music school with 288 students (25:7).  
 An illegal census of the people of the nation (21:1-7).

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### 2 CHRONICLES 14

**Key Idea:** Commentary on Kings  
**Summary:** The life of the rest of the Hebrew kings from God's perspective  
**Key People:** Solomon, Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Elijah, Elisha, and others  
**Key Places:** Jerusalem in Judah, Samaria in Israel, Dan, Bethel, Assyria, Babylon  
**Strange but True:** 88 children who all had the same father (11:21).  
 An enemy army defeated by a singing choir (20:22).  
 An eight year old boy who was king for only one hundred days (36:9).  
 The Jews taken into captivity so that the land could rest (36:21).

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Though He brings grief,  
He will show compassion,  
so great is His unfailing love.

Lamentations 3:32

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### SHOP TRADING HOURS:

**Monday – Friday:** 9am – 5pm      **Saturday:** 9am – 2pm      **Closed Sundays and some Public Holidays**