

## WHAT THE CHURCH CAN LEARN FROM LAMENTATIONS



**Before the seminar:  
Read: Lamentations 1-2**

### SEMINAR 2: COMPLAINT AGAINST GOD

#### A. Introduction

1. Have you ever heard a sermon on the importance of complaining?
2. Complaining in the Bible – the example of:
  - a. Abraham – read: Gen 18:23
  - b. Jeremiah – read: Jer 12:1
  - c. Habakkuk – read: Hab 1:2-3

#### B. Indirect Complaints against God in Lamentations 1-2:

1. Confession and Complaining together in one verse:
  - a. “The LORD is in the right, for I have rebelled against his word. But hear, all you peoples, and see my suffering; my young women and my young men have gone into captivity.” Lam 1:18
  - b. Identify the confession and the complaint in the verse above.
2. Cry for help and Complaining juxtaposed in Lam 1:11-12:
  - a. “Look, O LORD, and see, for I am despised” (1:11c)
  - b. “... all you who pass by, look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which was brought upon me.” (1:12)
3. Lamentations 2 – God is talked about in the third person
  - a. God is described as angry – read: Lam 2:1-3
  - b. God is likened to an enemy – read: Lam 2:4-5
  - c. God’s actions are described as without mercy 3x – read: Lam 2:2, 17, 21

#### C. Direct Complaints against God in Lamentations 2

Three direct questions in Lam 2:20:

1. “Look, O LORD, and see! With whom have you dealt thus?”
2. “Should women eat the fruit of their womb, the children of their tender care?”
3. “Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord?”

#### D. As Christians, how are we to understand these complaints against God?

1. Complaints against God and our Relationship with God
  - a. Intimacy with God
  - b. The need to deal with our hurt with God

2. What the complaints against God teach us about God
  - a. A humble God
  - b. An empowering God
  
3. Political implications
  - a. James Wilce: “laments in nearly all of the world’s traditions have a political edge to them.”<sup>1</sup>
  - a. If God can be questioned when it comes to matters of justice, why can’t human leaders be questioned?
  
4. Pastoral implications
  - a. Claus Westermann: “That the lament is heard implies that God has accepted their protest. Hence, we can see a connection between the lament of the oppressed which God hears, and the prophetic accusation against society. For in their accusations against society, the prophets in a sense became the articulators of the lament of the oppressed and the defenseless.”<sup>2</sup>
  - b. O’Connor: “If we cannot challenge the governance of this world, then we cannot challenge the governors of the world. The churches’ unwillingness or incapacity to bring radical discontent, protest, and anger before God silences and denies reality. It teaches sheepishness, lying and cowardice.”<sup>3</sup>

**Reflection questions:**

1. What do you think about complaining against God?
2. Have you ever complained against God? What was it about?

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<sup>1</sup> Wilce, *Crying Shame Metaculture, Modernity, and the Exaggerated Death of Lament*, 39.

<sup>2</sup> Westermann, “Role of the Lament in the Theology of the Old Testament,” 30.

<sup>3</sup> O’Connor, “The Book of Lamentations,” 1044.