

Journey through Jeremiah Part 41, Jehoiakim Burns the Scroll

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Th.D. – Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2017

† Jeremiah 36:1-32

Tonight, we are studying one of the most familiar chapters in the Book of Jeremiah; the rejection of the Word of God by King Jehoiakim – the famous pen knife cutting and fire throwing incident.

1 And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, *that this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,*

The fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim is a very eventful time period. First of all, it marked 23-years of Jeremiah's ministry as a prophet. It was also the year that Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and took Daniel, and his friends into Babylonian captivity.

We are reminded once again that Jehoiakim was the son of Josiah, king of Judah. Josiah was perhaps one of the very best kings that Judah ever had. We are going to see a stark contrast between him and his son in this chapter. If you remember when Josiah was confronted with the Word of God that he listened, repented, and then began purging the land of idols. But his son does not react the same way.

2 Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day.

The LORD commands Jeremiah to write down all of the prophecies that He had given him over the past 23-years. We see the reason why in the next verse.

3 It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.

It is the LORD once again showing mercy toward Judah by giving them another opportunity to repent. The idea is if they hear all of the prophecies and the warnings against them that they will be convicted of their sins and repent and turn back to the LORD. If they will do that He says that he will forgive their iniquity and their sin.

4 Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book.

Jeremiah had a faithful Scribe who helped him write down all of the prophecies. Scribes were generally very smart men who had been educated and trained to perform an office. He would have been knowledgeable of the laws and ordinances as well.

He wrote the words of the prophecies on what was called "a roll of a book." It was not a paper bound book like we have today, it would have been written on dried out animal skins that were sewn together and then they would have a piece of wood attached on both ends. They would roll this up and then unroll it to read it.

5 And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I *am* shut up; I cannot go into the house of the LORD: 6 Therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the LORD in the ears of the people in the LORD'S house upon the fasting day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities. 7 It may be they will present their supplication before the LORD,

and will return every one from his evil way: for great *is* the anger and the fury that the LORD hath pronounced against this people. 8 And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the LORD in the LORD'S house.

At this point Jeremiah is confined for some reason and unable to go to the Temple to read the words on the scroll. So, he trusts Baruch to do it for him.

Notice also that Jeremiah is going to dictate all of the prophecies by mouth. He doesn't have them written down. Obviously, by inspiration, the LORD gives him the super natural ability to remember all of these prophecies that he has been given over the past 23-years. It is just as Paul writes in **2 Timothy 3:16** *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

Baruch is instructed to read it out loud to everyone that is in the Temple and everyone that is passing in and out of the city. You could say that Baruch was an Old Testament street preacher.

9 And it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, in the ninth month, *that they proclaimed a fast before the LORD to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem.* 10 Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORD'S house, in the ears of all the people.

We do not know how long it took for Jeremiah to dictate all of the prophecies and Baruch to write them all down, I'm sure it was a considerable amount of time. Also, the command may have been given toward the end of the 4th year of the reign of Jehoiakim because the book is not read to the people until the 5th year.

11 When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard out of the book all the words of the LORD, 12 Then he went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber: and, lo, all the princes sat there, *even* Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes. 13 Then Michaiah declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people.

Things are getting interesting. Now that all of these words are out there and people are hearing them they start getting nervous. This man, Michaiah, takes it upon himself to go to the king's house to inform them of all of this.

14 Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, unto Baruch, saying, Take in thine hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch the son of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and came unto them.

After hearing what Michaiah had to say, they decide they want to hear the prophecy themselves, so they send for Baruch to come to the king's house with the roll and read it to them.

15 And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read *it* in their ears. 16 Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words.

Now they are really nervous. Now that they have heard it with their own ears and realize the impact that this is going to have upon them and the king, they decide that the king needs to get involved.

17 And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth? 18 Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote *them* with ink in the book.

They want every single detail; how the words were dictated to Baruch and everything. He tells them that Jeremiah spoke the words by his own mouth. How would you like to be Baruch right then? I mean, he's just the messenger but he's on the hot seat.

19 Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah; and let no man know where ye be.

Fortunately for Baruch and Jeremiah, the princes are protective of them. They tell him to hide while they go and show the king the words on the scroll. This is for their own protection. You never know what a king is going to do. He could very well call for the heads of Baruch and Jeremiah and charge them with treason.

20 And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king.

So, the men go to see the king, however, they place the scroll in safe keeping while they go in the king's court. This was to make sure it was in a safe place and wouldn't be mishandled, misplaced, or thrown out.

Then they relay everything they can from the scroll. Of course, they wouldn't be able to repeat it verbatim but they would be able to tell him the majority of warnings that it contained.

21 So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king.

The king decides that he wants to hear the words for himself and orders Jehudi to read it out loud to him.

22 Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and *there was a fire* on the hearth burning before him.

We get some idea of when it took place because it is in the ninth month, which on the Jewish calendar was the month of December. The king is sitting by the fire place keeping warm on a cold day.

23 And it came to pass, *that* when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast *it* into the fire that *was* on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that *was* on the hearth.

Now, there is some question to whether or not it was the King himself that physically cut the scroll and threw it in the fire or if it was Jehudi that did it. I've read about a dozen different commentaries and it's divided about half and half of who they think was the one that physically did it.

Personally, I believe it was the King that did the actual deed of cutting the scroll and burning it. Jehudi would not have had the authority to do it on his own, however, if the king commanded him to do it then he could but that's not what the Bible says.

My son Matthew made a good point about it when we were discussing it on Monday night. He said it depends on how you read it. If you read verses 22 and 23 separately, it sounds as if it was Jehudi doing it, but if you read them together it becomes clear that it was the King that did it.

The Word of God convicted him and infuriated him and in a fit of rage he destroyed the scroll. What he failed to realize though, is that the Word of God will stand forever. You can burn every single copy of the Bible on the face of the earth but the Word of God will still live on.

One thing is for sure, the LORD places the deed square upon the shoulders of the King as we will see in the next few verses, particularly verses 27, 28, and 29.

24 Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, *neither* the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.

This is one of the saddest things you will read. Despite being convicted by the Word of God, it did not change their evil minds and ways. The Bible says "**Yet they were not afraid.**" Doesn't that sound like the same world we live in today? People blatantly sinning without fear. Thumbing their noses at God, defying His Holy Word.

Not only were they not afraid but they didn't rent their garments. We've talked about this custom before. In times of stress and mourning the Jews would tear their garments as an outward sign of distress. None of these men were distraught enough to do that.

25 Nevertheless Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them.

There were three men there that had the fear of God in them. These were the same men we were introduced to in verses 11-12 that were shaken by the Word in the Book and had taken it to the king. Nevertheless, the king did not listen to them and burn the scroll anyway. He has no fear of God. I'd say this King's life verse would be:

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction.

26 But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them.

And, just like most belligerent men, the king decides to lash out at the messenger. He assumes that Jeremiah is locked up but the Bible says that "**the LORD hid them.**" We know from verse 19 that the princes had told them to hide. 19 Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah; and let no man know where ye be. Wherever they hid, the LORD protected them from being found even though the king had sent out a pretty large search party.

27 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, 28 Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned.

The LORD instructs Jeremiah to write it all down again. Now, remember I said last week that we would see one of the reasons why the Book of Jeremiah isn't in chronological order. Here is a prime example. Jeremiah spoke the words and Baruch wrote them down. This is the 2nd time and we see that the LORD added more words to it as well. Much of what we read in the Book of Jeremiah most likely came this way.

29 And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?

We find here some of the contents of the words that were on the scroll. It was the prophecy concerning Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem. This would have angered any king knowing that it has been prophesied that he would be losing his kingdom to his enemy.

30 Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. 31 And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

The punishment for defying God's Word is severe. The LORD lays judgement upon King Jehoiakim for the way he had mishandled His Word. He would have no heir to the throne. He would not live or die with the grandeur of a king, but instead will be cast out.

32 Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.

† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible