

## The Mercy of God (Jeremiah 36:1–32)

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### Introduction

1. In Chapter 30 Jeremiah was instructed to write in a book all the words that Yahweh had spoken to him to be an encouragement to the remnant in Babylon. This restoration had a threefold purpose.

First, it would document the reason for the judgment that brought the destruction of Jerusalem and their seventy-year captivity.

Second, in publishing the book, those who had not profited by the message Jeremiah spoke in their hearing might be provoked to take serious note of the message when they read it.

Third, the book would serve to inform future generations and give warning of sin and hope of future glories.

In the meantime, God would be present with His people in their current trial (30:11; *cf.* Ex. 3:12) so that they might not fear the discipline of the exile (Isa. 43:2).

The book of Jeremiah is the book God provided for the remnant in Chapter 30 and destroyed by Jehoiakim in Chapter 36 (Dan. 9:1, 2).

Jehoiakim tried to destroy this book, which accounts for the severity of the judgment pronounced against him (vv. 30, 31), the infamous curse of Jeconiah. This is the focus of Chapter 36.

2. A brief outline of Jeremiah, a book is divided into two parts, *sermons* (Chapters 1–25) and *narrative* or history (Chapters 26–52):

1) The condemnation of Judah declared in 12 sermons (Chapters 1–25)

2) The nation's conflict with Jeremiah, the Lord's prophet and spokesman (Chapters 26–29)

3) The future restoration of Jerusalem (Chapters 30–33)

4) The fall of Jerusalem to the Chaldeans (Chapters 34–45 and 52)

5) Prophecies against the nations (Chapters 46–51)

### I. Inscripturation

1. The Word of God is God's ordained means for His people to know the Lord and His will for them.

This makes the story related in our text very disturbing as the wicked king sought to destroy the Word. Nevertheless, the chapter closes with Jeremiah's taking another scroll on which Baruch the scribe wrote again the words destroyed, adding additional words (Chapter 36?).

a. The glorious truth revealed in the text is that nothing can destroy the Word of God. Evil men try by various means—outlawing, burning, corrupting it doctrinally through false teaching, or outright ignoring it. God's truth always triumphs over all efforts to silence it (Isa. 40:8; 1 Pet. 1:24, 25).

b. God will preserve His Word through all generations despite efforts to the contrary (Psa. 119:89; 105:8).

2. The means God employs to preserve His Word is found in this chapter, which provides an interesting look into the doctrine of divine *inspiration* or *inscripturation*.

a. God told the prophet to take a scroll and write on it all the words that he had spoken against Israel, Judah, and the nations. After more than 30 years of ministry, Jeremiah dictated it *all* to Baruch, a scribe. How could Jeremiah possibly remember all that the Lord gave him to speak?

Peter relates the process that allowed Jeremiah to perfectly recall every word that God gave him (2 Pet. 1:21).

- b. The result of this work, I believe, is the book we are now expounding, *Jeremiah*. It is the infallible Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16).
3. This glorious product was met with incredulous skepticism by the leadership of the nation.
  - a. Upon first hearing the message, the king's cabinet turned to each other in great alarm (v. 16).
    - 1) Their immediate response was that the king should hear these words because Jeremiah contradicted the message of the false prophets that the Chaldean threat was temporary—a mere two years (28:3, 11). Jeremiah, however, revealed that the captivity would last for *seventy* years.
    - 2) They pressed Baruch to explain how he wrote all the words from Jeremiah's *dictation*, literally, his *mouth* (v. 17). Baruch confirmed the truth, "*He dictated all these words to me*" (v. 18).
  - b. Evil men would rather believe a lie than truth because they are children of the father of lies. That *mercy* was the motive of this exercise is clear from the Lord's own mouth (v. 3).

## II. The Hope of Mercy

1. The purpose of this miraculous transcription of God's words was that the people might see and be moved by the mercy of God to repent.
  - a. The message was that of judgment and wrath portending disaster; however, its delivery was couched in a word of mercy.
    - 1) God is, first of all, *merciful* (Ex. 34:6; Hab. 3:2).
    - 2) Mercy is God's rule. Although His justice requires His wrath against those who disobey, His first impulse is mercy (v. 3).
  - b. This was also Jeremiah's understanding (v. 7).
2. The divine plan unfolded
  - a. Jeremiah, due to his incarceration (v. 5), deputized Baruch to bring the Word of God to the people in the proper setting, time, and audience (v. 6; Isa. 58:5–9a).
  - b. When the authorities heard the words in the Jeremiah scroll and inquired about its origin, they determined to take it to the king. However, for their safety, they insisted that Baruch and Jeremiah hide themselves against the king's retaliation (v. 26).
  - c. The Lord punished Jehoiakim for his burning of the original scroll. Yahweh's curse on Him had prophetic implications (v. 30). This made it necessary for Christ to be virgin-born so that He could be both David's heir and escape the curse.

## How Does This Truth Affect Us?

1. God is merciful and extends mercy to all, but that does not necessarily guarantee eternal salvation for all to whom the Lord shows mercy (1 Kings 21:20–29).

Eternal salvation is never the reward of repentance; rather repentance is a gift of salvation.
2. The Word of God is the powerful and essential means that God employs to accomplish His work in the world. Paul demonstrates this (2 Cor. 2:14–17).