

THE LORD'S MESSAGE TO BARUCH

TEXT: JEREMIAH 45

INTRODUCTION:

1. The book of Jeremiah is not in strict chronological order. Chronologically, chapter 45 follows chapter 36 (cf. 45:1).
2. This prophecy recorded in Jeremiah chapter 45 was given during the reign of King Jehoiakim (45:1).
3. The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* says Baruch "seems to have been of noble family. He was also according to Josephus a man of unusual acquirements. He might have risen to a high position and seemed conscious of this, but under Jeremiah's influence (see Jer. 45:5) he repressed his ambition, being content to throw in his lot with the great prophet whose secretary and companion he became. Jeremiah dictated his prophecies to Baruch, who read them to the people (Jer. 36). The king (Jehoiakim) was greatly angered at these prophecies and had Baruch arrested and the roll burnt. Baruch however rewrote the prophet's oracles. In the final siege of Jerusalem Baruch stood by his master, witnessing the purchase by the latter of his ancestral estate in Anathoth (Jer. 32). According to Josephus, he continued to reside with Jeremiah at Mizpah after the fall of Jerusalem. Subsequent to the murder of Gedaliah, he was accused of having unduly influenced Jeremiah when the latter urged the people to remain in Judah--a fact which shows how great was the influence which Baruch was believed to have had over his master (Jer. 43:3). He was carried with Jeremiah to Egypt (Jer. 43:6), and thereafter our knowledge of him is merely legendary. According to a tradition preserved by Jerome he died in Egypt soon after reaching that country."
4. Jeremiah is known as "the weeping prophet" because his heart was broken over the unrepentant and stubborn unbelief of his countrymen. He also saw the coming judgment and grieved over what was in store for Jerusalem and the rest of Judah.
5. Jeremiah warned them repeatedly to repent of their idolatry, but they refused to listen. Their wickedness also affected Baruch, and we see here in Jeremiah 45 that their behaviour made him discouraged and depressed.

I. BARUCH'S DISCOURAGEMENT AND DEPRESSION

1. Jeremiah chapter 44 ends with Jeremiah and Baruch, and the rest of the remnant in Egypt. This chapter, and the following chapters are placed here at the end of Jeremiah's story as a supplementary section, or an appendix.
2. The Scofield Bible describes Jeremiah 45--52 as, "Miscellaneous Prophecies." Jeremiah's narrative ends with chapter 44.
3. Chapter 52 is similar to chapter 39. These chapters describe the overthrow of Jerusalem. The book of Jeremiah concludes with a brief description of the last days of King Jehoiachin, who died in Babylon.
4. Baruch was Jeremiah's secretary or scribe. To him Jeremiah dictated his prophecies. The effect of writing these lengthy prophecies of judgment and doom was depressing to Baruch (cf. 45:2, 3).
5. Merrill Unger said, "His depression grew to despondency, since the occasional predictions of peace and salvation were reserved for the distant future. Moreover, the public reading of the scroll and its hostile reception, especially by the king, did not help matters. Baruch realized that in his lifetime he could only look for hardship and persecution" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).
6. The Jews considered Jeremiah a traitor for telling them to yield to Babylon, and they also distrusted Baruch (cf. 36:17).
7. In Jeremiah 43:3, the Jews in Egypt accused Jeremiah the prophet of being misled by Baruch. All of this pressure caused great grief and unrest for Baruch (45:2, 3).
8. Unger said Baruch "was put in the exceedingly unpopular light of being pro-Babylonian and an abetter of Jeremiah" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).

II. THE LORD ENCOURAGED BARUCH

1. The LORD told Jeremiah to speak to Baruch (45:1-3).
2. Irving L. Jensen summarized the message:
 - (1) Acknowledge God's sovereign will concerning judgment (45:4).
 - (2) Baruch was not to selfishly seek great things for himself (45:5a).
 - (3) Baruch was to be one of the few whom God would spare when Jerusalem was overthrown (45:5b).
3. There was no need for Baruch to be sorrowful. The LORD was in control. He gave Judah plenty of time to repent. Jeremiah prophesied during the reigns of Kings Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah.

4. But the people of Judah, especially their wicked kings Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, would not repent. Therefore the LORD had to break down that which He had built.
5. He had to pluck up that which He had planted (45:4).
6. Merrill Unger said the LORD had to remind Baruch that the LORD'S sorrow vastly exceeded his own, "for He was demolishing His own construction; how, then, could Baruch seek his own individual well-being?" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).
7. Jerusalem was engulfed in ruin. It would be unwise for Baruch to seek great things for himself (45:5).
8. But the LORD promised to spare his life. The LORD would give Baruch for a "prey" (spoil, booty) in all places wherever he went. The Bible does not tell us where Baruch went, and this is the last mention of him in Scripture. A tradition preserved by Jerome says he died in Egypt.
9. Another tradition states that he later went, or was carried, to Babylon, after the Babylonians conquered Egypt. This tradition seems to line up with Jeremiah 45:5b -- "but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest."
10. However, this prophecy was given to Baruch "in the fourth year of Jehoiakim" (45:1), i.e., before the destruction of Jerusalem, before the Babylonian captivity, and before Baruch was brought to Egypt with Jeremiah and the others.
11. The LORD was telling Baruch that things were bad (King Jehoiakim had just cut scroll containing the Word of God with his penknife and threw it in the fire), but they would get much worse.
12. The LORD was telling Baruch that no matter what happened, or no matter where he went, the LORD would preserve him. Of course, the same could be said for the prophet Jeremiah.
13. And the same could be said for the Jewish people. Jeremiah 31:31 says, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah."
14. Jeremiah, along with Isaiah and the other Old Testament prophets prophesied about the future restoration of Israel (cf. 31:35-37).

CONCLUSION:

1. Baruch was a faithful assistant to the prophet Jeremiah. The book of Jeremiah has with 52 chapters, but most people are not familiar with Baruch even though he recorded those 52 chapters.
2. Jeremiah is mentioned over 100 times in Scripture, but Baruch is only mentioned a few times, mostly in Jeremiah 36 and 45.
3. Jeremiah is mentioned in Matthew 16:14, where in response to our Lord's question, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" His apostles said, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets."
4. It is a great honor for a prophet to be compared to the Lord Jesus Christ. Baruch is not honored in that way. Yet he was a faithful man of God, who worked closely for many years with the prophet Jeremiah.
5. I have preached many times about Barnabas, who is overshadowed in the book of Acts by the great apostle Paul.
6. Spurgeon said, "It takes more grace than I can tell to play the second fiddle well."
7. Baruch was overshadowed by the prophet Jeremiah, but he was greatly used of God and received his heavenly reward.