

## JEREMIAH 36

## JEHOIAKIM DESTROYS GOD'S WORD

When people are bent upon following an evil course, and are resolved to follow it, the Lord gives them up to the delusions of their own hearts. King Jehoiakim had already heard the warnings of the prophet, but he had given no heed to them; and now in the fourth year of his reign (605 BC), Jeremiah was commanded to commit to writing all the prophecies which he had uttered from the beginning of his ministry. These words were dictated by Jeremiah to his secretary Baruch, who wrote them down on a scroll – a long slip of parchment, written upon one side only.

The scroll being completed, it was to be read in the ears of all the people; but Jeremiah himself was Providentially prevented in some way from publicly reading it. Therefore, he requested Baruch to do it in his place. The reading of this scroll in the presence of the people was yet another proof of Divine compassion. The Lord was willing to give them another opportunity to repent; and even at this point, He would have gladly turned aside the judgments that already hung over their heads.

A fast-day had been proclaimed in the ninth month; and accordingly, multitudes of people came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem. On this day, Baruch went up to the Temple and read the Lord's words to the vast assembly of people below him. Micaiah, the son of Gemariah – from whose chamber Baruch had been reading – was probably in the room. Impressed with what he heard, he hurried to his father in the scribes' chamber. There he also found several of the princes, and he told them what he had heard from the lips of Baruch. They immediately sent a man named Jehudi to bring Baruch into their presence with the scroll; and as they listened, they were moved by the concentration of its threatenings. They were filled with fear and probably looked at one another with considerable anxiety and concern. "We will surely tell the king all those words," they said. And they were anxious to know in what way Jeremiah had uttered them – whether consciously or in a state of ecstasy. Baruch told them the simple truth – how the prophet pronounced the words with his lips, while he himself wrote them down with ink on the scroll.

The princes took the scroll and laid it up in the chamber of Elishama. But they were apprehensive for the safety of Baruch and Jeremiah; they requested them to hide themselves so that no matter what the king might say or do, their lives would not be placed in jeopardy. Then they went to see the king, who was

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Jeremiah's secretary Baruch writes the Lord's words in a scroll – verses 1-4
- ❖ Baruch publicly reads the scroll aloud to the people in the Temple – verses 5-10
- ❖ The scroll is read before the princes – verses 11-19
- ❖ When the scroll is read to the king, he cuts it up and burns it – verses 20-26
- ❖ The Lord tells Jeremiah to have another scroll written down – verses 27-32

sitting in the winter-house of his palace with a charcoal-fire burning in an earthenware pot before him. The king was informed of the scroll, and he immediately sent Jehudi to fetch it. And now, as the princes stood before the imperious monarch, Jehudi read it. But before he had read even three or four columns, the king's patience was exhausted and he refused to hear any more. Seizing the parchment, he took a knife; and against the strong remonstrances of three of the princes – Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah – he cut the document in pieces and tossed them into the fire. What a daring and sacrilegious act! And not being satisfied with this, he sent some of his men to arrest Baruch and Jeremiah; but the Lord had hidden them, and their hiding-place could not be found.



Did this proud and haughty king suppose that he could thus set aside the purposes of God? Did he imagine that by burning the roll, he had gotten rid of its contents, and that he would never hear of them again? All through the ages, wicked men have dealt thus with the Word that condemned them. But a sailor does not escape shipwreck by destroying the chart which maps out the rocks upon which he is drifting. We do not alter facts by refusing to believe them. And so the burning of Jeremiah's scroll changed nothing. It was only the throwing away of one more possibility of escape. The person who rejects God's truth does so at his own peril, while the Lord hides His faithful servants in the secret place of His presence – secure from the attacks of their enemies!

News was brought to Jeremiah and Baruch, in their hiding-place, of the conduct of King Jehoiakim; and the word of the Lord came again to the prophet, bidding him to rewrite the scroll. But the scroll was not merely reproduced. There were added to it "many like words." These included the re-assertion that the king of Babylon would certainly destroy the land and punish Jehoiakim. So far from destroying the Word of the Lord, the actions of this wicked king only resulted in more lines of judgment being written against his people in general and himself in particular.

How can we better learn a lesson from this chapter than by considering our own privileges? Not only have we been given a scroll of the Lord's gracious dealings with His people; but to us, the glorious Gospel of Christ has also come. And it has come with a fullness of light, life, and salvation, so that all who are sitting in darkness may hear and know the joyful sound, and be brought to walk in the light of spiritual liberty. Blessed Lord Jesus! What shall we render to You for Your merciful grace toward us! You have not only sent Your prophets to write the blessed words that came from Your mouth; but You also personally came to us from the presence of the Father – full of grace and truth!

*Lord, we thank You that despite all the attempts of sinful human beings to suppress Your Scriptures, yet Your everlasting Word still remains and lives on! Amen.*