

Bible Studies for Life: August 25

Baruch • Jeremiah 36:4-8,16-18; 45:1-5

By Jessica McMillan



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Jehoiakim came from a long line of kings of Judah. Jeremiah 36 is an important chapter in several ways. Not only is it the only place in the Old Testament that indicates how spoken messages developed into written form, it also demonstrates that there were some leaders in the kingdom who did not support evil king Jehoiakim and wanted to obey the words of Jeremiah. Finally, this chapter reveals that Judah rejected the opportunity to repent, and that brought about the demise of the kingdom.

Jeremiah 36:4-8

For some reason not named in scripture, Jeremiah was no longer allowed to preach in the temple. In order to still extend God's message, he enlisted a trusted scribe, Baruch, to write down the words Jeremiah spoke and eventually take them to the king. Baruch would be called upon as Jeremiah's representative to read and even interpret the messages that Jeremiah penned with the hope that the people would "bring their petition before the Lord and ... turn from their wicked ways" (v. 7 NIV). Baruch did as he was told and delivered the message of the Lord.

Jeremiah 36:16-18

Upon hearing the words that Baruch read, a man named Michaiah went and told the officials all that he had heard. They "looked at each other in fear" (v. 16) and asked where these words had come from. Even though they had likely heard Jeremiah's words before he had been banned from preaching, for some reason, this time, they were moved and decided that the king, although he might not like it, also needed to hear these words. Motivated by concern for Jeremiah and Baruch, the officials encouraged both of them to go into hiding (v.19). When the king had heard a few lines from the scroll, he became extremely angry and cut it up into pieces to be burned in a firepot in front of him (v. 23). Neither he nor his attendants showed any fear or reverence as they blatantly rejected God's

message. Jehoiakim's negative reaction led to the end of the monarchy and his own personal destruction. (vv. 30-31).

You may recall that Jehoiakim's father, Josiah, heard the word of the Lord in a similar way (2 Chronicles 34). After the evil reigns of his grandfather and father, Josiah tried to lead the people of Judah back to following the one true God. After hearing the word of the Lord read to him, Josiah's response was one of grief and repentance followed by a commitment "to follow the Lord and keep his commands, statutes and decrees with all his heart and all his soul" (2 Chronicles 34:31) and obey the word of the Lord. Jehoiakim, however, did not continue in his father's footsteps.

Jeremiah 45:1-5

A few chapters after the burning of the scroll, Baruch became distraught over the scenario and complained, "The Lord has added sorrow to my pain; I am worn out with groaning and find no rest" (45:3). Jeremiah encouraged Baruch with a message from the Lord that the response of others to God's message is God's business. Baruch should remain faithful, and he would be protected. This lesson teaches us that we can trust God to protect and provide even in the midst of evil. He may not show up in the way we hope or expect, but we can be sure that He is always in control and active in the lives of His people.

McMillan is a member of Prentiss Church, Prentiss.