

A Penknife Religion

Introduction. Prior to the Babylonian captivity, the nation of Judah had become extremely wicked. They became immoral, dishonest in their dealings with one another and idolatrous. God sent many prophets to turn His people back to Him. Like some of the others, Jeremiah prophesied the doom of Jerusalem and Judah by the Babylonian Empire.

The only way the destruction could be averted was by repentance. However, the people of Judah did not repent, and their attitude, as a whole, can be summed up by the attitude of their king, Jehoiakim. We learn of him and what he did in Jeremiah 36.

I. *Jehoiakim Cuts And Burns The Word Of God*

- A. Jeremiah is commanded by the Lord to write the prophecies of doom against Judah (Jeremiah 36:1-2).
- B. God's purpose for the writing was not to anger them, but to save them (Jeremiah 36:3). As was done in the case of the Ninevites, God would have relented if they would have repented (Jonah 3:4-10).
- C. Baruch, a servant of Jeremiah, is enlisted to write the words as Jeremiah dictates them by the Spirit (Jeremiah 36:4, 18).
- D. After Baruch wrote the words, he was commanded by Jeremiah to go and read the book in the temple (Jeremiah 36:5-6). This was intended for a good purpose (Jeremiah 36:7).
- E. Baruch does as he was instructed (Jeremiah 36:8-10). But a certain man by the name of Michaiah hears the reading of Baruch, and then goes to the king's house and tells the princes and nobles what he had heard (Jeremiah 36:11-13).
- F. The princes and nobles send for Baruch to hear the words of Jeremiah for themselves (Jeremiah 36:14-15).
 1. They react with fear and insist that the king must hear those words (Jeremiah 36:16).
 2. They recognize that danger might come to Baruch and Jeremiah and tell them to go and hide (Jeremiah 36:19).
- G. When Jehoiakim hears of the writing, he commands Jehudi to read it (Jeremiah 36:20-21).
- H. After the reading of three or four columns, king Jehoiakim takes a knife and cuts up the scroll and throws it into the fire (Jeremiah 36:22-23). A few men try to stop the king, but for the most part the scene is witnessed with indifference (Jeremiah 36:24).
- I. The king then tries to arrest Baruch and Jeremiah but the Lord protects them (Jeremiah 36:26).
- J. God instructs Jeremiah to write another roll with additional words of personal destruction to Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 36:28-31).

II. **Lessons From This Incident**

- A. The New Testament also has messages of doom, and the purpose is the same -- to turn people from their sins (Luke 13:1-5). God is longsuffering, but eventually His patience will end and destruction will come (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).
- B. The spirit of Jehoiakim is still alive and well today.
 - 1. When people reject plain Bible teaching, for all practical purposes, they are cutting and burning the word of God.
 - a) Various conditions of salvation are cut and burned; for example, baptism.
 - b) For some unknown reason, many people do not want baptism as part of the plan of God for one to be saved. However, Jesus made it necessary (Mark 16:16).
 - 2. Christians, in reality, cut out passages of scripture and burn them.
 - a) Are we any better than Jehoiakim if we refuse to submit to various requirements of the Lord?
 - b) God's instruction on marriage is often ignored (Ephesians 5:22-25).
 - c) God's law on divorce and remarriage is often ignored (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).
 - d) God's instruction to children is often ignored (Ephesians 6:1).
 - e) God's instruction on modesty is often ignored (1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:3-4).
 - f) God's instruction on assembling is often ignored (Hebrews 10:25).
 - g) God's instruction on covetousness and putting the kingdom first has no place in the lives of many (Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:15).
 - 3. Some have long since cut and burned certain requirements of God, and have become so hardened that they will never change (1 Timothy 4:2).
- C. Consider the attitude of king Josiah, the father of Jehoiakim, when the word of God was read to him (2 Kings 22:8-13).
 - 1. God appreciated his humble attitude (2 Kings 22:19-20).
 - 2. We need tender hearts toward the word of the Lord (Isaiah 57:15; 66:2; Psalm 51:17; 119:120).
 - a) We need the humble attitude of the publican (Luke 18:13-14).
 - b) Let us lament, mourn, and weep because of our sins (James 4:8-10).
 - 3. Jehoiakim, his nobles and servants had no fear when the word of God was read to them (Jeremiah 36:24). They had no fear of God and they would meet the wrath of the Lord (Romans 2:4-5).
- D. Jehoiakim was an evil leader.
 - 1. Some of his nobles and servants acted correctly at first when the

- scroll was read; however, they were influenced by Jehoiakim to reject it.
2. Jehoiakim should have been like Josiah and reacted with a tender and contrite heart. If he had so acted, he would have influenced others to do the same.
- E. Though Jehoiakim cut and burned the word of God, it still remained.
1. Jeremiah was instructed to write another scroll with the same words as the first.
 2. Though men might try to literally or figuratively cut and burn it, it still remains (Matthew 24:35; 1 Peter 1:23-25).

Conclusion. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). What will you do? Will you cut and burn it - or will you fear God and humbly submit to it? Though one might reject it, it is still the word of God and it will remain. Let us strive to maintain humble and contrite hearts.