

## Scroll Burning

Franklin Church of Christ  
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AM Worship

### Introduction:

We do not know much about the last three kings of Judah before the Babylonian captivity based on the histories found in **II Kings** and **II Chronicles**. However, we are given an interesting insight into Jehoiakim's life in **Jeremiah 36**. More importantly, we are given an interesting insight into God's word. Reading that text, we learn three simple, yet profound points regarding God's word. Allow me to briefly set the stage for you. According to **II Kings 23:34**, Pharaoh Neco of Egypt had conquered Judah and brought them under his rule. When he killed Judah's king Jehoahaz was made king by the people of Judah. However, within three months, Neco exercised his power and deposed Jehoahaz, setting up his brother Jehoiakim (also called Eliakim) as king. However, over the next several years the tides of change were sweeping across the world. Nebuchadnezzar was conquering the world. Egypt would fall to him. With that fall, Judah came under Babylonian control. What would Nebuchadnezzar do with Judah? The story in **Jeremiah 36** tells us what he would ultimately do and why. As we read this chapter, pay careful attention to the role of God's word.

### Discussion:

- I. God's word is for salvation.
  - A. According to **Jeremiah 36:3, 7**, the primary purpose of God's word is not to condemn but to save. Granted, it may accomplish that goal by warning of condemnation, however, the goal is to bring about repentance and supplication, which lead to salvation.
  - B. Consider the contrasting story of Jonah's preaching to Nineveh according to **Jonah 3:4-10**. Jonah's message was simple. "In forty days, Nineveh will be destroyed." This message contained no proclamation of forgiveness if the people repented. However, the king of Nineveh did repent and commanded the people to repent. His thought was, "Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish." According to **vs. 10**, that is exactly what God did. His word is always designed to save us.
  - C. Consider **Acts 20:32**; **II Timothy 3:14-17**; **James 1:21** and **I Peter 1:22-2:3**. God's word is intended to save us. We must use it that way in our lives. Further, we must use it that way in our teaching. All too often, like James and John in **Luke 9:54-56**, we view our mission as one to condemn everyone who is not doing exactly what God's word says. That is not our job. Our job is to teach the word that people might be saved. No doubt, we will have to rebuke some. No doubt, we will have to warn some. No doubt, we will have to be firm and even harsh at times to rescue some from the fire. But we must always remember that our goal is to save souls with the word of God, not call fire down upon them from on high.
- II. We cannot alter or destroy God's word.
  - A. In **vss. 23-26**, Jehoiakim evidently believed he could destroy God's word. In **vs. 29**, we learn that Jehoiakim did not believe Nebuchadnezzar would destroy Judah. Based on his disbelief, he cut up the scroll and burned it. Clearly, he thought he could dictate what would and would not happen. If he destroyed the scroll and captured the authors of it, he could keep the judgment from occurring. However, **vs. 32**, demonstrated that no matter what happened to the scroll upon which God's word had been written, God's word could not be destroyed.
  - B. If we do not like God's word, we cannot change it. Satan will try to make us think otherwise. That was his approach from the very beginning. Satan tempted Eve by casting doubt on God's word. God had said, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (**Genesis 2:16-17**). Satan said, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (**Genesis 3:4-5**). Satan twisted God's word. Eve accepted the alteration. However, she learned, as Jehoiakim would learn, we can try to make God's word say what we want, but it never changes.
  - C. Read **I Peter 1:22-2:3** again. God's word endures forever. We may not proclaim it properly, but we cannot change God's word. As **Romans 3:3-4** demonstrates, we do not have to believe what God has said. But God's word is true and if we say anything else, we are liars.

- III. If we try to alter or destroy God's word, then our judgment will be worse.
- A. This final point is the kicker in this whole story of Jehoiakim and the burning scroll. **Vss. 30-32** say that the judgment on Judah and especially on Jehoiakim would be even worse than initially stated. The final words of the chapter are "And he wrote on it at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire; and many similar words were added to them."
  - B. While God's word was written to save us, it warns us of great judgments. We, for some reason, may not like what it says. We may want to follow our own brand of Christianity. We may want to mix and match our spirituality with our own desires. Here is the frightening fact, we can do whatever we want, but we cannot change God's word. If we hide it, alter it, change it or twist it, the judgment we are trying to avoid will only be worse. Peter declared as much in **II Peter 3:16**.
  - C. The closing comments of **Revelation** are very appropriate to this discussion. "I testify to everyone who hears the words of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book" (**Revelation 22:18-19**). While I certainly believe these two verses are written specifically for **Revelation**, the sentiment is one that should be applied to all of God's word. We must not believe we can change it or twist it. Our duty is simply to study it and teach it as it is. Otherwise, we only magnify our judgment.

**Conclusion:**

Jehoiakim sets a great example for us of how not to behave. When we read something in scripture that we do not like, we must not think we can ignore it or alter it in any way. Rather, we must simply submit to it, turning away from our sins and supplicating God for our forgiveness. Thankfully, we do not have to respond like the King of Nineveh. He was not sure if God would forgive them. We, however, can be sure. According to **I John 1:9**, if we repent and confess our sins to God, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins. What is the key to all of this? We must ever stick with God's word as our guide and never change it.