

# The Christian Arsenal

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## Heed God's Word Jeremiah 34-36

- Jeremiah was called to bring God's word to the people of Judah. In chapter 1 God told Jeremiah "For you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak"(1:7). God has instructed us to know, honor, and obey His word.
- These three aspects, knowing, honoring, and obeying God's word was completely ignored by those whose duty it was to faithfully carry out that responsibility. The temple priests. This led the citizens to respond the same way. They refused to acknowledge God's word that Jeremiah brought to them.
- This mind-set, a worldly mind-set that rejects all things of God, especially His Son, has not lessened over the years since Jeremiah's time. Many over time have refused to honor God's word. They attack it and some even go the extreme of trying to harm or kill those who share it with others.
- During the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe, some of the darkest times for believers, many were persecuted and killed for bringing God's word to the common man. In 1409 a constitution was drafted that forbid the reading of the English Bible without Episcopal approval. John Wyclif and his followers argued that the common man should have the bible available to them in English. In 1536, William Tyndale was burned at the stake for publishing the New Testament in English. His work was the basis of the 1611 version we now know as the King James Version.
- Here in Jeremiah chapter 36, King Jehoiakim tried to destroy God's word by cutting up the scroll on which it was written and burning it. The priests appeared to have been somewhat arrogant. God called it being "stiff-necked". Who wants to listen to this man from Anathoth, we're the temple priests, listen to us. King Zedekiah listened to Hananiah. Hananiah ended up dead and Zedekiah watched his son be executed then had his eyes put out. They trivialized God's word.
- This sounds an awful lot like today. How many times have you heard "your truth is fine for you, but don't force it on me, I have my own truth"? Or "the bible was written by men, they could have made mistakes." Someone once told me that he believed the stories in the bible were made up to give people encouragement during difficult times.
- Many today reject God's word by ignoring it. How can we live for God if we do not apply His word? There are consequences for our actions, good and bad. The Lord wants us to know, honor and obey His commands so that as Deuteronomy says "it will be well with you". There are good consequences for knowing and obeying His word. And as we see in Jeremiah there are bad consequences for ignoring and disobeying.

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- In chapter 34 God sends Jeremiah to warn King Zedekiah that God Himself would hand Jerusalem over to the Babylonians. And although he would not die in battle, he would see Jerusalem destroyed. The only comfort for Zedekiah was that he would die in peace (vs. 5).
- During the time that the Babylonians had Jerusalem under siege, Zedekiah made a covenant with the citizens to free their slaves. Here is an illustration of the people being ignorant of God's word. This was part of the law as written in Deuteronomy (15:12). God had commanded that Hebrew slaves be released in the 7<sup>th</sup> year after 6 years of servitude. This had been ignored. God even reminded them in 34:13, that this was a covenant He made with their fathers in the time of Moses.
- In 34:15 God was pleased that they repented and did what was right. Keep in mind that this was already law. But, they had additional motivation to release their slaves because slave owners now would not have to feed and care for the slaves during the siege. However, during perhaps a lull in the siege, they took the slaves back. One commentary writer wrote that "they repented of their repentance".
- God equated this to profaning His name (vs16). The people made this agreement with Zedekiah for the slave's freedom by cutting a calf in half and passing between the parts. This signified that you were entering into the agreement and pronouncing a curse on yourself that you would be cut to pieces if you broke the covenant (Gen 15:9-17).
- The people had ignored God's word. When they tried to honor it, then they trivialized it. Perhaps they were much like people today. "Religion is for the old folks, it's old fashion. We are much more progressive and modernized and enlightened."
- This illustrates how little the people regarded God's word. Do you believe that people today **really** believe that there are consequences for disobeying His word? Of course, if you don't care about God or believe in God or His Son, then why would you care about His word?
- But what about those who call themselves believers. Christians. Three quarters of the United States claims to be Christian. 75% of our nation claim to believe in Christ Jesus. How can that be? With 12 men Jesus changes the world forever. Just think if 75% of our 285 million citizens were committed to God. Committed to knowing and honoring and obeying His word. Satan and his minions wouldn't stand a chance.
- Look over in chapter 36. Read 1-8. Verse1 tells us this happened in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiakim's reign. We know that would be 605B.C. This is the same year that the Babylonians defeated the Egyptians and Assyrians at Carchemish. The Assyrians would never be heard from again. The importance here is that this confirms the prophecy Jeremiah had preached back in chapter 1. With Egypt and Assyria out of the way, the world's power shifted soundly to Babylon. The enemy from the north is now clearly revealed. Remember how to judge if a prophet is of God? Deuteronomy say if his words come to pass, him shall you heed.

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- So we have Baruch who served as a scribe for Jeremiah. He wrote down all the words the Lord gave to Jeremiah. Verse 2 says the Lord told him to do this. So now we have God's written word. Not initiated by men but rather by the Lord. Turn over to 2Peter 1:21. Peter said the same thing here. God's word was written down because holy men of God were moved by the Spirit to write and speak the word of the Lord.
- Get this truth down big, and plain, and straight. God's word is not some opinion of man. One commentary writer hit the nail on the head when he wrote "God's word is the perfect treasure of divine instruction".
- God's word changes lives. Look in verse 3. God said here that this is the purpose, to inspire people to repent and turn from wicked behavior and turn to the Lord. Now look in verse 14-16. At this point we have people beginning to sit up and take notice, some are now not so reluctant to hear the word of the Lord. Michaiah went and reported to the royal princes.
- When they heard the word they look at each other in fear. In our study of 2 kings we saw Josiah, grandfather of these princes, stricken with grief and fear after hearing God's word read (2Kings 22:11). He was so overcome because God's word cuts' like a double-edged sword. It convicts our sin and inspires us to repent and turn toward God. This is the power of God's word.
- God's word also inspires us to share it with others. The impact of the scroll's message motivated them to immediately bring it to the king's attention. But look in verse 19 what the royal princes did. They prudently hid Jeremiah and Baruch. Perhaps they knew the king's mind and what **his** reaction would be.
- Compare the response of Jehoiakim to his father Josiah. Josiah's life was changed through the hearing of God's word. He used the nation's resources to restore their relationship with the Lord God. His grandsons, the princes also recognized the importance and power of God's word (vs16). Yet here we have Jehoiakim, being the ultimate "stiff-neck". As the word was read, he cut pieces of it and threw it in the fire. Many throughout the history of time have tried to destroy God's word...all have failed.
- God offends the world. James said, "Friendship with the world is enmity with God. Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." We know that God loves mankind. He loves us so much He sent His Son here to die in our place. To pay the sin penalty for us. We also know that God created the world. In Genesis His word said God created it and it was good. The Greek word translated "world" is *cosmos*. This word means order or system. When we speak of the world in the context that James was using, we are referring to the worldly system that is in place that rejects God. The same "world" that killed Jesus, or rather that He "died for".
- As believers we are called to know, honor, and obey God's word. When we reject His word by trivializing it, or ignoring it, then we are part of the

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worldly system or worldly order that rejects our Heavenly Father and our Savior Jesus the Christ. Remember what the hymn says, "Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe".

Through knowing what God's word says, we can discern false teaching and distortions of His truth. Through honoring God's word we teach future generations the importance and power of His word. Through obedience we show others reverence for our Lord and His prominence in our lives.