

AM Jeremiah 36:1-32 Scripture Alone

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Date: 11 September 2022

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[0 : 0 0] Jeremiah chapter 36, a fairly lengthy reading, but it's all the one composite story.

Jeremiah 36 from the beginning. In the fourth year of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord.

Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah, and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you in the reign of Josiah till now.

Perhaps when the people of Judah hear about every disaster I plan to inflict on them, they will each turn from their wicked ways. Then I will forgive their wickedness and their sin.

So Jeremiah called Baruch, son of Nariah, and while Jeremiah dictated all the words the Lord had spoken to him, Baruch wrote them on the scroll.

[1 : 0 4] Then Jeremiah told Baruch, I am restricted, I am not allowed to go to the Lord's temple. So you go to the house of the Lord in a day of fasting and read to the people from the scroll the words of the Lord that you wrote as I dictated.

Read them to all the people of Judah who come in from their towns. Perhaps they will bring their petition before the Lord and will each turn from their wicked ways. For the anger and wrath pronounced against this people by the Lord are great.

Baruch, son of Nariah, did everything Jeremiah the prophet told him to do. At the Lord's temple he read the words of the Lord from the scroll. In the ninth month of the fifth year of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah, a time of fasting before the Lord was proclaimed for all the people in Jerusalem and those who had come from the towns of Judah.

From the room of Gemariah, son of Shaphon, the secretary, which was in the upper courtyard at the entrance of the new gate of the temple. Baruch read to all the people at the Lord's temple the words of Jeremiah from the scroll.

When Micaiah, son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphon, heard all the words of the Lord from the scroll, he went down to the secretary's room in the royal palace where all the officials were sitting.

[2 : 3 0] El-Ashamah, the secretary, Deliah, son of Shemaiah, El-Nathan, son of Ackbor, Gemariah, son of Shaphon, Zedekiah, son of Hananiah, and all the other officials.

After Micaiah told them everything he had heard Baruch read to the people from the scroll, all the officials sent Jehudi, son of Nethaniah, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Cushet, to say to Baruch, Bring the scroll from which you have read to the people and come.

So Baruch, son of Nariah, went to them with the scroll in his hand. They said to him, Sit down, please, and read it to us. So Baruch read it to them. When they heard all these words, they looked at each other in fear and said to Baruch, We must report all these words to the king.

Then they asked Baruch, Tell us, How did you come to write all this? Did Jeremiah dictate it? Yes, Baruch replied, He dictated all these words to me.

And I wrote them in ink on the scroll. Then the official said to Baruch, You and Jeremiah, go and hide. Don't let anyone know who you are.

- [3 : 46] After they put the scroll in the room of Elashama, the secretary, they went to the king in the courtyard and reported everything to him. The king sent to Jehudi to get the scroll.
- And Jehudi brought it from the room of Elashama, the secretary, and read it to the king and all the officials standing beside him. It was the ninth month and the king was sitting in the winter apartment with a fire burning in the brazier in front of him.
- Whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns of the scroll, the king cut them off with a scribe's knife and threw them into the brazier until the entire scroll was burned in the fire.
- The king and all his attendants who heard all these words showed no fear, nor did they tear their clothes. Even though Elnathan, Deliah, and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them.
- Instead the king commanded Jerahmiel, a son of the king, Serariah, son of Azrael, and Shalamiah, son of Abdiel, to arrest Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet.
- [4 : 59] But the Lord had hidden them. After the king burned the scroll containing the words that Baruch had written at Jeremiah's dictation, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah.
- Take another scroll and write on it all the words that were on the first scroll which Jehoiakim king of Judah burned up.
- Also tell Jehoiakim king of Judah, this is what the Lord says, you burned that scroll and said, why did you write on it that the king of Babylon would certainly come and destroy this land and wipe from it both man and beast?
- Therefore this is what the Lord says about Jehoiakim king of Judah. He will have no one to sit in the throne of David. His body will be thrown out and exposed to the heat of the day and the frost by night.
- I will punish him and his children and his attendants for their wickedness. I will bring on them and those living in Jerusalem and the people of Judah every disaster I pronounced against them because they have not listened.
- [6 : 08] So Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the scribe Baruch son of Nariah and as Jeremiah dictated, Baruch wrote on it all the words of the scroll that Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire and many similar words were added to them.
- Amen and may God add his blessing to the reading of his word. We owe a great deal to the Reformation not just because it brought about the recovery of biblical thinking in the church but for much more because the Reformation changed society from education to science from social values to politics.
- And at the heart of the great movement that was the Reformation there were three great truths sola gratia, grace alone sola fide, faith alone and sola scriptura, scripture alone.
- And these were the great foundational truths scripture alone, grace alone, faith alone upon which the Reformation was built.
- And to be a Christian means to stand on these truths. When all else is stripped away here is the essence of the gospel of Christ. God's word revealing to us God's grace grace and how we lay hold of that grace and faith alone.
- [7 : 40] And each of these scripture, grace and faith must not be added to or subtracted from. When I was with you around a month ago we looked at grace alone and faith alone.
- Grace alone the work of Christ Christ and the cross as the soul as the only ground of our salvation. And then faith alone as the soul means by whereby we lay hold of the gift of God and the gospel.
- Nothing we can do to earn it. Nothing that we can aspire to be or to do but simply laying hold in faith and trust in what God promises us in Christ.

So we looked at grace alone and at faith alone and this morning I'd like to look at the other one that I didn't look at a month ago scripture alone. Scripture alone.

And this is the issue of authority. What authority what standard do we base life upon?

[8 : 56] And basically there are three possible options. We can base life upon our own reason our own values and standards and that is the position of relativistic humanism which is the religion on which our modern society stands.

Here nothing is certain. Everything is relative. Secondly some might want to build their life upon the authority of the church.

The decisions of church councils or general assemblies and that of course always has the potential to fall back into the first position of our own reason.

Or thirdly there is the authority of God's revealed word. It seems to me that there are no other options. In practice we live our lives looking to one of these three foundations whether we do it consciously or unconsciously.

we can perhaps refine it further and say that we either submit to God's word or arrogantly if unconsciously set ourselves up as the final authority.

[10 : 20] If we choose to set ourselves up as authoritative then we are caught in the trap of relativism. If there is no objective standard no absolute authority from God then we have no basis in which to say something is right.

And something else is wrong. It always just boils back down to my opinion. And if that doesn't agree with your opinion then that's tough.

And perhaps a good example of this relativism is seen in the last 50 years or so in which our own society has changed its mind about what is right and wrong in the area of moral values.

way back in the time of the Old Testament judges the people thought they could ignore the word of God and we have told that everybody did what they thought was right in their own eyes.

Relativistic humanism is not new. Back then everybody did what they thought was right in their own eyes. back in the time of judges in the Old Testament the result was chaos and confusion and spiritual and national decline.

[11 : 39] And this might seem so obvious that it hardly needs laboured. And yet even today many within our churches would set themselves up over against scripture.

At the time of the Reformation God's authority in scripture had been replaced by the authority of church councils and traditions. Now religious traditions are nearly always very dangerous things.

I always remember a lecture by Howard Marshall whom some of you may know who was professor of New Testament at Aberdeen in which he pointed out that probably 95% of what we actually do in our churches is based on tradition rather than the word of God.

And he went through everything from the structure of the building to the structure of an order of service. It was precisely the religious traditions of the scribes and Pharisees that Jesus waded into as wrong.

Emphasizing over against tradition that there is but one authority which is scripture. In Matthew 15 we read of people saying to Jesus why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders?

[13 : 11] They don't wash their hands before they eat. And Jesus replied why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? An interesting quotation from Professor James Packer.

He writes we approach scripture with minds already formed by the mass of accepted opinions and viewpoints with which we have come into contact in both the church and the world.

It is easy to be unaware that it has happened it is hard even to begin to realise how profoundly tradition in this sense has moulded us.

The dangers of tradition. Up to the Reformation there used to be a veil between the people and the priests.

A partition if you went you simply went to a church or whatever spectators to watch beyond the veil the religious people performing worship.

[14 : 26] But the reformers took the veil away and put an open Bible where that veil had been. The ordinary person is not dependent on church authority but only upon the word of God.

which is why we find a great movement of Bible translation arising at the time of the Reformation. In the early days of the Reformation Martin Luther was summoned to Worms to recant of the dangerous biblical truths that he was teaching.

One man against what was known as the Holy Roman Empire. Luther marched into the lion's den and said this to the emperor I am bound by the scripture that I have adduced and my conscience has been taken captive by the word of God and I am neither able nor willing to recant since it is either safe nor right to act against conscience God help me.

And Luther fled from that meeting that he had been summoned to Worms. Interesting story. He was kidnapped as it turned out by friends who were kidnapping him to remove him from the scene because his life was in danger and he was taken to Eisenach to the castle there and imprisoned by his friends and in that castle in one room and had the privilege of standing in that room Luther translated the Bible into German saying let the man who would hear God speak read Holy Scripture another of the reformers John Calvin said Scripture is needed as guide and teacher for anyone who would come to God the Creator Scripture is needed as guide and teacher for anyone who would come to

God the Creator there was an interesting painting which I'm not sure if it's still there but it used to be in the old Supreme Court building in Lusanne so as all the judges were coming in to be involved in the cases that would be before them they had to pass through this huge and it was a large painting that stood on the wall and it was called Justice Lifts the Nations and you know how the normal picture of justice is with the book in a hand and a sword lifted up into the air but in the painting Robert paints justice with the sword down pointing onto a book and on that book is written the word of God and apparently at one time in history the judges in Switzerland were very uncomfortable walking past justice pointing to the

[17 : 49] Bible and had that painting covered with a curtain so that they didn't have to see it there are many ways in which we could explore this theme of scripture alone but I want to do so with a short look at Jeremiah chapter 36 and we could pick lots of bits of the Bible we could have picked Josiah earlier in the story where Josiah institutes a reform a spring clean of the temple and in that spring clean of the temple they discover the word of God and it's brought to Josiah and he reads it and we're told that he's taken a back and he repents of his and the sins of the nation and sets in place certain reforms but I want to look at Jeremiah 36 which is the other side of that we find here a fascinating historical incident how God gives his word to the prophet

Jeremiah who in turn dictates it to his secretary this man called Baruch the background is that Jeremiah was under house arrest at the time and Kant himself deliver this message from God to the people and so he sends Baruch off to do this and so his secretary goes into the temple reads the word which God has given among the crowd in the temple are some royal officials they take the scroll from Baruch and they take it and read it to the king Jehoiakim and so we find Jehudi reading this scroll to the king and as Jehudi reads Jehoiakim sitting in front of this fire takes his knife and cuts off the bit that's just red and nonchalantly flings it into the fire and thus thought he was destroying the word of God but God would not be denied and so he gives the word a second time to

Jeremiah now it seems to me that Jehoiakim is very much like many people today even people in the church because he makes certain fundamental mistakes about the word of God first of all Jehoiakim surely thought that the word of God was merely a human product something that this man Jeremiah whom he from all accounts didn't really like or get on with and so this was merely the writings of a human a common and disastrous mistake and the source of many poor attitudes to scripture seeing it as simply the writings of men well it is the writings of men but it is more it is the words of

God if we go back to the first chapter of Jeremiah we find that he was a reluctant prophet indeed he tried to avoid God's calling back in Jeremiah chapter 1 verse 6 a sovereign Lord I said I do not know how to speak I am only a child but the Lord said to me do not say I am only a child you must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you do not be afraid of them for I am with you and will rescue you declares the Lord then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me now I have put my words in your mouth I have put my words and in your mouth and centuries later Peter would write in 2nd Peter chapter 1 at verse 20 above all you must understand that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophets on interpretation for prophecy never had its origin in the will of man but men spoke from

God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit Scripture is not a series of human reflections about religion it is the word of God here God speaks to us Jehoiakim treated it with contempt because he thought it was merely human words and we must be careful not to fall into the same mistake secondly Jehoiakim did not take the word of God seriously and of course this follows from the first mistake if you think it's only human words then I don't need to take it seriously he could treat it with contempt and his was an act of contempt wasn't it he cut it into bits and he flung it into the fire how many in our churches today treat

[23 : 10] God's word with a pass of contempt by ignoring it how seriously do we take it because to take scripture seriously means studying it and putting it into practice we can't put it into practice until we study it conversely it's meaningless of course to study it and not put it into practice how long do we spend with our Bibles Henry Morris was one of the world's leading 20th century scientists in the field of hydrology and he could say that he would spend at least one hour a day with his Bible now I'm not saying that you have to do that though it probably wouldn't do us any harm at all but the point is that the time we spend with something is indicative of how seriously we take it and if we do not take scripture seriously we're certainly not taking

Jesus seriously Jeremiah 36 at verse 23 we read whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns of the scroll the king cut them off with his knife and threw them into the brassiere until the entire scroll was burned in the fire the king and all his attendants who heard all these words showed no fear nor did they tear their clothes and so they listened to the word of God the warnings of God and were unmoved God help us to take his words seriously and not treat it with any shallowness and thirdly Jehoiakim thought he could actually ignore or destroy the word of God he clearly set himself up as an authority over that word and his arrogance he thought he could negate the word of

God and get rid of it so that it did not apply to him but what happened Jeremiah 36 at verse 27 after the king burned the scroll containing the words that Baruch had written at Jeremiah's dictation the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah take another scroll and write on it all the words that were on the first scroll which Jehoiakim king of Judah burned up and also telling Jehoiakim king of Judah this is what the Lord says you burned that scroll and said why did you write on it that the king of Babylon would certainly come and destroy this land and cut off both men and animals from it therefore this is what the Lord says about Jehoiakim king of Judah he will have no one to sit on the throne of David his body will be thrown out and exposed to the heat by day and the frost by night and the historical record is that within ten years that came to pass

God's judgment and Jehoiakim down through history men have thought they could get rid of God's word it has been banned burned persecuted but scripture endures Jeremiah 36 verse 31 says I will punish him and his children and his attendants for their wickedness I will bring in them and those living in Jerusalem and the people of Judah every disaster I pronounced against them because they have not listened because they have not listened do some today think that if they ignore God's word they will go away no one here can plead the excuse of ignorance about key biblical truths we have it here in our Bibles and so let us come to it in a spirit of willing submission to learn and to apply we're all familiar with

Jesus' parable of the sower that whole parable is essentially a parable about listening I think it's in Luke's version that between Jesus turning the parable and then there's a section where Jesus and the disciples discuss with one another and then Jesus gives the interpretation of the parable that we bit in that links the parable and the interpretation of the parable Jesus says be careful how you listen be careful how you listen unlike Jerusalem let us listen and submit to the word of God I quoted earlier from 1st Peter where Peter says that we must understand that the word of the prophets comes not just from them but from God and just before that verse I quoted

[28 : 29] Peter reflects upon the wonderful experience he had with Jesus in the mount of transfiguration that must have been a tremendous experience for Peter as he saw Jesus transformed and you remember Moses and Elijah appearing but then Peter goes on to write that we have something surer something more certain than our experiences however wonderful they are namely the Bible intriguingly Sir Karl Popper who may not be that well known to you but he was a famous philosopher of science and president of the British Humanist Association in the 20th century but in one of his books he concedes that unless we have a direct revelation from God we have no basis for certainty about anything and then because he is a humanist he goes on to deny any such revelation and is left trying to pick himself up by his own shoelaces so it comes back to what our authority is for life and faith scripture does not deal with religion big mistake that so many make scripture tells us how to be right with

God it testifies to Jesus it deals with life with marriage and family with law and work with leisure and worship and how we tap into the resources of God to meet the demands of life in all these areas all have to be governed by the authority of scripture and it alone is to be authoritative break the law and you get hurt try and break the law of gravity by jumping off the top of some tower block and all that will happen is that you get hurt this is the same with God's law his moral laws and spiritual laws why is there a disintegration at work in our society today it's because we have abandoned the authority of God and his word why are folk uncertain about faith why do they have doubts because they will not submit to the authority of

God and his word what is our authority is it the self church traditions and institutions or the word of God let me finish with three quotations and a comment about the first the French philosopher Voltaire wrote another century and there will not be a Bible on earth and I like God's irony within a few years of Voltaire's death his house was taken over by the French Bible Society as a distribution centre for Bibles one man who thought another century and there will not be a Bible on earth the second quotation is from

Tozer whom some of you will no doubt be familiar with he writes the Bible is not an end in itself but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God that they may enter into him that they may delight in his presence may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God himself in the core and centre of their hearts and finally a little poem by the reformer Martin Luther for feelings come and feelings go and feelings are deceiving my warrant is the word of God not else is worth believing though my heart should feel condemned for want of some sweet token there is one greater than my heart whose word cannot be broken I'll trust in God's unchanging word till soul and body sever for though all things shall pass away his word shall stand forever let's pray our father

God we thank you that in your infinite wisdom you have given us your word help us to read it to study it to reflect upon it and seek to submit to it and put it into practice in our lives day by day in Jesus name we pray Amen