



# The **Fiery** Bones

Jeremiah 20:9

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Text

Jeremiah 36:1-32

Topic

King Jehoiakim takes a knife and cuts the Word of God as it is read then throws the fragments in the fire

Title

*"Jehoiakim the Ripper"*

## Introduction

Thomas Jefferson sat in the new presidential mansion in Washington in 1803 and opened his Bible - not to study, but to cut. He scoured the text for Jesus' greatest teachings, sliced out his favorite portions, and glued them into an empty notebook. He called it "The Philosophy of Jesus." That book was lost to history.

In 1819 he started over and created a new version called "The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth," commonly referred to now as the Jefferson Bible. This volume was kept largely secret and passed among Jefferson's relatives until 1895 when it was discovered by the librarian at the Smithsonian. In 1904 it was published by Congress.

The Smithsonian described Jefferson's editing process like this:

Jefferson created his own Gospel by taking a sharp instrument, perhaps a penknife, to existing copies of the New Testament and pasting up his own account of Christ's [life and teachings]...

Maybe Jefferson got the idea to cut portions out of the Bible from King Jehoiakim of Judah. Jeremiah dictated a scroll which was read aloud to Jehoiakim. When every three or four columns had been read to him, "the king cut it with the scribe's knife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the scroll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth."

It's never a good idea to cut God's Word. Instead we ought to want it to 'cut' us - to cut us to the heart. It is, after all, "living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

There's not much danger of us literally cutting the Bible with our Kershaw's and pasting together our own version. But we can emphasize certain things over others; and we can ignore certain things even though they are right there in God's Word. In that way we become editors of God's Word, do we not?

I'll organize my thoughts around two desires: #1 May It Always Be That God's Word Cuts You To The Heart, and #2 May It Never Be That You Cut God's Word From Your Heart.

## #1 May It Always Be That God's Word Cuts You To The Heart

(v1-19)

The tone of this chapter is captured in words from verse three where God said, "it may be... that everyone will turn from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin." God is always reaching out to save or restore you.

Which do you need today - saving or restoring? Whichever it is listen carefully because God is here to perform it with power.

Jeremiah 36:1 Now it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, that this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying:

Jeremiah 36:2 "Take a scroll of a book and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel, against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah even to this day.

Jeremiah 36:3 It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the adversities which I purpose to bring upon them, that everyone may turn from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin."

Up to now Jeremiah had only spoken the prophecies in the hearing of the people. Now he would commit them to parchment in order to reach a wider audience.

When the printing press was invented the first thing ever printed was a Bible. Today we have so many means to communicate the Word of God; we should use all of them to the glory of God.

Jeremiah 36:4 Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah; and Baruch wrote on a scroll of a book, at the instruction of Jeremiah, all the words of the LORD which He had spoken to him.

We've seen that Jeremiah did have a few friends over the course of his ministry: Ahikam (26:24), Gedaliah (Ahikam's son, 39:14) and Ebed-Melech (38:7-13; 39:15-18). Jeremiah's closest companion was a faithful secretary, Baruch, who wrote down Jeremiah's words as the prophet dictated them.

Jeremiah 36:5 And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, "I am confined, I cannot go into the house of the LORD.

Jeremiah 36:6 You go, therefore, and read from the scroll which you have written at my instruction, the words of the LORD, in the hearing of the people in the LORD's house on the day of fasting. And you shall also read them in the hearing of all Judah who come from their cities.

Jeremiah 36:7 It may be that they will present their supplication before the LORD, and everyone will turn from his evil way. For great is the anger and the fury that the LORD has pronounced against this people."

We don't know why Jeremiah was "confined" and unable to go into the Temple. Baruch must have been surprised that he would read aloud what he had been writing.

Don't be surprised when God wants you to share aloud what you've been reading in His Word.

We are sinners in the hearing of an atoning God.

God had told Jeremiah the point of the scroll was to lead men to repentance. Jeremiah told Baruch the same thing. We need reminding that God is for us, not against us. His Word convicts in order to convert. We are sinners in the hearing of an atoning God.

Jeremiah 36:8 And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading from the book the words of the LORD in the LORD's house.

Verse eight jumps ahead to the result. The details of the reading are in the rest of the chapter. Why tell us he did it before it happened?

I think it's a way of emphasizing that with God's calling or commanding comes His enabling. God wasn't telling Baruch to do something that He wouldn't equip him to accomplish. We can be certain that God enables us to obey Him.

Jeremiah 36:9 Now it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, in the ninth month, that they proclaimed a fast before the LORD to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people who came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem.

There was only one mandatory day of fasting under Jewish law and that was the annual Day of Atonement. Fasts would sometimes be announced for certain special occasions. In this case biblical historians think the occasion was the defeat of Egypt by Babylon and the advance of the Babylonian armies against Jerusalem. The crisis was a good opportunity to call for repentance.

Jeremiah 36:10 Then Baruch read from the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the upper court at the entry of the New Gate of the LORD's house, in the hearing of all the people.

Jeremiah 36:11 When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, heard all the words of the LORD from the book,

Jeremiah 36:12 he then went down to the king's house, into the scribe's chamber; and there all the princes were sitting - Elishama the scribe, Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, Elnathan the son of Achbor, Gemariah the son of Shaphan, Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes.

Jeremiah 36:13 Then Michaiah declared to them all the words that he had heard when Baruch read the book in the hearing of the people.

Jeremiah 36:14 Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cush, to Baruch, saying, "Take in your hand the scroll from which you have read in the hearing of the people, and come." So Baruch the son of Neriah took the scroll in his hand and came to them.

Jeremiah 36:15 And they said to him, "Sit down now, and read it in our hearing." So Baruch read it in their hearing.

Scholars debate over the exact content of this scroll - whether it was everything Jeremiah had said up to this point or just a portion. Either way it was a lot to read in one sitting.

Just as he finished reading it publicly Baruch was invited to give another private reading to a group of nobles. It's just like God to expand your ministry. You're never quite done when it comes to spreading His Word. Expect new doors to open.

Jeremiah 36:16 Now it happened, when they had heard all the words, that they looked in fear from one to another, and said to Baruch, "We will surely tell the king of all these words."

Jeremiah 36:17 And they asked Baruch, saying, "Tell us now, how did you write all these words - at his instruction?"

Jeremiah 36:18 So Baruch answered them, "He proclaimed with his mouth all these words to me, and I wrote them with ink in the book."

They first resolved that these words really were from God through Jeremiah and not just Baruch's recollections or opinions. We would compare them, in one sense, to the Bereans of the New Testament who wanted to be sure what the apostle Paul was teaching lined up with the inspired Word of God.

Jeremiah 36:19 Then the princes said to Baruch, "Go and hide, you and Jeremiah; and let no one know where you are."

Jehoiakim was not very sympathetic to prophets. He had sent men to extradite a prophet named Uriah from Egypt in order to execute him. The princes acted shrewdly to protect Jeremiah and Baruch.

We're not told of any reaction from the general population to the reading of God's Word, and in a minute we will see that Jehoiakim's reaction is to destroy the scroll. The princes at least acted on the Word by bringing it to the king and a couple of them will object to his cutting and burning it.

The question for us is, "How is God's Word affecting me?" Every time I encounter the Word God wants to show me something; He wants to deal with something; He wants to teach me or reprove me or correct me or instruct me in righteousness.

In the New Testament James warns, however, that we can look into God's Word and walk away not having had an encounter with Him that accomplishes any of those things.

There are probably as many reasons why we render God's Word ineffective as there are people; that's not the point. The point is for us to return to, or remain in, a state of expectation in our relationship with God.

Every time I encounter the Word God wants to show me something; He wants to deal with something; He wants to teach me or reprove me or correct me or instruct me in righteousness.

I can't say exactly how, but I can say that God wants to show... to deal... to teach, reprove, correct and instruct in

righteousness all the time. We tend to concentrate on His teaching us, and our learning about Him, from a mostly academic model. That's part of what God wants to do but there's a whole lot more.

I've been quoting from Second Timothy 3:16 which reads, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..."



As a spiritual exercise, take at least one of those things and ask The Lord what He is saying to you **today**. What doctrine are you seeing more clearly? How are you being reproved or corrected? What is He suggesting so that you are pursuing a more righteous lifestyle?

Since the Word is alive and cutting to our hearts to do those things - **we should always expect them to be happening.**

#2 May It Never Be  
That You Cut God's Word From Your Heart  
(v20-32)

Jehoiakim was a jerk. See if you agree.

Jeremiah 36:20 And they went to the king, into the court; but they stored the scroll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the hearing of the king.

Jeremiah 36:21 So the king sent Jehudi to bring the scroll, and he took it from Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the hearing of the king and in the hearing of all the princes who stood beside the king.

Jeremiah 36:22 Now the king was sitting in the winter house in the ninth month, with a fire burning on the hearth before him.

Jeremiah 36:23 And it happened, when Jehudi had read three or four columns, that the king cut it with the scribe's knife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the scroll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.

God's Word exposed Jehoiakim as someone who put himself above the Word of God, aloof from it.

Jeremiah 36:24 Yet they were not afraid, nor did they tear their garments, the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words.

The fear of The Lord, as evidenced by the tearing of their outward garments, ought to have been their reaction. Instead they heard the Word with contempt. Have you ever thought, "Wow! That's just what my friend or family member needed to hear! For sure they'll get saved today." Only to watch them walk away seemingly unaffected? It's your own mini-Jeremiah moment.

Jeremiah 36:25 Nevertheless Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah implored the king not to burn the scroll; but he would not listen to them.

Sometimes the most powerful testimony you can give is to show how God restores His fallen saints. We never sin so that grace can abound; but when we sin, grace does abound.

This was pretty bold on the part of these guys given the demeanor of Jehoiakim. He was a prophet-killer. Kudos to them for taking a stand. God's Word was working on hearts, as it always does, only, sadly, sometimes it reveals the hardness of hearts.

Jeremiah 36:26 And the king commanded Jerahmeel the king's son, Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to seize Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet, but the LORD hid them.

Century after century the devil encourages wicked men and women to kill the messengers of God. It never stops the Word from spreading; in fact, it usually multiplies it.

In our cases, at least in this country, no one is trying to kill you. Not yet, anyway. They will try to stop you some other way - usually by finding fault, either real or imagined, with your testimony for Jesus. Even if there is fault it doesn't nullify the truth of God's Word. Keep giving it out. If you fail, ask for and receive God's forgiveness. Sometimes the most powerful testimony you can give is to show how God restores His fallen saints. We never sin so that grace can abound; but when we sin, grace does abound.

Jeremiah 36:27 Now after the king had burned the scroll with the words which Baruch had written at the instruction of Jeremiah, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying:

Jeremiah 36:28 "Take yet another scroll, and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll which Jehoiakim the king of Judah has burned.

Jeremiah 36:29 And you shall say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, 'Thus says the LORD: "You have burned this scroll, saying, 'Why have you written in it that the king of Babylon will certainly come and destroy this land, and cause man and beast to cease from here?' "

Jeremiah 36:30 Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: "He shall have no one to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat of the day and the frost of the night.

Jeremiah 36:31 I will punish him, his family, and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring on them, on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and on the men of Judah all the doom that I have pronounced against them; but they did not heed." ' "

Jeremiah 36:32 Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote on it at the instruction of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire. And besides, there were added to them many similar words.

You can't keep God's man down. They rewrote the scroll and even added to it - including prophecies unique to Jehoiakim.

People have been editing God's Word ever since Eve misquoted The Lord in the Garden of Eden and Satan gave his own interpretation. The easy target today is the person we would label a religious "liberal," who cuts from the Bible events like miracles and teachings like the virgin birth of Jesus. Or the cults who both add to and subtract from God's Word.

The real question for us is, "Do **we** ever edit God's Word?" Christians sometimes *do* edit God's Word in their own lives. I'm hesitant to give examples, although I must, because I don't want to single-out any one thing in particular, but rather the tendency we all have to edit.

Let's take an easy one to start - one that doesn't affect you since you are here. A lot of professing Christians are simply not involved in regular fellowship in a local congregation.

There are specific verses that command them to be in fellowship; the whole tone of the New Testament assumes participation in a local church; all the illustrations of the church presume you are a part of a greater whole, like stones in a building or the members of a human body.

Yet they insist it isn't necessary for them to be involved. Whatever their reasoning, they have edited the Bible to fit their own preferences, their own ideas. They may as well have taken a knife to the text.

Another example would be giving. I use it not as a solicitation for funds but because it is universal in its scope and because there is solid quantifiable research about giving habits among Christians.

The New Testament encourages believers to invest in the kingdom of God by giving of their earnings to the work of the church. Giving is to be regular and cheerful but also generous and sacrificial.

That just isn't happening - not in America, anyway. According to one study, called *Passing the Plate*, "more than one out of four American Protestants give away no money at all - not even a token \$5 per year... Thirty-six percent [of Evangelicals] report that they give away less than two percent of their income. Only about twenty-seven percent tithe."

For sure the twenty-seven percent who give nothing and the thirty-six percent who give very little are editing God's Word - cutting away huge portions of it to their own detriment.

**Anything** we know we ought to do or practice but choose to overlook for any reason is an editing of God's Word. We don't need a scribe's knife to cut away the passage.

If you're a movie fan you probably like to view extended versions of your favorite films or what are called Directors Cuts. They portray the film as the director originally intended but was forced

by the studio to shorten by cutting certain seemingly unnecessary scenes.

God is working on the extended version of our lives; He has His own Directors Cut in mind. We need to put our knives down; quit cutting away the Word, and allow God's Word the freedom to cut us to the heart in order that God may complete the work He has begun in us of making us more like His Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ.