

Lesson 5:

Part Two

Prophecies Related To The Reign Of Jehoiakim

Readings: Jer 35; 36

Reading 1: Jeremiah 35 - The Model Of Loyalty Exhibited By The Rechabites

Background

1. The Rechabites were a branch of the Kenite family (1 Chron 2:55). The Kenites were first mentioned as descendants of Abraham (Gen 15:18-19).
2. They had shown kindness to the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt (1 Sam 15:6) and lived among them (Jud 1:16).
3. They had temporarily suspended their tent-dwelling existence to escape the invading armies of Nebuchadnezzar (11; cf. 2 Ki 24:1-2).

The faithfulness of the Rechabites to the principles of their ancestral father (1-11)

1. God's instruction (1-5).
2. The response of the family to Jeremiah's invitation (6-7). They did not drink wine on account of a command given by their forefather, Jonadab. He wanted them to maintain a nomadic lifestyle so as to avoid the potential corrupting influence of a settled existence.
3. They truthfully claimed that all "have dwelt in tents and have obeyed and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us" (8-11); cf. 14.

The Application- a Contrast drawn Between Faithfulness on the one hand and Disloyalty on the other (12-16)

Punishment to Come Upon Judah and blessing Upon the Rechabites (17-19)

Reading 2: Jeremiah 36 - Attitudes Towards God's Word During Jehoiakim's Reign

This passage is of importance because it shows how Jeremiah's prophecies were committed to writing.

The Prophecies of Jeremiah Written on a Scroll (1-8)

1. The command and its timing (1-3).
 - Although Jeremiah was instructed in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's kingship, the public reading of the scroll was not carried out till the ninth month of his fifth.
 - This was a significant and busy year. It was when the prophecy of the seventy-year domination was announced and in which the decisive battle of Carchemish occurred (46:2).
 - It was the beginning of the fulfilment of the threats Jeremiah had been issuing over the last twenty-three years (25:3). Given the lateness in the year, likely the invading armies were extremely near and perhaps their proximity might have softened the hearts of the people and caused them to be more receptive.
2. Jeremiah's circumstances and the book written (4-5).
 - "I [am] confined" or "Restrained" (ASV marg.) qualified by the phrase "I cannot go into the house of the LORD" (5). Possible explanations are: 1) Imprisonment, as in 33:1 and 39:15 but evidently does not have this meaning here. Verse 19 shows that Jeremiah could hide himself from the authorities. 2) Unspecified ceremonial uncleanness but the condition persisted too long for that. 3) Most plausibly he was banned by Jehoiakim under threat of death (ch. 26).

The reading of the Book to the People in the Temple (9-10)

This was not an ordinary fast but one proclaimed on account of an extraordinary situation: Either 1) As some argue a drought though contextually unlikely (14:1) or 2) the impending calamity about to befall the nation.

The Book read to the princes in a chamber of the king's house (11-19)

1. Michaiah's report of Baruch's words at the palace (11-16).

- His motivation is unclear. Perhaps out of ill-will to Baruch and Jeremiah but this is improbable since both were urged to hide before Jehoiakim was notified. Alternatively, he was affected by the prophecies and desired that steps were taken so as to avert the impending calamity.

- As to the named individuals: The name Elishama appears elsewhere (41:1; 2 Ki 25:25). Elnathan the son of Achbor is mentioned also in 26-22. Shaphan, Gemariah's father, had been a scribe (or secretary) in Josiah's government (2 Kings 22:3, 8) and is called "Shaphan the scribe" in v. 10. He was probably a brother of Ahikam, Jeremiah's protector (26:24). The others are unknown apart from this incident.

2. Baruch's attestation to the authorship of the book (17-18).

3. A warning sent by Baruch (19).

The reading of the Book to Jehoiakim (20-26)

Notice that this destruction of the prophecy was not provoked by an outburst of rage but rather a methodical and controlled action. Contrast Jehoiakim's reaction to that of his father (2 Ki 22:11).

The Punishment to Come Upon Jehoiakim (27-32)

1. Jeremiah informed of the king's actions and instructed to re-write the former prophecies (27-28).

2. Doom pronounced against Jehoiakim, his family, his servants, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (29-31).

- For an earlier prediction of Jehoiakim's fate see 22:18-19.

- Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim's son, reigned only three months and was replaced by Zedekiah, a brother of Jehoiakim (2 Ki 24:6, 8, 17).

3. The prophecies dictated to Baruch (32).