

# Dr. Gary Yates, Jeremiah, Lecture 20, Jeremiah 26-36, Jehoiakim, The Paradigm of Disobedience

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This is Dr. Gary Yates in his teaching on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 20, Jehoiakim the Paradigm of Disobedience in Jeremiah 26-36.

The title of our lesson is The Unbelief of Jehoiakim.

We're going to be looking specifically in this segment at two chapters, Jeremiah 26 and 36. In our previous lesson, we looked at the second section of the book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah chapters 26 to 45. We saw that in contrast to the messages of judgment in the first half of the book, this section focuses on the life of Jeremiah and is more than just a biography, a theological statement about how the people of Judah, the kings, the leadership, how they responded to the word of God.

We saw that the recurring problem is that throughout this section, it tells us that the people, the kings, the leaders, and the military officials did not listen to or obey the word of God. We also saw that there is a Jehoiakim frame around chapters 26 to 45 that I believe helps us have an interpretive grid to understand this section of the book.

There is a Jehoiakim episode or message in chapter 26 and chapter 35. And so we have one panel of this part of the book that goes from chapters 26 to 35. There's another Jehoiakim episode in chapter 36 and then a message from the time of Jehoiakim in chapter 45.

That provides the second panel, chapters 36 to 45. We saw that those sections parallel one another. They're designed to demonstrate that Jehoiakim's time was, in many ways, a watershed moment.

In the chapters that we're looking at today, we see how the unbelief of Jehoiakim really sets in stone and makes God's judgment of Judah something that's not just a possibility but something that God begins to warn is irrevocable and is going to happen because the king has rejected God's word. We really see two stories of unbelief, rejection, and the king's ultimate antagonism to the message of prophets like Jeremiah. Now, it's interesting that these two sections, chapters 26 and 35, introduced the two panels, or chapters 26 and 36, introduced the two panels in the second half of the book because, in many ways, these two stories very closely parallel one another.

There are four specific parallels that I'd like to note, and then we're going to get into the specifics of each chapter. The first parallel is the time of the two narratives that we've already mentioned. They are both from the time of Jehoiakim.

Chapter 26 says that the first episode occurred early in the reign of Jehoiakim, who reigned from 609 to 597. So sometime early in his reign, Jeremiah preaches this temple sermon that is ultimately going to demonstrate the unbelief of the king. And then chapter 36, verse one says that the time when God commanded Jeremiah to put his messages in a scroll and to read them in the temple, that's chapter 36, verse one.

The second parallel is that the setting of the stories, both of them, takes place at the Jerusalem temple. The first passage is the story about Jeremiah's temple sermon. Again, I think this is a second version of what we read about in chapter seven.

The sermon in chapter seven focuses more on the message of Jeremiah. He's warning them not to put their trust in the temple of the Lord and that if they do not amend and change their ways, then God is going to do the same thing to Jerusalem and to his house there that he did to Shiloh back during the time of the judges. The second story, God commands Jeremiah to have Baruch go to the temple and read the scroll there.

So, both of these passages are going to take place in the temple. And I believe that that particular setting adds weight and seriousness to both of these stories. The temple was the place where the people of Judah met with God.

It was God's dwelling place. And so, when the prophet comes there with a warning of judgment, it's something that needs to be taken seriously because this is God's dwelling place.

And if you're going to live in God's presence, if you're going to dwell in God's presence and enjoy his blessings and benefits as part of the covenant, then you need to meet the responsibilities that God places before those who come into his presence. Thirdly, both of these are stories, and this fits with the overall message of chapters 26 to 45; both of these are stories that focus on response to the prophetic word. In chapter 26, Jeremiah delivers an oral sermon.

And there are going to be various groups of people who have their opinion and their response. And really, in a sense, there's a debate about the message of Jeremiah, but it's going to involve the prophets and the priests as religious officials. It's going to involve the people as they're taking different sides in this story.

It's also going to involve the civil leaders, the elders, and the officials and their involvement in this as well. In the second account in chapter 36, Jeremiah's scroll is read at the temple by Baruch. And again, various people are going to respond to this.

Baruch reads this in the presence of all the people. So, what's their response going to be? There is a group of officials and scribes who hear that message and take it seriously. And so, there's their interaction and their feedback about the message.

Finally, the message is taken to the king, his officials, and his servants, and we have their response to the message as well. The fourth and final parallel between these two stories is that they basically have the same structure.

They have the warnings of the prophets about judgment. Jeremiah is a prophet of judgment because the people have not met. They have not lived up to their covenant responsibilities. The prophet is warning them of the judgment that's coming.

There's a response of rejection to that message in some way, in some aspect. And then, as a result of that, there's an announcement of judgment. So, I think it's very appropriate that these two passages and these two narratives introduce the two primary blocks in the book in the second half of Jeremiah because they're very similar to each other.

Jehoiakim is the featured individual here. And Lewis Stuhlman makes this comment about Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim becomes, in the book of Jeremiah, a prototype of infidelity and disobedience, who is afforded every opportunity to hear, but instead chooses to disobey.

And so think of the fact that this is the heritage. This is the legacy that Jehoiakim leaves behind. I think about that as we read the stories of the kings as well, in the books of Samuel and Kings.

It's going to tell us that the king either did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord or the king did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. In the Northern kingdom of Israel, there are zero kings that ultimately the narrator assesses by, he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. Even in the line of David, it is a minority of those kings who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.

So, Kings is a historical account. It's also a theological account, but it reminds us of their political successes, their military accomplishments, what the economy of the nation was at the time of their rule and reign, the length or the duration of their reign, the respect that the people had for them or the disrespect that the people had. That's ultimately not the issue.

The Jehoiakim and, in fact, the four kings that come at the end of Judah's line during Jeremiah's ministry, the assessment of all of them is that they did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord. We see that especially with Jehoiakim. He is incredibly antagonistic and hostile to the message.

There is never a time when Jeremiah and Jehoiakim meet face to face. And anytime we see Jehoiakim reacting or responding to the word of God in the book of Jeremiah, it's with anger, it's with hostility, and it's even with violence toward the prophetic messengers. So, let's go to the story in chapter 26.

Again, we get a very brief summary of the message. And if this is not the same message as the temple sermon, it's not the same occasion, then it's a very similar message that Jeremiah may have preached more than one time. But here's what Jeremiah said.

The Lord sends him to the temple to preach about God's judgment. The Lord says, it may be that they will listen and everyone will turn from his evil ways. And I may relent of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of their evil deeds.

All right. A couple of things that are going on here. Remember, in the Jehoiakim sections 26 to 35 and then 36 to 45, at the beginning of these two panels, there's the opportunity that in this stage of Jeremiah's ministry, that the people could be spared from judgment.

If they will shub, our key theological word in the book, if they will turn around, if they will turn from their evil ways, then there is always the possibility that God will change his mind and God will not send the disaster against them. There's another wordplay in all of this that I think is important. The prophets are going to confront the people with the fact that they are doing evil.

The Hebrew word is ra'ah or ra. So, the people are doing evil. And as a result of that, God is intending to bring calamity or disaster, which is also the word ra'ah or ra.

So, the Lord is going to give them a punishment that fits the crime. They are doing ra'ah. So, God is preparing to send ra'ah, calamity or disaster against them.

But if they will have the right response, then the Lord will not send the judgment and the disaster that he's planned. These are not things that are fixed in stone. These are not things that, at this point, are irrevocably going to happen.

If there's a right response to God, then there's the chance that the Lord may relent and not send the judgment. But what we're going to see in both of these panels in 26 to 35 is that opportunity is presented at the beginning of the panel. But then at the end of the first panel, chapter 35, there's a national judgment.

They are not going to take advantage of the opportunity that the Lord is going to give them. Chapter 36, ulai, perhaps, maybe they will respond. I will relent.

Maybe they will turn and do what God asks of them. But at the end of this section in chapter 44, we have the rebellion of the refugees who are living down in Egypt. We will not listen to the Lord.

We will not obey. We're going to continue to offer our sacrifices and pay our vows to the false gods. As a result of that, God is going to send national judgment.

Throughout this section, we are reminded just of the urgency of God's word. The book of Jeremiah is a story about what happens to the word of God as it's proclaimed by Jeremiah. The power of the word of God to bring judgment when people reject it, the power of the word of God to create new life out of a desperate situation.

But listening to God's word is a matter of life and death. In the first section of the book, we have the closing down of the hope and the opportunity for Judah to repent and be spared from judgment. We see the same thing in the second half here.

So, God tells Jeremiah to go to the temple and proclaim this message. Here's what he's to say in verse four: you shall say to them, thus says the Lord, if you will listen to me, walk in my law that I have set before you and listen to the words of my servants, the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not listened, then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth. That effectively summarizes exactly what we see in chapter seven.

The issue here is what's the response? In this passage, some people have actually explained this almost as a formal courtroom, a legal proceeding that is designed to resolve the issue of Jeremiah's validity as a prophet. So, how's this going to turn out? There's going to be various people that weigh in on this. Is Jeremiah recognized as a true, valid prophet of the Lord? That really is the tension that's raised by this narrative.

And the debate over this begins in verse seven. So, listen to the people that weigh in. First of all, it says, the priest and the prophets and all of the people, all right, the religious officials and the people are going to be the first ones that weigh in on this.

And their response to this is that after Jeremiah finishes saying the priest, the people, and the prophets are going to say, you shall die. So, the first legal verdict that's given here is that Jeremiah deserves to die. The prophet has announced the coming doom and destruction of Jerusalem.

Their response to that is we don't need to respond to the message. We need to put to death the messenger. I think there's a very strong possibility here that they believe that Jeremiah is to be put to death as a false prophet, as the book of Deuteronomy lays out because he has dared to speak against the house of the Lord.

Their theology is so built around the idea that God is going to bless his people. God is going to protect them no matter what. God has made a commitment to the house of David.

God has made a commitment to his people to protect them and watch over them. They can't even imagine that a true prophet would speak judgment, and that's the question they raise.

Verse 9, Why have you prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant. And all of the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the Lord. All right. Well, I mean, one answer to this could be, well, we can go back to our past traditions, read the story of Shiloh and what God did there, but they're so committed to their idea that God is going to bless them no matter what, that even that example has not gotten through to them.

So, the first verdict that's given here is that Jeremiah deserves to die. Okay. Now, the second response, we have some civil officials who are going to respond to this, and the people are going to get involved in this as well.

Verse 10 says, When the officials of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house to the house of the Lord and took their seat in the entry of the new gate of the house of the Lord. So, it does in some way here seem like really almost a formal legal proceeding. Let's resolve this issue about whether we should listen to this message or not.

Now here's again, Then the priest and the prophets said to the officials and to the people, this man deserves a sentence of death because he has prophesied against this city. All right. So again, it's the prophets and the priests, it's the religious leaders that are causing the most objection to Jeremiah's message.

But notice now that they are saying this to the officials and the people. So, it's going to be, in a sense here; I think, the officials and the people that are ultimately going to resolve this. As part of the proceeding, Jeremiah is going to speak on his own behalf finally in verse 12.

Basically, what Jeremiah is going to say here is that the Lord has sent me to preach this message. You want to put to death the messenger, but remember this message

is coming from the Lord, and it's something that you need to take seriously. So, he's going to, he's going to preach his message all over again.

Verse 13, Now, therefore, mend your ways and your deeds and obey the voice of the Lord, your God, and the Lord will relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against you. Again, another opportunity was placed in front of them. If they will relent or if they will repent, then God will relent.

But as for me, behold, I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood upon yourself. All right.

If we're going to look at this as a formal legal proceeding, Jeremiah says, if you pass a death sentence on me, you are going to be guilty before God of putting his messenger to death and of putting to death innocent blood. You're going to be held accountable for that because I've simply told you what the Lord is going to say, what the Lord has told me to say. All right.

So now, in verses 16 to 19, the third cycle of this response to Jeremiah and his message, notice who's going to talk here. Then all of the officials and all of the people. So now the people are over on this side with the officials said to the priest and the prophets.

All right, here's their verdict. This man does not deserve the sentence of death,, for he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord, our God. And so they validate. Remember, this is 609 BC, somewhere around that.

They validate Jeremiah as a true prophet of God. And notice who it is that does this. The officials who later on, as we get near the time of the fall and the demise of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem, the officials of the king are going to be the ones that oppose Jeremiah.

But at this point, the officials say, and the people agree with them, this man is a true prophet of God. All right. What evidence do they present? They were persuaded by the words that Jeremiah said here.

They're convinced by the message. Now, they go back to a historical precedent. And remember, Jeremiah has already done this.

If you think that Jerusalem is not going to be destroyed, let's go back to the historical precedent of Shiloh. What did the Lord do to his house there? Well, the reason that the officials and the people ultimately are convinced that Jeremiah is a true prophet is again, they go back to historical precedent. The historical precedent for them is the ministry and the message of the prophet Micah and the response that King Hezekiah

had to the preaching of that particular preacher of judgment the century before Jeremiah.

All right. We've talked about this in one of the previous sessions as we were talking about the response to the prophetic word, but listen to what the elders say. Micah of Moresheth, this is verse 18, prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, the King of Judah and said to all the people of Judah, thus says the Lord of hosts, Zion shall be plowed as a field, Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins and the mountain of the house a wooded height.

We have here an interesting example of intertextuality between the prophetic books. There is a citation here and a quotation from Micah 3:12. And Micah said that Jerusalem was going to be destroyed. In other words, a century ago, a prophet came and was giving us exactly the same warning as the prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah stands in the tradition of the prophets of judgment. When these prophets of judgment come along and speak a word to us, we do well to consider what they say. The response that Hezekiah had should be a lesson to us.

They say in verse 19, did Hezekiah, the King of Judah, and all of Judah, put him to death? And the answer is no. It says, did he not fear the Lord and entreat the favor of the Lord? And did not the Lord relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against them? All right. When this prophet of judgment came along and warned the people of the judgment that was coming, Hezekiah repented, the people sought God, and there was a turning to God that led to the Lord not sending the judgment that he had threatened.

This goes back to the theology of Jeremiah chapter 18. Whenever a prophet announces something good or something disastrous that's about to come upon people, the Lord doesn't send that just to announce to them what he's going to do, no matter what. The Lord is announcing his intentions.

And even if there is not an explicit condition attached to that, that condition is usually implicit. Unless the Lord says, look, I'm going to do this. I'm not going to turn.

I've sworn an oath. I'm not going to change. The Lord is going to give people the possibility and the opportunity to respond to his message.

And if they do, then the Lord will relent. So that's what happened in the days of Hezekiah. He responded to God's message in the right way.

And the Lord relented. He changed his mind and did not send the judgment. The elders, the officials and the people are saying, we at least need to take Jeremiah's words seriously.



And to put him to death would ultimately bring disaster upon ourselves. Okay. So, the end of this debate, the end of this really, in a sense, a formal legal proceeding at the temple that has evaluated and assessed the credibility of Jeremiah and the validity of his ministry and his message, the verdict officially of both the civil leaders of Judah and the people of Judah, this man is a true prophet of God.

We need to take his warnings seriously. And so, the conclusion to all of this, we are about to bring great disaster upon ourselves if we put Jeremiah to death. Jeremiah is validated as a prophet.

Now, I think it's very interesting that in a section of the book of Jeremiah dealing with how the people did not listen to the word of God, a recurring type scene takes place where the prophet delivers a message, and that message is rejected. It's very interesting that the first story there validates Jeremiah's message. And the people themselves, along with the leaders, confirm that Jeremiah is a true prophet of God.

What this does is make them even more culpable and guilty for the fact that they don't listen to what Jeremiah says. I mean, there's so much cognitive dissonance going on here because, first of all, they said to Jeremiah, how can you preach judgment against God's house? Jeremiah says, well, think about your own history. Go back to Shiloh.

But there's also the fact that these people have recognized Jeremiah as a true prophet of God. If that's the case, where is the revival, the reform, the renewal that's going to take place? This scene, at the very beginning of chapters 26 to 45, makes the people and the leaders of Judah all the more guilty for the fact that they didn't listen to Jeremiah's message and didn't respond in a positive way. All right.

Now you're saying, well, okay, I thought this was a section of the book that was talking about the rejection of Jeremiah's message. Everything that you've read so far seems to be, there's an introductory story here about the acceptance of Jeremiah's message. But as we've worked our way through the narrative and all of the people that have responded to this, there's one person that's missing.

We've seen the response of the prophets and the priests. We've seen the people and their response, and they seem to be somewhat fickle because they start out on the side of the priest and the prophets, who are angry and say that Jeremiah needs to die. They come over to the side of the officials and the elders who say this man is not deserving of death.

But in the midst of all of this and the different audiences and the different groups that are responding, the one person who is not involved here for whatever reason is Jehoiakim, the king. All right. Jehoiakim, what's his verdict on the message of

Jeremiah? Well, he's not involved in this scene, but what the narrator does is really a very effective thing here is that he puts an appendix to the story.

He begins by telling us there was a courtroom scene at the temple that officially validated Jeremiah as a prophet. So, the nation is going to listen to him, right? And the answer to that is no because the king himself is absolutely hostile and absolutely unwilling to hear anything that these prophets of judgment have to say. And so, what happens in verses 20 to 24 is that we have an appended story of another episode that deals with King Jehoiakim's response to the prophetic word of a prophet by the name of Uriah.

All right. Uriah may not be a name that we're familiar with. He is not a prophet whose words are included in the canon of scripture, but like Jeremiah, and he was preaching a message for the people of Judah that was exactly the same as that of Jeremiah.

He's saying the exact same thing to them. You need to repent. You need to change.

God is preparing to send judgment. And Jehoiakim, when he hears that message, becomes angry. And the royal response is such that Uriah knows that the king is trying to put him to death, and he flees and he escapes to Egypt.

It's the same place that ultimately Jeremiah is going to end up. Well, Jehoiakim doesn't stop there. He doesn't say, well, we got rid of him.

We sent him off to Egypt. He actually uses his diplomatic and political connections with Egypt to send his officials down to Egypt. They take Uriah, and they bring him back.

It says in verse 23 that they took Uriah from Egypt and brought him to King Jehoiakim, who struck him down with the sword and dumped his dead body into the burial place of the common people. It doesn't even say simply that Jehoiakim is directly involved in putting the king to death. And by his response here, he demonstrates that he is the paradigmatic example of unbelief in the book of Jeremiah.

The validity of Jeremiah's message is the warnings that Jeremiah is bringing about judgment. The people in the officials in chapter 26, they don't know how all of this is going to unfold. The Babylonians haven't even come at this time, but they're saying at least we need to take seriously warnings of judgment.

We need to step aside and assess our lives and where we stand with God. And are we being faithful to the covenant? Because remember what Hezekiah did. Jehoiakim doesn't want to do any of that sort of assessment.

He acts in anger and in indignation. And so, this story that seems to begin so positively, yeah, maybe the people, maybe the nation, maybe the leaders are going to respond in a proper way. Chapter 26, cast the die.

Jehoiakim is a man who will not respond to God and who will not obey. And as a result of that, God is not going to relent from the judgment that he sends. Okay.

Remember in each of the panels 26 to 35 and 36 to 45, it begins with a possibility. Uai, perhaps the people will respond properly. God will spare the judgment, but we really don't need to get to the end of the section to find out what's going to happen.

In the very first story, the unbelief, the rejection of the word of God, and the disobedience of the king reflect what these two panels are going to demonstrate to us. God brings judgment against Judah because of their disobedience, that is reflected in the life of the king. All right.

So that's the opening to the first panel, chapter 26. When we go to the opening of the second panel and this parallel passage in chapter 36, we're going to see another pretty obvious example of just Jehoiakim's blatant hostility to the word of the Lord. Again, we're going to have a very brief summary of Jeremiah's message.

And the issue is going to be how do the people respond. God has Jeremiah dictate this message. The words of Jeremiah are the words of the Lord. The words of Baruch are the words of Jeremiah, which are the words of the Lord.

But again, there is the possibility raised at the very beginning here that maybe this message and maybe these warnings of judgment, if the people will listen, Shema, and if they will turn, shub from their evil ways, there's the possibility that God will relent and not send judgment against his people. Chapter 36, verse three says this, write these words down and announce and summarize all the messages of judgment that I've given. It may be that the house of Judah will hear of all of the ra'ah, all of the disaster, the calamity that I intend to do to them so that everyone will turn from his ra'ah, his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.

All right. When Jeremiah gets ready to send Baruch to the temple with this message and think about the courage that it's going to take for Baruch to deliver this. It's too hot a message for Jeremiah to even come out of hiding.

Baruch gets to be the messenger. But why is he doing all of this? Verse seven, it may be that their plea for mercy will come before the Lord and that everyone will turn from his ra'ah, his evil way. For great is the anger and the wrath that God has pronounced against this people.

And so that's, that's why Baruch goes to the temple. All right. A short summary of what this is all about.

It's the warnings of judgment. I think chapters one to 25 may reflect for us something of what this scroll was like. After the scroll is destroyed, it says that many similar words were added to it, but perhaps the scroll that Baruch goes to the temple to read is something very similar to what we have in chapters one to 25.

All right. Now the question becomes, just like in chapter 26, what's the response to the message? And again, we're going to have these various voices that are going to weigh in. First of all, let's think about the response of the people.

How did the people themselves respond? In verse nine, we get a couple of insights into this. In the fifth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, 605 BC is the year, all of the people in Jerusalem and all of the people who came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem proclaimed a fast before the Lord. All right.

So, Jeremiah and Baruch picked a very opportune time to bring this message. The people have already proclaimed a fast, and that's the reason they're coming to the temple in the first place. Now, Old Testament law only required the people of Israel to fast one day a year on the day of atonement as an expression of their repentance and their confession for sin.

So, this is a special fast that has perhaps been proclaimed by the leaders of Judah because they realize that they're in a time of national crisis and need God's help. All right. The significance of this is that if they are fasting and if they are praying to God, it seems like they would be especially open to responding to what the prophet has to say to them.

I think about the time in the post-exilic period when Ezra and Nehemiah are leading the people, and Ezra reads the scroll of the book of the law and they read it from early in the morning to noontime for five hours or six hours. The people stand, they listen, they're attentive to the message. But when they hear what the message has to say, they're struck to the heart; they begin to weep, they begin to cry, they mourn, and they repent.

Actually, Ezra and the leaders there have to stop the mourning and say, hey, this is a day of celebration. But there's nothing here in this fasting that indicates that the people responded in this particular way to the book of or to the message of Jeremiah. It says in verse 10, then in the hearing of all the people, Baruch read the words of Jeremiah from the scroll in the house of the Lord in the chamber of Gomorrah.

And that's the last time that the people are mentioned in this story. The word of the Lord was read in the hearing of all the people. Well, where's their response? In chapter 26, they're directly involved in Jeremiah's temple sermon.

Remember, they side with the prophets and the priests at the beginning who say that Jeremiah needs to be put to death. They come over to the side of the officials and the elders, who ultimately say Jeremiah should not be put to death. But here, we don't have anything.

And the question that, if I could go back and interview the narrator, I'd be, well, what was the response? What was the reaction? By virtue of the fact, and we're reading between the lines here a little bit, by virtue of the fact that there is no mention of the response of the people, it sort of reflects the emptiness of the fast that they had really proclaimed. I mean, they're there doing this religious observance. And supposedly, a fast was a time when you humbled yourself over sin.

Here's a prophetic message that's confronting them that they've been listening to for 20 years, and there's no response. There are a couple of other prophetic passages that talk about the emptiness of fasting without a response of obedience and commitment to do what God commands you in His Word. Isaiah chapter 58 talks about this.

And it says this, the Lord speaks to the people, and He says, they seek me daily and delight to know my ways as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God. I mean, they're doing their religious rituals. They appear to be very religious, and that's what we seem to have here.

They appear to be very sensitive to God. They've proclaimed a fast. This is a national disaster.

This is a time of crisis. We need the Lord. Okay, that's good.

But they don't really seek to know what God's will is in terms of living that out in their lives. They ask for righteous judgments. They delight in drawing near to God.

That's what they're doing here. They even ask God a question in verse 3, and I can imagine the people in Jeremiah's audience who heard the scroll and Baruch's audience here. They would have said the same thing. Why have we fasted and yet you do not see it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it? Behold, in the day of your fast, here's the problem.

You're upset about the fact that God is not recognizing your fast. Here's the issue. In the day of your fast, you seek your own pleasure, and you oppress all of your workers.

You've got this national religious observance, and you're all getting together, and you're praying, and you're fasting, and you're pretending to seek God. But as soon as the fast is over, you go back to work and disobey the law and oppress the poor and the needy. That's why God doesn't pay attention to your fast.

And I think this message would have been very appropriate to the people that were there in Baruch's audience that were hearing the scroll. Look, you've come to fast. Let's deal with the real issue here.

You need to come back to obeying God's word. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Feasting like yours this day will not make your voice be heard on high.

Is this such the fast that I choose? A day for a person to humble himself? Is that really what's going to please God? Is it to bow down his head like a reed and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast and a day acceptable to the Lord? You know, just going to the temple and praying some prayers and pretending to be humbled. Is that really what God wants? And the answer, of course, is no. Here's what the Lord says, Isaiah 58, 6. Is this not the fast that I choose? To lose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and to bring the homeless poor into your house? When you see the naked to cover him, then, if you fast in that way, will you turn back to God, take care of the needs of the, then your light shall break forth like the dawn and your healing shall come speedily.

All right? There's a similar passage to this in Zechariah 7 in the post-exilic period. They had a fast where they observed the time when Jerusalem had fallen when the temple had been destroyed. They come to the prophet. Should we continue observing these fasts? They've done that throughout the time of the exile.

Zechariah says the real issue is not whether you go through the observances of the fast or not. The real issue is, are you going to obey God? So, I think it's just, it's interesting here that in Jeremiah chapter 36, they've come to seek the Lord, to pray, to confess their sin, but yet they're not responsive to the message of the prophet. There's a second response in verses 11 to 20.

It tells us there, in verses 11 to 18, that there are officials here who hear the message and respond to it in a positive way. The first one is mentioned in verse 11, when Micaiah, the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, is mentioned. This family is involved in Jeremiah's life.

Back in chapter 26, when the prophet Uriah is put to death by Jehoiakim, it's another member of the family of Shaphan who protects Jeremiah from the same thing

happening to him. And so, Micaiah, this member of this family that is a supporter of Jeremiah, they hear that he hears the message. He takes it to other officers and scribes.

They hear it. They take the word seriously. And their response is, after Baruch sits down and reads it again, here's what it says, verse 18: when they heard all of these words, they turned to one another in fear.

And when a prophet of the Lord warns you of judgment, that's the right response: fear. And they say this message is serious. We need to take it to the king.

And so, they bring it to the king. In verse 20, the king is sitting in his comfortable palace. The fire pot is burning to keep him warm.

And it says in verse 22 that it was in the ninth month, the king was sitting in the winter house, and there was a fire burning in the pot before him. And as they read the scroll of the prophecies to him, it tells us that Jehoiakim takes a knife and, strip by strip, cuts up the scroll and throws it into the fire pot. Now, what was it that motivated this kind of response? Well, obviously, it's his anger and his hostility, but verse 24 says this, yet neither the king nor any of the servants who heard his words, who heard all of these words, was afraid.

So, you have the scribes and the officials, they hear the warnings, they fear, they fear the Lord. They reverence God's word, they take it seriously. Jehoiakim hears the word of the Lord, and he does not fear.

He commits Jeremiah's scroll to the fire and turns it into ashes. In some sense, I wonder if Jehoiakim doesn't think, all right, if this prophet wants to condemn me with a message, let's see whose word has power here. Let's see who has authority here.

Is it the prophet or is it the king? And in his royal authority and in his royal position and at the royal palace, he commits the prophet's words to the fire. Maybe even in some sort of magical sense, thinking that by destroying the message, I've destroyed the reality that it's talking about. But when we come to this confrontation between prophetic power and royal power throughout the scriptures, it's always the prophetic power of the word of God that's going to win this battle.

And Jehoiakim has all the troops, all the power, all the authority, all the officials on his side. Jeremiah has God, and he has the power of God's word. Reminds me in some sense of the confrontation between Moses and the Pharaoh back in the story of the Exodus.

In Exodus chapter 10, it says that Moses comes to the Pharaoh and he says, this is what the Lord says, let my people go. This is the message of God. This is God's royal decree.

And then a few verses later, I believe it's in verse 10 of that chapter, Pharaoh says, this is what the Pharaoh says. Get back to work, and I'm no longer going to give you straw to make your own bricks. So, we come down to this confrontation of whose word has power. Is it the word of Moses and the word of the Lord? The Pharaoh says I don't know who the Lord is.

What authority does this God of Israel, what authority does his word have over the word of the king of Egypt? Let's see whose word has power. And as you work your way through the rest of the story, the Pharaoh is going to lose really badly. The same thing here. Jehoiakim may think that he has destroyed the word of God.

He disregards it. He orders the arrest of Baruch and Jeremiah and the officials were smart enough to hide him. But the consequences of these choices are that number one, in verse 30, Jehoiakim has brought judgment on the nation.

And then there is also going to be the judgment that God brings directly on Jehoiakim himself. Lord says this: he will have no one to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat by day and to the frost by night. And I think about him sitting in the warm comfort of his palace and enjoying his royal authority, disregarding the word of God. The punishment is going to fit the crime because he's not even going to be given a decent burial.

And his body will be subjected by the heat and the frost. And there will be no one to carry on the royal line because God is getting ready to destroy the house of David. All right.

The, the, the, the, the response of the king is what brings judgment against the people of Judah. Jehoiakim believed that by destroying the scroll, he was able to put an end to the warnings of judgment. But all that God does is that he simply commissions Jeremiah to write another scroll.

And instead of the first scroll, no longer being in effect, it says that many similar words of judgment were added to this. And again, thinking about the process of the composition of Jeremiah, uh, it's likely that Jeremiah and Baruch continue to add words, to revise, to reshape, to remold and to reform the message throughout the time of Jeremiah's ministry, uh, and the remainder of his life, uh, until we see the book in the form that it's put in today. All right.

Whose word has power? Is it the king, or is it the prophet? And we are going to understand, and we definitely see from all of this, that real power is in the message



that the Lord communicates, uh, through his messenger and through his servant. Now, uh, remember that, uh, part of what is going on in the stories of the kings of Judah here is, uh, there's this hope and this expectation that the Lord might do for the people of Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day, what he did during the time of Isaiah. And, maybe the Lord is going to step in at the 11th hour and deliver Jerusalem from danger.

They, they were hoping for that. They were expecting that. And since then, that's what their theology really drove them to.

But what Jeremiah and what the story of Jeremiah is going to say is that that kind of response is not going to be forthcoming because the response of the kings in Jeremiah's day is not the same as the response that King Jehoiakim and later King Zedekiah are going to have to the prophetic word. In fact, let's go back to the story of the book of Kings and the story of Isaiah and Hezekiah. And let's think about Jehoiakim in the light of God's dealing with the kings of Israel and Judah throughout their history.

When we go back to the book of Kings, uh, it's going to tell us that there are three incomparable kings in Israel and Judah's history. The first one is that Solomon was an incomparable king. He was incomparable in his wisdom.

There was no one like him. It's also going to tell us that there was no one like Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18:5. He was incomparable in his faith. No one trusted the Lord like Hezekiah did when the city of Jerusalem was surrounded by the Assyrians.

And that's why the deliverance came in the days of Isaiah. Thirdly, it's going to tell us that there was no one like Josiah. There was no other king like him in terms of his obedience to God's law and the reforms that Josiah brought about when the scroll of God's law was found.

Josiah took God's law and God's commandments seriously in a way that was true of no other king. Okay? No other king like Solomon, no other king like Hezekiah, no other king like Josiah. Those last two kings, Hezekiah and Josiah, are behind the scenes of what we're reading in Jeremiah 26 and 36.

This is significant in light of the fact that Jehoiakim is a son of Josiah. Also significant in light of the fact that they are looking for a deliverance of Jerusalem like that that was experienced by Hezekiah. The two stories that we have just read are there to say Jehoiakim was not a Hezekiah and Jehoiakim was not a Josiah.

First of all, that's stated explicitly in chapter 26. Did not Hezekiah respond to the word of the Lord in the days of Micah? When Micah warned of the judgment, didn't Hezekiah fear the Lord, respond to the message, turn to the Lord in prayer, and ask

for God's mercy? Yes. But immediately after we read that in chapter 26, in the very same section, in the verses that follow, we have the story of King Jehoiakim putting Uriah to death.

So, the obvious idea is: Why is there not going to be a deliverance like there was in the days of Hezekiah? Look at the response of the two kings to the word of the Lord. But when we go to chapter 36, this is more implicit. We have a contrast there between Jehoiakim and Josiah. C.D. Isbell, in an article in JSOT back in 1978, laid these things out.

And I think it's a very helpful illustration here. He argues that the story in Jeremiah chapter 36 bears a very close relationship to the story of Josiah in 2 Kings 22 and 23. And when you compare these two passages, you do see some very interesting parallels.

In both stories, you have the response to a newly discovered scroll. In Josiah's case, they found the Book of the Law. I mean, they have gotten so far away from God that they even lost the commandments of Moses.

They discover that, and they bring it to the king. In Jeremiah chapter 36, the officials have heard the scroll of Jeremiah's prophecies, the message that's there, and they bring that scroll to the king. So, the issue is, how's the king going to respond? Both of these scrolls are words of judgment.

Josiah hears the covenant curses that are found in passages like Deuteronomy 28. Jehoiakim hears the warning of the covenant curses that God is about to bring on Judah through the preaching of Jeremiah. But the difference is the response of the two kings.

It tells us in 2 Kings 22 that Josiah, when he heard the warnings of judgment, tore, *kara*, his garments. It also tells us that he humbled himself, he responded and pleaded, and ultimately, Judah was spared from judgment. Josiah and his officials feared the Lord.

And then, there are all kinds of positive reforms and changes that are brought about as a result of the reading of the scroll. It tells us when they bring the scroll to Jehoiakim that he cut up the scroll, *qara*, the same word that refers to the tearing of Josiah's garments in one passage, is used to talk about the tearing up and the destruction of the scroll in another. It tells us that Josiah burned in the fire all the pagan implements that were used as part of Judah's idolatrous worship.

It tells us in the story of Josiah that he burned up the word of God and tried to do away with that. And so, I think there is a very close similarity and a very close parallel

between 2 Kings 22 and 23 and Jeremiah 36 to say, let's look at these two kings. One responded in faith, fear, and obedience.

One acted on the message. One reacted with no fear, anger, and hostility toward the word of God. And Judah, in Josiah's day, was spared from judgment.

Judah, in Jehoiakim's day, comes under a sentence of judgment because of the response of the king. Now, I want to close with an illustration from a moment in American political history. Back in the vice presidential debates in 1988, now many of you may be too young to even remember this.

It's kind of an obscure thing, but Lloyd Benson and Dan Quayle were engaged in the vice presidential debate. This was the presidential election between Michael Dukakis and George Bush Sr. At one moment in the debate, Senator Benson charged Dan Quayle with being too young and too inexperienced to serve as vice president. He wasn't qualified for the job.

Quayle responded by going back to this Democratic candidate, going back to John F. Kennedy, and pointing out that he had the same basic experience requirements, they were basically the same age, and that was his response to Senator Benson's charge. Benson, as he responded back to Quayle, said this. He said, Senator Quayle, I knew Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. You are no Jack Kennedy. And even though the Democrats lost the election that year, it was a very powerful moment in that debate.

I believe the prophet Jeremiah, and the narrator of these two amazing stories is pointing the finger in the face of Jehoiakim and saying, King Jehoiakim, you are no Hezekiah. King Jehoiakim, you are no Josiah. I knew Josiah.

Josiah was a friend of mine. You are his son. You are no Josiah.

And because of the king's response to the word of God, judgment is going to come. How we listen to God and how we respond to God is a matter of life and death. We're going to be reminded of that again and again as we study through Jeremiah chapters 26 to 45.

We see that initially and right up front here in the stories of Jehoiakim. Jeremiah 26, Jeremiah 36.

This is Dr. Gary Yates in his teaching on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 20, Jehoiakim the Paradigm of Disobedience in Jeremiah 26-36.