Fact Sheet for **"Who's in Charge?"**
Jeremiah 36
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It seems like every day we hear of new political battles being waged in Washington D.C. Who's in charge? Is it the president, the congress, the Supreme Court? Who will win? Will it be the Republicans or the Democrats, or will there be a compromise? Similar political battles occur in Salem. All the while both our country and our state careen into bottomless debt. Some laws are made, not on the basis of science or truth, but on the basis of political values. I can feel I am a different gender, but I can't feel I am a different race. Children are not considered people up until the moment of birth, even though the only differences between a child and an unborn child are age and place of residence. Who's in charge?

There is an answer to this question, and Jeremiah 36 provides a wonderful illustration for that answer. So, let's dive into that chapter and see what God has to say.

ESV 36:1 **¶ In the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ² "Take a scroll and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and Judah and all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah until today.**

Jeremiah's ministry began in the reign of Josiah (1:2, 25:1-3). God told Jeremiah to write down all the words He had spoken to him in the last 23 years. And this was one of God's purposes:

³ It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the disaster that I intend to do to them, so that underline every one may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin."

We've talked before about what God decrees versus what He takes pleasure in. Look at 2 Peter 3:9. In Jeremiah's day God did not take pleasure in their judgment, even though their judgment was certain.

Read Jeremiah 36:4-8.

Jeremiah had been banned from entering the temple, possibly because of his earlier unpopular addresses there (7:1-15; 26:1-19). Jehoiakim had no love for Jeremiah or his prophecies.

Baruch was told to wait for a fast as an occasion to read the scroll. Prior to the fall of Jerusalem there were no regular fast days. Instead they were only called in times of emergency.

⁹ ¶ In the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, in the ninth month, all the people in Jerusalem and all the people who came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem proclaimed a fast before the LORD. ¹⁰ᵃ Then, in the hearing of all the people, Baruch read the words of Jeremiah from the scroll, in the house of the LORD

The Babylonian Chronicle reports that Nebuchadnezzar was now in the area collecting "vast tribute" from the nations he conquered. This was a national emergency for Judah, and a fast was called. Baruch went to the temple and read to the people, from the scroll, all the words of

Jeremiah. A report quickly went to the officials in the royal palace about this. They sent for Baruch and asked him to bring the scroll (36:10b-14a).

Read Jeremiah 14b-19.

There are two things to note here. (1) The officials took the words of Jeremiah to heart. They believed the prophecies. (2) They also strongly suspicioned that Jehoiakim would not. So they told Baruch that he and Jeremiah should hide.

These officials stored the scroll, then they came into the king's court and reported all the words of the scroll to the him (36:20). Jehoiakim then sent for the scroll and had it read before him (36:21). Listen to how callous Jehoiakim was to God.

22 It was the ninth month, and the king was sitting in the winter house, and there was a fire burning in the fire pot before him. 23 As Jehudi read three or four columns, the king would cut them off with a knife and throw them into the fire in the fire pot, until the entire scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the fire pot. 24 Yet neither the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words was afraid, nor did they tear their garments.

The officials who came to Jehoiakim urged him not to burn the scroll, but the king paid no attention (36:25). Unlike the officials Jehoiakim did *not* take the words of the LORD through Jeremiah to heart. Instead he commanded that Jeremiah and Baruch should be seized… but it says that **"the LORD hid them"** (36:26).

The LORD had something to say about this. *Read Jeremiah 36:27-31.*

Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin, did follow him on the throne but reigned merely three months before Nebuchadnezzar deposed him (2 Kings 24:8-17). No other descendant of Jehoiakim ever took the throne.

32 ¶ Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the son of Neriah, who wrote on it at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the scroll that Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire. And many similar words were added to them.

Now here's the question. Who was in charge? Was it Jehoiakim? Who was really in charge? The LORD! By the time Jehoiakim wanted Jeremiah and Baruch seized God had already hidden them. It wasn't going to happen! Jehoiakim could burn the scroll with the words of the LORD written on it, but God would just have a second copy made. Jehoiakim could do everything in his power to escape from the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, but it was God who put an end to his line, decreed that his body would be left to the elements, and would bring against the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the disaster He had   pronounced against them. Jehoiakim wasn't going to be able to change any of this. He should have listened to God. Who was really in charge? God! It was going to be a tough time for God's people. There was no doubt about that, but God was directing the show.

Who's in charge today? The LORD is! Could there be tough times ahead for us? There very well could be. But God has made some very firm and great promises for those who are His, and we can rely on those promises. Remember always, the LORD is in charge!

As you hear the news out of Washington D.C. or Salem, don't despair. God is still on the throne!