

Judgment and Promise:

God Speaks through the Prophet Jeremiah, #12

“The God Who Has the Last Word”

Jer. 36

CEFC 4/18/21

“Revive us again!”

I think of the words of Psalm 85—a prayer for revival—

**“Restore us again, God our Savior,
and put away your displeasure toward us. . . .**

**Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?” (vv. 4-6).**

Do you pray for revival?

I hope you do,

for the church in this country is in desperate need of revival.

Don't we long for that powerful work of the Spirit

that awakens our hearts to the reality of God—

to his holiness and love,

to his judgment and his grace.

That has happened in the past.

There are wonderful Youtube videos going around

describing the amazing spiritual revival

that took place on the island of Lewis in the Scottish Hebrides in 1949.

It was an extraordinary outpouring on the Spirit
resulting in a manifest presence of God.
People who hadn't darkened the door of a church in years
came out in great throngs to hear the Word of God preached.
They were convicted of their sin and were heard weeping in the pews.
Thousands of people were converted,
transforming whole towns.
There are some amazing stories./

Whether you realize it or not,
our church, as a part of the Evangelical Free Church of America,
exists because of a revival.
The Free Church was birthed during the Scandinavian revivals of the 19th century.
The State church was spiritually dead,
and the Lord raised up what were called "Readers Groups"—
cells of people who began reading the Bible together
and discovering a new experience of living faith
in the risen Christ--
a Savior who sends the life-giving Spirit to change the human heart.
I read a book entitled *The Hammer of God* describing this revival in Sweden—
It showed the way the Word of God
acts like a hammer to shatter the pretensions of the human heart,
and opens us to God's love and mercy.
The book tells of lives that were transformed by God's grace—
old grievances forgiven, neighbors reconciled,
and congregations alive in the worship of God.

Those Swedish and Norwegian believers formed non-state churches—
that is, “free” churches,
and they brought their faith with them when they immigrated to this country.
We are a part of that ecclesiastical stream shaped by spiritual revival.

But, of course, that revivalist stream was already here in America.

The term Evangelical, which comes from the Latin *evangel*,
which is the word for “gospel,”
that term had already been used of the European Reformers of the 16th century.
Because of their focus on the gospel,
they were called evangelicals—gospel people—
before they were called Protestants.

And that Protestant evangelicalism we given a particular twist in this country
in the 18th century.

In the 1733 in Northampton, Massachusetts,
a teenager died suddenly,
which seemed to affect the young people of that town deeply.
Soon the pastor of the church there, Jonathan Edwards, noticed a movement of God
among the people as he preached on the biblical message
of the grace of God justifying sinners.
A deepened sense of sin and the need of forgiveness descending on the people.
In six months 300 of the town’s youth were born again
and became a part of the church.

This spiritual work spread, with extraordinary effect.
Edwards wrote to a fellow minister in Boston—

The church was "never was so full of Love,
nor so full of Joy, nor so full of distress
as it has lately been. ...
I never saw the Christian spirit in Love to Enemies so exemplified,
in all my Life as I have seen it within this half-year."¹

Edwards wrote of what was happening in a short book:

*A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God
in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton.*

The book was widely read in the colonies and in England,
and in the 1740s a revival spirit spread on both shores.

British historian Paul Johnson has written,

"The revival known as the Great Awakening, . . .
was the formative event in the history of the United States,
preceding the movement for independence and making it possible."²

This religious revival was the first event that crossed all regional boundaries
and provided some unifying force to this colonial conglomeration.

Evangelists preaching the gospel traveled extensively.

The preacher George Whitefield was America's first national celebrity,
known from New England to Georgia.

That spiritual Awakening,
in the view of many historians,

• ¹ [*Ahlstrom, Sydney E. \(2004\) \[1972\]. A Religious History of the American People\(2nd ed.\). Yale University Press p. 282.*](#)

²"God and the Americans," *Commentary*, 99.1 (Jan. 1995): 30.

helped to undergird the moral climate
that provided the foundation for democracy.

And then it was a Second Great Awakening in the early 19th century,
that eventually unleashed a second great American revolution--
this time against the tyranny of slavery,
as the Abolition movement was driven by religious conviction and passion.

What we call Evangelicalism today was shaped by this revival power—
with an emphasis on the word of God in the Bible
pointing us to a personal faith
and the need of the Spirit's work in the life of a believer
to open blind eyes and to give us new hearts.

The evangelical movement has been a force for reform and revival
in the life of the church,
transcending denominational boundaries,
and helping to bring gospel grace and truth around the world.

Certainly, revival movements have had a profound impact upon this country,
and today many are saying that only another powerful movement of the Spirit
can save us from a path of cultural self-destruction.

And it is a movement of the Spirit—that revival—
that must begin with God's people in the church.

And I'm sure the prophet Jeremiah would have said the same

about his nation of Judah at the dawn of the sixth century B.C.

As you read his book

you see the prominence of his descriptions of the degeneracy of his own culture--

In Jer. 5:7-9 the Lord says to Judah through Jeremiah the prophet--

"Why should I forgive you?

Your children have forsaken me and sworn by gods that are not gods.

I supplied all their needs, yet they committed adultery

and thronged to the houses of prostitutes.

They are well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing for another man's wife.

Should I not punish them for this?" declares the LORD.

"Should I not avenge myself on such a nation as this?"

5:27-29--**"Like cages full of birds, their houses are full of deceit;**

they have become rich and powerful

and have grown fat and sleek.

Their evil deeds have no limit;

they do not plead the case of the fatherless to win it,

they do not defend the rights of the poor.

Should I not punish them for this?" declares the LORD.

"Should I not avenge myself on such a nation as this?"

Here was a nation ripe for the judgement of God.

Nothing less than a large-scale spiritual revival would do--

what other hope do they have?

Jeremiah would have hoped for just such a revival,
for in his early years he had lived through one.

When he was but a young man
Jeremiah had seen what, by all appearances,
was the single greatest period of revival in the history of the nation of Israel--
a revival which took place during the reign of a king named Josiah.

Jeremiah and Josiah were born at about the same time--
during the reign of King Manasseh.
We read in 2 Kings 21 that “[King Manasseh] did evil in the eyes of the LORD,
following the detestable practices of the nations
the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. . . .
he erected altars to Baal and made an Asherah pole,
as Ahab king of Israel had done.” (vv. 2,3)

“In both courts of the temple of the LORD, he built altars to all the starry hosts.
He sacrificed his own son in the fire, practiced sorcery and divination,
and consulted mediums and spiritists.
He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger” (vv.5,6).

“Manasseh led the people astray,
so that they did more evil than the nations
the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites” (v.9).

This was the environment in which Jeremiah lived in his early years,

but after Manasseh's death, and the short reign of Amon,
a boy only eight years old was crowned king--

and as he grew, Josiah developed a heart for God,
and in the eighteenth year of his reign
we read of an extraordinary incident.

Josiah had begun a project restoring the temple for worship,
and during that work Hilkiah the high priest discovered,
hidden away, a dusty and forgotten scroll.

It was the Book of the Law--probably what we know as Deuteronomy--
the last of the five books of Moses.

Hilkiah gave this book to Shaphan the king's secretary
and Shaphan read it aloud in the presence of the king.

2Kgs. 22:11--**"When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law,
[in an act of contrition and fear] he tore his robes."**

"Great is the Lord's anger that burns against us," Josiah said,
"because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book:" (v.13).

Josiah acknowledged that what he had heard was the very Word of God,
and he humbled himself before that word,
and he responded to that word in obedience.

He gathered the people of Judah together, and he read in their hearing
all the words of this book that had been found.

"The king renewed the covenant in the presence of the LORD --" we're told,
"to follow the LORD and keep his commands, regulations and decrees

with all his heart and all his soul,” (2Kgs. 23:3).

He ordered the priest “to remove from the temple of the LORD
all the articles made for Baal and Asherah and all the starry hosts.
He burned them outside Jerusalem

He did away with the pagan priests appointed by the kings of Judah
who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and moon,
to the constellations and to all the starry hosts.

He took the Asherah pole from the temple of the LORD
to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem and burned it there.
He ground it to powder and scattered the dust

He also tore down the quarters of the male shrine prostitutes,
which were in the temple of the LORD

Furthermore, Josiah got rid of the mediums and spiritists,
the household gods, the idols and all the other detestable things
seen in Judah and Jerusalem.

This he did to fulfill the requirements of the law written in the book
that Hilkiah the priest had discovered in the temple of the LORD.”

Here was a moral and spiritual revival of unprecedented proportions
among the people of God.

Josiah the king had heard God’s word and his heart was moved
to fear God above all and to live in loving obedience to him.

But sadly, it was not to last,
for after Josiah was killed in battle
his successors quickly returned to the ways of Manasseh,
leaving Jeremiah discouraged once again about the spiritual state of his nation.

Jeremiah no doubt longed for just such a revival in his day,
and perhaps it was with that in mind that he rejoiced
when the Lord had him call his friend Baruch to his side
and had him write down on a scroll all the words the Lord had spoken to him
during the last twenty-three years of his ministry.³
Then Jeremiah sent Baruch to the temple to read
these words of the Lord to the people.

Perhaps this scroll would have the same effect as that other scroll once did--
the scroll once found in the temple that was read to King Josiah.

As the Lord himself says in v.3--

**Perhaps when the people of Judah hear about every disaster
I plan to inflict on them,
each of them will turn from his wicked way;
then I will forgive their wickedness and their sin.”**

Perhaps this word of God would lead to a revival of God’s people.

³ This “book” is referred to back in Jer. 15:13.

We read in v. 8 that

“Baruch son of Neriah did everything Jeremiah the prophet told him to do;
at the LORD's temple he read the words of the LORD from the scroll.”

Notice, the words written on that scroll were Jeremiah's words—

but they were also the word of the Lord.

And they continued to be the words of the Lord

when they were written down

and when Baruch read them to the people.

So it is with us today—

what we have before us in written form

is still that same word of the Lord.

Now, before we continue with the story,

I want to take a moment to look more closely at this man **Baruch**.

Baruch is one of those “very important unimportant people”⁴ mentioned in the Bible—

We know little about him,

but without his faithful service,

we might not have this written record of the prophet Jeremiah

that we now have in our Bibles.

We're told Baruch was the son of Neriah,

and later in this book we read of another son of Neriah, Baruch's brother,

who was a high official in the king's army (51:29),

and from 2 Chron. 34:8 we learn that Baruch's grandfather

⁴ C. Wright, 408.

had been the mayor of Jerusalem (cf. Jer. 32:8).

So Baruch evidently came from a noble family,

and he would have contacts in high places,

and Baruch might have had prospects of power and prosperity for himself,

had he so chosen.

But instead, Baruch chose to throw himself in with this renegade prophet Jeremiah.

Already Jeremiah's in jail, or at least some sort of house arrest--

that's why he can't go to the temple himself.

Jeremiah was not a popular figure among the powerful, as you might imagine--

and the fact that Baruch even consents to be seen with this man,

much less act as his secretary and messenger, says a lot about his character.

But that doesn't mean it was easy for him.

Turn over quickly in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 45 for a moment,

which provides an interesting window into the struggles of this man.

Jer. 45:1 "This is what Jeremiah the prophet told Baruch son of Neriah

in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah,

[that is, this is taking place at the same time

as the episode we're looking at this morning]

after Baruch had written on a scroll the words Jeremiah was then dictating:

"This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to you, Baruch:

You said, 'Woe to me! The LORD has added sorrow to my pain;

I am worn out with groaning and find no rest.'"

It's as if Baruch is saying,

“O no! What do you want me to do now, Jeremiah?

You want me to read this scroll in public!

Am I to ruin what little reputation I have left?

Why am I doing this—this will not turn out well!

I could be somebody if I didn't hang around with you so much, Jeremiah!”

Then we read: **‘This is what the LORD says:**

**I will overthrow what I have built and uproot what I have planted,
throughout the land.**

Should you then seek great things for yourself? Seek them not.

**For I will bring disaster on all people, declares the LORD,
but wherever you go I will let you escape with your life.’”**

Don't worry about being somebody in the eyes of this world, Baruch--

for like the Titanic, this world, in all its glory and splendor,

is but a sinking ship, about to go down.

Think about it, Baruch—

Far better to appear to fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed,
than to appear to succeed in a cause that is sure to fail.

I think of what the author of Hebrews said of Moses—

**“He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God
rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.**

**He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ
as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt,**

because he was looking ahead to his reward” (Heb. 11:25-26).

Baruch forsakes the lure of glory offered by the world around him,
and throws his lot in with the call of God.

Does that make sense to you?

. . . to give up what you cannot keep,
to gain what you cannot lose?

And as an aside to this aside--

go forward with me to a different place and time--
It was 1852 in Cambridge, England.

A young preacher by the name of Charles Spurgeon
was to meet with a tutor from London representing a college
which Spurgeon hoped to attend.
Through an unfortunate misunderstanding, the appointment was missed,
and as he was walking through a park in Cambridge
known as Midsummer Common,
Spurgeon was startled by what seemed a loud voice,
or perhaps it was just an illusion.

But "whichever it was," Spurgeon later wrote,

"the impression was vivid to an intense degree;

I seemed very distinctly to hear the words,

‘Seekest thou great things for thyself?

Seek them not!’

This led me to look at my position from another point of view,

and to challenge my motives and intentions."

To go to that college was too much a matter of pride, he concluded,
and he was still needed at the little village church that he was pastoring.
"I did there and then solemnly renounce the offer of Collegiate instruction,
determining to abide for a season at least with my people, . . .
Had it not been for those words,
in all probability I [would never have been] where and what I am now am.
I was conscientious in my obedience to the [ad]monition,
and I have never seen cause to regret it."⁵

God's word to Baruch--

became God's word to a young Charles Spurgeon.

God has spoken, and he still speaks.

'Are you seeking great things for yourself?

Seek them not!

Is that divine word speaking to anyone here this morning?

Well, back to our story--

After this internal struggle,

Baruch takes this scroll to the temple

upon which is written the word of God.

It was the ninth month of the fourth year of Jehoakim--

⁵*C.H. Spurgeon: The Early Years*, p. 208.

that is, December, 604 B.C.--
and it was a special day in the temple--it was a fast day--
and a large crowd had gathered.

Perhaps Baruch used his contacts among the nobility
to get a platform from which to speak.
From the balcony of the room of Gemariah son of Shaphan the secretary
(the same Shaphan who had read the book discovered in Josiah's day)
Baruch read to the people below.

Gemariah's son, Micaiah, heard the words
and knew that something significant was being said,
so he went to tell his father and the other officials of the city about it.

They then sent Jehudi to get Baruch
so that Baruch could read these words to them.
The action shifts from a temple balcony
to a government chamber,
and at this second reading, the stakes are higher.

So Baruch read to them.

v.16--**"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."
This is a matter of the highest importance!**

But before they go to the king,

they seek some attestation as to the authenticity of these words--
"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."

This was hot stuff!

And the royal advisors had strong suspicions that the king
wasn't going to like what he heard.
Here, in what may represent a bit of political intrigue,
the officials exercise what is sometimes called the "need to know" strategy--
If questioned by the king,
they wanted to be able to say they didn't know where these guys were.
"You and Jeremiah, go and hide," they said.
"Don't let anyone know where you are."

So they go to the king,
and we come to the climax, the heart, of the story--
v. 20-- "After they put the scroll in the room of Elishama the secretary,
they went to the king in the courtyard and reported everything to him.
The king sent Jehudi to get the scroll,
and Jehudi brought it from the room of Elishama 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 firepot 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 firepot,
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, Delaiah and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll,
he would not listen to them.
Instead, the king commanded [them] to arrest
Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet.”

Jeremiah may have hoped for a response to the word of God like that of Josiah,
but it was not to be--

King Jehoiakim shows utter contempt for this word from God.

In an act of disdain,

he cuts the scroll up into little pieces and throws into the fire
and watches it go up in smoke.

He shreds the document--

he eliminates the scroll--

it's gone, and now only he is left.

He would cut the *scroll*,

but he would not *cut* his garments--

as Josiah had done, in humility and repentance.

Jehoiakim showed no fear--no fear of God.

God had spoken,

but he refused to listen.

And as a result, there would be no revival in Judah--

there would be nothing to save the nation

from the inevitable judgment of God.

A contempt for the word of God--

that's what Jehoiakim shows us here.

But I want to ask,

what are some of the ways that the word of God is held in contempt today?

There are a number of ways that come to my mind--

1. First, the word of God is held in contempt by **scoffers**--

those who simply laugh it off as at best an irrelevancy

and at worst a silly nuisance

or even an actual evil.

I think of what have been called the new atheists—

a group of writers who think of all religion as mere superstition

that should not be tolerated.

Richard Dawkins wrote *The God Delusion*,

He described the God of the Old Testament as

“arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction:

jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak;

a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser;

a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal,

filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.”⁶

⁶ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam, 2006), 51.

And there was the late Christopher Hitchens—

who wrote *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*.

Surely, he now knows whether that is true,

and if it is, his life is of no significance anyway.

It's the sacrilege of the scoffer--

They denigrate the word of God--

In the end, they just don't care if it's true--just get rid of it!

And then there are the **skeptics**--

who don't believe it can be true.

Here there is not quite the same "in your face" defiance--

skeptics are generally more civil and polite in their treatment of the Bible,

the final results are about the same.

I think, for example, of the skepticism of a Thomas Jefferson.

Jefferson was quite taken with the moral instruction found in the Bible,

but he considered all that supernatural stuff entirely out of place.

In a most Jehoiakim-like fashion,

he edited his own anthology of the Bible

by putting together all of Jesus' moral teachings

while cutting out all of the stories of Jesus as a miracle worker

and as one resurrected from the grave.

The Gospels end with Jesus being put into the tomb.

And the denigration of the Bible by the skeptics

continues in our day through the work of certain biblical scholars--

I think of the notorious example a few years back

of what was called the Jesus Seminar.

It was a collection of biblical scholars who met periodically

to rate the relative authenticity

of the actions and sayings of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels.

In their semi-annual meetings they discussed these matters

and then they took a poll on each particular passage or saying,

dramatically using colored beads to cast their vote--

A **red** bead meant that the scholar thought Jesus actually said or did this or that;

Pink meant that it was less certain.

Gray meant that Jesus didn't say it, but that something of his thought

may lie somewhere obscured behind the biblical saying;

Black meant that the text most certainly came from some earlier or later period.

These 74 scholars, who were certainly not representative

of the broad range of scholarship you can find in the academic community--

were almost entirely skeptical,

and contended that over 80% of the what the Gospels ascribe to Jesus

was deemed inauthentic

and most of the rest was dubious.

With all its pretense toward scholarly sophistication,

the scholars of the Jesus Seminar seemed to be held captive

to certain presuppositions and methods

that made its conclusions determined from the start.
They ruled out from the outset any sort of supernatural Jesus,
and ended up with one who was—surprise, surprise--entirely natural.

And in the process, they too were like Jehoiakim,
cutting up the word of God into little pieces
and discarding what they didn't like.

It's was a contempt for the word of God.

Certain scholars seem to delight in undermining people's ability
to trust in what the Bible says--
you can be sure that they will one day give an account.

What does Jesus say?

**"if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble,
it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck
and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt. 18:6).**

The contempt of scoffers,
the contempt of skeptics,
and the contempt of certain scholars--
they all show disdain for what God has said.

But there's one more group we must consider
as we list those who denigrate the word of God today--
and that is the contempt of those we could call Sunday Christians.

I'm thinking of people

who come to church on Sunday
and affirm the full and complete authority of the Bible.
They hear it read and then say "Amen!"
They nod their heads in agreement
when all the orthodox statements are made about the Word of God.
They are rightly offended by the scoffers and the skeptics.
They *love* the Bible.

But then, it lies still on their shelves--gathering dust, never read.
Or maybe it's read,
but then what it says never gets beyond their brains to their hearts.
It has no impact on their lives;
It makes no difference in their daily decisions;
It no more moves them to action
than it did Jehoiakim.

I like the story of the Christian father who was deeply concerned about his son
who was going to Germany to get his doctorate in theology.
Germany was the fountainhead of theological liberalism,
and the father said,
"Son, they will take the Book away from you.
When you get back,
you will no longer believe that Jonah is in the Book."
His son went overseas;
and when he returned, his father said,
"Son, is Jonah still in the book?"
The son replied,

“Dad, you find me Jonah in the Bible.”
He father got out his Bible and he searched it out,
but he couldn’t find the book of Jonah.
The son said, “Dad, when I left home three years ago,
I cut the Book of Jonah out of your Bible,
and you haven’t even missed it.”

Whereas the scoffers don’t care if the Bible is true;
and whereas the skeptics don’t believe it can be true;
the Sunday Christians believe it to be true, but they don’t care.

And sadly, this final category may be the worst of all--
at least you get that impression from the way Jesus addressed
the representative perpetrators of this behavior in his day--the Pharisees--
who knew the law inside and out, but did not practice what they preached.

Jehoiakim’s fault lay in his refusal to fear God and his word--
and by not fearing God, he refused to listen to him.

May that not be the greatest danger for many of us?--
who have become so familiar with God and His Word
that we no longer tremble before it.

It’s all old hat--
we know all the stories backwards and forwards--
we may have much of it memorized--
and we forget just who is speaking these words.

We dare not denigrate the word of the living God in that way--

becoming just like this king Jehoiakim.

Jehoiakim--

in his arrogance he thought he could silence this word.

By shredding this scroll and throwing into the fire

he thought he'd be done with it forever--

it would be a lost document, no longer able to incriminate him,
one that would never get into the hands of any grand jury
to implicate him in any wrongdoing.

But notice how our passage ends:

v. 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.**

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 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.

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."

So Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the scribe Baruch son of Neriah,
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."

Jehoiakim thought he could silence the Word of God--

but Jehoiakim was wrong.

For you see, the God who speaks always has the last word.

There is something entirely ludicrous in thinking that we could ever silence God--

surely, the Lord laughs at our presumption.

But for those who do not listen to what God has said,

it will be no laughing matter.

For God always has the last word.

The words on the scroll was replaced,

"and many similar words were added to them," we read

in the last verse of this chapter.

The word of God lives on--

despite all the scoffers, and all the skeptics and scholars

who would try to wipe it out.

despite the professing believers who seem deaf to its voice--

the Word of God lives on.

No power on earth can finally keep it down--
not even the eventual captivity and exile of the Jews in Babylon,
The captivity of the church behind the communist Iron Curtain
couldn't do it,
nor will the restrictions in the Islamic world.
Nothing can silence the voice of God.

"At least five times [in history]," noted G. K. Chesterton,
"the Faith has to all appearances gone to the dogs.
In each of these five cases,
it was the dog that died." /

Psa. 2:1 "Why do the nations conspire
and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth rise up
and the rulers band together
against the LORD and against his anointed, saying,
"Let us break their chains
and throw off their shackles."
The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them.
He rebukes them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
"I have installed my king
on Zion, my holy mountain."

The Lord reigns—he always has the last word./

I think of the story of a ship at sea on a dark night.

The captain is informed that a light has appeared on the horizon--
and that calculations indicate a collision course.

The captain immediately signals a message
aimed at the approaching vessel--

"We are on a collision course.
Change heading 10° south."

Immediately they receive a response--

"Collision course.
You change your heading 10° north."

The captain was incensed with this message--

He was the captain of a great ship--*he* gave the orders.

So he signaled again--

"Collision course.
Change heading 10° south.
I am a captain."

Again they receive a response--

"Collision course.
You change heading 10° north.
I am a seaman third class."

The captain wouldn't stand for it--

"Collision course.

Change heading 10° south.

I am the captain of a battleship."

This was a veiled threat, of course,

as well as being a realistic assessment of the difficulty

of changing the direction of his massive vessel.

But the captain received a response once again--

"Collision course.

You change heading 10° north.

I am a seaman third class . . . operating a lighthouse."

The Lord laughs.

He likes to use little seamen third class to operate his lighthouse--

to confront the mighty captains of the world.

He has chosen the foolish to confound the wise;

the weak to overcome the strong.

They may have massive power and influence on their side.

Like King Jehoiakim, they may command the forces of a mighty army--

But we stand on the Rock of the Word of God,

and when the collision ultimately occurs,

it is we who will be left standing.

Ps. 37:13--

**"The Lord laughs at the wicked,
for he knows their day is coming."**

God has spoken--

And it is that word from God that holds the key to spiritual revival in our own lives
in the life of the people of God in the church
and beyond that to an awakening in the life of our nation.

The revival of God's people is always reflected in a reverence for God's word.

For reverence for God's word
reflects a reverence for God himself.

God has spoken--

Have you heard his voice?

And more importantly,

if you have heard God's word--

Will you be like **Josiah**--

who heard and, in humility, responded

in repentance and faith and obedience?

or will you be like **Jehoiakim**

who thought, in his pride, that he could ignore God's word,

and even silence God's word?

God has spoken—

He has spoken supremely in his Son Jesus Christ—

who died for our sins,

rose again from the grave,

ascended to heaven,

from which he will come again as judge of all the earth.

May the whole earth hear his voice.

May we each respond in faith.

It is our only hope.

Prayer—

Closing hymn: *Restore O Lord, the Glory of Your Name*

Restore, O Lord, the honour of your name!

In works of sovereign power

come shake the earth again,

That all may see, and come with reverent fear

To the living God— whose kingdom

Shall outlast the years.

Benediction:

1Tim. 6:15,16

To God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,
who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light,
whom no one has seen or can see--
to him be honor and might forever. Amen.

Judgment and Promise:

God Speaks through the Prophet Jeremiah, #11

April 18, 2021

"The God Who Has the Last Word"

Jeremiah 36

Spiritual revival has played an important role in the history of our nation, and many see it as our only hope today. Our passage this morning reminds us that true revival must include a reverence for the Word of God.

I. Revival and the Word of God--

the example of King Josiah:

"he tore his robes." (2 Kgs. 22:11)

II. The Rejection of the Word of God--

the example of King Jehoiakim:

he *"cut them off with a scribe's knife"* (v. 23)

Scoffers, Sceptics, Scholars, and Sunday Christians

III. The Revival of the Word of God--

the Word lives on.

*"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." (v. 32)

Sermon Response:

“The God Who Has the Last Word”

Jer. 36

- Have you heard stories of revival—like those from the Great Awakening of the 18th century? Do you believe there can be spiritual revival? What might it look like in our day?
- Contrast the two kings, Josiah and Jehoiakim, in their response to hearing the word of God. Why were they different?
- What do you make of Baruch in this story? Do the words the Lord spoke to him (and to Charles Spurgeon) in Jer. 45 apply to you?
- Why should we not be intimidated by scoffers and skeptics (and scholars)?
- How can we maintain a proper reverence for the word of God in our lives?