I. Jehoiakim burns Jeremiah’s scroll; Jeremiah writes another, 36:1-32.¹

A. Introduction

1. This marks a new episode in Jeremiah’s career provides
2. Gives insight into biblical inspiration
3. Covers a period of 2 years:
   a. Lord commands Jeremiah to dictate to Baruch all his prophecies of the preceding 23 years, 26:1-3
   b. Jeremiah does so, vv. 4-7
   c. Next few weeks or months Baruch reads these prophecies in the temple, thus disturbing King Jehoiakim’s officials, vv. 8-19
   d. The king is informed, who cuts up and burns the scroll, vv. 20-26
   e. God commands Jeremiah to make a 2nd edition, 27-32
4. The writing of this scroll and Rejection by the king marks a shift in Jeremiah’s career.
   a. Jeremiah’s words had been classified as “threats,” i.e., proclamations of disaster unless the king and people repented.
   b. Those threats were not actualized, however, until the Babylonians gained the upper hand in the region.
   c. That happened in the year in which this story begins, when the Babylonians come into the territory of Judah and take some of the young men with them back to Babylon.
   d. The people can now see that Jeremiah has been speaking the truth in his words about an “enemy from the north.”

¹Cf. Timothy Willis, Jeremiah-Lamentations (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2002), 291ff; this commentary serves as a basis for these notes.
e. They should recognize the need to take Jeremiah seriously. Jehoiakim’s base treatment of the scroll demonstrates how little regard he still has for Jeremiah and his message.

f. His rejection of that message marks the beginning of the end of any hopes the nation might have of avoiding the disaster the Lord has been predicting through his prophet.

g. Their window of opportunity is still not completely shut, but it is closing fast.

5. **1-3:** God hopes the revelation of the portending events (cf. 25:1-14) will cause the people to listen and commissions Jeremiah to write them down. Jeremiah hires Baruch (son of Neriah and brother of Seraiah, 32:12; 51:59) as scribe.

a. The fourth year = 605, the 4th year of Jehoiakim.

b. This is the year that Nebuchadnezzar defeated the final remnants of the Assyrian army at Carchemish and established Babylonian dominance over the lands along the Mediterranean seaboard.

c. This must have had a profoundly sobering effect on the people in Jerusalem and it might have been the reason for the “day of fasting” mentioned later in the story (v. 6).

d. The Lord’s instructions reveal that Jeremiah’s prophetic work has been strictly oral until this time.

e. He also reveals that there is still the possibility that total destruction can be avoided.

f. The expressed goal in putting these prophecies into writing is to get the people to repent. **Perhaps. . each of them will turn from his wicked way,** and then the Lord **will forgive** them (v. 3).

g. The language here is very close to that of Jeremiah’s Temple Sermon (7:1-15; 26:1-6).

6. **4-7:** For some reason Jeremiah was barred from the temple, perhaps due to the "treasonous" nature of his prophecies.
a. So he instructed Baruch, on the occasion of a fast proclaimed by Jehoiakim due to Nebuchadnezzar’s advance against Askelon (Nov., 604), to read the scroll in his place.

b. Shaphan, who was a friend of Jeremiah (26:24).

c. The day of fasting when the scroll is to be read was probably related to the presence of the Babylonians in the land that year.

d. Jeremiah, like the LORD, expresses the hope that the people will repent, Perhaps . . . each will turn from his wicked ways when they hear his message (v. 7).

7. **8-19:** The reading takes place in the ninth month of the 5th year, or December 604 B.C. Baruch is in temple room reserved for Gemariah son of Shaphan, who had discovered the "Book of the Law" 20 years earlier (2 Kgs 22:8-10).

a. Upon hearing the words the officials so impressed they resolved to inform the king, but sensing the danger to Baruch and Jeremiah, they instructed them to go into hiding.

b. These reactions expose the existence of a religious-political rift to within the Jerusalem officials.

c. These men apparently still hold to the ideas which were central to the religious reforms of Josiah.

d. They are sympathetic to Jeremiah’s message, and they assume that Jehoiakim is not.

e. One is left to wonder what was said and done “behind the scenes” when the reform policies of Josiah were undone by Jehoiakim.

(1) What opposing opinions were expressed, and how did the king to deal with them?

(2) These individuals are still part of the palace establishment, yet they are not part of the king’s inner circle.
f. The individuals mentioned next have a different reaction to the message of the scroll.

8. **20-26:** The reaction of these new hearers is completely different from the reaction of those who heard it in the temple.

   a. Despite the protest of the officials, Jehoiakim burned the scroll as it was read—three or four columns at a time.

   b. He then ordered the arrest of Jeremiah and Baruch.

   c. The *Pen-knife* was used to sharpen the scribes’ reed pens—ironic that a knife used by scribes is used to cut up the scroll.

   d. **The king . . . showed no fear** even though there were advisors who urged him to rethink his reaction.

   e. The king’s response is to treat Jeremiah’s scroll as trash. He is cold, the scroll can provide fuel for his fire, so he burns it. In his mind, it has no other purpose, no other value. His reaction is in marked contrast to Josiah’s reaction a generation earlier to a similar scroll (2 Kgs 22:11)

   f. There is a subtle play on the word “hear/listen” (מָשָׂאְר

   (1) Jehoiakim heard the words of the scroll (v. 24), but he responds with indifference.

   (2) He has not really “heard” them as he should.

   (3) He demonstrates his refusal to hear these words when he would not listen to Gemariah and the other officials who had come with the scroll.

   g. The text gives no explanation at this point for the king’s rejection of Jeremiah’s words.

   (1) Later, we are told that the king questioned Jeremiah’s prediction that the Babylonians “would destroy this land and cut off men and animals from it” (v. 29).
(2) Likely that he and others around him have known of Jeremiah and his teachings for several years, and they already have an “official position” concerning him.

h. The king’s final reaction is similar to the reaction of the prophets and priests to Jeremiah’s Temple Sermon (26:7-11)

i. Jeremiah is viewed as a threat to the well-being of the city, even though he is the one presenting the only way the city’s well-being can actually be preserved.

j. Fortunately, Jeremiah and Baruch escape capture this time; they had hidden at the advice of the sympathetic officials, which the text attributes to the Lord's providence (v. 26).

9. 27-32: Jeremiah used the destruction of the scroll as a symbol, announced the death of Jehoiakim (22:18-19; 2 Kgs 24:6-15), and dictated a 2nd edition (probably chapters 1-25)

a. The announcement begins and ends with the reason for the LORD’s punishment on the king.

b. He has dismissed the possibility of Jerusalem’s destruction, and has not listened to the words of the Lord (v. 31).

c. Evidently Jehoiakim believes in the inviolability of Jerusalem and the Davidic dynasty.

d. The announcement is also a reversal of the Davidic promise.

(1) That promise states that David “will never fail to have a man sit on the throne of Israel” (1 Kgs 2:4; cp. 2 Sam 7:12-16; 1 Kgs 8:25; 9:5)

(2) Now the LORD says Jehoiakim will have no one to sit on the throne of David.

(3) This, at the least takes away Jehoiakim’s participation in that promise.

e. A twofold message
(1) For the members of the House of David, there is reason to feel shame for what they have let slip away

(a) Jeremiah and other prophets duly warned them, but they chose to ignore the warnings.

(b) Now they suffer the inevitable consequences and disgrace of their decision.

(2) There is a message for every subsequent generation of believers.

(a) That message is about the need to “hear the word of the Lord.”

(b) The Lord makes promises of blessing and honor to all, but only those who “hear” him will inherit those promises.