

The Scroll Burned and Rewritten

Jeremiah 36

WHAT WE FOUND

The Bible showed us its own workshop: God speaking, Jeremiah dictating, Baruch writing (36:4), and the scroll's stated purpose: "that every one may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin" (36:3). Scripture is given not merely to inform us but to draw us to conversion. Then the assault: King Jehoiakim, warming himself by a winter fire, sliced the scroll apart three or four columns at a time with a penknife and fed it to the brazier, at leisure, in installments (36:23). Not rage: contempt. And the narrator's quiet verdict: no fear, no torn garments (36:24), written to detonate a memory, because one generation earlier this king's own father, Josiah, tore his clothes at the reading of a scroll and reformed a kingdom (2 Kings 22:11; 23:1-25). The father tore his garments at the word; the son tore the word. Every reader of Scripture stands between those two kings.

God's answer to the penknife: "Take another scroll" (36:28), and the punchline: "and many similar words were added to them" (36:32). The word came back longer. We set three verses side by side and watched a promise from the first night of this study close: "I am watching over my word to perform it" (1:12); "Is not my word like fire?" (23:29); and the enlarged second scroll (36:32). You cannot burn fire. Twenty-six centuries of penknives, braziers, and empires later, we read the scroll tonight.

And Jesus claimed for His own words the indestructibility that belongs to God's alone: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). The faith we received is not a religion of the book but of the Word: not written and mute, but incarnate and living.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Jerome · *Prologue to his Commentary on Isaiah, quoted at CCC 133*

The saint who opened this study closes its Scripture arc: ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ. He gave his life to the sacred page because the scroll a king burned and God rewrote was worth every hour a human life could give it.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ephrem the Syrian · *Commentary on the Diatessaron*

St. Ephrem compared the word of God to a spring: the thirsty drink and rejoice, but no one drinks the spring dry. What each reader carries away is enough for him, and what remains is inexhaustible for all who come after.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine · *Confessions, Book VIII*

In a garden in Milan, Augustine heard a child chant “take and read,” opened the Scriptures, read a few lines of St. Paul, and rose a different man. The word that survives its enemies also converts them; Augustine had been one.

Live It This Week

- Read Scripture every day this week, even five minutes, and read it Josiah-style: before you begin, pray one sentence: Lord, tear something.
- Identify your most-avoided column, the teaching or passage you tend to skip, and read it slowly once this week, asking what obedience would cost and what it would give.
- Thank God once this week, explicitly, for the sheer existence of your Bible: dictated, burned, rewritten, copied, translated, and watched over all the way to your shelf.

Memory Verse

"Then the LORD said to me, 'You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.'" (Jeremiah 1:12, RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Jeremiah 37-38.

Catechism References

CCC 105-106 · CCC 108 · CCC 133