

# Take Up and Read

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(Jeremiah 36)

## I. Introduction

A. The last great watershed event in Judah's history as nation is in **Jeremiah 36**.

1. Moved by God and aided by his secretary Baruch, Jeremiah wrote a book
  - a. It was like a draft of Jeremiah, though as we'll see, it had to be rewritten
  - b. Book predicted God's judgment and offered the hope of mercy (**Jer 36:3**).

*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.*

2. Jeremiah couldn't himself deliver the message; he was *persona non grata*
  - a. But it was imperative that this book get into the hands of King Jehoiakim
  - b. Baruch and a concerned officials named Jehudi managed to get rearing
  - c. You remember King Jehoiakim's response to word of God (**Jer 36:23**)

*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*

- 1) It is hard to miss the contempt that this showed for the words of God
- 2) Jehoiakim would find that burning book doesn't nullify God's word
- d. Within 10 years, not only was Jehoiakim dead... so was nation of Judah

B. Jehoiakim was not the last leader who tried to destroy the word of God.

1. Roman emperors from Domitian to Diocletian tried to destroy the Bible
  - a. Two millennia later, the Romans Empire is but dust and Bible remains.
  - b. Emperor Julian last words, "Thou at last hath conquered, O Galilean"
  - c. Today, people name their sons Peter and Paul and their dogs Caesar!
2. Philosopher Voltaire was outspoken critic of Bible during Enlightenment

*'One hundred years from my day there will not be a Bible in the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity seeker*

  - a. Read any Voltaire lately? Just who was Voltaire? Exactly the point!
  - b. Geneva Bible Society open its headquarters in 1870... in his old house!
3. Bible does have an enemy that has managed to weaken its power/influence.
  - a. Greatest enemy of the Bible are people who say they believe it!
  - b. When we give lip-service but don't "*read and study and then obey*"
  - c. To borrow Pogo's famous line, "We have met the enemy, and he is us."

- C. A survey years ago illustrated how much we have become the enemy
  - 1. All of the people included in the survey identified themselves as Christian
    - a. Only 12% reported reading the Bible on a daily basis.
    - b. Only 34% suggested that they read the Bible at least once a week.
    - c. Only 42% reported that they read the Bible only “occasionally”
    - d. Only 50% said that they had read the entire Bible
  - 2. Do people often respond to polls like they know they SHOULD do?
  - 3. So the time that the average Christian spends with scripture may be less!
- D. We SAY that the Bible is the word of God... and then we IGNORE it?
  - 1. Henry Halley, in his old standard *Halley’s Bible Handbook*, says this  
*Oh, we talk about the Bible and defend the Bible, and praise the Bible and exalt the Bible. Yes, indeed! But many church members seldom ever even look into a Bible—indeed would be ashamed to be seen reading the Bible. And church leadership generally seems to be making no serious effort to get people to be Bible readers.*
  - 2. This is accusation and defamation of the worst kind—it’s absolutely true!
  - 3. Often when it comes to the Bible, we SAY one thing and LIVE another

## I. So Why We Don’t Read the Bible

- A. **First**, we believe that the Bible is just TOO HARD to understand
  - 1. It is an ancient book written in foreign language to an unfamiliar culture
    - a. Bible will be harder to read than the newspaper (*at least the comics*)
    - b. We might have to work a little harder—but then, it’s is God’s word
    - c. First year we dated, I was off at college and Lynn was in high school
  - 2. We “dated” thru letters— handwriting was HARD for Lynn to read
    - a. She worked through them because she had an interest in the author
    - b. Maybe the problem is more our interest than the difficulty of the Bible!
  - 3. If the Bible is the word of God, then wouldn’t He want you to understand?
    - a. If God wrote scripture, wouldn’t he write it in a way you could read?
    - b. Sure, there are parts that can only be understood with intense study.
      - 1) There are parts where you need special training (language/theology).
      - 2) Hey, there are parts we’ll never fully understand (*God is the author*)
    - c. But if the Bible is God’s message of salvation, then we can understand it.

B. **Second**, we get distracted by the seemingly unrelenting urgent things in life

1. Remember the parable of the sower that Jesus tells in Matthew 13?

a. It should be called the parable of the soil—it's about how we hear God

1) Some hearts are hard like the pathway—hard and impenetrable

2) Some hearts are shallow like the rocky soil—word can get no root

3) Some hearts are like seed that sprout only to be choked (**Matt 13:22**)

*“The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.*

b. These people allow the distraction of the world to crowd out the word.

c. Greatest enemy many of us have in our regular reading is distraction.

2. I think I mentioned Lynn's recent prediction about parking at our gym

a. I noted the full parking lot, “*Just wait until after the first of the year*”

1) New Year's resolutions will mean the parking lot will be slam full

2) Come February, there'll be plenty of empty parking space at the gym

b. Why? Like Bible study, exercise is often harder than we want it to be

c. **Big Problem:** Other things seem more important. *Weeds choke out word*

3. I trust that no one here would say that daily Bible reading is a waste of time

a. So why don't you do it? The #1 answer would be, “*I'm just so busy*”

b. If we can't spare God 15 minutes or so, then maybe we are just too busy!

C. **Third**, when all is said and done, there is much more said than is done

1. When it comes to some things, we are just too lazy and undisciplined

a. Paul's imagery of Christian life is anything but lazy (**1 Cor 9:26–27**)

*I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

b. Paul uses an athletic metaphor here—as in “*no pain means no gain*”

c. The first point—reading the Bible is too hard. Sometimes it is... *So?*

2. We need to disciple ourselves to do the things that we know we need to do

a. God didn't intend faith to be easy— He gives us His power (**2 Tim 1:7**)

*For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline*

b. God makes sure we have everything we need, but we must put forth effort

c. Sometimes “*walk by faith*” simply means we need to get up and MOVE!

## II. Conclusion

- A. Our theme for year is “*Take Up and Read.*” Conversion of Augustine of Hippo
1. His mother Monica raised him in Christian faith, but he pursued pagan life
    - a. But he found no peace, and in the middle of a person crisis he sought God
    - b. He heard a child’s voice singing nearby “*Tolle, lege*” (“*Take up and read*”)
    - c. He found his mother’s open Bible, and read from **Romans 13:13-14**  
*Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature*
  2. He was driven to scripture and it changed his life—that’s what we want too
    - a. Before we can be transformed by scripture, we must take up and read
    - b. We want to encourage one another in this good work of daily reading
- B. In 2010, we will take up and read the NT together each week—here’s the plan
1. Bulletin and web site will list daily reading (*beside prayer list in bulletin*)
    - a. There is no reading for Sunday; you get either a day off or a catch day
    - b. The Sunday sermon each week will come from one of our daily readings
    - c. Small group material (from those using it) will come from our readings
  2. Let me make a couple of suggestions that may help your daily reading
    - a. **First**, do it at the same time each day (*so don’t put it off until too late*)
    - b. **Second**, use an unfamiliar, easy to read version of the Bible
      - 1) ESV, NET (*translation notes*), NLT and TNIV are good choices
      - 2) If you want to try a few, they can be read free on web (see web site)
    - c. **Third**, bathe the process of your reading in daily prayer
      - 1) **Before**: Ask God to show you Himself and to teach you in reading
      - 2) **After**: Pray some part of the text (*Genealogy: Pray for parents/child*)
  3. Remember the three reasons we mentioned why we don’t read
    - a. **Too Hard**: NT (no Leviticus) and we’ll have sermons and groups too
    - b. **Too Busy**: The readings will be chapter length, about 10-15 minutes
    - c. **Too Lazy**: Doing this together and talking about it every Sunday will help
- C. The plan is set up to begin on January 4; that means it starts TOMORROW!