

Jeremiah, the Prophet - God's Word is Forever

A Closing Program Skit to demonstrate Prophecy and how the Bible was protected.

Adapted by Elizabeth Blomgren, eablomgren@sbcglobal.net, from the play "God's Word is Forever." Please direct any specific questions to her.

Characters, in order of appearance:

Narrator, should be a good reader

Jeremiah, The prophet of God, lived about 627-580 BC (should be tall and thin, has few lines)

The Jailer, can double as one of the king's strong-arm men

Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe and friend (must be able to read well)

A crowd of people at the Temple Gates (all ages, all sizes)

Mi-chai-ah, a prince, the son of Gemariah, a member of the king's court

Mi-chai-ah's Wife, can double as a servant of the King

Jehudi, the king's secretary and attendant

E-li-sha-ma, the scribe in the king's court

King Jehoiakim

Three servants of the king

King's strong-arm men

Scenery and Props:

Prison - back bars across the exit door on the left side, fixed to open

Small table and stool, rather large ink pot, numerous rolls of paper, a pen-- bigger than normal so the audience can see it.

Gate of Jerusalem - pulpit area, crowd eases in through side doors,

Office of the King's scribe - table and one or two chairs

"Winter House" of the king - big chair for king covered with bright material, pretend fire

Scroll - If you use computer paper that is on a roll, the pages can be torn out as called for.

Costumes:

King should be garbed in finery

Jeremiah - white, close fitting robe of a priest of that day

Baruch - long, dark robe

All other players should wear some type of head coverings and simple clothes

NARRATOR: The time is about 600 years before Christ in Jerusalem. Jeremiah the prophet is in prison. According to Jeremiah 36, *reads from the Bible* “And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah King of Judah that this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD saying, ‘Take thee a roll of a book and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nation, from the day I spoke unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.’

“Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Ne-ri-ah; and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon the roll of a book...”

Scene 1

As the Jailer and Baruch come down the aisle, the Jailer is talking.

JAILER: Baruch, the truth of the matter is I think King Jehoiakim has forgotten that the old prophet, Jeremiah, is locked up. So, as far as I’m concerned, you can stay as long as you like and write ‘till the sun goes down if you want to.

Opens cell door. Jeremiah stands up, wiping his eyes as if crying.

Just look at Jeremiah! Weeping again! I call him the weeping prophet.

Leaves door open, key in lock.

I’ll be around, if you need anything. *Jailer leaves.*

JEREMIAH: Ah, Baruch, I’m glad you could come!

BARUCH: Jeremiah, my friend, why do you weep so early in the morning?

JEREMIAH: “My heart within me is broken...because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness.”

BARUCH: Do you have something special that you want me to write down?

JEREMIAH: Yes, yes! The words of the LORD, which have come to me again.

They are not words to bring joy. Rather sorrow. But they must be written. And they must be read to all the people.

BARUCH: *as he brings out table and stool* We’ll have more room if I move this table and stool, and the jailer won’t care. As I came through the city, I heard that a day of fasting has been proclaimed for Jerusalem and all of Judah.

JEREMIAH: That means King Jehoiakim is worried about the approach of the Babylonian army, and well he should be! Jehovah will use the Babylonians to destroy this land!

BARUCH: Many people will be coming to the temple for the day of fasting. It is too bad you cannot go to the temple and speak to them the words of the LORD.

JEREMIAH: For a long time the king has forbidden me to go into the temple. And as you see, I am shut up. You must go, and read the words of the LORD. You

shall read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah strides back and forth as he dictates to Baruch.

“It may be they will present their supplication before the LORD, and will return every one from his evil ways; for great is the anger and fury that the LORD has pronounced again this people.” Now write this:

“Out of the north evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.” Thus says the LORD. “And I will utter my judgments against them, for all their wickedness...”

NARRATOR: All of the people gathered at the gate of the temple on the day of fasting. *Reads from the Bible* “Then read Baruch from the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD ... the entry of the new gate of the LORD’s house, in the ears of all the people.”

Scene 2

Baruch enters immediately, from right stage, holding up Jeremiah’s scroll.

BARUCH: *talking to the people*, Hear now the words of the LORD. This word came unto Jeremiah the prophet, from the LORD, and I did write from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon this roll of a book. *Begins reading*, Thus says the LORD; “Out of the north evil shall break forth ... The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall destroy both man and beast.”

...Thus says the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah: “He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David. And his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.

“And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity: and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have promised ... because they would not listen to me...” *voice trails off*

MI-CHAI-AH: *to his wife*, This is an alarming prophecy! It will have to be reported to King Jehoiakim!

MICHAIAH’S WIFE: The Babylonians coming to destroy us? The king is going to die? It’s unbelievable!

MICHAIAH: My dear wife, it’s best that you return to our house immediately! I’ll go and tell the other nobles and courtiers and see what they think about reporting this thing to the king!

MICHAIAH’S WIFE: Where will you find the nobles and princes this time of the afternoon? Will they still be at the king’s palace?

MICHAIAH: My father and most of the others will be in the office of E-li’-shama, the scribe, at a meeting called by the king’s secretary, Je-hu-di. Jehudi will

know whether or not it's best to tell the king what Jeremiah has prophesied! Jehudi knows the king and all of his moods! He may think it best that this thing read to the people not reach the ears of King Jehoiakim!

Scene 3

Michaiah moves from the temple gate to the office of E-li-sha'-ma. Jehudi, the scribe and the nobles are gathered in the office. Elishama is seated, with papers in his hand. Jehudi is bent over, looking at the papers. There are four other courtiers watching the scribe and Jehudi intently. When Michaiah enter, all turn around to look at him.

NARRATOR: reading from the Bible “Then Mi-chai-ah went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber; and lo, all the princes sat there.

enter Michaiah

“Then Michaiah declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people.”

MICHAIAH: I tell you, sirs, the prophecy of Jeremiah which Baruch read at the temple gate is most alarming! If it comes true, we are all doomed! Especially the king!

DELIAH: I hate to think what the king may do when he hears that Jeremiah has prophesied that the king will die!

ELNATHAN: It's impossible to keep something like this from the king! Somebody will tell him!

GEMARIAH: It is best that we tell him. Would you not agree, Jehudi?

JEHUDI: I agree with you. The king must be told, the sooner, the better.

ZED-E-KI-AH: Before we tell King Jehoiakim, we must know exactly what Jeremiah the weeping prophet is saying this time. For years Jeremiah has warned of the wrath of the LORD. But so far as I know this is the first time he has said that the king of Babylon will destroy this land and that King Jehoiakim will die!

GEM-A-RI-AH: Je-hu-di, go and bring Baruch here. And we will require him to read the prophecy to us. Then, we can tell the king.

JEHUDI: Gem-a-ri-ah, your words are wise. *Starts out the door* I'll be right back. *Spotlight follows Jehudi. He overtakes Baruch as he is returning from the temple to Jeremiah's cell. As he gestures to Baruch in pantomime and they turn to go back to where the courtiers are waiting.*

NARRATOR: “So Baruch the son of Ne-ri-ah took in his hand, and came unto them. And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears.” So, Baruch read it in their ears. “Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch, ‘We will surely tell the king of all these words.’”

GEM-A-RI-AH: My friends, we have heard Baruch read the words of the LORD as they came to Jeremiah. Terrible things are foretold here in this scroll: the destruction of the land, dishonor and death of the king, and evil upon the men of Judah--all because we have not obeyed the LORD. This frightens me!

DEL-AI-AH: You are not alone, Gemariah! It strikes terror in my heart also!

EL-NA-THAN: It is alarming! To think that the King of Babylon will come and utterly destroy both man and beast! What shall we do?

JEHUDI: All of us will go to the king's winter house, where now he sits warming himself. And we will tell the king. But let me caution that we use the utmost diplomacy. You know the king!

MI-CHAI-AH: Should we not let Baruch come and read it to him?

ALL NOBLES: *not in chorus, but all at the same time* Oh, no, no! That would never do! I think not! That would be the wrong thing to do!

JEHUDI: *to Baruch* Baruch, go quickly and get Jeremiah and hide! Let no man know where you hide! There will be no measuring the king's wrath when he hears this.

E-LI-SHA-MA: Perhaps the scroll should be left here. It will be safe here.

BARUCH: Very well. I will leave it with you *hands scroll to Elishama* and when things are such that it is possible, I shall come for it.

Baruch hurries out, right stage, and courtiers prepare to go to king's quarters.

Scene 4

King Jehoiakim sits in a large chair, with blankets wrapped about himself. There is an open fire in front of him. Three women servants are scurrying around, trying to make the king comfortable--with wine and more blankets. King Jehoiakim is in a foul mood and is complaining about the cold.

NARRATOR: "Now the king sat in the winter house in the ninth month; and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him..." *voice trails off*

KING J: What a wretched cold day! Put more wood on the fire! And bring me some more wine! *hands goblet to one of servants* What's a man supposed to do to keep warm on a winter day like this!

1ST SERVANT: Let me wrap this blanket about your feet, King Jehoiakim.

KING: No! No! I'm cold as a frozen frog! But I don't want my feet covered up, like some old woman!

2ND SERVANT: Here's your wine, sir.

KING: *after a big gulp of wine* Where's Jehudi?

3RD SERVANT: He has gone to the scribe's office, remember?

KING: Go get him! What's a secretary for if he's always going off to the scribe's office! Tell Jehudi I said to come here, right now!

3RD SERVANT: Yes, sir! *Starts to hurry out; but meets Jehudi and the delegation of courtiers. She hurries back to the king.*

Here is Jehudi coming now! And many of the princes with him.

KING: *growling* Ah-h-h! Wonder what this is all about! You servants be gone! Servants have no business in the king's room when matters of state are discussed.

Servants leave quickly. Jehoiakim turns toward Jehudi and courtiers.

Now, now, what could be bringing all of my princes in to see me at one time? I know! You are cold! And you want to warm yourselves by my fire! Well, gather 'round!

EL-NA-THAN: No, no, King Jehoiakim. It is a day to draw nigh to a fire; but we have come about a matter far more serious than the cold winds that sweep through the streets of Jerusalem today and chill the very marrow in our bones. We have word of an evil wind that is coming!

KING: Don't speak in riddles about the wind! Get to the point! What is it?

GEM-A-RI-AH: The prophet Jeremiah has made a prophecy which came to him as the word of the LORD. And he caused this prophecy to be read at the temple gate. Many people heard it and we consider it a serious matter.

KING: That's nothing to lose sleep over! Old Jeremiah has been talking about the word of the LORD ever since I can remember--even when my father Josiah was king of Judah. Nobody pays any attention to that old weeping prophet's lamentations!

GEMARIAH: This time, though, King Jehoiakim, the people listened! For the prophecy was such that it struck terror into all our hearts. Baruch, the scribe employed by Jeremiah, has read the prophetic scroll to us, and we thought you should know about it.

KING: Where is this prophecy?

JEHUDI: We left the scroll in the office of E-li-sha-ma, your scribe.

KING: Go get it! *Jehudi hurries away to get the scroll. The king keeps talking.* Such is the life of the king of Judah! I have enough to worry me without something like this dire thing old Jeremiah has foretold-- whatever it is. It is true that the Babylonians are a threat, but the thing I'm interested in--as all of you well know--is my plan to build another palace! One even larger than this one. *waves his arm* You should just see the plans I'm drawing up!

JEHUDI: *returns with the scroll, starts to hand it to the king* Here is the Jeremiah scroll.

KING: Don't hand it to me! Read it to me!

JEHUDI: Very well, sir. The whole thing?

KING: You read me part of it, I'll see how it sounds, and then I'll tell you how much more to read.

JEHUDI: *reading* “The word of the LORD which came unto Jeremiah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah king of Judah--“

KING: *interrupting* Never mind the preliminaries! Everybody knows this is the fourth year of my reign! And, that I am the son of Josiah! Get to the thing this foolish prophet has foretold!

JEHUDI: *reading* “Out of the north evil shall break forth ... a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury ...”

KING: *impatiently* That doesn’t mean a thing! Hand me that leaf! *Jehudi hands over a page. The king wads up the paper, throws it into the fire.* Now, read some more!

JEHUDI: *reading* “The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall destroy both men and beast--“

KING: Give me that! *As he grabs the page, he tears the page in two before he throws it into the fire.* So the king of Babylon is going to destroy the land! Well, I can destroy this prophecy! Read on!

GEM-A-RI-AH: But, king Jehoiachim, perhaps it would be best not to burn this scroll!

KING: I know what I’m doing! Read, Jehudi!

JEHUDI: *after some hesitation* Now, King Jehoiakim, please remember that this was written at the hand of the prophet of God. None of us had a thing to do with it.

KING: Read the scroll, Jehudi!

JEHUDI: *reading* “Thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah: He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David...”

KING: *grabbing the paper from Jehudi* No heir? No heir to sit upon this throne? We’ll see! *Tears the paper and throws it into fire.* Keep reading, Jehudi!

JEHUDI: *so fearful that he begins to stutter* “And-- And th-- And the Kin-- And the King’s dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost!”

KING *rising to his feet in rage* So! I’m going to die like a donkey, am I?

Grabs whole scroll from Jehudi, and then throws it on the fire.

We’ll see who is going to die and have his dead body cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost! I’ll have the heads of Jeremiah and his Baruch! Jehudi, call my special guards!

JEHUDI: Yes, sir. You mean the three who-- The three who always--

KING: The three you call my “hatchet men”-- Je-rah-meel, Se’-rai-ah, and Shel-emi’-ah! That’s who I’m talking about and you know it! They’re right outside the door, and you know that, too! They guard me day and night!

Jehudi walks to door, beckons to persons outside, and Jerahmeel, Seraiah and Shelemiah come in and stand before the king.

KING: You three are to kill the prophet Jeremiah and the scribe Baruch! Do you understand what I mean?

JE-RAH-MEEL, SE-RAI-AH, and SHEL-E-MI-AH: *in unison* We understand!
As the three start to leave. Jehudi draws Shel-e-mi-ah aside and whispers to him. The king pokes at the fire, so intent on destroying the prophecy scroll that he does not notice Jehudi's action. The spotlight shifts back to Jeremiah's prison cell.

Scene 5

The prison door is open. Baruch is helping Jeremiah put on his cloak. Jeremiah has his arms full of rolls of paper.

BARUCH: We must hurry! The very last words Jehudi, the king's secretary, said to me was "Go quickly and get Jeremiah and hide! Let no man know where you hide!"

JEREMIAH: The LORD will hide us! Bring the ink pot!

BARUCH: The ink? *Grabs ink. The two run up the aisle and out, as Jeremiah makes his final declaration.*

JEREMIAH: Yes! We will write again all the former words of the LORD! And more, also!

The king's three strong-arm men arrive at the prison cell seconds after Baruch and Jeremiah have gone.

JE-RAH-MEEL: We're too late! They're both gone!

SE-RAI-AH: They won't be hard to find. Come on, we'll have 'em before daylight!

SHEL-E-MI-AH: Let's not bother! Jehudi said not to pain ourselves with trying to find Jeremiah the prophet, or Baruch the scribe.

JE-RAH-MEEL: King Jehoiakim will be furious!

SHEL-E-MI-AH: He won't be furious if he doesn't know about it! Right?

SE-RAI-AH and JE-RAH-MEEL: Right!

As the three guards laugh among themselves

NARRATOR: *Looks up* This is what happened when King Jehoiakim was told of the prophecy. *Reading from the Bible.* The Bible tells us in Isaiah 40:8, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever." *Look up* No man could destroy the words that God wanted man to hear. Many have tried thorough through the years of time, but God has protected His words in His Bible so that we can know Him, His son, Jesus, and His salvation for us.

The prophecy of Jeremiah came true. The Babylonians captured the people of Judah and carried them off to Babylon and King Jehoiakim died. The prophet Jeremiah and many other prophets pointed to the judgment of God upon the Hebrew people because they were rebellious, but they pointed also to the salvation of God through a Messiah. That Messiah was Jesus. The Old

Testament prophecies were talking about the New Testament Christ that would save man from sin. The whole Bible is one message inspired by one God, even though it was written by 40 people over about 1600 years, and that one message is that:

God created and loves man,

Man sinned and needs to be saved from his sins,

God provided that salvation thorough His son, Jesus Christ and He promises us life everlasting for those who believe His Word.

The Bible can be trusted. It is “a lamp to our feet and a light for our path.”

(Psalm 119:105)

GOD’S WORD IS FOREVER

Adapted from “A Biblical Skit for Ft. Rucker, Alabama Protestant Youth of the Chapel (PYOC)” by the late Jewell Ellen Smith, whose son David can be reached at e-mail address DSmith1204@aol.com.

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