

The Curse of Jehoiakim

In Jeremiah 36 the Lord told Jeremiah to write down all of his prophecies:

Jeremiah 36:1: “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,
2 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 nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day.
3 It may be that the house of Judah will hear all 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.”

Jeremiah obeyed, and Baruch read the words of the scroll to the people of Judah. When the princes heard about this they asked Baruch for the scroll and promised to give it to the king. When the scroll was read to the king, though, the king did not repent. Instead he burned it and then tried to have Jeremiah arrested:

Jeremiah 36:21: “So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king.
22 Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him.
23 And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.
24 Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.
25 Nevertheless Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them.
26 But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the Lord hid them.”

God was not at all pleased with the way King Jehoiakim had utterly despised His Word. He therefore cursed the king:

Jeremiah 36:29: “And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the Lord; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?
30 Therefore thus saith 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.
31 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 pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.”

At first this seems like just another sad story of disobedience. God warned a king that judgment was coming, but instead of repenting the king burned the words of God and tried to have the prophet arrested. God therefore cursed the king and promised to send judgment. It's the same tragic story of rebellion that is repeated so many times in the Bible.

This time, however, there is something critically different. Verse 30 says that none of Jehoiakim's descendents would sit on the throne of David. That was bad news, because the Messiah was supposed to come from that line. If none of his descendents could rule then that meant the Messiah could not come. If the Messiah could not come then that meant all was lost; salvation could not come and mankind could not be saved. This is why some Jews teach that the Messiah can never come – they say that the curse of Jehoiakim prevents it.

There is an answer to this, and it is fascinating. It is true that Joseph, the husband of Mary, was indeed of the line of Jehoiakim. We find this in Matthew 1, which lists the genealogy of Joseph:

Matthew 1:6: “And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;
7 And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;
8 And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias;
9 And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias;
10 And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias;
11 And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:”

“Jechonias” is just an alternate spelling of Jehoiakim. Joseph was the son of David, the son of Solomon, and the son of Jehoiakim. However, thanks to the curse of Jehoiakim, neither Joseph nor any of his children could sit on the throne of David.

But Jesus wasn't Joseph's natural son; He was his *adopted* son. In Luke 3 we find Mary's genealogy. It turns out that Mary is also of the line of David, through David's son Nathan:

Luke 3:31: “Which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David,”

Nathan's line was never cursed. Jehoiakim's line was cursed – but Jesus was adopted into that line. Since Jesus wasn't Jehoiakim's natural son He did not inherit the curse, and therefore He had the right to rule. Thus was fulfilled what the prophet Isaiah had foretold:

Isaiah 9:6: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

Isaiah said “unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given”. What Isaiah is telling us is that the Messiah will come by birth and by adoption. Jesus was born into the line of Nathan and adopted into the line of Jehoiakim. He thus fulfilled both requirements and avoided the curse of Jehoiakim. He came the only way the Messiah could possibly come.

To this day some Jews struggle with the curse of Jehoiakim. They do not understand how the Messiah could come and avoid that curse. They believe that their salvation is blocked – but it is not. God worked out the details a long time ago. Jesus really is the Messiah.