

Session 6

August 25, 2024

BARUCH

Jeremiah 36:4-8, 16-18; 45:1-5

a·man·u·en·sis: noun.

-a literary or artistic assistant; in particular one who takes dictation or copies manuscripts.

There are several indicators that some of the Bible authors used amanuenses to record some of their Scriptures. The apostle Paul depended upon Tertius to record the book of Romans (Rom. 16:22). Isaiah had his own following of disciples, and they, too, may have recorded some of his dictation (see Is. 8:16). Peter mentions a Silvanus “through” whom he wrote. But the best-known amanuensis in the Bible is probably Baruch, who wrote down the Scriptures as dictated by the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah. In his story, we see the importance of those people who came along side of God’s heroes, and who did such important work. Three characteristics of Baruch made him a valuable asset to the prophet.

Honesty (36:4-8). The name Baruch means “blessed.” When he was introduced in 32:12 as “the son of Neriah, son of Mahseiah.” There, he was charged with witnessing and delivering the bill of sale for a purchase of land Jeremiah made from his cousin. Here, his pedigree is barely mentioned, but is given to identify this Baruch as the same one. Obviously, Baruch was more than “blessed;” he was trusted. This was important to Jeremiah, for his assistant was charged with two substantial responsibilities. First, he was instructed to record the words of Jeremiah that the prophet received by divine inspiration (v. 4). Hence, the inspiration, inerrancy and infallibility of God’s word was absolutely preserved. Second, because Jeremiah was imprisoned at the time, Baruch was charged with reading the scroll to both the general population and the Jewish leaders at the temple in Jerusalem (see vv. 10-15). Additional responsibilities were not assigned but assumed. Baruch would be forced to defend himself before the Jewish leaders (v. 17), then hide and protect Jeremiah from the repercussions of what he wrote (v. 19). It’s important to note that Jeremiah shared with Baruch his motivation. Verses 7-9 reveal the Weeping Prophet’s sorrow at what would take place in his prophecy and his plea that his people would repent. For reflection: *Verse 8 seems insignificant at first glance. Why do you think these lines were added? What do they tell us about Baruch’s character?*

Accuracy (36:16-18). As instructed, Baruch read the scroll that Jeremiah had dictated to the people and the Jewish leaders on a day of fasting proclaimed by the king (v. 9). The message of God’s coming judgement against Judah so shook the people that Baruch was summoned to a meeting with the temple leaders and instructed to re-read the text to them (vv. 11-15). The scribes were sufficiently afraid of the prophesied calamity, and sufficiently loyal to their duties, that they dared not keep the message of it from Jehoiakim the king (v. 16). But before doing so, they needed to confirm the accuracy of the scroll. This was not meant to discredit Baruch; their respect for him and for Jeremiah was already established. But they wanted details before going to the king. Baruch’s response was simple and direct. Jeremiah dictated the words, and as he spoke them, Baruch wrote them “on the scroll in ink” (v. 18). For reflection: *I mentioned the people’s respect for Baruch and Jeremiah was already established. What clues from the story indicate this respect?*

Accountability (45:1-5). Many scholars suggest these verses are out of place and were intended for the end of chapter 36. Either way, this seemingly “tagged on” text gives us some fresh insight into Baruch’s thoughts and actions. In general, this seems to be God’s response to Baruch’s uncertainties regarding his task. Verse 3 indicates Baruch’s personal fears of the coming doom. No doubt, as he wrote the prophecies of Judah’s destruction, he saw the lives of his family and his people at stake. This added the misery he described, his fatigue and lack of rest. The encouragement came in the form of a mild rebuke that reminded Baruch of God’s absolute sovereignty (v. 4), and in the form of a promise: Baruch’s life would be spared (v. 5). For reflection: *Baruch worked for Jeremiah, yet God had a special word for him. What does this text tell us about God’s expectations? What about His rewards?*