

Jeremiah 36:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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,

Analysis

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, This chronological marker places the event in 605 BCE, a pivotal year when Babylon defeated Egypt at Carchemish, establishing Nebuchadnezzar's Neo-Babylonian Empire as the dominant world power. The dating formula emphasizes divine sovereignty over historical timing—God's word comes at precisely the moment when the geopolitical situation confirms the prophetic warnings Jeremiah has been proclaiming.

Jehoiakim's identification as "son of Josiah" carries ironic significance. Josiah (640-609 BCE) was Judah's last godly king who led sweeping reforms after discovering the Law scroll (2 Kings 22-23). His son Jehoiakim (609-598 BCE) reversed these reforms, becoming one of Judah's most wicked kings. This generational contrast underscores the spiritual tragedy: despite having a righteous father and witnessing genuine revival, Jehoiakim chose rebellion.

The phrase "this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD" (hayah debar-YHWH el-Yirmeyahu) emphasizes prophetic authority. What follows isn't Jeremiah's opinion but divine revelation. The command to write these prophecies in a scroll serves multiple purposes: preserving the message for future generations, providing portable testimony during exile, and creating a permanent record for validation when prophecies are fulfilled.

Historical Context

The fourth year of Jehoiakim (605 BCE) marked a crucial turning point in ancient Near Eastern politics. Babylon's decisive victory at Carchemish ended Egyptian influence over the Levant and began the Neo-Babylonian period that would dominate the next seventy years. Jehoiakim initially served as an Egyptian vassal but transferred allegiance to Babylon after Carchemish, only to rebel later—bringing Nebuchadnezzar's wrath.

This historical context explains the urgency of God's command to write the prophecies. With Babylon's rise, Jeremiah's twenty-three years of warnings (beginning in 627 BCE, Jeremiah 25:3) were about to be vindicated. The written scroll would serve as undeniable evidence that God had repeatedly warned Judah before judgment fell. Archaeological discoveries of neo-Babylonian chronicles confirm the dramatic power shift in 605 BCE, validating the biblical chronology.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does God's precise timing in speaking through His word at critical historical moments demonstrate His sovereignty?
2. In what ways does the contrast between Josiah and Jehoiakim warn against presuming on godly heritage rather than personal faithfulness?
3. How does the permanence of Scripture (written and preserved) provide different benefits than oral proclamation alone?

Interlinear Text

וְיָהִי H1961	בְּשָׁנָה הַ H8141	וְהָיָה H7243	לְיֵהוֹיָאִקִּים H3079	בֶּן H1121	יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ H2977
	year	And it came to pass in the fourth	of Jehoiakim	the son	of Josiah
מֶלֶךְ H4428	יְהוּדָה H3063	כִּי הָיָה H1961	הַדְּבָר H1697	אֵל H2088	יִרְמְיָהוּ H3414
	king	of Judah	that this word	came unto	Jeremiah
מֵאֵת H853	יְהוָה H3068	לֵאמֹר: H559			
	from the LORD	saying			

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 25:1 (Kingdom): The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon;