

# The Voice of Jeremiah (Continued) Iii

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes the enduring message of God, which will appear again, undiminished, and destiny will be determined thereby, regardless of our present attitude.*

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 36:23, Acts 13:27

**Topics:** "The Voice of God", "Spiritual Rebellion"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the enduring significance of the voices of the prophets, particularly through the story of Jeremiah's two rolls. He illustrates how the first roll, representing God's original message, was destroyed by King Jehoiakim, yet God spoke again through the second roll, underscoring that divine truth cannot be extinguished. The sermon warns against the consequences of rejecting God's revelations, as seen in the historical context of Israel and the Apostle Paul's experiences. Sparks highlights that neglecting God's voice leads to judgment, while the re-emergence of His message calls for repentance and acknowledgment. Ultimately, the sermon serves as a reminder that God's truth will always resurface, and our response to it determines our spiritual destiny.

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## Transcript

"They knew not... the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath" (Acts 13:27).

The Two Rolls (Jeremiah 36)

When the Apostle Paul made this reference to the Prophets, he was bringing their ministry right up to date some seven hundred years after the days of the Prophets. Thus he showed that those "Voices" were of enduring meaning. The context also shows that there is a voice in the Scriptures which is more than the words. The words could - and can - be heard "every Sabbath", but the voice unheard. This is an indictment, a condemnation, a warning.

We have taken note of several of the double messages of Jeremiah; that is, two contrasting things set over against each other. In what we are now going to consider it is not a matter of contrast, but of duplication: the two rolls. It is the story of the king's penknife with which he cut up the roll of prophecy and cast it to the flames.

This incident has - as far as our knowledge goes - been invariably fastened upon in relation to destructive criticism and the battle between conservative and liberal theologians or Bible interpreters. It certainly does

provide a first-class instrument for such a controversy as to the authority of the Scriptures, but it is not our intention so to use it here. If we shut it up exclusively to such a connection we may miss a "voice" which has a spiritual meaning and message of - at least - equally important significance. This is connected more with the second roll than with the first.

The seriousness of this message is found in the judgment of God upon that offender. In fulfillment of the prophecy the body of Jehoiakim was thrown over the wall to the invaders by the very people who had not repudiated his action. That, however, is going a long way ahead in order to show that an action such as his does eventually issue in disaster and calamity; in shame and retribution, however long it may tarry.

What then is the message or "Voice" of the two rolls? The first was ruthlessly destroyed and cast away. No copy of it was kept by Jeremiah or Baruch, his scribe. There were no carbon copies of documents in those days. The reproduction had to be like the first, a direct inspiration by God. God had to speak the same thing a second time (although in the second there were additions). The point is that God did speak again in the same terms. Do what we may in repudiation of anything that God has revealed, either to neglect, brush aside, or - as in this case - vehemently throw to the flames, that which God has spoken will appear again, undiminished, and destiny will be determined thereby. This fact appears again and again in the Bible. Two outstanding instances are Jesus Christ, and the churches in Asia. It is quite evident that, whether or not Saul of Tarsus was actually a participant in the crucifixion of Jesus, he was spiritually so, and having believed that the Leader had been well got rid of, he was going to send the followers also to their death. No doubt, when Jesus was killed, Saul's idea was that He was for ever out of the way and had come to His deserved end. All that remained to be done was to wipe out all that remained in connection with Him. We can never, with the most vivid imagination, enter into the surprise, devastation, and shattering bewilderment of the man Saul when Jesus of Nazareth met him with the announcement of who He was on the road to Damascus: "I am Jesus." The second roll, so to speak, had turned up and confronted him. He - Saul - had used his penknife and cast Jesus of Nazareth to the flames. He had extended that work to Stephen. Now the encounter with Jesus Himself, but with additions. We cannot imagine what calamity would have befallen Saul of Tarsus if he had persisted like Jehoiakim in rebellion.

Paul wrote - perhaps with a sob - from his prison: "All that are in Asia turned away from me" (2 Timothy 1:15). Under God they owed everything to Paul. Now, at length, they have turned from him and perhaps repudiated his ministry of "the whole counsel of God". Well, is that all that there is to it? No, only thirty or so years later and we have that matchless presentation and description of Paul's Master given in the first chapter of the Revelation. That description and presentation needs to be considered in the light of what took place in the forsaking of Paul, and the development of the subsequent thirty years. With that detailed, symbolic presentation the churches in Asia are challenged, interrogated, and judged, with their destiny in the balances, as to their reaction to Jesus - yes - and to Paul's "Voice". The second roll came up, and it was decisive.

These instances are such as to give very forceful argument to this principle: we can never ultimately get away from anything that God has shown, whatever may be our present attitude. It will come back again, and our eternal position will be hanging upon it. This, of course, is of many-sided application.

In Acts 13 Paul is showing that Israel's tragedy - which has lasted for these many centuries - was because they thought that their neglect, or violence, would not return upon them in judgment. But they are under the aegis of the Second Roll. "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart."

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