

Tear and Burn

By

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Theme:

This play conveys the fact that you can't just pick and choose what parts of the Bible you wish to obey. God's word is complete as it is written and we are to read it and obey it.

Biblical Reference:

Jeremiah 36

Approximate Running Time:

15 minutes

Props:

A Laptop Computer
A Backpack
A Scroll
A feather pen
A fire
A knife

Cast of Characters:

- Jeremiah: A Prophet of God. He is dressed in Old Testament period costuming. He is a confident man of God who has a great working relationship with Baruch.
- Baruch: A young man who is Jeremiah's Scribe. He is a fun-loving young man who has a great working relationship with Jeremiah. He is dressed in Old Testament period costuming.
- Jehoiakim: King of Judah. He shows little respect for the words of the Lord. He is arrogant and crass. He is dressed in Old Testament period costuming.
- Elishama: The secretary in the King's palace. He carries himself like someone in authority, but he is not crass and arrogant as the king is. He responds to the warnings of the Lord. He is dressed in Old Testament period costuming.
- Micaiah: A person in the king's secretary's office. Dressed in Old Testament period costuming.
- Delaiah: A person in the king's secretary's office. Dressed in Old Testament period costuming.
- Elnathan: A person in the king's secretary's office. Dressed in Old Testament period costuming.
- Gemariah: A person in the king's secretary's office. Dressed in Old Testament period costuming.

Scene: The interior of Jeremiah's house. Jeremiah is onstage as the curtain rises. He is praying and writing notes as he prays. Baruch enters after Jeremiah has written a few notes.

Baruch: You called for me?

Jeremiah: Ah, Baruch, my trusted scribe. It is so good to see you again.

Baruch: You're looking good yourself on this fine morning.

Jeremiah: Are you ready to get to work?

Baruch: I've got a question for you before we begin.

Jeremiah: You've got a question for me?

Baruch: Yeah, it may not sound like much, but I was wondering if you could stop calling me a scribe all the time?

Jeremiah: Stop calling you a scribe? Why shouldn't I call you a scribe? Don't you always come here and write things down for me?

Baruch: Yeah, that's my job.

Jeremiah: Then you're a scribe. A scribe is someone who writes things down on paper and then makes copies for others to read.

Baruch: I know, but I don't really like being called a scribe. I'd rather be called a secretary.

Jeremiah: A secretary? I don't believe I've ever heard that term before.

Baruch: I know you haven't. I made it up myself. I want to be more than just a scribe. I want to get your coffee...

Jeremiah: What's coffee?

Baruch: Answer your phone...

Jeremiah: What's a phone?

Baruch: Get your e-mail...

Jeremiah: ME-mail?

Baruch: No, it's e-mail, you know, electronic mail...

Jeremiah: I've never heard of that.

Baruch: Send your faxes...

Jeremiah: Stick to the facts, just the facts...

Baruch: Check your voicemail...

Jeremiah: How can I send mail using my voice?

Baruch: I want to book your airline reservations...

Jeremiah: Air what?

Baruch: and your hotel...

Jeremiah: What?

Baruch: And your rental car...

Jeremiah: Baruch - Baruch, are you listening to me?

Baruch: *[Coming out of his trance.]* I'm sorry. I guess I got a little carried away.

Jeremiah: Yeah, I'll say you did. Anyway, I don't know anything about the things you just told me about. E-mail, phones, faxes, and the like - it doesn't make any kind of sense to me. You're a scribe. You write down things that I tell you to write down. Isn't that enough?

Baruch: I guess I can live with it, but we can't ignore the future. Change is coming; I guess I'll just have to wait for the rest of civilization to catch up.

Jeremiah: Are you ready to start writing yet?

Baruch: *[Pulls a laptop out of his bag.]* Just let me boot this baby up.

Jeremiah: Baruch...

Baruch: All right. *[He puts his laptop back into the bag and gets out a scroll and a feather pen.]* Now I'm ready.

Jeremiah: The Lord God Almighty has told me to take a scroll and write on it all the words He has spoken to me concerning Israel, Judah and all of the other nations from the time God began speaking to me in the reign of Josiah until now. Perhaps the people of Judah will hear what the Lord has said about every disaster He plans to send their way and they will turn from their wicked ways and then I will forgive them.

Baruch: Wow, that's heavy. What part of that should I write down on this scroll?

Jeremiah: I wanted you to write everything I just told you to write. Weren't you listening to me, or do I need to send you a voicemail?

Baruch: I was writing it down. I just didn't know if you wanted me to leave it all on here. I've got some white out somewhere in my desk.

Jeremiah: White what? Never mind. You wrote what I said?

Baruch: Every word.

Jeremiah: Great. Now you are to go to the Lord's temple and read to the people from the scroll the words the Lord has commanded we write down.

Baruch: You want me to read this in the Lord's temple?

Jeremiah: That's what I said.

Baruch: Why me?

Jeremiah: I cannot go to the Lord's temple. I'm restricted from going. Tomorrow is a day of fasting. Go and read it to the people who come to the temple in the hopes that they will hear what the Lord has said, turn from their wicked ways, and the anger and wrath the Lord has pronounced on them is great.

Baruch: Yeah, this is some heavy stuff. I wouldn't want it to happen to me. But are you sure that I'm the right person to tell the people what the Lord has said? I mean, I'm not sure I'm qualified. I'm just a secretary, I mean, a scribe.

Jeremiah: The Lord has commanded that we do just this. He will protect you.

Baruch: All right, but I'm not sure about this.

[Baruch gets his stuff together and exits.]

Baruch: Pray for me.

Jeremiah: I will. *[He begins to pray.]*

[Scene changes to that of the interior of the secretary's room in the royal palace. There is a desk at center stage and important looking work strewn across his desk. The officials are gathered around the room in silent conversation. We can hear Baruch read the scroll off stage and Micaiah enters.]

Micaiah: Did you guys just hear that?

Delaiah: What?

Micaiah: The proclamation that Jeremiah's scribe is making in the temple.

Elishama: There is a scribe making a proclamation in the temple?

Micaiah: He's reading from a scroll words that were written by Jeremiah.

Elnathan: What did he say?

Micaiah: He pretty much said that Lord isn't happy with us and some pretty bad things are going to happen to us if we don't shape up.

Gemariah: Maybe we should go and hear what he has to say. What do you think?

Micaiah: This wouldn't be a good time to do that.

Elishama: Why not?

Micaiah: He's taking his lunch break. He said something about a shrimp fest at Red Lobster. He said he'd be back later.

Elishama: If this is as important as you say it is then we don't have any time to spare. Micaiah, Gemariah, and Delaiah, go to Red Lobster, get him, and bring him to me.

[*They exit. A beat. They enter with Baruch. He is munching on some fries as he enters.*]

Elishama: That was fast.

Baruch: I'll say. They didn't even let me finish my lunch.

Micaiah: I told these men of the proclamation you read in the temple and they had to hear what you said right away.

Baruch: But you could have let me finish my lunch. It was all you can eat shrimp and I wasn't even close to eating all I could eat.

Gemariah: There will be time for eating later. Did you bring the scroll with you?

Baruch: Yeah. Do you happen to have any ketchup?

Elishama: No I don't and I can't wait to hear the word of the Lord any longer. Are you going to read the scroll to me or do I have to read it myself?

Baruch: [*Finishing his fries.*] I'd let you read it, but I don't think that's how these things work. I'm the scribe. God told it to Jeremiah, he repeated it to me, I wrote it down, and now I'm supposed to read it to you. I don't think it would if we did it any different. You know how these Old Testament things work.

Elnathan: Whatever. Come on, just read it to us.

Baruch: [*Pretending he has something stuck in his tooth.*] You don't happen to have a toothpick, do you?

Elishama: No I don't. Now on with the reading.

Baruch: All right already. [*He opens the scroll. Reading.*] The Lord God Almighty has commanded Jeremiah to take a scroll and write on it all the words The Lord God Almighty has spoken to me concerning Israel, Judah and all of the other nations from the time God began speaking to me in the reign of Josiah until now. Then there's this long list of the things that God is going to do to the people if they don't turn from their wicked ways. Perhaps the people of Judah will hear what the Lord has said about every disaster He plans to send their way and they will turn from their wicked ways and then He will forgive them.

Elishama: Let me see that long list of things that will happen to us.

[*Baruch shows it to him.*]

Elishama: Oh man.

[*The others want to see it too.*]

Gemariah: What is it?

Elnathan: How bad is it?

Delaiah: What's gonna happen to us?

Micaiah: I told you guys it was pretty bad. What are we going to do now?

Elishama: I think King Jehoiakim has to see this.

Elnathan: Are you kidding me? He's going to flip.

Elishama: He needs to know what it says.

Gemariah: I don't want to be the one who tells him.

Elnathan: Me either.

Baruch: I'll read it to him. You know, it's my job and all.

Elishama: I think we should all go together but I don't think you should be there.

Baruch: But it's my job.

Elishama: I agree with these guys. King Jehoiakim isn't going to be happy. I think it's best if we take the scroll to him and for you to hide.

Baruch: I'm going to finish my lunch. You'll know where I am if you need me.

[He exits. The others exit as well. The scene changes to King Jehoiakim's palace. There is a fire burning and the King is standing next to it. They enter.]

Jehoiakim: What do you want? Did you not know that I was in the middle of something important?

Elishama: Your majesty, this is very important and I knew you would want me to bring it to your attention as soon as I could. I have here a scroll that contains a proclamation of Jeremiah that you need to read.

Jehoiakim: Why don't you read it to me. This ought to be good.

Elishama: Okay. It says, *[He opens the scroll. Reading.]* The Lord God Almighty has commanded Jeremiah to take a scroll and write on it all the words The Lord God Almighty has spoken to me concerning Israel, Judah and all of the other nations from the time God began speaking to me in the reign of Josiah until now. Then there's this long list of the things that God is going to do to the people if they don't turn from their wicked ways. Perhaps the people of Judah will hear what the Lord has said about every disaster He plans to send their way and they will turn from their wicked ways and then He will forgive them.

Elnathan: Do you want to read the list of bad things that are going to happen if we don't repent?

Jehoiakim: No, won't be necessary. Give me the scroll. *[Elishama hands it to him.]* The Lord God almighty has commanded Jeremiah to take a scroll and yatta-yatta-yatta.

[Jehoiakim pulls a knife out of his pocket and cuts the part he just read from the scroll and throws it into the fire. The others react.]

Delaiah: What are you doing?

Micaiah: You're ripping the scroll?

Gemariah: That's not a good idea. Those are the words of the Lord.

Jehoiakim: *[Ignoring them.]* Judah and all of the other nations, blah-blah-blah. *[Cutting and throwing into the fire.]* This long list of things that God is going to do, oh, I'm so scared. *[Cutting and throwing into the fire.]* If we turn from our wicked ways he'll forgive us, yeah right. *[Throwing the rest into the fire.]* That's what I think of Jeremiah's proclamation. Now get out of my palace and find Jeremiah and his scribe and bring them to me.

[They exit. Scene changes to the interior of Jeremiah's house again. Baruch enters. He has been running and he is out of breath.]

Baruch: Jeremiah, we have to hide. The king has read your proclamation and has burned the scroll it was on. He's not afraid of the Lord God and he's demanded that we be arrested and brought to him.


Jeremiah: We will not run. We will not hide. The Lord will hide us from the evil king. Quick, take another scroll, the Lord has spoken to me again.

[Baruch quickly gets another scroll and his pen.]

Baruch: I am ready.

Jeremiah: Write the words that were on the first scroll and add to it this is what the LORD says: You burned that scroll and said, "Why did you write on it that the king of Babylon would certainly come and destroy this land and cut off both men and animals from it? Therefore, this is what the LORD says about Jehoiakim king of Judah: He will have no one to sit on the throne of David; his body will be thrown out and exposed to the heat by day and the frost by night. I will punish him and his children and his attendants for their wickedness; I will bring on them and those living in Jerusalem and the people of Judah every disaster I pronounced against them, because they have not listened.

- CURTAIN -



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