

Who was Baruch in the Bible?

There are several men in the Bible named Baruch. The name Baruch means “blessed” and is still in use today.

Nehemiah mentions the name Baruch three times, referring to two or perhaps three different individuals (see Nehemiah 3:20; 10:6; and 11:5). Little information is given about these individuals other than that they were involved in various activities during Nehemiah’s governance of Jerusalem.

The most well-known Baruch in the Bible is the scribe and perhaps servant of Jeremiah the prophet. As Jeremiah received messages from the Lord, he dictated them to Baruch, who wrote them down.

What is at issue in the book of Jeremiah is Jeremiah’s pronouncement that the king of Babylon would be victorious against Israel. This victory would be proof positive that the Lord was displeased with the practices of the people and the leadership of Judah. Of course, those in leadership did not want to hear this.

In Jeremiah 32:11-16, Jeremiah buys a piece of land and puts Baruch in charge of handling all of the legal requirements regarding the deed. This was a prophetic act: “The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land” (verse 15). This was a message of hope because the judgment would not last forever. Israel would be restored, and normal activities would resume.

In chapter 36, Jeremiah is commanded to write down all the words the Lord gives him. It seems clear that the command was not that Jeremiah himself commit the words to the

scroll because he called on Baruch to do the actual writing:

"In the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 'Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you in the reign of Josiah till now. Perhaps when the people of Judah hear about every disaster I plan to inflict on them, they will each turn from their wicked ways; then I will forgive their wickedness and their sin.' So Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and while Jeremiah dictated all the words the Lord had spoken to him, Baruch wrote them on the scroll" (verses 1-4).

Once the words were written down, they needed to be read. Jeremiah was not allowed on the temple grounds due to previous altercations with the leadership, so he sent Baruch to read the message to all who would listen (Jeremiah 36:5-10.)

Some of the leaders heard what Baruch read and asked him to read it to them again, which he did (Jeremiah 36:11-15). After they heard all the words Baruch read from the scroll, they became fearful and said, "We must report all these words to the king" (verse 16). Then they asked Baruch about the source of the prophecy, and Baruch explained that Jeremiah had dictated all the words and that Baruch had written them in ink on the scroll (verses 17-18). Then the officials said to Baruch, "You and Jeremiah, go and hide. Don't let anyone know where you are" (verse 19). However, the leaders kept the scroll to read to the king. During the course of their audience with the king, every time several columns had been read, the king cut them from the scroll and threw them into the fire. Eventually, the whole scroll had been burned up, but not before the king heard the word of the Lord (see verses 20-26.)

"After the king burned the scroll containing the words that Baruch had written at Jeremiah's dictation, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: 'Take another scroll and write on it all the words that were on the first scroll, which Jehoiakim king of Judah burned up.' . . . So Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the scribe Baruch son of Neriah, and as Jeremiah dictated, Baruch wrote on it all the words of the scroll that Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire. And many similar words were added to them" (Jeremiah 36:27-28, 32). Burning the scroll could do nothing to prevent the words from coming to pass, and a new scroll was prepared. God's Word will endure.

In chapter 43, Jeremiah speaks his message from the Lord, and some prominent men charge that Baruch is actually prompting Jeremiah to bring the message of judgment (see verses 1-3).

The final mention of Baruch is in Jeremiah 45. Although the message of judgment was from the Lord, Baruch and Jeremiah sorrowed to think that the city and nation they loved would be destroyed in judgment: "When Baruch son of Neriah wrote on a scroll the words Jeremiah the prophet dictated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, Jeremiah said this to Baruch: 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to you, Baruch: You said, "Woe to me! The Lord has added sorrow to my pain; I am worn out with groaning and find no rest." But the Lord has told me to say to you, "This is what the Lord says: I will overthrow what I have built and uproot what I have planted, throughout the earth. Should you then seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them. For I will bring disaster on all people, declares the Lord, but wherever you go I will let you escape with your life'" (verses 1-5).

Here God promises that, even though the devastation will be great and even though it will be a sorrow for Baruch, he personally will be spared. The Lord cautions Baruch not to seek great things for himself. He should be satisfied with the deliverance that the Lord has promised.

This final word to Baruch is also pertinent to Christians. Christians live in a world that is doomed to destruction. A Christian who seeks great things for himself or seeks to become great on earth is shortsighted. Christians should simply be faithful to do what God requires and rejoice in the fact that they will escape the coming judgment.