

TAKING THE PENKNIFE TO GOD'S WORD

During the days of Jeremiah, God sent word to the kings of Judah regarding the upcoming destruction and subsequent captivity that would take place at the hands of the Babylonians. Because Judah had failed to learn from her sister Israel, and refused to turn aside from her idolatrous, perverse ways, God was forced to punish His own people that out of her He might save a faithful remnant. God instructed Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch to write God's words on a scroll so that they might be read to all of the people of Judah in hopes that they would repent and turn back to God (Jer.36:3). Ultimately, the scroll finds its way into the palace of king Jehoiakim, where Jehudi began to read the scroll. After just a few words, Jehoiakim takes a penknife and begins cutting the scroll, and casting it into the fire (36:23). God then commands Jeremiah to write again the words of the scroll, but to this would be added even more words, words specifically spoken against Jehoiakim and his posterity (36:28-32). How foolish for this wicked king to think that simply by cutting and burning the scroll he would be delivered from the weight of its contents!

The spirit of Jehoiakim is very much alive and well today. Many seem desirous to know the truth of God's word, but upon finding something they do not desire to hear or see, they take a spiritual penknife and begin carving out of God's revealed will those things they do not like, casting them into the fire of ecumenism, denominationalism, humanism, and every other "ism" opposed to God's way. Many are foolish enough to think that if they ignore the plain teachings that they do not like, then they are under no obligation to follow them! Far too many will seek out a "second opinion" when it comes to God's word. Someone will read or already know the Lord's teaching concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage (as clearly revealed in Matthew 19:9), but because their marriage situation is not what it should be, they will seek out someone who will tell them what they want to hear, that they can stay in an adulterous marriage with no consequence whatsoever. Others have taken the penknife to God's word with regard to homosexuality, abortion, the gospel plan of salvation, the worship of the church, and many other such things. Such is to be expected from those who are not members of the Lord's church, those who are of the world and of the denominations. It is most disturbing when those of the house of God (1 Tim.3:15) begin taking liberties with the unalterable standard of truth and right (Prov.30:6; Gal.1:6-9). Some who claim to love the Lord are tearing His holy word asunder and casting it into the fire so that they may be more like the world round about them (1 Sam.8:20). Some desire to talk like the world, dress like the world, act like the world, play like the world, and in so doing have been pressed into the mold of the world instead of being transformed by the power of the word (Rom.12:1-2).

Instead of cutting out the portions of God's word that are difficult for us to hear, we should instead allow that word to cut to our hearts and drive away that which would keep us from our God (Acts 2:37). Instead of burning

the word of God because it may ask us to do hard or uncomfortable things, we should allow that word to burn within us as a consuming fire, waiting for every opportunity to proclaim it to others (Jer.20:9). By taking a penknife to the word of God, we in no way minimize or eliminate our responsibility to do what has been commanded of us. “And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes” (Luke 12:47).

Patrick Morrison