

The Bonds and the Yokes

Jeremiah 27-28

Jeremiah 27 - *"In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, ² 'Thus says the Lord to me: 'Make for yourselves bonds and yokes, and put them on your neck, ³ and send them to the king of Edom, the king of Moab, the king of the Ammonites, the king of Tyre, and the king of Sidon, by the hand of the messengers who come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah. ⁴ And command them to say to their masters, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel—thus you shall say to your masters: ⁵ 'I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are on the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it to whom it seemed proper to Me. ⁶ And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field I have also given him to serve him. ⁷ So all nations shall serve him and his son and his son's son, until the time of his land comes; and then many nations and great kings shall make him serve them. ⁸ And it shall be, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and which will not put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation I will punish,' says the Lord, 'with the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand. ⁹ Therefore do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who speak to you, saying, 'You shall not serve the king of Babylon.'" ¹⁰ For they prophesy a lie to you, to remove you far from your land; and I will drive you out, and you will perish. ¹¹ But the nations that bring their necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will let them remain in their own land,' says the Lord, 'and they shall till it and dwell in it.'"*

¹² I also spoke to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, "Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live! ¹³ Why will you die, you and your people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the Lord has spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?"

¹⁴ Therefore do not listen to the words of the prophets who speak to you, saying, 'You shall not serve the king of Babylon,' for they prophesy a lie to you; ¹⁵ for I have not sent them," says the Lord, "yet they prophesy a lie in My name, that I may drive you out, and that you may perish, you and the prophets who prophesy to you."

¹⁶ Also I spoke to the priests and to all this people, saying, "Thus says the Lord: 'Do not listen to the words of your prophets who prophesy to you, saying, 'Behold, the vessels of the Lord's house will now shortly be brought back from Babylon'; for they prophesy a lie to you. ¹⁷ Do not listen to them; serve the king of Babylon, and live! Why should this city be laid waste? ¹⁸ But if they are prophets, and if the word of the Lord is with them, let them now make intercession to the Lord of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the Lord, in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, do not go to Babylon.'

¹⁹ "For thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the pillars, concerning the Sea, concerning the carts, and concerning the remainder of the vessels that remain in this city, ²⁰ which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon did not take, when he carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and

Jerusalem—²¹ yes, thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the Lord, and in the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem: ²² ‘They shall be carried to Babylon, and there they shall be until the day that I visit them,’ says the Lord. ‘Then I will bring them up and restore them to this place.’”

Background Notes

The year was 597 BC, the first year of Zedekiah’s reign. That year the second group of captives, including Ezekiel and King Jehoiachin, was deported to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:10). During this year the Lord directed Jeremiah to give an object lesson before King Zedekiah and the people, and specifically before the envoys who had come to Jerusalem from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon. Most likely these envoys had come to join with Zedekiah in planning a revolt against Nebuchadnezzar and the authority of Babylon. The object lesson involved making and wearing wooden yokes for each of the nations gathered at this summit meeting. The point of this object lesson was that the nations should submit to the yoke of Babylon. They should not rebel, because a rebellion would not succeed. The envoys were to take this message back to their nations and kings.

Doctrinal Points

1. The “powers that be” are ordained by God.

This doctrinal point comes straight from Romans 13:1, *“For there is no authority except from God and the authorities that exist are appointed or ordained by God.”* When the apostle Paul wrote this Scripture, Nero was on the throne – not a benevolent ruler!

This doctrinal point was brought out in the message from the Lord that the envoys were to take home and communicate to their nations. *“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel—thus you shall say to your masters: ‘I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are on the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it to whom it seemed proper to Me. And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant” (v4-6).* How long the Babylonian rulers were to be in power was revealed in verse 7. Notice - that God Himself would punish any nation that refused to submit to the rule of Nebuchadnezzar (v8).

Why was it okay to resist Sennacherib and the Assyrians about 100 years earlier, but not Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians at this time? The reason is that God revealed His will in both cases. In one case, it was to resist: in the other case, it was to submit.

Jeremiah warned King Zedekiah, the people, and the priests not to listen to the false prophets who were saying that peace was right around the corner, and that the captured Temple treasures would soon be returned to Jerusalem (v9-17). Then Jeremiah challenged the false prophets (v18-22). If they were true prophets of the Lord, then the remaining Temple

treasures would not be taken to Babylon. But if they were false prophets, and Jeremiah was the true prophet of the Lord, then the remaining Temple vessels would also be carried away.

Indeed, the Temple vessels were carried away in 586 BC, and they remained in Babylon for the duration of the 70-year captivity. *“They shall be carried to Babylon, and there they shall be until the day that I visit them,” says the Lord. “Then I will bring them up and restore them to this place.”* Jeremiah, the true prophet, revealed the truth about Babylon. The powers that be are ordained of God.

2. The “prophets that be” are proven by history.

Jeremiah 28 - *“And it happened in the same year, at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, who was from Gibeon, spoke to me in the house of the Lord in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying, ²“Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: ‘I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. ³ Within two full years I will bring back to this place the vessels of the Lord’s house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon. ⁴ And I will bring back to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah who went to Babylon,’ says the Lord, ‘for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.”*”

⁵ Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and in the presence of all the people who stood in the house of the Lord, ⁶ and the prophet Jeremiah said, “Amen! The Lord do so; the Lord perform your words which you have prophesied, to bring back the vessels of the Lord’s house and all who were carried away captive, from Babylon to this place. ⁷ Now hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: ⁸ The prophets who have been before me and before you of old prophesied against many countries and great kingdoms—of war and disaster and pestilence. ⁹ As for the prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent.” ¹⁰ Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke off the prophet Jeremiah’s neck and broke it. ¹¹ And Hananiah spoke in the presence of all the people, saying, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Even so I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years.”” And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.

¹² Now the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, after Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying, ¹³“Go and tell Hananiah, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord: “You have broken the yokes of wood, but you have made in their place yokes of iron.” ¹⁴ For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “I have put a yoke of iron on the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him. I have given him the beasts of the field also.”””

¹⁵ Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, “Hear now, Hananiah, the Lord has not sent you, but you make this people trust in a lie. ¹⁶ Therefore thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will cast you from the face of the earth. This year you shall die, because you have taught rebellion against the Lord.” ¹⁷ So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.

Here in chapter 28 a false prophet named Hananiah confronted Jeremiah and prophesied that within two years King Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) and all the Temple treasures would be returned to Jerusalem (v3-4). To dramatize his false prophecy, Hananiah removed and broke the wooden yoke that was on Jeremiah's neck for the object lesson. He said that within two years the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, would be removed (v11).

What was Jeremiah's response to Hananiah's prophetic claims? *"As for the prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent"* (v9). In other words, prophets of the Lord are proven when the events they prophesied come to pass, and thus become part of history. That's essentially our doctrinal point: ***True prophets are proven by history.***

According to Deuteronomy 18:20, false prophets were to die. So Jeremiah gave the true word of the Lord to Hananiah, saying (in essence): 'You broke the yokes of wood, but they will become yokes of iron. God has ordained that Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon is in power. And you, Hananiah, have falsely prophesied that peace will come within two years, but you will be removed from the face of the earth within one year.' *"Behold, I will cast you from the face of the earth. This year you shall die, because you have taught rebellion against the Lord"* (v16). Hananiah died two months later, according to the word of the Lord through Jeremiah. *"So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month"* (v17). True prophets are proven by history.

Practical Application

Don't deny the truth with "wishful thinking."

Notice what Jeremiah said to Hananiah: *"Amen! The Lord do so; the Lord perform your words which you have prophesied, to bring back the vessels of the Lord's house and all who were carried away captive, from Babylon to this place"* (28:3). In other words, said Jeremiah, we all **wish** that the peace and return from captivity that you're predicting could be true - but **it's not the truth**. Don't deny the truth with your "wishful thinking"!

Unfortunately, "wishful thinking" is what many people do today – even some professing Christians. They want to be healthy and wealthy and successful and happy, so they deny the biblical truth that it's not God's will for everyone to be rich or free of suffering. They want eternal happiness for everyone in the end, so they deny the existence of an eternal hell, a truth that is clearly taught in Scripture. Let's face it: the possibility of suffering and the doctrine of hell are not pleasant teachings. But don't be like the false prophets.

Don't deny the truth with "wishful thinking"!