

Jeremiah Chapter 28

Jeremiah 28:1 "And it came to pass the same year, in 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, which [was] of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying,"

“Reign of Zedekiah”:

Compare 27:1 and see note there.

The fourth year would be about 593 B.C.

“Hananiah”:

This man was one of several by this name in Scripture, in this case a foe of God’s true prophet, distinct from the loyal Hananiah (of Dan. 1:6).

Zedekiah reigned 11 years, so it could have been thought that anything under 5 years would have been considered the beginning of his reign.

This was a gathering of priests, perhaps to discredit Jeremiah.

Notice the specific date they met.

The 4th year, in the fifth month.

That time will be very important in the next few verses.

Gibeon was a city of priests.

We remember that Jeremiah was the son of a priest as well.

Since the priests and all the people were there, it was probably a special feast day.

Verses 2-3

“I have broken the yoke”:

The false prophets, of the kind Jeremiah warned of (in 27:14-16), boldly predicted victory over Babylon and the return of the temple vessels within two years.

In actuality, Babylon achieved its third and final step in conquering Judah 11 years later (586 B.C.; as in chapters 39, 40 and 52; as to the vessels, see notes on 27:21-22).

Jeremiah 28:2 "Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon."

Using the language of the true prophets, and describing the LORD just in the same manner they do, when coming from him, and speaking in his name.

A bold and daring action, when he knew the LORD had not sent him, nor had said any such thing to him.

He next relates with all assurance.

"Saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon":

Which he had put upon the neck of the king of Judah.

Signifying that he should be no more subject to him.

That is, he had determined to do it, and would do it, in a very short time.

We learned in a previous lesson, that the prophets who were prophesying good times were actually false prophets.

They had not been sent of God, but had done this on their own.

Hananiah proclaimed his message to be from God.

He is bringing the exact opposite message of the message God gave Jeremiah.

Jeremiah's message was placed in his mouth by God.

Hananiah's message came from his own will.

Jeremiah 28:3 "Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD'S house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon:"

Or, "within two years of days"; when they are up to a day.

The Targum is, "at the end of two years;"

What the false prophets before had said would be done in a very little time.

This fixes the precise time of doing it.

A very short time, in comparison of the seventy years that Jeremiah had spoken of (Jer. 25:11).

"Will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place":

The temple, where he now was.

Namely, all such vessels as before this time had been taken by him, both in Jehoiakim's reign, and at the captivity of Jeconiah his son (who also was called Coniah and Jehoiachin).

"And carried them to Babylon":

Where they still remained, and according to Jeremiah still would.

And were so far from being brought back in a short time, that what were left would be carried there also (Jer. 27:19).

This prophecy appeals to the flesh of man.

These people want to accept this message because it is good news.

This message is that there is no need for repentance.

Jeremiah said the captivity would be for 70 years.

Jeremiah 28:4 "And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the LORD: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon."

"Bring again ... Jeconiah":

This rash, false claim fell into public disgrace.

Jeconiah (previously taken to Babylon in 597 B.C.), would live out his years there and not return to Jerusalem (52:31-34).

Other captives either died in captivity or didn't return until 61 years later (compare 22:24-26).

Hananiah spoke in the name of the LORD, and his message sounded very similar to Isaiah's earlier promises that the LORD would deliver Jerusalem from the Assyrians (Isa. 37:33-35).

False prophets speak just enough truth to make their message sound good, which is why the Bible reminds us to "test the spirits" (1 John 4:1), and warns us that Satan has the power to present himself "as an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14).

Jeconiah was the same as Jehoiachin, and he was in captivity 36 years in Babylon.

This prophecy is a lie.

Verses 5-6

Jeremiah points out that, humanly speaking, he could wish that Hananiah's prophecy were true.

Unfortunately, without repentance and renewed obedience to the terms of the covenant, Judah will know neither peace nor the return of the captured sacred vessels.

Jeremiah 28:5 "Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the LORD,"

The false prophet, as he is called by the Targum, Syriac, and Arabic versions.

"In the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the LORD": Waiting and worshipping in the temple.

And said boldly and before them all, in answer to Hananiah's prophecy, what follows.

Jeremiah 28:6 "Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the LORD do so: the LORD perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the LORD'S house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place."

Or, "so be it".

He wished it might be so as Hananiah had said, if it was the will of God.

As a prophet he knew it could not be.

As an Israelite, out of respect to his country, he wished it might be; or, however, he wished that they would repent of their sins.

That the evil he had threatened them with might not come upon them.

And the good that Hananiah had prophesied might be fulfilled.

"The LORD do so: the LORD perform thy words which thou hast prophesied":

Such a hearty regard had he for his country, that, were it the LORD's pleasure to do this, he could be content to be accounted a false prophet, and Hananiah the true one.

It was very desirable to him to have this prophecy confirmed and fulfilled by the LORD.

The Jews have a saying, that whoever deals hypocritically with his friend, at last falls into his hand, or the hands of his son, or son's son.

And so they suppose Jeremiah acted hypocritically with Hananiah, and therefore fell into the hands of the son of his son's son (Jer. 37:13).

But he rather spoke ironically, as some think.

"To bring again the vessels of the LORD's house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place":

As a priest, this must be very desirable to Jeremiah, the Jews observe, since he would be a gainer by it.

Being a priest, he should eat of the holy things.

When Hananiah, being a Gibeonite, would be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water to him.

"Amen":

Means so be it.

Jeremiah is saying that it would be wonderful if this happened.

Jeremiah 28:7 "Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people;"

Though this would be very acceptable to me, and I should be glad to have it fulfilled.

Yet carefully attend to what I am about to say, it being what greatly concerns thee to observe, as well as all present to listen to.

And therefore it is added,

"And in the ears of all the people":

That stood round to hear the conversation that passed between the two prophets.

Nevertheless, is the key word in this verse.

Jeremiah says, I hope what you are saying is true, but God has given me a different message.

Jeremiah did not hide somewhere to give his message just to Hananiah.

He spoke his prophecy so all could hear.

Jeremiah 28:8 "The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence."

Such as Isaiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and others.

These, "Prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms":

As Egypt, Babylon, Syria, Ethiopia, Moab, etc. as Isaiah particularly did.

"Of war, and of evil, and of pestilence":

By evil some think is meant famine, because that usually goes along with the other mentioned, and there being but one letter in which the words for evil and famine differ.

And now the prophets that prophesied of these were sent of God, were the true prophets of the LORD.

And therefore, this ought not to be objected to the prejudice of Jeremiah that his prophecies were of this sort.

Yea, if they should not come to pass, yet a man is not to be counted a false prophet, because such things are threatened in case nations do not repent of their sins and reform.

Which they may do; and then the evils threatened are prevented, as in the case of the Ninevites.

Generally speaking, the true prophets brought warnings from God to the people.

They stood before kings with messages from God.

They spoke of the need of repentance.

They spoke to priests to keep the worship of God holy.

They were messengers with warnings from God.

Jeremiah reminds all of them that the prophets who speak of good times are generally the false prophets.

Hananiah's prophecy is not a warning from God.

He speaks of peace at a time, when the people have been worshipping false gods.

This means he is a false prophet.

Jeremiah 28:9 "The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, [then] shall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly sent him."

Of prosperity, of good things, as Hananiah did, and which are always acceptable to men.

And such a prophet is agreeable to them.

"When the word of the prophet shall come to pass":

When the prophecy of good things, which he delivers in the name of the LORD, shall be filled.

"Then shall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly sent him":

And not till then; it is the event that must make it manifest.

In the other case, it may be in a good measure known before it comes to pass, and, whether it comes to pass or not, that a prophet is a true prophet.

Because his prophecies are agreeable to the word and the declared will of God.

Contain evils threatened on account of sin, and in order to bring men to repentance, which must needs be right.

And besides, they have no interest of their own to serve, but run contrary to the stream of the people, and are exposed to their rage and censure.

Whereas, a man that prophesies of peace, he is more to be suspected of flattering the people, and of prophesying out of his own heart.

And nothing but the event can show him a true prophet.

Which if he delivers with a condition, that the people do not do that which is evil in the sight of God.

To provoke him to deny them the promised good, is always certainly fulfilled.

And if it is not, then he appears manifestly a false prophet.

The final proof of whether a prophet is a true prophet or not, is whether the prophecy comes true or not.

If the LORD truly sent the prophet, his words will come to pass.

Jeremiah 28:10 "Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it."

“Took the yoke ... brake it”:

The phony prophet, in foolishness, removed the object lesson from the true spokesman and broke it as a sign of his own prediction coming true (compare verses 2-4, 11).

Jeremiah had been wearing the yoke on his neck to give the people a visible sign of their captivity.

Only God should have removed the yoke from Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 28:11 "And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Even so will I 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."

Explaining to them his meaning, in taking the yoke, and breaking it.

"Saying, thus saith the LORD":

Wickedly making use of the LORD's name, to give countenance to his words and actions.

"Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years":

The time he had fixed for the bringing back of the vessels of the sanctuary (Jer. 28:3).

"And the prophet Jeremiah went his way":

Showing thereby his opinions for him, and intense dislike of his lies and blasphemies.

Patiently bearing his actions and disrespectful behavior; and prudently withdrawing to prevent riots and mayhem.

Returning no answer till he had received one from the LORD himself, which he quickly had.

The time table that Hananiah gave would make him a true prophet or a false prophet, within the two years spoken.

Jeremiah left because he knew this was not true.

Jeremiah 28:12 "Then the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah [the prophet], after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying,"

When in his own house or apartment, to which he retired.

And this came to him either in a vision or dream, or by some articulate voice.

Or by an impulse upon his spirit, directing him what to say to the false prophet.

"After that Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck of the Prophet Jeremiah":

How long afterwards is not known, perhaps the same day.

Or, however, it is certain it was in the same year, and less than two months after (Jer. 28:17). And very probably in a few hours after.

"Saying" (as follows):

God has something to say about all of this.

Verses 13-14

Breaking Jeremiah's yoke did not have the power to magically thwart the Word of God behind the sign act (Deut. 28:48).

Jeremiah 28:13 "Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron."

"Go and tell Hananiah":

Jeremiah apparently left the meeting, and later God sent him back to confront the liar, likely wearing yokes or iron (which Hananiah could not break).

To replace the wooden ones (verse 14) and to illustrate his message.

The yoke of wood could be broken easily, but a yoke of iron is not breakable.

God is saying to him, you are right; the wood could not hold him long, but the iron yoke will be hard and lasting.

Jeremiah 28:14 "For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also."

Under which titles he is often spoken of.

And which he uses, when he delivered anything to his prophets to declare in his name to others.

"I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations""

Mentioned in Jeremiah 27:3.

"That they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him":

Directly contrary to what Hananiah had prophesied (Jer. 28:11).

That his yoke should be broken off from them.

But instead of that, it should become heavier unto them, and they should be obliged to serve him.

Whether they would or not; and refusing to pay tribute to him, should be carried captive by him, as had been foretold.

"And I have given him the beasts of the field also":

As he had said he would (Jer. 27:6).

And which is repeated, to show that the whole would be punctually fulfilled.

That not only those nations, the men, the inhabitants of them, would be delivered to him; but even the very cattle, and all that belonged to them.

The power of Nebuchadnezzar is from God.

He will rule with iron or hardness.

Creator God can do whatever He chooses with His creation.

In this case, He has given these nations over to Nebuchadnezzar.

Verses 15-17

"The LORD hath not sent thee":

Jeremiah told Hananiah that

- (1) God had not approved his message;
- (2) He was guilty of encouraging the people to trust in a lie, even rebellion; and
- (3) God would require his life that very year, 597 B.C. The true prophet's word was authenticated by Hananiah's death in two months (compare verse 17).

Hananiah had promised that the LORD would deliver Judah from Babylon within “two years”, but the LORD put him to death two months after he had challenged Jeremiah and deceived the people.

Jeremiah 28:15 "Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie."

The false prophet, as he is again called by the Targum, and in the Syriac version.

Where he went to him, and met with him, whether in the temple or elsewhere, is not mentioned.

Very probably in some public place, that there might be witnesses of what was said.

For it was for the conviction of others, as well as for his own confusion, the following things are observed.

"Hear now, Hananiah, the LORD hath not sent thee":

Though he spoke in his name, and pretended a mission from him, when he had none, which was abominable wickedness.

"But thou makest this people to trust in a lie":

That the LORD would break off the yoke of the king of Babylon, and free the nations from servitude to him, particularly Judea.

And that the king, and his princes, and people, and the vessels of the temple, carried away with him, would be returned within two years.

This, the people depended on as coming from the LORD, when he was not sent by him.

To speak against a prophet of God is a dangerous thing, but remember, this is God speaking through Jeremiah.

Hananiah was recognized as a prophet, but God says He did not send him.

The people have believed the lie he had told, because it was good news.

It is so strange why the public seem to believe a lie before they will believe the truth.

Jeremiah 28:16 "Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD."

Because of this heinous offence, in lying in the name of the LORD, and deceiving the people.

"Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth":

With the utmost indignation and abhorrence, as not worthy to live upon it.

It signifies that he should die, and that not a natural, but violent death, by the immediate hand of God, by some judgment upon him.

And so be by force taken off the earth, and buried in it, and be no more seen on it.

"This year thou shalt die":

Within the present year, reckoning from this time.

So that, had he died any time within twelve months from hence, it would have been sufficient to have verified the prophecy.

"Because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD":

To despise his word by his prophet.

To contradict his will.

To refuse subjection to the king of Babylon.

To neglect his instructions, directions, and exhortations.

And to believe a lie.

Jeremiah has given him a shorter time to prove whether he is of God or not.

Hananiah had said, within two years; now Jeremiah says within one year.

Remember if the prophecy comes true, the prophet is of God.

God will kill Hananiah to stop him from telling lies to the people.

He made a bad mistake when he told the people to rebel; against the wishes of God.

Jeremiah 28:17 "So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month."

That he had delivered out his prophecy.

In the same year in which Jeremiah said he should die.

Which proved Hananiah to be a false prophet, and Jeremiah to be a true one.

"In the seventh month":

It was two months after he had prophesied.

For it was in the fifth month that he prophesied, and in the seventh he died.

Not after seven months, as Theodoret remarks, but in two months.

So he that prophesied, that within two years what he foretold would come to pass, in two months' time dies himself, according to the word of the LORD, and his prophecies die with him.

The Jewish writers move a difficulty here, how he should be said to die the same year, when the seventh month was the beginning of another year.

For the civil year of the Jews began from the seventh month, or the month Tisri; as their ecclesiastical year from the month Nisan or Abib.

To solve this they observe a tradition, that he died the last day of the sixth month, or the eve of the new year.

And ordered his sons and his servants, before his death, to hide it, and not bring him out to be buried till after the year was begun, to make Jeremiah a liar.

To which agrees the Targum, both of the clause in (Jer. 28:16); and this.

The former of which it paraphrases thus, "this year shall thou die; and in the other year (or the year following), thou shalt be buried;" and this verse thus, "and Hananiah the false prophet died this year, and was buried in the seventh month:"

But there was no occasion to raise such a difficulty, since it would have been enough to have verified the prediction, that he died any time within the twelve months from the date of it.

And, besides, the solution makes the difficulty greater, and contradicts the very text, which says, he died in the seventh month.

Remember earlier in this lesson I told you to remember the prophecy was given in the fifth month, now you know why.

Hananiah dies in the 7th month.

Two months after Jeremiah prophesies of his death, he dies.

The two months are because his prophecy was about two years.

Now the people know that Jeremiah is the true prophet of God.

Jeremiah Chapter 28 Questions

1. When did Hananiah speak to Jeremiah in the house of the LORD?
2. How many years did Zedekiah reign?
3. What did Hananiah and Jeremiah have in common?
4. What was Hananiah prophesying?
5. Jeremiah's message was placed in his mouth by _____.
6. What time did Hananiah set for the return of the temple vessels?
7. Hananiah's prophecy appeals to the _____ of man.
8. Why do the people want to believe the message of Hananiah?
9. Jeconiah was the same as _____.
10. How long was he in captivity?
11. Why did Jeremiah say "Amen" to Hananiah's message?
12. What does "Amen" mean?
13. What is the key word of verse 7?
14. Who did Jeremiah speak to?
15. The prophets of old, who were true prophets, brought what kind of message?
16. What is the final proof of whether someone is a prophet or not?
17. What happened to the yoke on Jeremiah's neck?
18. What did Hananiah say, the breaking of the yoke symbolized?
19. What would God replace the yoke of wood with?
20. Where had the power of Nebuchadnezzar come from?
21. What does Jeremiah accuse Hananiah of in verse 15?
22. What bad news did Jeremiah tell Hananiah?
23. When was Jeremiah's prophecy against Hananiah proven?