

# CHAPTER 28

## INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH 28

Thus chapter relates a false prophecy of Hananiah, who broke off the yoke from Jeremiah; but in return the people are threatened with an iron yoke, and he with death; which came to pass. The time, place, and substance of his prophecy, are in (~~28:1~~Jeremiah 28:1-4); Jeremiah's answer to it, (~~28:5~~Jeremiah 28:5-9); Hananiah breaks Jeremiah's yoke, and explains the meaning of it to the people, (~~28:10~~Jeremiah 28:10,11); Jeremiah prophesies that iron yokes should be given instead of wooden ones, (~~28:12~~Jeremiah 28:12-14); and foretells the death of the false prophet, (~~28:15~~Jeremiah 28:15-17).

**Ver. 1.** *And it came to pass the same year*, etc.] That the prophet was bid to make yokes and bonds, and send them to the neighbouring kings, whose ambassadors were in Zedekiah's court; and when he spoke the things related in the preceding chapter to Zedekiah, the priests, and people:

*in the beginning the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah*; perhaps in the first year of his reign:

*in the fourth year, [and] in the fifth month*; not in the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign, though the Septuagint and A table versions so render it; since his reign was but eleven years in all, and therefore the fourth could not be called with so much propriety the beginning of his reign: though, according to Jarchi, it was the fourth of Zedekiah's reign, the same year in which he paid a visit to the king of Babylon, (~~25:15~~Jeremiah 51:59); and was not only confirmed in his kingdom by him, but, according to the same writer, had it enlarged, and was made king over five neighbouring kings; and so this, though the fourth of his reign over Judah, was the first of his enlarged dominions: but rather this was the fourth year of the sabbatical year, or the fourth after the seventh year's rest of the land, as Kimchi observes; which was the first of Zedekiah's reign, who reigned eleven years, and the temple was destroyed at the end of a sabbatical year; in which he is followed by many, though there is nothing in the text or context that directs to it. Some divide Zedekiah's reign into three parts, the

beginning, and middle, and end; and so what was done within the first four years of his reign might be said to be in the beginning of it. Others think that here are two distinct dates; that the former respects the things in the preceding chapter, which were in the beginning of his reign; and the latter that affair of Hananiah, which was in the fourth year of it. But Noldius<sup>f543</sup>, after Glassius<sup>f544</sup>, gets clear of the difficulties of this text, by rendering the words, “and it was from that year, the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, unto the fourth year of his reign”; that is, the prophet went on for the space of four years, signifying the will of the Lord by words and types; when in the fifth month of the fourth year, which was the month of Ab, answering to part of our July and of August,

*Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet*; the false prophet, as the Targum, Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions call him,

*which [was] of Gibeon*; a city of the priests; so might be a priest, though not the high priest, as some have thought:

*spake unto me in the house of the Lord, in the presence of the priests, and of all the people*; he came to the temple, where Jeremiah was, to confront him; and he addressed himself to him, the priests and all the people being present, who were come thither to minister and worship:

*saying*; as follows:

**Ver. 2.** *Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel*, etc.] 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.

**Ver. 3.** *Within two full years*, etc.] Or, “within two years of days”<sup>f545</sup>; 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, (<sup><251></sup>Jeremiah 25:11,12);

*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:

*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 thither also, (<sup><279></sup>Jeremiah 27:19-21).

**Ver. 4.** *And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah,* etc.] This he knew would please the people, who looked upon Zedekiah only as a deputy of the king of Babylon, and not properly their king; but Jeconiah, as he is here called; and he knew that Zedekiah dared not resent this, but was obliged to feigned a desire of Jeconiah's return, though otherwise not agreeable to him:

*with all the captives of Judah that went into Babylon, saith the Lord;* the princes, officers, and others, that should be living at the time fixed:

*for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon;* weaken his power over other nations, and particularly deliver the king of Judah from his bondage, and from subjection to him.

**Ver. 5.** *Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah,* etc.] 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.

**Ver. 6.** *Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen,* etc.] 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 the 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<sup>f546</sup> 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, (<sup>28713</sup>Jeremiah 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, to 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.

**Ver. 7.** *Nevertheless, hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears,* etc.] 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.

**Ver. 8.** *The prophets that have been before me, and before thee of old,* etc.] Such as Isaiah, Hoses, 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.

**Ver. 9.** *The prophet which prophesieth of peace*, etc.] 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 Lord 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 proviso, 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.

**Ver. 10.** *Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck*, etc.] Which he wore as a symbol of the subjection of Judea, and other nations, to the king of Babylon: an impudent and insolent action this was, to take the prophet's yoke from his neck; and the more so, as it was by the command of God that he made it, and wore it:

*and brake it*; being made of wood, as it afterwards appears, and so might easily be broken.

**Ver. 11.** *And Hananiah spoke in the presence of all the people*, etc.] 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, (<sup><243B></sup>Jeremiah 28:3);

*and the prophet Jeremiah went his way*; showing thereby his dissent from him, and his dislike and detestation of his lies and blasphemies; patiently bearing his affronts and insolence; and prudently withdrawing to prevent riots and tumults; returning no answer till he had received one from the Lord himself, which he quickly had.

**Ver. 12.** *Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah [the prophet]*, etc.] 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, (<sup><243T></sup>Jeremiah 28:17); and very probably in a few hours after:

*saying*; as follows:

**Ver. 13.** *Go and tell Hananiah, saying, thus saith the Lord*, etc.] Whose name he had abused; whose prophet he had ill treated; and whose prophecies he had contradicted, and the symbols of them had contumeliously used:

*thou hast broken the yokes of wood*: or, “bonds”, or “the thongs”<sup>[547]</sup>; with which the yokes of wood were bound and fastened, as Kimchi interprets it:

*but thou shall make for them yokes of iron*; not Hananiah, but Jeremiah; who should prophesy of a more severe bondage the nations should be brought into by Nebuchadnezzar, in direct contradiction to Hananiah’s prophecy; instead of wooden yokes, they should have iron ones; which should lie heavier, and bear harder upon them, and which could not be broken nor taken off.

**Ver. 14.** *For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel*, etc.] 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 (<sup>227B</sup>Jeremiah 27:3);

*that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and they shall serve him;* directly contrary to what Hananiah had prophesied, (<sup>228B</sup>Jeremiah 28:11); that his yoke should be broke 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, (<sup>227B</sup>Jeremiah 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.

**Ver. 15.** *Then said Jeremiah the prophet unto Hananiah the prophet,* etc.] 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.

**Ver. 16.** *Therefore thus saith the Lord,* etc.] 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.

**Ver. 17.** *So Hananiah the prophet died the same year*, etc.] That he had delivered out his prophecy; in the same year in which Jeremiah said he should die; which proved him 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 (~~28:16~~ Jeremiah 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.