

Jeremiah 26-29 • Threats, False Prophets and the plans of the Lord

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As we get into this chapter tonight, this chapter is going to take us back a little bit in time, but it talks about a threat that came to Jeremiah because of the message he was giving to the people from the Lord. We've talked in the past about how even the men of his own village had conspired to shut him up because they didn't like what he was saying.

So, chapter 26 begins by saying, *“In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim.”* And this is how we know that we're going back in time a little bit, because Jehoiakim was one of the final kings. But certainly not the very last one. Let me put on the screen for you once again what we showed you last week. Which is the historical order of the last four kings of Judah.

The historical order of the last 4 kings of Judah:

- **Jehoahaz (also called “Shallum”)**
- **Jehoiakim**
- **Jehoiachin (also called Jeconiah)**
- **Zedekiah**

You have Jehoahaz, also called Shallum. He's the one who was originally taken captive by the Egyptians. And then you have Jehoiakim, and then Jehoiachin, who is also referred to as Jeconiah. And we read last week about a curse that God pronounced against Jeconiah and his line, or his lineage. And then finally, you have the last king of Judah, who was Zechariah.

So, we're beginning here, the reign of Jehoiakim, as you can see here in this passage. So, this puts us about... at this point, about four years before the Babylonian invasion. And the message that we're going to read here is essentially kind of a repeat of something we read earlier in chapter 7, but we're going to get some different details about how the people responded to Jeremiah.

And so, again:

²⁶“In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the LORD: ²‘Thus says the LORD: Stand in the court of

the LORD's house, (in other words the temple) and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the LORD all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word.'"

Can I, you know, something just popped into my head, and I need to do this just in case there might be an area of confusion for some people. You'll notice the Lord says to Jeremiah to go stand in the court of the Lord's house and speak to all of the cities of Judah who come to the temple.

And this is a good way for God to get his message out because people are going to be streaming from all of the towns of Judah and coming to celebrate whatever and to, you know, worship the Lord, even though many of them are also involved in pagan practices.

But the thing I wanted to bring out here is don't think that just because it says here that the people are to come from all the cities of Judah that there aren't people coming from Israel or from the northern tribes of Israel. Even though Israel has long before been taken captive and completely, really destroyed by the Assyrian Empire, there was a huge influx of people.

During the course of the kings, as you read 1st and 2nd Kings, many, well, there weren't any good kings in Israel, the northern kingdom of Israel, and there were a few good kings in the southern kingdom of Judah, but no good kings up north. So what that did is that caused people to actually relocate from the northern kingdom of Israel down to Judah.

So you've got all 12 tribes represented now in the southern kingdom of Judah. There, I'm bringing this up because there's oh, good grief, there's all these conspiracy theories and stuff. Maybe you've heard about some of about the lost tribes of Israel, the lost 10 tribes of Israel. And they'll say, well, actually it's the British people. The British are the lost 10 tribes of Israel. It's so dumb.

But anyway, I just want to encourage you not to get messed up with that. Do you know that people move when they feel like they're in a bad area? Guess what I was just reading in the news, just like two days ago. People in the United States are moving quickly out of states where there is heavy handed liberal, I'm trying not to get political here, representation, and they are moving to states where there is more freedom and less government.

I don't know if you knew that, but there are people who are relocating right now in the United States of America and going where they believe they can raise their family as they ought without governmental interference. Now that's a

really interesting sort of thing. We're seeing it happen in our country, just because of what happened in one, really in the last year, primarily.

It really has been precipitated by the kind of response that people have seen in, with government in the last year. Alright, now, take that and multiply that over hundreds of years for Israel. You know, the very first king of the divided kingdom after David's grandson, you know, is the one who split the kingdom.

You had David who ruled over the whole thing. Solomon ruled over the whole thing. And Rehoboam started to rule over the whole thing. That's Solomon's son. But he was a young man. He was inexperienced. I was going to say something else. Which is not quite as kind. But he was inexperienced. He was young and inexperienced.

And he split the kingdom in half because of his ignorance and his foolishness. And he retained the southern kingdom, which is later going to be referred to as Judah. And the northern kingdom was given to a man named Jeroboam. We call him Jeroboam the first because there was another man named Jeroboam who also ruled.

Jeroboam got to looking at life up in the northern kingdom, and he suddenly realized that the temple that Solomon built was down in Rehoboam's territory. And he got scared. He said, he thought to himself, people aren't going to stick around. I'm going to lose all of my tax money. I'm going to lose these people.

And he, so he came up with his own religion. He literally came up with his own religion. He created a religion, golden calf and everything. And of course people were drawn away. And that was the beginning for the Northern Kingdom of Israel of pagan idolatry. And it never ended in the Northern Kingdom of Israel after that.

It never ended. They fought against it. Prophets like Elijah did some pretty cool stuff against it. But it never ended. You got to know that in the hundreds of years that those two now different kingdoms existed, people were making their way down to the Southern kingdom from the Northern 10 tribes. They were literally abandoning their family property, their tribal property given to them by God.

And they were saying, we can't do this. We can't live under a pagan leadership. And especially during the rule of those godly Kings, from the Davidic dynasty. They would come down into the land and settle there. So please understand that

when it talks about the cities of Judah, the people of Judah, these are made up of all the tribes of Israel.

Okay. There's no such thing as any lost tribes of Israel. God doesn't lose anything. All right. So, he tells them, he tells Jeremiah, I'm going to give you a word and I want you to speak it and don't hold back anything.

Verse 3, *“It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may relent of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of their evil deeds.”* This is like four years before the first invasion of Babylon. And God is still appealing to, He's been appealing to them for hundreds of years. He's still appealing. He knows what's going to happen, but He's still appealing to them. Maybe, maybe they'll turn.

He says, *“⁴You shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you, ⁵and to listen to the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not listened, ⁶then I will make this house like Shiloh,’* (we'll explain that here in a second).

... ‘and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant’? And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.” All right. He says, if you guys don't turn, I'm going to make this city like Shiloh. What does that mean? Well, you might recall that when they, before they, they even conquered the city of Jerusalem, you know, it was David who took Jerusalem and that's why they called it the city of David.

Prior to that, it was inhabited by the Jebusites and so they had to have a place to set up the tabernacle that Moses had brought from the wilderness, and they set it up at Shiloh. Now, if you remember, we just went through the book of Judges. So, you know, we kind of remember some of this stuff and then moving into 1st Samuel, we learn that Shiloh was attacked by the Philistines and decimated, and the Philistines actually took the Ark of the Covenant and stole it, took it away. And the place was devastated.

And God is saying through Jeremiah, unless you turn and why is he saying it's going to be like Shiloh? He could have named any number of cities that had been decimated from the past by enemies. Why Shiloh? Here's why. The Jews believed that because the temple stood in Jerusalem, it could not fall.

They believed that with all their hearts. So God is using Shiloh as an example because the Ark of the Covenant was there at the time and Shiloh fell. And so

God is basically saying, what makes Jerusalem special? It's my presence, right? Well, wasn't my presence at Shiloh before there was a Jerusalem for you?

Before there was a temple, wasn't my presence in Shiloh? I let that go down because of the disobedience of my people. Why do you think that Jerusalem is this city that will never possibly fall?

Verse 7, *“The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD. (You think they were very happy with it?)⁸ And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people, then the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, ‘You shall die!’⁹ Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant?’ And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.”* He's in trouble.

“¹⁰ When the officials of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house to the house of the LORD and took their seat in the entry of the New Gate of the house of the LORD”. That's where they would like, hear cases.

“¹¹ Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and to all the people, ‘This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears.’” So now it's a capital offense to speak against the temple of the Lord and the city of Jerusalem.

“¹² Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and all the people, saying, ‘The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard.¹³ Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD will relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against you.

¹⁴ But as for me, behold, I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you.¹⁵ Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the LORD sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears.’”

Now, while this is all going on and you know, this has got to be attracting a crowd because these priests and leaders grabbed Jeremiah. How dare you say this? And they drag him before the officials. And they essentially have this kangaroo court thing that pops up and they say, yes, he deserves death. And now there's people gathering. The people of the city. Not everybody's against Jeremiah. And you're going to see that.

“¹⁶ Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, ‘This man does not deserve the sentence of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.’”

And it goes on here to say in verse 17, ¹⁷“*And certain of the elders of the land arose and spoke to all the assembled people, saying, ¹⁸‘Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and said to all the people of Judah: ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts,*

*Zion shall be plowed as a field;
Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
and the mountain of the house a wooded height.’*

¹⁹ *Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and entreat the favor of the LORD, and did not the LORD relent of the disaster that he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great disaster upon ourselves.”*

Did you notice who's speaking here? Certain elders of the land. This is when the aged men speak up. There's probably a bunch of young men who are all angry and hot and lathered up and ready to kill Jeremiah for what he's doing. But then the older men speak up who remember. Who remember some of the kings of the past and this one particular, or these elders speak up and they begin to talk about this man named Micah who prophesied, right?

In the days of Hezekiah. He prophesied the same message! Same thing! No real, no different. And they said, Did Hezekiah put him to death? Heavens no. He repented. And what happened? God relented from the disaster that He was going to bring upon our land. And the point of the whole story is that wiser men of the past have listened to the words of the Lord.

And then Jeremiah goes on and tells of another prophet whom the Lord raised up at this at this very same time to give a message. And so God even brings up another prophet to speak the same word as Jeremiah. It says,

²⁰ *“There was another man who prophesied in the name of the LORD, Uriah the son of Shemaiah from Kiriath-jearim. He prophesied against this city and against this land in words like those of Jeremiah. ²¹ And when King Jehoiakim, with all his warriors and all the officials, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death.”* So they were trying to kill him too. *“But when Uriah heard of it, he was afraid and fled and escaped to Egypt.”* And that, of course, was probably a very bad mistake.

²²"Then King Jehoiakim sent to Egypt certain men, Elnathan the son of Achbor and others with him, ²³ and they took Uriah from Egypt and brought him to King Jehoiakim, who struck him down with the sword and dumped his dead body into the burial place of the common people. But the hand of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, was with Jeremiah," and we don't know a whole lot about this person, "so that he was not given over to the people to be put to death."

In other words, Jeremiah had an advocate. And so after these elders spoke up and talked about during the time of Hezekiah, how Micah had also prophesied against the city, but how Hezekiah had responded positively apparently this Ahikam spoke in Jeremiah's defense and calmed the people down.

Now we get into chapter 27 and we're going to find that it goes right along with chapter 28. We're going to kind of take these chapters as one because here we're going to see that Jeremiah is told to fashion a prop. You know, once in a while the prophets had to do that. They had to make props to communicate something of the message of the Lord to the people of the land.

But we're going to see how in the next chapter that prop is then used in a challenge by a false prophet. But this chapter begins by saying, ¹"*In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah (Now we're back to the, this is the last king, alright? The last king of Judah. So, we've jumped ahead now) the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD,*

²*Thus the LORD said to me: 'Make yourself straps and yoke-bars,' (And that's the kind of thing that would go over an ox.) 'and put them on your neck. ³ Send word to the king of Edom, the king of Moab, the king of the sons of Ammon, the king of Tyre, and the king of Sidon by the hand of the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah. ⁴ Give them this charge for their masters: 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: This is what you shall say to your masters:*

⁵ *"It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me. ⁶ Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him. ⁷ All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes. Then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave.*

⁸ *"But if any nation or kingdom will not serve this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, I will punish*

that nation with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, declares the LORD, until I have consumed it by his hand. ⁹ So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your fortune-tellers, or your sorcerers, who are saying to you, 'You shall not serve the king of Babylon.'

¹⁰ For it is a lie that they are prophesying to you, with the result that you will be removed far from your land, and I will drive you out, and you will perish. ¹¹ But any nation that will bring its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will leave on its own land, to work it and dwell there, declares the LORD.'''''

Wow, this is fascinating. So Jeremiah is now given a prophetic word for the neighboring countries. And God sends this prophetic note with all these envoys who've come to King Zedekiah back to their homeland to tell them that God is about to put all of their lands under the dominion of the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar.

And furthermore, God says this is my doing. So if you will submit to what I'm doing, it'll go well with you. If you fight against me, you'll be carried away from your land because if you fight against the king, if you fight against Nebuchadnezzar, you're fighting against me. If you submit to Nebuchadnezzar, you're submitting to me.

Isn't this interesting? Nebuchadnezzar's a pagan! And yet God calls him, my servant. Because he's serving God's purposes. For right now, but he also says in this prophetic word, after his son and grandson rule, his nation is going to come to an end and then he's going to be enslaved and I'll punish him for the things that he did that were wrong believe me.

Just because he is my servant for now doesn't mean he gets a "get out of jail free card". He's still going to fall under the judgment of the hand of the Lord, but this is my doing for now. So will you submit to it? This is a really interesting thing that speaks to you and me about the hand of the Lord in his disciplinary action in our lives.

God, we're told in the scriptures, disciplines those whom he loves, right? And he chastises all of his children. And, of course, discipline, we're told, is never fun. In fact, it's painful, it's difficult, but we grow from it, we learn from it, we typically draw closer to the Lord because of it, but not always.

The times that we grow from it are the times that we submit to it. And we submit to it as of or from the hand of the Lord. The Bible says that we are to

consider all hardship as discipline, all hardship. Are you going through hardship in your life right now? You are to consider it as discipline. You're to think of it as training. (Hebrews 12:7-11)

And you are to submit to the hand of the Lord in the midst of that discipline. And I believe that what God is communicating here in the book of Jeremiah is so important for us to see and understand because it communicates the heart of God related to his disciplinary action.

And that is that if we fight against his discipline, if we buck and kick and bite, which we'll do from time to time, right? We're not going to get anywhere and we're only going to find ourselves fighting against the Lord. But if we will submit to the hand of discipline from God, it'll go well with us. We will learn a great deal and be encouraged in the end.

You know one of the very first prophetic words that I personally ever received, and I haven't received all that many to be completely honest with you, but I was a young man, I was in my twenties, and it was a word that was given from an older man who's now with the Lord. And it was not a word that I particularly liked at the time.

In fact, I went to my pastor afterwards and I asked him about it. I said, what do you think this means? I was bothered by it. And the Lord said to me through this wonderful, tenderhearted gentleman who had a very renowned prophetic gifting, the Lord said to me, "I will not shield you from the difficulties of life, but they will be brief. And you will learn much from them."

And I thought, there's got to be a better way to learn than to go through difficulties. I mean, I didn't, I wasn't very thrilled about that at all. In fact, I took it to the Lord, too, and I prayed. Lord, really? Do you have to take me through hard stuff to learn lessons? But you know if you know my personality, that's exactly what He has to do. Otherwise, it's very difficult to get my attention.

But God was essentially saying there are times in your life, and I'm sure those times are not done, but there are times in your life when I will take you through my disciplinary action. That's what He was saying. But He was saying, but if you will submit to my loving hand of discipline, you will gain much wisdom from those things.

If not, you're just going to be a stiff-necked idiot, you know. And that's kind of the choice that we have, you know. We can be stiff-necked just like the

Israelites, and we can say, “No, I refuse to submit like King Zedekiah.” Or we can say, “Lord, this is you.”

You know, I find in some sectors of Christianity, anything that goes bad or what their idea is of bad in their life, they fight against it because they believe it's of the devil. And they have certain verses they like to quote that try to back that up to say that anything bad to happen in their life is from the enemy and anything good comes from God.

And so if it's bad, you got to curse the devil, plead the blood of Jesus and da, da, da, da, da and go through these various things that you have to say, you know, and with enough faith get the devil to stop doing what he's doing. I think some of these people are going to be shocked one day. When they get to heaven and find out how much they were cursing the devil when it was God's disciplinary work in their lives that was simply loving them and keeping them from error and from danger.

And yet, they considered it to be the hand of the devil. I think we give the devil way too much credit for his activity in our lives. And by our lives, I mean believers. I'm not saying that the devil can't mess with you, because he can and does. At least sending his minions to maybe mess with you or something like that. I'm not sure.

It's kind of funny when people say, Satan's really attacking me. I think, wow, you must be pretty important, you know, for Satan to attack. I don't think I've ever had Satan attack me. I'm sure he sent a lot of his little dopey, you know, people to harass me from time to time. I'm just not important enough for Satan to single handedly attack me. Are you joking?

You know, it's like, who's this guy? You know, Satan's got better things to do. Bigger fish to fry. My point is, though, we claim so much is the work of the enemy when, in fact, God's disciplinary action is going on in our lives. And we just don't like it because it's painful. Yeah, it's painful. It's difficult. It's challenging.

But God says here, If any nation will bring its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, it's going to go well with him because what you're doing is you're submitting to my disciplinary action. Now, verse 12,
¹²“To Zedekiah king of Judah I spoke in like manner: ‘Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him and his people and live.’ ¹³ Why will you and your people die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, as the LORD has spoken concerning any nation that will not serve the king of

Babylon? ¹⁴ Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are saying to you, 'You shall not serve the king of Babylon,' for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you. ¹⁵ I have not sent them, declares the LORD, but they are prophesying falsely in my name, with the result that I will drive you out and you will perish, you and the prophets who are prophesying to you. '''

So, God is telling Zedekiah the same message. Submit to my disciplinary hand and it will go well with you. Do you think Zedekiah is going to listen?

"¹⁶ Then 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 are prophesying to you, saying, 'Behold, the vessels of the LORD's house will now shortly be brought back from Babylon,' for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you. ¹⁷ Do not listen to them; serve the king of Babylon and live. Why should the city become a desolation? '''

You might be asking yourself, why are some of the articles or our things of the temple in Babylon. You've got to remember that the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem three times before they finally sacked it at the very end, destroyed it and destroyed the temple, but that was the third invasion.

They'd been invading the land little by little. And when they came on one of those occasions, they took some of the articles of worship out of the temple and they took them to Babylon. But these false prophets are telling the people, in no time at all, these things will be returned, and life will go on as normal and so forth. Okay.

Verse 18, *"If they are prophets, and if the word of the LORD is with them, then let them intercede with the LORD of hosts, that the vessels that are left in the house of the LORD, in the house of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem may not go to Babylon."* So now Jeremiah is putting out a challenge. If these guys are genuinely men of God, you have them intercede with the Lord that all the things that are left in here won't be taken away. Because he knew they would all be taken away. This is just one more sign that Jeremiah is giving them that the Lord is actually speaking through him.

"¹⁹ For thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the pillars, the sea, the stands, and the rest of the vessels that are left in this city, ²⁰ which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon did not take away, when he took into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem --" So again, he's talking about when the king of Babylon came in the past, invaded the land, took some of the people of nobility, by the

way, Daniel was one of them. Daniel was one of those who was taken in one of those first invasions of the land.

“²¹ thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that are left in the house of the LORD, in the house of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem: ²² They shall be carried to Babylon and remain there until the day when I visit them, declares the LORD. Then I will bring them back and restore them to this place.”

So God has laid the gauntlet down to challenge them. If these guys are real prophets, you have them pray that none of the rest of these things go into Babylon, because I'm going to give you a word from the Lord, they're all going to go.

All right. Chapter 28 continues pretty much where the last chapter ended. Because it says, ²⁸*“In that same year, at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fifth month of the fourth year, Hananiah the son of Azzur, the prophet from Gibeon, spoke to me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and all the people, saying, ² ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts,’”*

Alright, so you see what's going on here? This Hananiah guy pulls Jeremiah in with all these elders and religious leaders and so forth and he begins to speak to him in the name of the Lord *“² Thus says the Lord of hosts,”* You notice he uses Yahweh, *“the God of Israel: I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. ³ Within two years I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the LORD's house, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon. ⁴ I will also bring back to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the exiles from Judah who went to Babylon, declares the LORD, for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.”*

Now you got, this is what, we get to hear exactly what the false prophets are telling the people. By the way, which message would you like to hear? You got Hananiah, “Within two years,” of course, they've been saying that the king of Babylon would never even get in there. Well, he did. And he took people and he took vessels out of the temple and he carried them off into exile.

Now they're still prophesying falsely. “Well, we'll get all this stuff back soon. Don't you worry about it. Let me tell you.” And notice he says “within two years,” he says. “God is going to break the yoke of the King of Babylon.” Why is Hananiah saying that?

You remember what Jeremiah was told to do? Make a yoke, with straps. He's literally been carrying this around. This is his prophetic ministry. To walk around with a yoke that you would normally put on an ox. And he's walking around with this thing, going through the streets of Jerusalem, telling people that, you know, they need to submit to the yoke of the King of Nebuchadnezzar because it's the yoke of the Lord.

And Hananiah pulls Jeremiah in, and he begins to say, God is going to break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar and says, and by the way, he says within two years. Okay, Hananiah has spoken. *“⁵ Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Hananiah the prophet in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD, ⁶ and the prophet Jeremiah said, ‘Amen! May the LORD do so; may the LORD make the words that you have prophesied come true, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the LORD, and all the exiles.’”*

So, Jeremiah, he's in agreement, he's like, “Yeah, I'm totally in agreement with you brother. May it happen, may it be exactly as you've said.” You see what he's doing is he's responding to Hananiah because he knows that Hananiah has simply told the people what they want to hear, and he's giving a good sentiment. It's, he's treating it like anybody who would just say, you know, I really hope this all ends soon.

I'd love to think that within two years, maybe this whole thing is going to be over. Maybe God's going to break the yoke of the king of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and we're going to get all our stuff back and the people that he's taking captive. When somebody would say something like that, I mean, no matter what you believed or knew, you'd say, well, amen, I hope that too.

And that's the way Jeremiah is treating it. Yet, he says in verse 7, *“Yet hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. ⁸ The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. ⁹ As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet.”*

“¹⁰ Then the prophet Hananiah took the yoke-bars from the neck of Jeremiah the prophet and broke them. ¹¹ And Hananiah spoke in the presence of all the people, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all the nations within two years.’”

Can you imagine what the people probably did? They probably cheered. Don't you suppose? I mean, they were hearing what they wanted to hear. Yeah, Hananiah, he's the man. And notice what it says. *"But Jeremiah the prophet went his way."* Can I stop you there for just a moment? This is an important place to stop.

And I'll tell you why, because it's important to see how Jeremiah responded to this situation. When Hananiah made his false prophecy, it was still a good sentiment. And so Jeremiah said, amen. I hope that happens just the way you said, I know it's not going to, but be nice. And then when Hananiah breaks the yoke and gives this, again, this false prophecy.

It says that Jeremiah just went his way. He didn't say anything. He just turned around and he walked away. And that's one of the wisest things you'll see a man of God do. When people aren't listening and when you don't have a word from the Lord. He's going to come back with a word from the Lord in just a little bit. But right now, he said what God told him to say. He's done. He's done.

It is probably without, every week, every single week, I get a note from someone asking how they should respond to an unbeliever at work, a family member who has gone astray, a child of theirs who has backslidden, a family member who's gotten into some weird doctrine.

I had a kid write to me just re- I don't think he's a kid I think he's a grown son, but he was all distressed because his mother had been drawn away into Sabbath keeping. She had heard this preacher on the radio or something like that, teaching about how you got to keep the Sabbath and now she was just absolutely adamant about the fact that you've got to keep the Sabbath.

She just swallowed everything this guy was saying, hook, line, and sinker. And this son was distressed, and he wrote me and said, "Pastor Paul, what can I do? Give me some scriptures that I can use." And I get that like every week. Somebody writes and asks that same kind of a question. And my response is always the same.

Gee, I'm really sorry that this person that you care much about has gotten caught up in this or backslidden away from the Lord or fallen into sin, or now they've, whatever. But I tell them, first of all, they need to pray for wisdom from the Lord about how to respond. They need to pray for a softening in that person's heart. Do you guys, Jesus told us that parable about when you sow seeds on a rock hard path, you know what happens to them? Nothing. The birds come and eat them and take them away. Right?

And that's Satan literally stealing it away. Why? Because there's, it's a hard path. There's nothing, the ground has not been worked, it's not able to receive. Do you understand that there are times in people's lives when they are not able to receive?

So many people will say to me, "Well, you know, I went and talked to my uncle. You know he's really got a hard heart, but you know, I sowed seeds." No, yeah, you probably threw them on the concrete. I mean, I'm not saying what you did was necessarily wrong. I'm just saying that there's this kind of this attitude, like, well, you know, and then they like to quote that verse about how, you know, God's Word will never come, you know, return void. (*Isaiah 55:11*)

Do you know what that passage actually says? It says it won't return void for the purpose for which He sent it. It doesn't mean that when you just go scattering recklessly, that it's always going to come to fruition. Jesus made it clear, some of it hits the hard path and it doesn't go anywhere, and it doesn't do any good.

And we as Christians need to learn to start being spirit-led in our witnessing to people and not just scattering recklessly but walking in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit in such a way as to discern the ability that a person even has to listen at that moment. Because if we don't, we're going to be wasting our breath.

I am impressed by the fact Jeremiah gave the word of the Lord. Hananiah, you know, shot his mouth off and Jeremiah turned and walked away. And, you know, it reminds me of Jesus. After Jesus was arrested. All these accusations being flung at him in front of Pilate and Pilate was just like, "Aren't you going to say something?"

So, you know, he sends him off to Herod who happened to be in town. Hey, let's see what Herod has to say. He sends him over there. Herod's delighted. He's been wanting to pepper Jesus with questions. What he wanted to do is see a miracle. And it says that Herod asked him tons of questions. Guess what Jesus said in response?

Nothing. Zero. He didn't say a word. Jesus did not respond to King Herod. Okay. What do we learn from that? There's a time to hold your tongue. There's a time to speak. There's a time, but we need to be prayerful. We need to be watchful. We need to follow the directives of the Spirit because don't you know, and boy, I've seen this in my life, I've done more harm by speaking up when I shouldn't have, and that can happen.

So here I am, you know, trying to work this thing out in my flesh, in my own power, and I'm not getting anywhere and I'm getting frustrated and they're getting frustrated and I'm probably just, the only thing I'm doing is shutting this person down even more. So there is a place to go your way. There's a time to go your way.

If somebody, if you're talking to somebody at work and the topic comes up, or they're talking about the Bible or talk, you need to be quick in prayer. "Lord, is this the time? Is this when you want me to speak? If this is, give me that sense. Give me the power, Lord, anoint me, baptize me afresh in your Holy Spirit. I need to know if this is the time to speak, or is this the time to zip my lip? You tell me because I want to do this according to your will and your timing because it's best." It's really an important thing to remember.

Verse 12, ¹²*"Sometime after the prophet Hananiah had broken the yoke-bars from off the neck of Jeremiah the prophet, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah:"* So now, guess what? Jeremiah's going to go talk to him. You know why? God gave him a message. God gave him something to say.

¹³*"Go, tell Hananiah, 'Thus says the LORD: You have broken wooden bars, but you have made in their place bars of iron. ¹⁴For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I have put upon the neck of all these nations an iron yoke to serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and they shall serve him, for I have given to him even the beasts of the field.'"*

¹⁵*"And Jeremiah the prophet said to the prophet Hananiah, 'Listen, Hananiah, the LORD has not sent you, and you have made this people trust in a lie.' ¹⁶Therefore 'thus says the LORD: Behold, I will remove you from the face of the earth. This year you shall die, because you have uttered rebellion against the LORD.' ¹⁷In that same year, in the seventh month, the prophet Hananiah died."*

There you go. One more chapter. Chapter 29. This includes a letter. Now, remember, there are exiles living in Babylon, Jewish exiles. So, Jeremiah decides to send a letter because he has some, the king has some men who are taking information to Babylon for the king Zedekiah. So he's going to send his letter with those guys.

²⁹*"These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders of the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. (We are told) ²This was after King Jeconiah (Who we know better*

as King Jehoiachin) *and the queen mother, the eunuchs, the officials of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the metal workers had departed from Jerusalem.*”

Let me just put a little note, a little bug in your ear about the queen mothers. You know, you go through 1st and 2nd Kings, you learn about, there were a few queen mothers that popped up, never because the Lord told them to do that. In fact, He didn't even tell them to do kings at all, but some queen mothers popped up on the scene a few times. They were always nasty, and sometimes they even ruled the land, all by themselves. Yeah. It was entirely a creation of the people. God never said anything about having a queen mother.

Anyway. So, verse 3, ³“*The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.*”

So again, there, Jeremiah is kind of piggybacking his letter with these guys who are going to Babylon. “*It said: ⁴Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. ⁶Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease.*”

Isn't this the same message he was giving to all the nations and to King Zedekiah? Submit to my hand of discipline. So, he's, what is he saying to the exiles? Guys, you're not coming home anytime soon. So settle down, build houses, plant crops, get a job, have families, go ahead, give your kids in marriage to other Jews, live in the land, because this is God's doing, submit to it, right? I want you to notice what else the Lord says. Now this might tweak your theology a little bit.

Verse 7, ⁷“*But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*” Stop there for a moment. Very insightful passage, wonderfully insightful. We feel sometimes even here in the United States of America as Christians, like we're living in a pagan nation.

Kind of like we're almost living in a similar circumstance as the Jews in the sense that we've taken, we've been taken away from our home and we're living among idolaters, and it just seems like the direction that our country is going is

completely opposite of what the Bible teaches. So how are we to respond to that country?

“I think we should take up arms and go against these guys and fight them and kill them and...” No, I don't think so. I don't think so. God told the Israelites here to seek the welfare of the place where they were living and to even pray for that city. Isn't that what Paul told the Romans? In chapter 13 when he said to obey the laws of the government, to pray for those who are in positions of authority and so forth?

Listen, we forget that Paul was telling people to submit to an authority that later took his head off. Okay, the Romans beheaded him. They were completely corrupt and yet he said there are no authorities put in the place of authority who are not put there by God and if you fight against the authorities, you will find yourself fighting against God (Romans 13:1-5).

Okay, now that, those are kind of like wow, splash me in the face with cold water kind of passages. They kind of run a little bit contrary to certain attitudes that exist within the Christian community that would try to pass themselves off as patriotic, but in fact they are not biblical. Now I'm not saying that we shouldn't speak our voice.

You know, we have a wonderful privilege here in the United States of America to live at least under what was originally a very cool constitution. I mean, I'm impressed by our constitution. I think it's the best thing that has ever been made on earth by man, as far as a constitution goes. It's a great government that was originally created.

It's trying to be abolished right now. I mean, they're trying to get rid of it. But it, you know, it, it still gives us the right to be able to speak up and freely speak our mind and to vote our conscience and all the things that go along with the freedoms that we enjoy or have enjoyed in this country.

And I'm not saying you shouldn't participate in those things at all, not at all. But I think we also have to remember, because I hear too many Christians going around cursing the president rather than praying for him. You know, praying that God would move on his heart, would challenge him with righteousness, bring godly men and women around him to influence him.

That's what we're supposed to be doing. We're to pray for our cities. We're to pray for our law enforcement. You know, we have wonderful law enforcement. You probably saw the note that Evan sent out, I think it was yesterday on

Calvary Mail or Calvary Connection, one of the two, saying, you know, hey our law enforcement guys they're under it.

They're under it. Lawlessness is on the increase. You guys know that. Of course, you know that. But they're facing it. They're taking the brunt of it and they need our prayer. You might've noticed we even put out on the sign out on the electronic side on, by the road, you know, we support our local law enforcement. We want people to know we stand behind these people because as it says here that the welfare of the city is where you're going to find your welfare, you know? So, we need to be praying.

Verse 8, ⁸*“For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, ⁹for it is a lie”* (How many times have we heard that tonight?) *“that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the LORD. ¹⁰For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.”*

Hananiah said it was all going to end in two years. I'm telling you right now, it's going to be 7-0. 70 years. Oh, and by the way, here comes that verse that everyone loves to quote. ¹¹*“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹²Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you.”*

I want you to stop there for just a moment, please, because again, this is, I hear this quoted a lot. In fact, I remember a number of years ago, I was down in Southern California at the Bible College in Murrieta, and I was watching one of the graduation ceremonies for the students. In this particular graduation ceremony, they had them give their life verse and Jeremiah 29:11 was by far the most popular life verse that was quoted that night among the students. I can certainly understand.

The question that we have to kind of ask ourselves is, is this a passage that anyone can take out of its context and claim? Can they claim that this is a verse from the Lord for them?

What is the context of the verse? The context is God's just got done saying 70 years are going to pass. You're going to live in the Persian kingdom for 70 years. Then I'm going to visit you. I'm going to bring you back. Because I know the plans I have for you. There are plans to do good. There are plans to prosper

you. To give you hope and a future. Those are my plans. So in 70 years those plans are going to begin to unfold again for you. That's the context.

So, the question once again is, can a Christian take this scripture out of context and claim it as their own? I hope you don't think I'm wishy washy when I give you my answer, but the answer is yes and no.

Let me explain it if I could really quickly. This verse was spoken to the people of Israel about their immediate future. And when I say immediate, I mean within the next 70 years. That's pretty immediate in the grand scheme of eternity. And it pertained, again, to the time when God would bless them, bring them out of exile and gather them back to their homeland.

And so it was for a time. It was given to Israel for a time. It wasn't given to Israel for all time. It was given to them for a time. Now, I dare say that most of the Christians who quote this passage and call it their life verse or whatever, are also assuming that this is a promise for their lives while they're on earth.

Okay. In other words, this was a temporal promise for Israel. And I believe Christians probably embrace it in the same way as a temporal promise. But you see, that's where this promise really can't be assumed by anyone other than the people to whom it was given. Now from an eternal perspective, oh yeah, embrace it.

Because God has plans for you and there are plans to prosper you and to give you hope and a future. But He hasn't necessarily told you that for this life. He told that for, to Israel for that time period. Okay? But He wasn't including eternity in that time period. This was a temporal promise. And again, Christians quote this as a temporal promise.

But I don't believe they can take advantage of it as I don't think, I don't think quoting it out of context applies temporally. I believe it does apply eternally. Okay, does that make sense? So yes, you can claim it all you want, as long as it has an eternal perspective. But I don't know if God's going to give you a hope in the future, I don't know.

Any one of us could go to be with the Lord tomorrow. So your temporal issues are done at that point. And you enter into eternity. Now, the next verse in verse 13, I believe, communicates a promise from God toward his people in any time period. It was true for the Jews. I think it's still true today for believers.

Verse 13, ¹³*“You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”* And the reason I believe this is a promise for all time is because it is expressing a principle that is true of seeking the Lord whenever God's people may seek Him. Not only that, but it is expressed many times throughout the word in the Old and the New Testament. Let me show you where Jesus gave it from Matthew chapter 7.

Matthew 7:7-8 (ESV)

Ask and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, it will be opened.

“Ask and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find.” And you know, He's not just talking about looking for a few minutes. This is talking about genuinely getting into it, seeking. He says, *“knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, it will be opened.”*

This is a principle that God applies to all time saying, if you seek Me, you will find Me. I will be found by you. If you seek Me with all of your heart. All right. The Lord goes on to promise, ¹⁴*“I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.”*

But now the Lord has a severe word for those who remain in Jerusalem and who stiffen their necks. ¹⁵*“Because you have said, ‘The LORD has raised up prophets for us in Babylon,’* ¹⁶*thus says the LORD concerning the king who sits on the throne of David, and concerning all the people who dwell in this city, your kinsmen who did not go out with you into exile:* ¹⁷*‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, behold, I am sending on them sword, famine, and pestilence, and I will make them like vile figs that are so rotten they cannot be eaten.’*

¹⁸*“I will pursue them with sword, famine, and pestilence, and will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, a terror, a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them,* ¹⁹*because they did not pay attention to my words, declares the LORD, that I persistently sent to you by my servants the prophets, but you would not listen, declares the LORD.”*

²⁰*“Hear the word of the LORD, all you exiles whom I sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon:* ²¹*‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who are prophesying a*

lie to you in my name: Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall strike them down before your eyes.

²² Because of them this curse shall be used by all the exiles from Judah in Babylon: 'The LORD make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire,' (Ooh doesn't that sound delightful?) ²³ because they have done an outrageous thing in Israel, they have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and they have spoken in my name lying words that I did not command them. I am the one who knows, and I am witness, declares the LORD.'

²⁴ To Shemaiah of Nehelam you shall say: ²⁵ "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: You have sent letters in your name to all the people who are in Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying, ²⁶ 'The LORD has made you priest instead of Jehoiada the priest, to have charge in the house of the LORD over every madman who prophesies, to put him in the stocks and neck irons. ²⁷ Now why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth who is prophesying to you? ²⁸ For he has sent to us in Babylon, saying, "Your exile will be long; build houses and live in them, and plant gardens and eat their produce."'"

²⁹ Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the hearing of Jeremiah the prophet. ³⁰ Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: ³¹ 'Send to all the exiles, saying, Thus says the LORD concerning Shemaiah of Nehelam: Because Shemaiah had prophesied to you when I did not send him, and has made you trust in a lie, ³² therefore thus says the LORD: Behold, I will punish Shemaiah of Nehelam and his descendants. He shall not have anyone living among this people, and he shall not see the good that I will do to my people, declares the LORD, for he has spoken rebellion against the LORD.'"

And that's where we stop. Wow. It's crazy, isn't it?

I mean, you got letters flying back and forth between Jerusalem and Babylon and prophecies, false prophets rising. Wow. Death threats, you name it. It's going on.

Let's pray. Father, I thank you so much for Your Word. Thank you for the wonderful, timeless principles that we see here in the Word. Thank you for Your Holy Spirit who brings all of this to life in our hearts. It helps us to understand what it means to us today. And help us, Lord, to put into practice in our lives an understanding of any hardship that we are enduring as a work of discipline and training from the Lord so that we will not grow weary and that

we will remember that you are working an eternal work in us to fashion us into the image of your son.

We bless your name, and we pray all these things in the name of your mighty son, Jesus, amen.

God bless you.