

## THE SIGN OF THE YOKES

### **TEXT: JEREMIAH 27:1-22**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. Jeremiah chapters 27 & 28 are connected, and both deal with the sign of the yokes (27:1, 2; 28:1, 2).
2. The yokes represent passive submission to the yoke of Babylon.
3. H.A. Ironside said, "Strange as it may seem to those not conversant with the ways of God with man on earth as outlined in the Scriptures, it was He Himself who had raised up Nebuchadrezzar and had given His people and the Gentile nations into his hand. This, and the failure on man's part (especially that of the "head of gold," as the Chaldean monarch was declared to be), will all be found fully detailed in the book of Daniel" (*Jeremiah and Lamentations*).
4. Jeremiah 27:1 says, "In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word unto Jeremiah from the LORD..."
5. But verses 3 and 12 refer to King Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, and the brother of King Jehoiakim. Both these kings were sons of King Josiah, who was the last good king of Judah.
6. This has confused some people. The command was given "in the beginning of the reign" of King Jehoiakim (27:1). According to II Kings 23:36, King Jehoiakim reigned for eleven years.
7. He was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin, who reigned for only three months (II Kings 24:8). King Jehoiachin was succeeded by another son of King Josiah, Zedekiah, the last king of Judah.
8. Therefore, Jehoiakim's brother Zedekiah would not ascend the throne until twelve years later. Some have imagined a problem here.
9. Irving Jensen calls this a "textual corruption" (*Jeremiah and Lamentations*).
10. Adding to the confusion are some modern translations, which change "Jehoiakim" to "Zedekiah" in verse 1. For example, the NIV says in verse 1, "Early in the reign of Zedekiah son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD."
11. It is true that a few Hebrew manuscripts read "Zedekiah," but the overwhelming majority of the Hebrew manuscripts say, "Jehoiakim."
12. The King James Version is accurate and trustworthy, but the modern translations are not reliable or trustworthy.
13. Jeremiah was given his instructions during the reign of King Jehoiakim. He was to make bonds and yokes (symbolizing

submission to Babylon), put them upon his neck, and then "send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyrus, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah" (27:3).

14. The LORD commanded Jeremiah to make the yokes in advance, and when the messengers would arrive later in Jerusalem, King Zedekiah would be on the throne (27:3).

## I. THE YOKE REPRESENTS SUBMISSION

1. Israel and Judah were judged by God. The northern kingdom was judged first. This should have been a warning to Judah but they did not heed the warning (cf. 3:6-11).
2. King Manasseh was very wicked, and II Kings 21:9 says, King Manasseh seduced the people of Judah "to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel" (cf. II Kings 21:1-17).
3. However, Manasseh's grandson Josiah was a good king and his reformation held back the wrath of God. But the four kings who followed him (three were his sons; Jehoiachin was the son and successor of Jehoiakim, and he reigned for only three months) were all wicked.
4. Judah's sin, particularly the sin of idolatry, brought the judgment of God. Because of their sin, they would have to wear the yoke of bondage and be brought to Babylon.
5. King Zedekiah chafed at this yoke, which only made things worse.
6. From Jeremiah 27:3, it appears that he and the kings of the surrounding nations, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyrus, and Zidon had attempted an organized coalition against the king of Babylon.
7. Jeremiah was told to warn Zedekiah and the ambassadors representing his allies that their efforts would fail (27:4-8).
8. King Nebuchadnezzar is called God's "servant" (27:6; cf. 40:1-3). The LORD had given those nations into the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar, and those who refused to submit to King Nebuchadnezzar were rebelling against God (27:6-8).
9. Jeremiah 27:7 predicts that Babylon will be the great world empire -- "And all nations shall serve him" -- up until the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar's grandson.
10. This prophecy was fulfilled when King Belshazzar was slain, and Darius the Median took over the kingdom (Daniel 5:30, 31).

11. King Zedekiah was told to wear the yoke of submission to Babylon, warning him that if he refused to wear it he and his people would surely die (27:12, 13; cf. 27:10b).
12. Despite these repeated warnings from Jeremiah and other prophets, King Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon, and entered into an alliance with the king of Egypt.
13. Second Kings 25:6 and 7 says the Babylonian army took King Zedekiah, and brought him up to the king of Babylon, who was in Riblah, and there they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.

## **II. THE YOKE REPRESENTS A REPUDIATION OF THE FALSE PROPHETS (27:9-11).**

1. Jeremiah had to constantly contend with the false prophets, who assured the people that nothing bad was going to happen to them (27:9).
2. The last four kings of Judah -- Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah -- were all wicked kings, and were all misled by the false prophets (27:9, 10, 14-18; cf. 23:21, 25-27; 29:8, 9).
3. The false prophets lied to the people and told them that the vessels of the LORD's house would soon be returned from Babylon (27:16). These vessels had been brought to Babylon earlier during the reign of King Jehoiachin (cf. II Kings 24:8-17).
4. Jeremiah challenged the false prophets in 27:18. If they truly were prophets, and if the word of the LORD were with them, "let them now make intercession to the LORD of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, go not to Babylon."

## **III. THE YOKE REPRESENTS THE JUDGMENT OF GOD**

1. After challenging the false prophets, Jeremiah made another prophecy. All the vessels that remained in the temple would also be taken by the Babylonians (27:19-22).
2. When this prophecy was soon fulfilled, the false prophets were once again exposed as liars.
3. The strange thing about false prophets is that no matter how many times they are exposed, people still follow them.
4. The newspapers are full of articles about the Vatican bank scandal, and the pope having his butler put in jail for discussing

it with the press, and there are countless articles about priest scandals. Yet millions of Roman Catholics remain loyal to their church.

5. The Jehovah's Witness Watchtower magazine has predicted the end of the world for 1914, 1918, 1925, and 1975. But their brainwashed members believe they are God's true witnesses.
6. Jeremiah warned them everything of value would be taken. Not only the vessels, but also the bronze pillars that stood in front of the temple, and the sea (a bronze washbasin in the temple court), and the bronze bases (27:19).
7. The bases were movable and had wheels (cf. I Kings 7:30).
8. These would all remain in Babylon during the seventy year captivity. After the captivity, the LORD then would bring them up from Babylon, and restore them to their proper place in the temple (27:22).
9. The fulfillment of this prophecy is recorded in the book of Ezra.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Irving Jensen says the wooden yokes represent God's sovereignty.

- The fact of sovereignty -- "I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm..." (27:5a).
- The exercise of sovereignty -- "and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me..." (27:5b-7).
- The warning of sovereignty -- to refuse to submit to Babylon's yoke was to bring punishment (25:8). To hearken to false prophets, diviners or soothsayers was to believe a lie (27:9, 10). To submit to Babylon's yoke assured at least peaceful dwelling in the land (27:11).

*(Jeremiah and Lamentations)*