

**Jeremiah 28: 1-17; “A False Prophet & The 70 Years Captivity”, Sermon # 30 in the series – “Heart Lessons Learned for a Prophet and the People of God”,
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 22nd, 2018,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

At this hour, I would like to show you the danger of a false prophet, to the people of God. This man Hananiah was a spiritually dangerous man in his day, because as one who claimed to be a teacher, he was not taking up Christ's yoke as Jeremiah did when he wore the yoke; he was actually breaking the yoke by rejecting God's authority as it was revealed in His word, and then he was trying to substitute his own authority in the place of God's word. He was leading all the people of Judah to a false hope that their captivity would be a short one, and that God would restore their fortunes and bring back the captives much sooner than it was the Lord's purpose to do so. Similarly, there are men in our own day who are spiritually dangerous as well. They are false teachers – men who resemble Hananiah in what they will attempt to say and do. Let me set forth for you now, 3 ways in which false teachers will try to nullify God's authority as it is exercised through true teachers and preachers of the word of God, like Jeremiah. I pray that each of us will see the great importance of not listening to false teachers. And further, I pray that you will see that there is good and true authority being received in the preaching of the word of God by a man who is called of God.

1st of all – False teachers will attempt by their own authority to speak on God's behalf and contradict the plain prophecies of the word of God. (verses 1-4)

In Chapter 27 of this book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah was told by God to make himself bonds and yokes, and to put them on his neck; and also to send yokes to the kings of Edom, and Moab, and the Ammonites, and also to the kings of Tyre and Sidon, by the hand of messengers who came to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah. These yokes were a symbol of God's purpose; that He had sovereignly determined that all of these countries, and Judah and Jerusalem as well, that it was His will that they submit to God's purpose; to serve Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and not rebel against him. Some of the nation of Judah had gone into captivity, and some still remained in the land. Those who remained in the land, they were to till it and to dwell in it. God certainly still did have good purposes and plans for those who would trust in Him and heed His word to them, but they were not to make up their own plans. They were to submit to God's will and understand how much He was in control of every aspect of their situation.

Jeremiah had prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would bring them into this forced service, and that God would impose upon them a 70 years captivity (Jeremiah 25: 11). The 70 years had now been underway for some months now, and the king and many of the people of Judah and Jerusalem had indeed been carried away to Babylon. Others still remained in the land, but they were uncertain of how things would go for them. Many of them were hoping that the former king, Jeconiah would be brought back to Judah, and all the captives would return home with him. But God's purpose for His dear people who would obey His commands and would submit to His providential ordering, was that they might learn how to be content to live a principled life of obedience in His sight; a life of trusting Him and obeying Him in accordance with His word through Jeremiah and the true prophets. It was His will that they would learn to obey Him in these difficult political circumstances; that they would even glorify Him, when so few were attempting to do what was right and honoring to God.

You and I are in a somewhat similar situation today. We have not been overrun by a foreign invader, or hauled out of our houses and taken to a foreign country, but our whole culture and society has been overrun by the philosophies and false religions of people who have no regard for the truth of the Bible, and they are trying to discredit the true preachers of the word. I say, we have

been overrun with the false philosophies and religions of the world which are pushing at us from the lying lips of false teachers; people who will not heed what the Bible says. And we must take notice of the fact that many of those false teachers are calling themselves Christians, and they attempt to represent God as saying something different than what He has declared to be true. In our text, the issue was prophecy. Now, you would think that prophecy would not be something that the Devil would try to confuse and deceive people over. In some ways prophecy, and the correct understanding of it, is not worth fighting over. But when false teachers think that they can get attention to themselves by asserting things which are contrary to the word of God, they will try to do so.

In our text, in verse 1b, Hananiah, who was the son of Azur the prophet, who was from Gibeon, spoke to Jeremiah in the house of the Lord, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, and he was not afraid to contradict what Jeremiah had already told the people before, that there was going to be a literal 70 years captivity in store for Judah and Jerusalem. He was not a true prophet because he spoke on his own authority. He said in verse 2 – Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: ‘I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon.’ “Within two full years I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the Lord’s house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon.” “And I will bring back to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah who went to Babylon,’ says the Lord, ‘for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.” Now, this was a very bold assertion, and Jeremiah knew it. He also knew that it entirely undermined his authority as a prophet.

Jeremiah knew that it was true, that God would bring the captives back in 70 years, and he would tell the people about this in chapter 29; that at the end of that time, God would bring them back and restore blessings to the people, in accordance with His grace and His purposes. But the king and many of the people had been taken captive because of the sins of many generations in the land of Judah; especially the sin of idolatry, and they were going to be made to feel it as a nation. Even the true believers among them would be made to feel and understand the greatness of the sins of their nation. Let us understand that for those who believe in Jesus, all of their sins are forgiven them. They will not be remembered by God and they will not be brought up before them on the Day of Judgment. But does that mean that true believers will not undergo times of spiritual captivity, in the sense of the truth being misrepresented by false sons in her pale, or even physical captivity on account of the sins of many in their nation? No, it doesn’t mean that at all.

This truth is little thought about, and it is taken advantage of, by the false prophets who try to make people believe that sin does not have consequences; that idolatry and false religion can be tolerated, and accepted by Christians. It is most certainly true that God will judge in both a temporal, earthly, national way; and He will also be judging in a spiritual way in terms of the progress which the gospel is making among the nations. He will render these judgments just as certainly as He will eventually judge the world in righteousness through the man whom He has appointed; having furnished proof by raising Him from the dead. Let us understand that there were specific times of captivity laid up for the Old Testament people of God because of the sins of those people. And their captivity was a kind of scourge to them. The time of their being in captivity was very specific, and it was conveyed by the prophet Jeremiah to the people so that they would know what their national sins deserved. But it was also true that God would deal with their sins as a people, and eventually, He would restore them to His blessings, according to His eternal purposes as well as His purposes for them as a nation.

Let us understand and apply this, then, in our own case, in New Testament times. The specific times which are mentioned in the New Testament book of Revelation are important for us to understand. The sins of people in former generations of this New Testament Church age, in accepting false doctrines and bringing them into the visible Church of Jesus Christ, has brought about what many of the Reformers and Puritans have called, the Babylonian Captivity of the

Church; a spiritual captivity where it has been very hard for the true Church of Jesus Christ to bring forth the gospel to the nations. The time of this captivity has been given in the book of Revelation as the 1260 days, 42 months, or a time, times, and a half of time. All of these times have the same meaning. And they represent prophetic years; a year for a day. In order to establish this little-taught truth, I would like you to recall that in Daniel chapter 9, verse 2, that Daniel the prophet “understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.” And so he set his face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.” “And he prayed to the Lord for understanding. And he was given the 70 weeks prophecy, recorded in Daniel 9, verses 24-27.

These 70 weeks were actually weeks of years, 70 sevens, and the prophecy was revealing the fact that there would be 490 literal years, 70 weeks of years, until Messiah the Prince would come, and be cut off, but not for Himself, and He would confirm a covenant with many for one week of seven years, at the end of those 490 years. But in the middle of it He would bring an end to the sacrifice and offering of the Jewish people by fulfilling the whole law of God. The Lord Jesus Christ would do this by His offering of Himself as a sacrifice for sin. And following this fulfillment, seeing that the Jews as a nation would reject Christ and the gospel as it was preached through the apostles, these 490 years this would finish with their stoning of Stephen the first martyr. And so, the 70 weeks prophecy was completely fulfilled in its exact times. What a glorious prophecy!

We need to think about it more so that we will not be deceived as to what we, the New Testament Church should expect both now and in the future. In our own day most Christians do not realize that we are currently living in the days of the reign of Antichrist, and that these days of this Babylonian captivity shall eventually come to an end, and the systematic deception which is currently taking place among the nations of the world by Satan will come to an end. We need very much to see that there is much work yet to do, even though we are in this captivity. We can still preach the gospel right here where we are, at home, and we can still preach the gospel to the nations. The Bible tells us that there will come mockers in these last times who will say – “Where is the promise of Christ’s Coming?” For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” But brethren, all things do not continue as they were from the beginning of creation. God has His times and His seasons for accomplishing all of His good purposes, both in regard to the blessings of eternal salvation being given to His elect people, and His purposes being fulfilled with regard to the Devil’s schemes, and his being overcome by Christ through His Church in the whole of this present evil age.

It is indeed an evil age all down through history until the coming of Christ, but within it there will also be times of tremendous victory, of the gospel coming with power to all the nations, and Satan being bound for a thousand years. And let us remember that a thousand years is as one day, and a day as a thousand years in the day of the Lord’s power. We should not forget that fact, and believe that after the end of 1260 days/years prophecy, there will come a very dark time for a few years. This is what is prophesied in the book of Revelation. But after that, the Antichristian systematic deception will be taken away. And then the Lord will bring back the captivity of Zion. In that day the nations shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth Christ’s glory! (Psalm 102, verse 15) The Lord will build up Zion. No longer will the Devil be able to raise up great systems of error and heresy like Roman Catholicism and Mohammedanism and the false doctrines of the Pagan religions of the world. Satan shall be bound, and the nations shall be deceived no longer, as it says in Revelation 20, verse 4. Yes, it is true that he will be released for a little season at the end of the thousand years. But this will only bring about the 2nd Coming of our Lord in its appointed time; that glorious return of which we do not know the hour nor the day.

What we should learn from this passage is that false teachers will often try to twist the Scriptures and impose upon the Bible, things that they would like to see happen which will benefit

themselves personally. They will try to impose upon the clear prophecies of the Scriptures. False teachers have big egos, and they boast like Hananiah in a prophetic manner, as if God has to listen to them, as though God has exclusively given to them, great understanding on the times and seasons. Hananiah was trying to assert that within two full years God would bring back to that place all that was taken away. But this was a lie, and God would confront it as such, as He did here with Hananiah. If a pastor or preacher is a true pastor or preacher, he will not add to the word of God and he will not take away from it either. He will preach the word, and attempt to understand the times that God Himself has revealed. But he will, by all means, submit to what God has specifically said, and he not impose what He personally would like to see, upon the plain teaching of Scripture. Let us all receive what the word of God says to us, but refuse the assertions of those who have a personal agenda.

2nd – False teachers will attempt by deceptive words to preach a false peace to sinners who are under the judgment of God. (verses 5-9)

Verse 5 – “Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and in the presence of the all the people who stood in the house of the Lord, and the prophet Jeremiah said, ‘Amen!’ “The Lord do so; the Lord perform your words which you have prophesied, to bring back the vessels of the Lord’s house and all who were carried away captive, from Babylon to this place.” “Nevertheless hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: The prophets who have been before me and before you of old prophesied against many countries and great kingdoms – of war and disaster and pestilence.” “As for the prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent.”

What Jeremiah was doing was questioning, in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people, whether God would perform Hananiah’s words. He knew that God wouldn’t perform his words because he knew that the word of the Lord hadn’t actually come to him. And he also knew that the word had really come to him, and also there was the Scriptures of the other prophets. He knew that prophesying was a serious business. He also knew how badly that the people wanted this captivity to be short. But he also knew as it says in Isaiah 57: 20, that “the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” “There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked.” He knew that Hananiah was trying to preach peace when there was no peace. He knew that Hananiah was preaching out of his own mind and heart. He knew that he must continue to preach the 70 years captivity.

You can see what God thought of Hananiah’s attempt to deceive the people if you will turn over to Ezekiel 13, verse 1 – “And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Son of man prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, ‘Hear the word of the Lord!’ “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!’ “O Israel, your prophets are like foxes in the deserts.” “You have not gone up into the gaps to build a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle on the day of the Lord.” “They have envisioned futility and false divination saying, ‘Thus says the Lord!’ “But the Lord has not sent them, yet they hope that the word may be confirmed.” “Have you not seen a futile vision, and have you not spoken false divination?” “You say, ‘the Lord says,’ but I have not spoken.”

“Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Because you have spoken lies, therefore I am indeed against you,’ says the Lord God.” “My hand will be against the prophets who envision futility and who divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of My people, or be written in the record of the house of Israel.” “Then you shall know that I am the Lord God.” “Because, indeed, because they have seduced My people, saying, ‘Peace!’ when there is no peace – and one builds a wall, and they plaster it with untempered mortar – say to those who plaster it with untempered mortar, that it will fall.” “There will be flooding rain, and you, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind

shall tear it down.” “Surely, when the wall has fallen, will it not be said to you, ‘Where is the mortar with which you plastered it?’”

You can see here that the Lord is comparing the false prophets to foxes in the deserts. They were sly and cunning. They had not gone up into the gaps to build a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle on the day of the Lord’s judgments. God did not send them, and they spoke falsely, for they did not preach repentance. Their prophecies of peace, the Lord in this case, compares to a wall which is plastered with untempered mortar. It is missing the very necessary ingredient of the Holy Spirit’s empowerment which would be found in the preaching of a true prophet. This wall, which was raised up by these false prophets, God says that He would cause the stormy wind of His wrath to break forth in His fury upon it, and it would fall. Even so, in our days there are false teachers as well. Listen to the apostle Peter in 2nd Peter 2, verse 1 – “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.” “And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.”

You can see the method of false teachers here portrayed for us. They secretly, or little by little, bring in destructive heresies. They deny the critical importance of the Deity of Christ or the Humanity of Christ, and call the Holy Spirit an influence. They see one nature in Christ instead of two. They deny Christ’s satisfaction for sin, or the Father’s begetting Him from all eternity, as well as in time and space. How do false teachers in our day deny the Lord who bought them? This verse in 2nd Peter 2: 1 is often brought to the attention of the Calvinist as proof that Christ died even for the false teachers who deny Him. Did not Christ buy them with His redemption? But the word in the Greek there, which is translated “Lord” in the King James and New King James, is not *κύριος* (*kurios*), which word is usually used by the apostles in referring to our Lord Jesus Christ, but here it is *δеспότης* (*despotes*), which more accurately might be rendered “Master”, as it is in the New American Standard translation and can therefore be applied to the Father, or the Lord God’s, having bought them, not in the sense of salvation, but in terms of His having redeemed them in an outward sense; that is, having determined only to deliver them from the calamities brought on by their sins, outwardly, at least for a time, but leaving them, inwardly in their hearts, to themselves and their own treacherous hearts, and the sin which they most certainly love more than Him.

Listen to Jude verse 4. “For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. Here we find that a whole people were saved out of the land of Egypt, but afterwards those who did not really believe were destroyed. This is how it is with false teachers who profess to be Christians. They have only a nominal faith in God and in Christ. And the doctrines which they hold to and teach others, are not orthodox in relation to the apostles doctrine. Brethren, let us not be Biblicists in the sense that some are in our days; those who say that they hold only to the Bible, and yet they deny many cardinal doctrines of the faith.

They use this, their affirmation that they hold to the Bible alone, and to no human Confession of faith, because they do not really want to define what the Bible is saying. They actually want to be free from all in-depth definitions of sin and righteousness and doctrinal correctness. They actually want their own opinions of Bible truth to prevail. The Bible does not speak to them and govern their lives; they speak to it and rationalize away the force of truth and the commandments of God. Let us hold fast our confession of faith in Christ, and the Confession of Faith known as the London Baptist Confession of Faith, for in doing so, we shall be able to test those who claim to be Biblical, and prove whether they are, or they are not. Our Confession of Faith is not the final authority. We

know that the Bible is. But our Confession of Faith is the best representation of explanation of Biblical truth that exists, and therefore, we ought not to be ashamed to use it.

3rd – False Teachers will attempt by preaching a doctrine of personal freedom to make the yoke which the true Christian must take up, to seem unbearably difficult.

(verse 10-17)

“Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke off the prophet Jeremiah’s neck and broke it. And Hananiah spoke in the presence of all the people, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘Even so I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years.’ And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.” “Now the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying, ‘Go and tell Hananiah, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: “You have broken the yokes of wood, but you have made in their place yokes of iron.” “For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “I have put a yoke of iron on the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him.” “I have given him the beasts of the field also.”

You can see what Hananiah was doing can’t you? He was actually trying to break the power of God’s word which Jeremiah had spoken to the people, of His purpose, so that they would believe in what to him was much more pleasant; a two-year captivity. He was actually trying to show his own independent self-asserting power of judgment over God’s word to the people through Jeremiah, and so he broke the yoke. What was he saying? He was saying – I have independent power of judgment and I have the strength within my own mind and I will to break this yoke of Jeremiah’s and nullify his heavy words of judgment which discourage the people. I will, by the strength of my own actions and assertions bring about hope and good for this people. But my brethren, that is not something that any person has the power to actually do. Jeremiah knew the truth of 2nd Timothy 2: 24 – “And the servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” Hananiah had not been taken into captivity with Jeconiah and the others, but he was very much a captive of the devil and was making for himself and all Judah and Jerusalem, a yoke of iron to wear.

Let us learn from this not to fight against the purposes of God, but rather pray for wisdom and ask to understand what the Lord would have us to do, when we come into them. Look at how much the Lord was in control of this situation. Jeremiah went his way for a time, and then he came back at the bidding of the Lord, to say this to Hananiah in verse 22 of our text – “Hear now, Hananiah, the Lord has not sent you, but you make this people trust in a lie.” “Therefore thus says the Lord: ‘Behold I will cast you from the face of the earth.’ “This year you shall die, because you have taught rebellion against the Lord.” “So Hananiah the prophet (the false prophet) died the same year in the seventh month.”

Let this speak to us now as I close this message. Do you see how completely our lives are in the hands of God? God can take our sinful selfish and self-deceived life away from us if He sees that we want to believe a lie; if we want to cling to an independent, self-justifying attitude of denying His word; in wanting to promote simply the earthly well-being of ourselves and people around us, without ever checking to see what God might think of us. He who made us, knows how to judge us justly, and He is under no obligation to save any person. But He will have regard for those who will humble themselves and receive His word, to teach them how to truly live, whether they are brought into a state of captivity, or whether they are living in God-appointed freedom. If you will worship God alone and heed His word, you shall know the Lord’s blessing. Believe in the ultimate and true Prophet, Jesus Christ. If you believe in Him you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free, and you will be free indeed!

