

What if God had sent us a message that we all must bow to one of the cruel national leaders Saddam Hussein or Adolf Hitler, instead of resisting them?

This thought gives you a sense of the scene in chapter 27 of Jeremiah. Surprisingly, God called all the people from all the nations to bow to the cruel and wicked King Nebuchadnezzar, as bad as he was. As a further surprise, God referred to Nebuchadnezzar one of God's servants. What does all this mean?

Remember from the Book of Daniel, chapter 2, where there was a vision of a statue, and Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold? It meant that God would allow Nebuchadnezzar to become the one main world ruler, the World King, the King of Kings! Wait. Isn't Jesus the King of Kings? Yes, He is, and so why would God allow the godless Babylonians the right to destroy Jerusalem and destroy the great Temple of Solomon? Why would Christ the King of Kings allow Nebuchadnezzar His servant to uproot God's people and carry them off into captivity?

God was dealing with the sin of His people, and saving them! God does not cause the wickedness and oppression that people do, but God takes their actions and accomplish God's righteous will with them.

Dictators like Nebuchadnezzar, who crush other countries, think that they are the most powerful pieces on the chessboard, but the truth is that they are pawns in the hand of our Sovereign Lord.

The main lesson from chapter 27 is this: **Accepting God's plan of exile-then-restoration meant accepting King N., until God would send a future son of David to burst that yoke.**

1. God's message to all the nations. (v. 1-11)

Verse 1, the scene shifts back to the reign of Zedekiah. We learn from chapter 28:1, that these events happened in the 4th year of the reign of King Zedekiah. So the year on the calendar was 593BC.

Verse 2, the command about the yoke – why would God tell Jeremiah to put a yoke on his own neck? It was a powerful object lesson and a fitting symbol of its accompanying message. A yoke was a tool used on farms to connect two oxen side by side to pull a wagon or a plow. By telling Jeremiah to actually a yoke on himself - the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar - God was saying that they must become servants of King Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 3 – King Zedekiah was doing exactly what Jeremiah had previously warned him not to do. Earlier in chapter 24, Jeremiah had warned Zedekiah not to partner with Egypt. Sure enough, here in chapter 27, Zedekiah has gathered these messengers of these various kings for an international summit meeting in order to discuss forming an alliance to rebel against Babylon and King Nebuchadnezzar, and align with Egypt. At that moment, it seemed like they could succeed, because

Babylon was 1,000 miles away, and had a lot of other military troubles to deal with at that time. It seemed like a perfect time to rebel. There was only one thing they forgot....to ask God. So, without them requesting God, we see in verse 4 that God mercifully gave them the message they needed, and the message that they were not wise enough to request. God's message was (v.6), that God has great power, and (v.6), that God had given all lands to Nebuchadnezzar, and that therefore (v.7) all nations should serve Nebuchadnezzar. Verse 8, anyone who would not follow Nebuchadnezzar would be punished. So, basically, God's message to the assembled diplomats was this: either accept the Yoke of Nebuchadnezzar or die!

In verse 9, any false prophets who were holding out vain hope of not surrendering to Nebuchadnezzar were classified with pagan fortune-tellers!

In verse 10, God called out the false prophets as liars.

In verse 11, we have a re-statement of what was previously said the opposite way. Accept the Yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, and live!...Oh, and by the way, accept the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, and you can stay in your own land.

Whenever there is a change in government in a country of the world, the Lord is behind it all.

2. God's message to His nation's king. (v. 12 - 15)

Verse 12, God sent the same message to King Zedekiah, King of Judah! Basically, surrender to the yoke of Babylon, or die! Or basically, 'Go ahead and allow yourselves to go into exile, and know that I will restore you later. I will bring you back.'

Why must they surrender to this yoke? It is because they had thrown off the yoke of God. God's message is clear breaking away from God is not freedom, but rather ends up with slavery to a harsh taskmaster! As a result, the gentle yoke of obedience to God would be replaced with the brutal yoke of oppression. Verse 13, the consequence would be death for not submitting to this new plan of God.

How can they get right with God? The only way is by submitting to the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar! This is a test. This is a second chance for the people who have walked away from God. God is saying, I'll get you out of your sin and your consequences for your sin. You must repent. And repentance is defined as doing exactly as I say. I say surrender to Nebuchadnezzar! The ironic thing is that NOT doing exactly as God said the first time, was the opportunity they had missed!

They would need to repent of their disobedience, and trust that God would save them from exile!

Verse 14, the false prophets claimed that the people would not need to submit to the yoke of Babylon. Just like in the Garden of Eden. God said don't eat of the tree or you will die. The serpent said, no, you will not die. That was a lie. In the same way, God gave a command and the false prophets were lying about that

command. So, God warned in verse 14, not to listen to false prophets. In verse 15, God said that He had not sent the prophets. This was included in God's message.

3. God's message to His priests and people. (v. 16 -22)

In verse 16, because of the false prophets, the question became whether or not the people would ever get back their national treasures – the vessels from the temple. So far, it was only the smaller items, the more easily removable items, not the large scale and integral parts of the temple structure, like the pillars and the sea and the stands, the attached parts. Already four years prior to this point, Nebuchadnezzar had attacked, and carried off some of the temple furnishings. Now the false prophets were saying that these small temple objects would soon be brought back from Babylon to Jerusalem's temple. God literally said in verse 16, "*it is a lie...*" And again in verse 17, God said, do not listen to the false prophets.

There is sarcasm in verses 18-19. Instead of giving false hope about retrieving the smaller gold objects that were already taken to Babylon, God mocked them in saying maybe they should pray that the rest of the larger, attached temple special objects will not be stolen next! If they were truly prophets, let them pray to God. If they did, God would have a correction for them. Verse 19, the vessels that remain in Jerusalem, verse 20, the vessels that were not taken last time when people and vessels were taken away, verse 21, those remaining vessels, verse 22, they will also be taken away!

In other words, get with the program of God! Accept God's plan for the remaining larger and attached vessels (and the remaining people) to also be carried off into exile, and then someday, to be brought back and restored.

God's plan was exile-then-restoration. God's plan was establishing the world-ruler Nebuchadnezzar. God's plan was people staying in exile for 70 years, until God would send a future son of David to burst that yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, and God would then establish the rule of a son of David.

Remember verse 7, "*All the nations shall serve [Nebuchadnezzar]... until the time of his own land comes. Then many nations and great kings shall make [Nebuchadnezzar] their slave.*"

God will reverse the exile. God will reverse the rule of Nebuchadnezzar to the slavery of Nebuchadnezzar. God will reverse their submission to the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, and turn it into submission to the yoke of a son of David.

God will restore. We see that in verse 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.*"

When we move beyond the book of Jeremiah, we see the fulfillment of God's promises. God tells us what happened later - it is in the Book of Ezra, chapter 1, verses 1-11, Cyrus king of Persia became the next powerful leader, accomplishing God's purposes, fulfilling God's word in Jeremiah! That king

ordered the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. That order included the return of the gold vessels to the Temple of God! That order included the return of the people of God to Jerusalem, so that they could worship God in that temple!

This is a reminder that God keeps His promises.

The Bible tells us what happened next. The son of David came and He underwent the ultimate exile through His death at Jerusalem, and He has fulfilled God's plans for us, the exile-then-restoration plan.

Matthew 1:1, Jesus Christ is the Son of David.

Matthew 1:12 and 17 mention the deportation to Babylon, and yet the succession line of the sons of David continues down to Jesus Christ.

Matthew 11:28-30, *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

The Lord Jesus Christ took the yoke of God upon Himself for us. He submitted to the actions and decisions of lawless men, so that He would be crucified for us to cleanse us of our sins. Acts 2:23, Jesus was *"...delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God...crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men..."* And again in Acts 4:27-28, *"...there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom [God] anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever [God's] hand and [God's] plan had predestined to take place."*

The gospel of our salvation came to us when our Savior submitted to the yoke of wicked rulers, in order to be crucified for us.

Conclude:

1. Submit to God's authorities. In the home, church, workplace, and government. Just because the leader is bad, does not mean we can disrespect them. Acts 23:1-5, *"And looking intently at the council, Paul said, 'Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.'" And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike [Paul] on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, 'God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?'" Those who stood by said, 'Would you revile God's high priest?'" And Paul said, 'I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"*

God calls us to submit to the authorities in our lives. One of the lessons from our chapter is that God even called His people to submit to Babylon! Let that lesson sink in to us. In our country today, we are quick to rebel. A student who does not like a teacher, and believes the teacher to be assigning too much homework, will rebel and conclude that the assignments need not be completed.

Same for supervisors at work. Children give themselves permission to disobey their parents when their parents are not perfect. Citizens give themselves permission to disobey the government, when the citizens disagree with the government. That is our culture. Our country was founded by declaring independence, and so we have a habit of declaring independence from authority. But God wants us to obey. Consider the 5th commandment – honor your father and your mother. Consider the application of that, spelled out in Westminster Larger Catechism 124, “Who are meant by father and mother in the fifth commandment? Answer. By father and mother, in the fifth commandment, are meant, not only natural parents, but all superiors in age and gifts; and especially such as, by God's ordinance, are over us in place of authority, whether in family, church, or commonwealth. That is the doctrinal standard of our church. It means that we are to honor those over us in authority in the family, in the church, and in the government! Of course this only applies to lawful commands. Consider Daniel who was commanded by Nebuchadnezzar to eat certain foods that would defile Daniel, and how careful Daniel was to find a way through that predicament. Consider Daniel again when Daniel and his three friends were told to worship the statue of Nebuchadnezzar. They answered in Daniel 3:18, that they would not worship the golden image. So, our obedience to authorities does have limits, but it is a very carefully considered matter. In general, we are to submit to God's authorities.

2. Focus on the true worship of God. Jesus is King of Kings, and is worthy of our worship. Jesus has saved us, and so we express our allegiance to Him in our worship services. This is seen in our chapter when there is talk of the temple. The fate of the people seemed connected to the temple and its vessels. The temple was central to the plan of God. If the vessels went into exile, so did the people. If the vessels were brought back and restored, so were the people. The Lord Jesus Christ is the temple. Why? To show us the importance of the worship of God. The people of God in the New Testament church are described as the temple. Why? To show us the importance of the worship of God. One of the most important things we do in our lives is to worship God together. Let the worship of God take a central place in your living of your life, because the worship of God takes a central place in God's plan for the nations of the world. God has called all nations to worship Him. What about the exile and return? That points us to the crucifixion, by which Christ is made King over all the Kings and Lord of all the Lords. Acts 2:36, “*let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.*” This is the plan of God for our salvation and our worship. Hebrew 2:8, “...now in putting everything in subjection to [Jesus], [God the Father] left nothing outside of [Jesus'] control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to [Jesus Christ.]” Jesus is King of Kings, but we don't

see that when we watch the news. The place we see it is in the worship of God. Psalm 73, "...my feet had almost slipped...until I went into the sanctuary of God..." In the worship of Christ, under the Word of Christ by the Spirit of Christ, we are granted eyes to see the invisible rule of Christ.

3. Do not listen to false prophets. The book called *The Pilgrim's Progress*, one of the most famous books ever published, is the story of a Christian's journey through life. The Christian in the story meets a false prophet with the name Mr. Worldly Wiseman, from the town of Carnal Policy, who falsely advises Christian to take an easier pathway. This is quite appropriate to include in a story about our journey as Christians, since both the Bible filled with the consistent advice to avoid false prophets.