

JEREMIAH

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Jeremiah chapter 27 as we continue our study through the Word of God. As we will see in our study this evening Jeremiah is going up against the false prophets of Judah. They and the nations around Jerusalem felt they were safe, that they would not be taken into captivity and Jeremiah is going to show them that the exact opposite is true. He is going to show them that they need to surrender to the King of Babylon. Then, as we get to Jeremiah chapter 29 we see some letters that Jeremiah has sent to the captives who were already in Babylon, encouraging them to settle in because they would be there for a while, some seventy years! He will also be dealing with what the false prophets were writing back to Jerusalem encouraging them to put to silence Jeremiah. With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Jeremiah chapter 27 beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word this evening.

JEREMIAH 27**VERSES 1-8**

1. Now this seems confusing because here in verse 1 we see that the Lord gave these words to Jeremiah during the reign of Jehoiakim and yet these things took place during the reign of the last King in Judah, Zedekiah and we see his name mentioned in verse 3 and verse 12 of Jeremiah chapter 27.

So what is going on here, why do we see this discrepancy? In a commentary by Jamieson-Fausset- Brown we are given four possible reasons and I will share with you afterward what I think is correct here. They wrote,

1. Some think Jehoiakim was a common name to all the sons of Josiah, and that Zedekiah is here called Jehoiakim, but I see no foundation for that conjecture from holy writ.
2. Others think it is an error in those that copied out the prophecies, but it is dangerous to admit that.
3. Others think that the prophecy came in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, but was to be concealed until the reign of Zedekiah.
4. I had rather agree with those who think that this command came to the prophet first in the time of Jehoiakim, but was to be repeated by the prophet often, and accordingly was so until and in the time of Zedekiah; not that he always went about with bonds and yokes about his neck, but [at times he put them on] and went about with them, as a type of that bondage which the Jews were suddenly to endure.

- <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/jeremiah/27-1.htm>

I believe the fourth explanation is correct even though many feel this is just a copyist error. They believe the scribe who was transcribing this passage was focused on what Jeremiah 26:1 said and just copied the name Jehoiakim instead of Zedekiah. I don't think that is correct. I believe that it was first given by the Lord to Jeremiah during the reign of Jehoiakim and it was fulfilled during the reign of Zedekiah.

2. So the King on the throne when these things take place is Zedekiah and not Jehoiakim as verse 3 tells us. Zedekiah was the last King to reign in the Southern Kingdom of Judah before the Babylonians made their third and final assault upon the nation, specifically Jerusalem, and destroyed the city, taking the remaining people back to Babylon with them except for the old and the sick.

If you remember the first invasion came in 606 B. C. when the Babylonians took the best of the best back to Babylon with them, incorporating them into their culture, including Daniel. The second invasion came in 597 B. C. and at that time Zedekiah was placed as a vassal King in Judah until he revolted against Babylon causing this third and final invasion in 586 B. C.

And Jeremiah is told by the Lord to give the nations around Jerusalem this object lesson as he was to make a yoke and place the yoke upon himself. These prophets had it tough, not just what they said but what the Lord wanted them to do.

Now keep in mind that yokes were symbols of submission, bondage. And Jeremiah, as he speaks, the people will have this object lesson before their eyes as they see Jeremiah wearing this yoke. And the message was simple and yet hard to swallow. The Babylonians were coming, the people were going into captivity, and they would have to submit to the authority of Babylon, that is the will of God. Now as you can imagine, that was not a very popular message. They didn't want to submit to anyone!

Babylon was a mighty nation; no one was able to stand against it. One nation would never be able to defeat the Babylonians so these 5 Kings, along with Zedekiah, six in total, were planning to work together and fight against Babylon. During this time, according to The Babylonian Chronicle, there is a record that Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon was having some internal trouble. A revolt was growing and maybe Zedekiah and these Kings saw this as an opportunity to defeat Babylon. The only problem was that revolt was put down and the King and the nation remained very powerful. God warned them to surrender and they refused and in the end they went into captivity just as God said!

And notice what Jeremiah is to do. These representatives who came to work out this alliance with Judah against Babylon had seen Jeremiah with this yoke around his neck and now they were to go back to their King's with a message from Jeremiah. It was a warning not to fight against the King of Babylon because they will not win, there were to surrender to the Babylonians.

3. Now it was not just this object lesson of the yoke but it was also the Words of God as we see in verses 4-6. Jeremiah wants them to tell their Kings that the creator of heaven and earth has the power to do as He pleases. Now if God was some kind of tyrant, we would be in trouble. But He is not. He rules in righteousness, His judgments are fair. And He has the right to use whom He pleases to fulfill His purposes, and in this situation it is Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. Thus, they needed to surrender to him and not fight because this is the will of God! If they refuse to surrender to the Babylonians then the punishment will be even harder upon them.

4. Now in the midst of this judgment there is hope because we are told that this powerful enemy, the Babylonian's were going to fall, their power would not last forever. During the reign of Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian empire fell to the Medo-Persians in 536 B. C.

5. Listen to Jeremiah's warning as he continues on to warn the people and the nations of what is coming and what they need to do.

VERSES 9-10

1. Isn't it amazing that we still have false prophets today who say they speak for God and yet their words go contrary to what God's Word has to say! In Jeremiah's day the false prophets, the diviners, the dreamers, the soothsayers, the sorcerers were all saying "Peace and safety" when in reality destruction was coming. Thus, Jeremiah was warning them not to listen to these false prophets but to listen to the Lord.

And yes the message that Jeremiah was speaking was a hard one to swallow, but it was from God and it was what they needed to hear! They were to surrender to Babylon or they would be destroyed. Now the false prophets were giving the people what they wanted to hear, a positive message, but it was not of God. And that is the tragedy, people like a positive message because it makes them feel good about what they are doing but in the end they will be in utter despair because it was a false message.

The Lord warned Isaiah in Isaiah 8:20, **“To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”** May we heed the warning and listen and obey the Words of God instead of the lies the false prophets are spewing out!

VERSES 11-13

1. God was not only speaking to the Southern Kingdom of Judah through Jeremiah. He was also speaking to Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon. And the reality of Judah and these other nations not listening and obeying these words is they were fighting against the will of God! You see, to submit to Babylon was to submit to the will and purposes of God. But they fought against the will of God and ended up in captivity, the very thing they were trying to avoid!

VERSES 14-17

1. Isn't it amazing the crazy things people believe because someone who has some kind of title said it was true! Here the Lord is telling them not to listen to these false prophets, they are not speaking for Him and yet that is exactly who they are listening to and believing. It sounds like today; the more bizarre the more people believe it! And yet, when it comes to the Bible and what we believe they call us crazy, stupid. God's Word has never failed and it will never fail. What He has said has come to pass and it will come to pass!

Let me just share this with you and you will see how some leaders say the craziest things and so-called Christians just believe it. Listen to what one of the leaders in the church is saying, the apostate church that is. Tony Campolo is a Change Agent whose vision is to change America's churches with radical new ideas that are not based from the Bible or its principles. Some things to know about Campolo associations: Campolo is on Renovaré's "Board of Reference." Renovaré is a New Age, ecumenical organization that practices the "meditative" and "contemplative" lifestyle of early Christianity.

There are also many new age influences found in his books. Campolo writes favorably of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and does not let the readers know that Teilhard's Christ is not the Christ of the Bible but the cosmic Christ of New Age spirituality. Campolo writes, *"If the Shalom of God and the peaceable kingdom of Isaiah 11 are to become real, then new ways of thinking must be established. With some help from St. Francis and Teilhard de Chardin, we just might make it"* (Tony Campolo, *How to Rescue the Earth Without Worshiping Nature* p. 89).

Listen to this article and you tell me why parents let their children go to Lifest when Tony Campolo was there. We are told,

For him, the Kingdom of God is a place of justice. When his students ask him to "spell that out," Campolo says he refers to Scriptures.

“I go to the Bible, and the sixty-fifth chapter of Isaiah is the passage I often refer to, starting with the seventeenth verse, in which the Kingdom of God has certain characteristics,” he says. “First of all, children do not die in infancy. I want to go to work around the world to do something about the infant mortality rate, the fact that 30,000 kids die of hunger every day. It says that old people shall live out their lives in perfect health. I want to see elderly people cared for, as they should be. It goes on to say that everyone should have decent housing to live in. I’ve been on the international board of Habitat for Humanity for years, for that reason. It says that everybody has a job, to work in the vineyard out there, and earn a living. I want to see people get a job.”

He also finds respect for the Earth in the Bible. “The last verse of the sixty-fifth chapter of Isaiah says, ‘Neither shall they hurt the earth anymore.’ Environmentalism is in there,” he says.

Campolo had written in *A Reasonable Faith*: his view that Christ lives in every human being, whether Christian or not. “Jesus is actually present in each other person,” he wrote in the book.

- http://www.progressive.org/?q=mag_camp0805

That is just plain heresy, he is making the Word of God say what he wants it to say and he even misquotes the Scriptures, go figure. Again, why would anyone go and listen to this man who is not even a Christian? “Pastor Joe, how can you say that?” Because he denies the blood atonement and without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins! How can you listen to a man who says that God is in every one of us? How can you send your children out to these events and listen to a man who preaches a social gospel and not the true gospel of Jesus Christ? How can a church or churches in town be members of the Willow Creek Association when Bill Hybels, the pastor of Willow Creek, allows Tony Campolo to speak there with no reservations? They should be ashamed of themselves!

The deception is growing, it is everywhere. Just go into your local Christian bookstore and see the garbage that is in there. Go to a church that has a bookstore and see the New Age and Eastern mysticism books that are being sold. See what yoga books or programs are offered at churches. We need to use the discernment that God has given to us and expose these false teachers and teachings!

2. Here in Jeremiah the Lord is telling them not to fight against the Babylonians because if they did it would only make things worse for them! And yet they still tried to fight against them.

3. During the first invasion by Babylon in 606 B. C. some of the Temple vessels were taken. Now the false prophets, those who were already taken captive to Babylon and those that still remained in Jerusalem, were saying these vessels were going to be returned. Why? Because they were not going to be under the yoke of Babylon and it didn't matter that their message was the complete opposite message that God gave to Jeremiah. (II Chronicles 36:7-10)

Ryrie makes these comments on what winning armies would do when they came into the city they have taken captive and why they took the vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem. He wrote, "A conqueror customarily took the idols of a conquered people back to the temple of his own god. Since Judaism was an imageless religion, the vessels of the Temple were taken instead."

VERSES 18-22

1. Instead of praying for what was taken away, these false prophets should have been praying for this nation, that they would get right with God and possibly cause this judgment of God to cease. And Jeremiah challenges them to pray to the Lord that the rest of the Temple implements would not be taken away like the others. And, of course they were taken away just as the Lord told them and it showed that these were not prophets of God!

You see, these false prophets were saying that within 2 years all the vessels will be returned from Babylon. We will see that spoken of in the next chapter. But God is telling them that they are wrong. Not only will the vessels not be returned in 2 years but the remaining vessels will be taken away to Babylon and they will not return until the Lord is done with His judgment. The captivity was to last 70 years!

We are warning people of the coming judgment and they laugh at us, they mock us but in the end the Judgment of God will come and I believe it is coming soon!

JEREMIAH 28**VERSES 1-4**

1. We are still in the timeframe of the last King in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, Zedekiah. It was in the fourth year of his reign, in the fifth month, which was July\August that a prophet is going to speak and he is going to speak forth some pretty big things.

This prophet's name was Hananiah and he was from Gibeon, which was about six miles northwest of Jerusalem and about five miles west of Jeremiah's hometown of Anathoth. Keep in mind that Gibeon was one of the priestly cities according to Joshua 21:17. And he tells Jeremiah what is going to happen, that the yoke of Babylon will be removed, the vessels will be returned, and Zechariah will be removed from the throne. You see, he felt that the kingship of Zedekiah was illegitimate and God would restore Jeconiah or Jehoiachin to the throne in Jerusalem. And all this would take place within 2 years.

Now it would be very easy to tell if he was a false prophet or not by what is going to happen. Obviously we know the end of the story and he was a false prophet as the nation went into captivity, they were not freed within 2 years! And as we will see as we read on, judgment was going to fall upon this false prophet, he would not last through that 2 year timeframe that he had predicted!

VERSES 5-6

1. As you read that it almost seems like Jeremiah is in agreement with Hananiah, but that is not the case. Yes Jeremiah would have loved this to happen, that the captives and the Temple implements would be returned but that was not the case. And we don't know the inflection of Jeremiah's voice, but it almost seems a little sarcastic. How do I come to that conclusion? By what Jeremiah says next!

VERSES 7-9

1. Jeremiah gives a challenge to this prophet. You see, if what a prophet says doesn't come to pass then he is a false prophet. The time frame here was 2 years and if the captives don't return and the vessels were not brought back then Hananiah is a false prophet, there is no in-between.

And I get the idea that Jeremiah wants these priests and people who were listening to him to remember what has taken place in the past with the judgment of God upon His people and the warnings of the other prophets of God regarding what was to come. Don't just listen to these false prophets, listen to the prophets of God and you can see that what they have spoken has come to pass!

2. In Matthew 7:15-16 Jesus warns us to, "**Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. . . .**" Now what are the fruits of a false prophet? *FALSE PROPHECIES* and *FALSE DOCTRINE!*

Yes we are not to judge a person's heart but we are to examine the fruit. In fact Jesus tells us in John 7:24, "**Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.**" If you are not a fruit inspector you can easily fall prey to their deception. God has warned us to be on guard, to check what is said with His Word!

VERSES 10-11

1. Do you think Jeremiah touched a nerve here with Hananiah? You bet he did! Remember that as Jeremiah and Hananiah are speaking there is a large crowd of people around them. And to drive home his point, since Hananiah didn't have an object lesson like Jeremiah did, he took the yoke off of Jeremiah's neck and broke it. And that was to symbolize that the bondage of Babylon was going to be broken. He did not like what Jeremiah was saying and he wanted to make a statement and he did but it was not a true statement!

2. What I find interesting is what Jeremiah does here. He just walks away. Why did he do that? Because he already spoke forth his message and now it was up to the people to accept it or reject it. He wasn't going to fight over it so he moved on. That is a good lesson for us to learn as there are times to just walk away.

VERSES 12-14

1. Yes Hananiah was able to break the yoke of wood but the Lord tells him through the prophet Jeremiah that there were stronger yokes coming that he would not be able to break nor would the nation be able to break!

You see, whenever a person rebels against the chastening of God they only make things worse for themselves. To fight against the Babylonians, which was to fight against the will of God, was only going to bring death and destruction upon them. And that is exactly what happened because they refused to listen to the Lord but they listened to the false prophets with their empty words of peace and prosperity!

VERSES 15-17

1. People today don't think it is that important if there are some lies mixed with the truth, at least there is truth. But we see here the tragedy of following after false prophets, of not being fruit inspectors, you will believe a lie! And lies will lead you down a path of death and destruction! I don't know about you but I am so thankful that I have the truths of God that are found in the Word of God and I can tell a truth from a lie because of that. I can listen or read the words of others and if they are contrary to what God's Word has to say then they are wrong and I need to stay away from them! May we heed the warning!

2. For the false prophet Hananiah, judgment was coming upon him for leading the people with his lies. He is not even going to see those 2 years come to pass but he will be judged by the Lord and will die for his lie within a year! And that is exactly what took place as verse 17 tells us, "**So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.**" He lived for only 2 months from giving these false prophecies!

3. We are living in a day when false prophets, false doctrine is growing and growing fast within the church. Let me just share a few things with you. We are told,

Benny Hinn, for example, made a series of celebrated prophetic utterances in December of 1989, none of which came true. He confidently told his congregation at the Orlando Christian Center that God had revealed to him Fidel Castro would die sometime in the 1990s; the homosexual community in America would be destroyed by fire before 1995; and a major earthquake would cause havoc on the east coast before the year 2000. He was wrong on all counts, of course.

That did not deter Hinn, who simply kept making bold new false prophecies. At the beginning of the new millennium, he announced to his television audience that a prophetess had informed him Jesus would soon appear physically in some of Hinn's healing meetings. Hinn said he was convinced the prophecy was authentic, and on his April 2, 2000, broadcast, he amplified it with a prophecy of his own: "Now hear this, *I am prophesying this!* Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is about to appear physically in some churches, and some meetings, and to many of His people, for one reason: to tell you He is about to show up! To wake up! Jesus is coming saints!"

Hinn's failed prophecies are more outlandish but nearly as memorable as the notorious claims Oral Roberts began making about three decades ago. In 1977 Roberts said he saw a vision of a 900-foot-tall Jesus, who instructed him to build the City of Faith, a 60-story hospital in south Tulsa. Roberts said God told him He would use the center to unite medical technology with faith healing, which would revolutionize health care and enable doctors to find a cure for cancer.

The building, completed in the early 1980s, was a colossal white elephant from the very start. When the City of Faith opened for business, all but two stories of the massive structure were completely vacant.

By January of 1987 the project was saddled with unmanageable debt, and Roberts announced that the Lord had said unless Roberts raised eight million dollars to pay the debt by March 1, he would die. Apparently not willing to test the death-threat prophecy, donors dutifully gave Roberts the needed funds in time (with the help of \$1.3 million donated at the last hour by a Florida dog-track owner).

But within two years, Roberts was forced to close the medical center anyway and sell the building in order to eliminate still-mounting debt. More than 80 percent of the building had never been occupied. The promised cure for cancer never materialized, either.

A list of similar failed charismatic prophecies could fill several volumes. And yet, amazingly, the “prophets” who make such fantastic claims now appear to have more influence than ever—even among mainstream evangelicals. And the idea that God routinely speaks directly to His people has found more widespread acceptance today than at any time in the history of the church.

- <http://www.gty.org/blog/B100111/false-prophets-and-lying-wonders>

Let me just share a couple more of these new leaders within the church and what false doctrine they are promoting.

Brian McLaren, wrote,

“I don’t believe making disciples must equal making adherents to the Christian religion. It may be advisable in many (not all!) circumstances to help people become followers of Jesus and remain within their Buddhist, Hindu or Jewish contexts . . .”

“Yes, I find a character named God who sends a flood that destroys all humanity except Noah’s family, but that’s almost trivial compared to a deity who tortures the greater part of humanity forever in infinite eternal conscious torment, these words that need to be read slowly and thoughtfully to feel their full import.”

“For many Christians, their faith is primarily about what happens to people after they die. That distracts them from seeking justice and living in a compassionate way while we’re still alive in this life. We need to go back and take another look at Jesus’ teachings about hell. For so many people, the conventional teaching about hell makes God seem vicious. That’s not something we should let stand.”

Tony Jones wrote,

“Some people today may find it compelling that some Great Cosmic Transaction took place on that day 1,980 years ago, that God’s wrath burned against his son instead of me. I find that version of atonement theory neither intellectually compelling, spiritually compelling, nor in keeping with the biblical narrative.”

Many of today’s youth have been raised in a culture (and sadly in some churches) where feelings and sensitivity matter but sound doctrine and the truth of God’s word aren’t a priority. This invites the justification of sinful behaviors and tolerance for sin. Our culture has redefined the word ‘tolerance’ to mean love, unconditional grace, warm fuzzies, and the acceptance of not only the sinner but the sin as well. When the Holy Spirit isn’t invited, by the preaching of Scripture, to come in and work in our hearts, there can be no conviction.

Without revelation of sin and conviction, there can be no repentance leading to forgiveness. We shouldn’t be surprised that many young Christians have their spiritual foundations built on the sand. The Lord Jesus Christ said something very serious about those who cause little ones to stumble. He said in Luke 17:2 that it would be better that a millstone would be tied around the neck of the one who caused them to sin. These guys have no business teaching Christian theology and it’s amazing that so many ‘believing’ consumers buy into their feel-good, motivational doctrine. Part of their gospel is one of a social worker putting their faith in man (humanism) and government.

Dr. Walter Martin, founder of the Christian Research Institute, sternly warned about liberal theology and the emergent church saying, “It is a cult because it follows every outlined structure of cultism; its own revelations; its own gurus, and its denial – systematically- of all sound systematic Christian theology. It is a cult because it passes its leadership on to the next group that takes over - either modifying, expanding or contracting - the same heresies; dressing them up in different language, and passing them on . . . it denies the authority of Scripture, it ruins its own theology. And it ends in immorality; because the only way you could have gotten to this homosexual, morally relativistic, garbage - which is today in our denominational structures - is if the leadership of those denominations denied the authority of the Scriptures and Jesus Christ as Lord. . . . Test all things; make sure of what is true (see 1 Thessalonians 5:21). I’m not being harsh; I’m not being judgmental. I am being thoroughly, consistently, Christian; in the light of historic theology, and the holy Bible.”

May we heed the Word of God and not downplay it or distort it or negate it!

And we can go on and look at what the Seeker Friendly churches are saying, the Purpose Driven churches and the Emergent churches and you will see that they are taking people away from the Word of God or altering the Word of God to fit their agenda. But people should not be fooled by them because the Word of God exposes them. That is why they are trying to get people away from the Word of God!

And it worked with the Catholic Church as they are biblically illiterate and they believe the words of men rather than the Word of God because they have kept God’s Word out of the hands of the people and tell them that the common person can’t understand the Scriptures. May we not fall prey to the lies of these false prophets but expose them for who they are!

4. As we move into Jeremiah chapter 29 this evening we are going to be reading several letters that were sent to the captives in Babylon.

JEREMIAH 29

VERSES 1-7

1. This letter was sent by Jeremiah to Babylon during the reign of Zedekiah, after Jeconiah was taken captive, along with many others. Zedekiah was a vassal King to Babylon. And thus, ambassadors would come and go and Jeremiah would send letters with them to give to the captives in Babylon.

Now what is interesting to me is that Jeremiah did not tell them to gather weapons, to kill the Babylonians, to overthrow their government. He did not tell them to rebel at all!

What he did do was tell them to make themselves at home, to plant gardens, build houses, get married, have children because they were going to be there for a long time! Why? Because one day they were going to return home and their children will be the ones to see that day!

And think about this for a minute. Babylon was the center of occult worship and God tells them to pray for the peace of this city. Why? Because in their peace the children of Israel would also have peace, it was protection for His people. He wanted His people to be good citizens, to be a good witness. And Daniel was a model citizen and I believe he lead King Nebuchadnezzar to the Lord.

2. Today you hear of Christian refusing to pay their taxes, taking up arms to fight against this wicked government. I am not sure if we are worse or better than Babylon but we are at least the same and yet look at what God said His people were to do. I think we should do no less. We should pray for the peace of our nation, that God would touch the hearts of our leaders and draw them to Him.

But I don't see anywhere in the Bible that we are to rebel against our government! In fact, Paul tells us in Romans 13:1-7, **“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.”**

This is a tough section for many and they like to make excuses why they don't have to obey the government. I had one person tell me that we are not to obey our government because when Paul said this he was speaking of the government of Rome, which was not as evil as our government!

I know our government is bad, but not that bad, and even if it was, that is not a reason to rebel against those who are in authority over us. Keep in mind that Caesar Nero was in charge when Paul wrote this letter to the Romans and he was no friend of Christians. He would pour tar over them and light them on fire. He would stitch them up in animal skins and release wild dogs to eat them alive! Thus, Paul is saying that like the people of his day were to be subject to those who are in authority over them, no matter how evil or wicked they might be, we must also be subject!

Newell puts this into perspective for us as he says: “Remember your Savior suffered under Pontius Pilate, one of the worst Roman governors Judea ever had; and Paul under Nero, the worst Roman Emperor. And neither our Lord nor His Apostle denied or reviled the ‘authority!’” You see, God has placed them as the legitimate authority and we must respect that position they are holding, we are subject to them!

And like it or not, this is not an option for us, we are to respect, honor, we are to be subject to those who are in authority over us.

This does not mean we have to agree with everything they say or do and if what they tell us goes against what God says in His Word, if they tell us to do something that is immoral then we can disobey what the government says.

3. I remember years ago at a hospital in Chicago I was working at and they were not doing well financially, they even let a lot of people go and I thought I would be one of them, but I wasn't. And my wife said she would pray for the peace and prosperity of that hospital because in their peace we would also have peace and the Lord honored that! It wasn't until after I left, interestingly enough, that the hospital went under and they are still struggling today even after being bought out by other hospitals!

VERSES 8-10

1. What a precious promise from God. Yes they were in captivity but it was not going to last forever. It had its limits, 70 years, and then they will return home. Can you imagine how these people were feeling? They were some 1,000 miles from home. The Temple, the place of worship was back in Jerusalem.

And in Psalm 137 we are given insight into how the people felt as they were taken captive to Babylon. We read beginning in verse 1, **“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst of it. For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, and those who plundered us requested mirth, saying, ‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion!’ How shall we sing the LORD’S song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth - if I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy.”** Psalm 137:1-6.

2. Now here's the thing. Jeremiah sent these words to them by this letter and he encouraged them to trust in the Lord and not these false prophets who spoke lies about returning home in 2 years. The captivity would last 70 years! They could accept that or reject that, they had a choice.

Now as the days of captivity were coming to an end there was a man by the name of Daniel who was taken captive by the Babylonians in 606 B. C. and he read and believed the words of Jeremiah from the Lord. We are told in Daniel 9:1-4a, **“In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans - in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, 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. Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed to the Lord my God . . .”**

Daniel believed the words of Jeremiah and it caused him to pray accordingly. May we believe the Words of God and may it cause us to pray accordingly!

VERSE 11

1. We should take great comfort in this verse because in the midst of captivity, when the enemy has us surrounded, the Lord will use it for good and not for evil in our lives. Even with the Southern Kingdom of Judah He used their captivity for good. They went into captivity as idol worshipers and they came out worshiping the true and living God!

If your future seems a mess, if your hope is gone, understand that God is working for good and not for evil and as you look to Him you will see your future and you can have hope, hope in the Lord!

May we, as Christians, keep that in mind! God's thoughts for us are good, not evil. He desires to give us a future, a hope, but at times, to get our attention, He chastens us. And other times He allows these things in our lives to help us to grow. You see, it will work out for good in our lives if we allow it. He is working in us, preparing us for the future so that He might bless us.

VERSES 12-14

1. Notice when we go searching for God. It is when we have lost hope, when we have come to the end of ourselves that it causes us to look up and seek God. And I love this about God. He does not say, "Catch me if you can!" Nor does He say, "Good luck finding Me!"

God says, "**And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.**" God wants us to find Him all we have to do is look to Him and He will reveal Himself to us!

2. And notice this point. What does God want from us? Our whole heart! He doesn't want us to come to Him half-heartedly. As Jesus said about the religious leaders, "**These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.**" Matthew 15:8-

9. God is not looking for us to play church; He wants a relationship with us! And as we come to Him the captivity that we have found ourselves in we will be set free from! I like that!

VERSES 15-19

1. Here was the problem for those who were taken captive in Babylon. The false prophets were saying that all will be fine in 2 years and you will return home. But Jeremiah is telling them the exact opposite. In fact, it will be better for them who are in captivity than it will be for those that remained in the land of Judah!

And the reason is simple. They are going to revolt against Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar will finally have enough and he will put down this rebellion. In the process many will die of starvation, of pestilence, and by the sword and the rest will be taken captive to Babylon. Far different from what the false prophets were saying. Only the old and the sick would remain in the land, they would not be taken captive to Babylon!

VERSES 20-23

1. Like Hananiah, Ahab and Zedekiah were false prophets, probably some of the more vocal ones, and when the King of Babylon hears about what they are saying, how they were going to revolt against Babylon he captures them and has them put to death.

This is how the King of Babylon dealt with those who came against him; he roasted them in the fiery furnace. We can read of an incident that took place with Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. They refused to bow to the golden image and the King was going to have them put to death by tossing them in the fiery furnace. And he was so mad at these guys he had the heat turned up seven times the normal temperature. It was so hot that the big, strong soldiers that threw these three guys into the fire were burned to a crisp. But God protected these three Hebrew men, the only thing that was burned on them were the ropes that bound them. They didn't even smell like smoke!

But that was not the case for these false prophets, they were burned to death for the lies that they spoke in the name of God!

2. And as you read verse 23 you see how bad it really was in the Southern Kingdom of Judah! These false prophets were speaking lies for God. They were sleeping around, living in sin, living immoral lives.

But they of course had a following. People loved to have their ears tickled but they didn't and don't like the conviction of God's Word. People today are so reckless with the Word of God and with these false prophecies that are being spoken like they come from the throne room of God. And God has not changed His Words; He says the same thing to the false prophets of today that He said to the false prophets of Jeremiah's day. He said that they, "**. . . have spoken lying words in My name, which I have not commanded them. Indeed I know, and am a witness, says the LORD.**" Jeremiah 29:23.

VERSES 24-29

1. Shemaiah, this false prophet, was sending letters back to Jerusalem telling the leaders to deal with Jeremiah for he is not speaking for God. He was upset that they were not putting to silence Jeremiah and he did not want to lose his following there in Babylon. He was telling them they were going home within 2 years and Jeremiah was saying to build homes, tend their gardens, get married, have children, pray for the peace of Babylon because you will be there seventy years! The opposition to the work of God is great but God is greater and thus, may we not fear what is before us!

VERSES 30-32

1. God is going to judge Shemaiah for his lies. His house will be cut off, none of his family will return to the land of Jerusalem, not in 2 years and not in 70 years. God is not mocked, and what a man sows, he will also reap, as Shemaiah did.

May we learn to trust in the glorious truth of God's Word and to walk by faith and not by sight! What we see with our physical eyes does not always match up to what God is doing, thus, may we learn to trust in His promises to us!