

# **Dr. Gary Yates, Jeremiah, Lecture 22, Jeremiah 27-29, The Prophetic Conflict**

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This is Dr. Gary Yates in his teaching on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 22, Jeremiah 27-29, The Prophetic Conflict.

Our focus in this session is going to be on Jeremiah 27 to 29.

We are specifically dealing with the topic of prophetic conflict. We raised this issue in our study of Jeremiah 23, the qualities and characteristics of a true prophet that are laid out in Deuteronomy 18. The struggle that Jeremiah and his ministry had with false prophets that were promising the people peace and were giving the people a reason and a rationalization to ignore his message and his warnings of judgment.

That issue of prophetic conflict will also come to the fore in chapters 27 to 29. Let me also connect these passages to the structure that we've been working through. We've talked about how chapters 26 to 45 tell the story of the rejection of the word of the Lord and the theological purpose behind this: to demonstrate that it was the rejection of God's word that ultimately led to the judgment of exile.

It was not God who failed to fulfill his covenant obligations; it was Israel who failed to fulfill their obligations to the Lord. We've also seen or tried to look at the Jehoiakim framework around this passage.

Chapters 26 to 35, chapters 36 to 45. We have these four events and episodes from the time of Jehoiakim's ministry that provide a grid that we read this story through. The time of Jehoiakim was a decisive moment when Judah turned away from the Lord and when the rebellion and the rejection of the king toward the word of God ultimately brought Judah's judgment and sealed their fate.

In our last session, we talked about the fact that there was an offer of life given to the people, but the promise of life at the end of each panel is only given to a very tiny remnant. In panel one, in chapter 35, we have the promise to the Rechabites, this obscure tribe that has remained faithful to their family traditions. As a result of that, the Lord says, the Rechabites will never fail to have a man to stand before me.

In the second panel, we have Baruch, who has been Jeremiah's faithful scribe. Jeremiah was a weeping prophet. Baruch was a weeping scribe because he went through the same experiences that Jeremiah did.

Because of his faithfulness, he is promised life in the context of national judgment. But at the end of both of those sections, where you have the deliverance of the

Rechabites and life for Baruch, you also have a judgment on the nation as a whole. In chapter 34, there is going to be a judgment on the people of Judah and on the king because they've turned back from their covenant to release their slaves the way that the Mosaic law prescribed.

In chapter 44, there is going to be judgment on the remnant in Egypt because they have continued in their idolatrous ways. So, we've looked at the outer part of the structure and the frame itself. Now, we're going to turn and look inside the structure and see a little bit more of what's there.

I want to make one word or one comment about structure. I understand that I'm presenting a certain structure of the book of Jeremiah. There are other scholars who are going to present structures that may be equally valid but that differ in some ways.

For example, I've seen a number of studies that will look at this section, and they will divide the structure this way. Chapters 26 to 36, these stories of Jehoiakim's rejection of the word of the Lord provide an inclusio. They will see the second section going from perhaps chapters 26 to 36.

Then in chapter 37 and following, we have the roughly chronological story of what happens in the last days of Judah as a nation. So, there are sometimes more than one way to explain a structure. I don't want to say about the structure that I'm presenting here.

This is the definitive way to read the book. It is one way to read the book that I think helps us to make sense of some important things and does reflect some of the architecture and design of the book. But it's often difficult to say clearly this is what was in the mind of the writer.

We're simply trying to provide a structure that I think provides coherence for all of this. Sometimes, these structures, I think, work more effectively when we keep them at a general level. When we note general parallels, there are times when we can develop structures or scholars have developed structures that are so complex that you almost think that Jeremiah and Baruch would have had to have a computer to be able to do this kind of work.

Or the book of Isaiah is laid out in such chiastic structures that it would have been very difficult for the prophet to have done this. So, I see a structure here that I think shows some general pattern and general design, and that helps us to make sense of the message where we divide the sections into 26 to 35 and 36 to 45. Now, within the panel, within the structure, in the middle of this, there is a choice that is facing Judah as a people and a nation that is very different than what is offered to them in Jehoiakim's day in chapters 26 to 35.

Inside the structure, we are dealing more with the time of Zedekiah. The framework around this deals with the time of Jehoiakim, 609 to 597. Within the structure, we are dealing primarily with the time of Zedekiah, who reigned from 597 to 586 BC.

We are looking at the last days of Judah as a nation. And so, the hope and the possibility that's given to Jehoiakim in the opening chapters is perhaps you and the people will respond, and you can be spared from judgment. And there's the real opportunity where there's a choice between listening to God and avoiding judgment or not listening to God and experiencing the destruction and the devastation that God is going to bring upon them.

What's going on within the structure, however, and within the framework is that the choice facing Judah now has changed in a significant way. Now the two options that Zedekiah and the people have are submit to Babylon, surrender to them, and be spared from judgment. Look, God is sending the Babylonians as his instrument of judgment.

If you will surrender to them and accept this and submit to them and turn back to God, then God will spare you. If you continue your resistance, if you persist in your sin, if you believe that you can militarily figure out a way to avoid God's judgment, it's ultimately going to lead to total destruction. So, the choice for Jehoiakim is choosing God's way and be spared from judgment.

The choice facing Zedekiah and the people is to choose God's way or be absolutely destroyed. In chapters 27 to 29, we get a reflection of the prophetic conflict that was going on during Zedekiah's reign dealing with this issue: what do we do with the Babylonians? Or what would God want us to think or what perspective should we have on the Babylonian crisis? Remember, Jeremiah's perspective is that Judah has violated the covenant; they have not been faithful to the Lord; one of the covenant curses that God had warned he would bring against his people was the covenant curse of military invasion and exile. Jeremiah is warning the people that God is using the Babylonians as his instrument of judgment.

This is all falling out in accordance with the covenant that God laid out in the days of Moses. If they do not repent and turn from their sinful ways, then God is going to use the Babylonians to bring destruction on them. However, they see this, or however they respond to this; if they do not submit to Babylon, they are going to be absolutely destroyed.

There is no way for them at this point to involve subjugation to Babylon. God has given the Babylonians dominion over the nations, and that dominion includes the nation of Judah. The prophets who opposed Jeremiah have a fundamentally different understanding of the covenant.

They believe that God has chosen Israel as his special people, that God is obligated because of that to bless them and that God is going to protect them no matter what. Jeremiah is warning the Babylonian army is coming and these waves of exile that you are experiencing are going to increasingly get worse and worse. Jeremiah is going to tell them that the exile is going to last for 70 years.

The people that are taken away into exile need to settle down there and build houses marry and raise families, submit to the king of Babylon, and pray for the peace of Babylon because they are going to be there for a while. The false prophets, based on their defective view of covenant, believe that God is going to rescue them within a couple of years. This crisis will soon be over.

And so, we have the debate and the discussion in 27-29, what do we do about the Babylonian crisis? Jeremiah is saying submit to Babylon, and the prophets are saying something else. Now this is paralleled in the second panel in chapters 37-39 because, again, we are in the days of Zedekiah, it is the last days before the fall of Jerusalem, but now it is more the political and the military officials debating what do we do about Babylon. In the second panel, Jeremiah is going to say the same thing: submit to Babylon and be spared. we have the officials and the military leaders who have listened to the defective promises of the prophets, and they are continuing the resistance.

So, the parallel in the two panels is, what do we do? What about the issue of submission to Babylon, which is going to be a major focus in 27-29, 37-39? We also have a cause-and-effect relationship here because in 27-29, we have two prophetic messages. Do we believe Jeremiah? Do we submit to Babylon, and do we change our ways, or do we believe in the false promises of the prophets of peace, and do we continue the resistance? The consequence of that is that Jerusalem is going to be destroyed, and we get a record of that in chapters 37-39.

So, in a sense, there is also a warning and fulfillment parallelism between 27-29 and 37-39. Okay, but as we go back now and look specifically at chapters 27-29, I would like for us to notice three specific instances of prophetic conflict that Jeremiah is going to endure and go through because of this message of submit to Babylon. And remember, the people are the ones that are in the middle here; the officials and the kings are also.

How do we respond? Who do we believe? This is a serious thing. Really the life and the nation of Judah, their fate is ultimately going to be determined by how they respond to this message. We are reminded just at a practical level of the importance of theology.

What we believe about God and the ideas that we have about God ultimately determine the most important decisions and actions that we make in life. The theology of the prophets of peace and the theology of the prophet Jeremiah give us two very different understandings of reality, and how people act on the basis of those theologies is ultimately going to determine the fate of Judah. So today, when people say, you know, we need to give up our debates about theology, it's not important anyway, let's just focus on living out what it means to be a Christian.

I think they're undermining the importance of something that's very real, the way that our theology ultimately determines our behavior. So here's the debate about that theology that's going on in chapters 27-29. It tells us in chapter 27, verse 1, it says, "...in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah." Okay, so remember Zedekiah comes to the throne in 609 BC, but it also tells us in chapter 28 that the story that happens there happens in the same year as the events in 27.

And it says there, "...in that same year at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, the king of Judah in the fifth month of the fourth year." And so, the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign is 593 BC. So that's the time. That's the chronological context for what we're going to see taking place in chapters 27 and 28. Now there's something else about the opening verse of chapter 27, verse 1, that I wanted to call attention to.

In the ESV and in most English Bibles, it's going to say, "... at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah." That's the title that's provided for this section. The Hebrew version is going to say, "...in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim." So, we've talked about the Jehoiakim frame and the fact that there are only passages about Jehoiakim in 26, 36, and 45. Actually, in the Hebrew text, we have a reference to Jehoiakim in 27.1. In the Greek text we do not have a heading at all.

But as we look at the events that take place in this story, it's clearly something that's dated to the reign of Zedekiah. And so, the reference in the MT, the title that says, "...in the reign of Jehoiakim," it's a title that's been added later. And I think the English versions are right in amending Jehoiakim to read Zedekiah.

That keeps our framework intact. But the time of this is 593. What's going on here is that a delegation of ambassadors from various nations, the nation states that surround Judah, has come to Jerusalem for a conference with Zedekiah.

What this conference is about is that these smaller nations realize that on their own and by themselves, there is no way that they're going to be able to withstand the power of the Babylonian army. There's no way that they're going to be able to resist the Babylonian invasion. And so, what they have decided to do is to join together in an alliance.

And if we pull our forces together, we saw the same thing happening with Judah and the nation-states during the Assyrian crisis in the previous century. If we can come up with an alliance, maybe we can stand up to the big bully on the block. And so they are entertaining the possibility of a rebellion against the Babylonians.

What does Jeremiah think about that? Well, Jeremiah's message is that God has decreed that the Babylonians are going to be in control of the nations. Any type of resistance against them is futile. That's not just a political assessment.

That's not just, well, I'm looking at the size of our armies versus the size of their armies. It's a theological assessment based on Jeremiah's understanding of what God has revealed to him that the Babylonians are God's instrument of judgment. During the Assyrian crisis, Isaiah said that the Assyrians were the rod of God's anger.

Jeremiah is going to say Nebuchadnezzar is God's servant. And so, resisting him, withstanding him is not going to work. This conference that you're having, where you're plotting and putting together this political situation or this political solution, is not going to work.

We also read in Jeremiah chapter 51, verse 59, that Zedekiah was actually required to go to Babylon in 593. He was sent back, but he was allowed to remain on the throne.

But you have to wonder if Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians have not heard about this conference and they want to report from Zedekiah, where Zedekiah is affirming to them his continued loyalty and the fact that he's going to pay tribute to them. The Babylonians were the ones who had set Zedekiah up as the king of Judah in 597 when they captured the city of Jerusalem and took away Jehoiachin. And they had set up Zedekiah as their puppet.

Zedekiah would be allowed to remain on the throne as long as he was loyal to the Babylonians and he paid the tribute. What happens with Zedekiah because of his own weakness as a leader is that Zedekiah is going to be drawn back and forth between. Do we continue to resist the Babylonians, or do I submit to them? Zedekiah is listening to his military officials who say, you know what? We've got a shot. If we pull together our forces, if we come up with the right strategy, if we develop the right coalition, we can withstand the Babylonians.

Jeremiah is saying, you don't have a shot. God has decreed the subjugation of the nations to Nebuchadnezzar, and any kind of resistance to him is futile. And Jeremiah is going to give that message both to Zedekiah and to these other delegates in chapter 27.

The first people, and he's going to repeat this message three times, resistance to Babylon is futile. Let's look at verse 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 hands of the envoys who have come to Jerusalem. Alright, I've got a message for all the nations.

And here's what he says in verse 5. The Lord says, it is I who, by my great power and my outstretched arm, have made the earth with the men and the animals that are on the earth. And I give it to whomever it seems right to me. Now I have given all of these into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beast of the field to serve him.

Look, the Lord says, I'm the creator of the world. I own the earth. I'm not just the God of Israel; I'm the God of all nations.

I have decreed as the sovereign Lord and the creator who determines these things that Nebuchadnezzar is to rule over the nations. We mentioned this earlier in the course, but by giving Nebuchadnezzar control not only of the nations but even of the animals, Nebuchadnezzar is being portrayed in a sense as a second Adam who is God's vice-regent, who is God's image. Nebuchadnezzar is God's image.

To resist Nebuchadnezzar is to resist God. Okay, so this political coalition is not going to work. So, here's a warning to the nations.

Verse 8. If any nation or any kingdom will not serve this Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, I will punish that nation with the sword, with famine, with pestilence, declares the Lord, until I have consumed them. And remember, this is the time when Jeremiah is wearing the yoke on his neck, this wooden yoke that represents the message of subjugation. He's not just preaching this, and he's visually demonstrating it.

Okay, now he's going to give a specific warning to the nations and to these envoys. He says, do not listen to the words of your prophets who are telling you somehow that you can resist the hegemony of Babylon. It will not happen.

And don't listen to these false prophets. The interesting thing is that when Jeremiah gives this message to the second audience, in verse 10, he listens to the people that he addresses there. To Zedekiah, the king of Judah, I spoke in like manner.

And this chapter is going to level Judah off with all of the other nations. They're no different. They may have believed, hey, there are special circumstances because we're the people of God, and we're involved in this.

The same message that God gives to the Edomites, to the Moabites, to the Ammonites, to the people of Tyre and Sidon, the same message that the Lord is going to give to Zedekiah. His status as the Davidic king doesn't put him outside the dominion of the Babylonians. And he's going to say to Zedekiah, don't listen to the words of your prophets, submit to Babylon, that's the only hope that you have for survival.

In the past, God has referred to David as his servant. What happens in this passage in chapter 27, verse 6, is that Nebuchadnezzar is God's servant. The same thing is said in chapter 25.

The Lord, in Judah's past history and in the past history of Israel, has committed himself to the house of David. God had a special relationship with the Davidic king. He adopted the Davidic king as his son.

And he put him on the throne, and what the Lord will say about this king is, this is my anointed one, I have chosen him, I have installed my king on Zion, my holy hill, and all of the nations are to submit to him. If they do not, they will answer to me. So David and David's sons were God's vice-regents.

As the sons of God, they ruled on earth as earthly representations of God's heavenly dominion and sovereignty. And the Lord says that ultimately, I'm going to give all the nations of the earth, and I'm going to place them under the authority of David. That is a pretty amazing statement in light of the fact that the land of Israel was about the size of New Jersey.

But ultimately, these kings are going to rule over the nations. That arrangement changed during the days of Jeremiah because now God's servant, now God's vice-regent, is Nebuchadnezzar. And so, Zedekiah, don't think that being the Davidic king and having this special relationship with God is going to exempt you from this.

You are to submit to Babylon just as much as all of these other nations. And here's the warning, verse 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. It is Sheker that they are prophesying to you.

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 of the land. If you listen to this false message, if you buy into this false theology, it is going to have devastating consequences for you because the only way to survive is submission to Babylon. And so, I think it's just very interesting the way that the prophet levels Judah off with all the other nations.

There are going to be other prophets that will do exactly the same thing. As they're preaching judgment on the people of Israel and Judah, they're going to level the



nation of Israel and Judah off and say, hey, you're no better than the nations themselves. One of the prophets who does this particularly in an effective way is the prophet Amos.

And he does this in several ways. I'm just going to mention this real quickly and then go back to Jeremiah 27. But Amos begins his oracles with a series of judgment speeches against the nations.

And remember, he's a prophet to Israel. And in his seventh and final, or what appears to be the final judgment speech, there's a message against Judah, Israel's enemy down in the south. And I can imagine the people of Israel celebrating this.

It's like, yeah, God, go get them. Get all the pagan peoples around us. But the eighth oracle that Amos gives is a message against Israel itself.

And it's like, wow, the hammer falls. The fact that they are God's chosen people does not mean that they are exempt from judgment. In Amos 3, verses 1 and 2, Amos says, hear this, O word, that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up from the land of Egypt.

You only have I known of all the families of the earth. And so, you hear that. Yeah, there it is.

They are special. God brought them up out of the land of Egypt. God knows the people of Israel in a way that he knows no other family on earth.

But listen to what Amos says. Therefore, I will punish you for all of your iniquities. He doesn't say, therefore, you're the chosen of all the earth. Therefore, I'm going to bless you, protect you, and watch out for you.

No, because of that special relationship, you're more responsible. And I'm going to punish you as a result of that. Down in chapter 3 in Amos, later on in the passage in verse 9, proclaim to the strongholds in Ashdod and to the strongholds in the land of Egypt, all these foreign places, and say, assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria and see the great tumult that is within her and all of the oppressed in her midst.

They do not know how to do right, declares the Lord. They store up violence and robbery in their stronghold. The Lord invites representatives from all these other nations to come to Samaria, to take a seat, to look on what's going on in the city.

And he says to these, have you ever seen anyone as wicked as the people of Samaria and Israel? So the Israelites and the people of Judah thought, we have an exempt status from all of this because we're the chosen people of God. The prophets level

them off and say, hey, you're under the same sentence of judgment that all of these other people are. And that's what God is saying to Zedekiah here as well.

Now, the third time this message is repeated, chapter 27, verse 16, again, three times the prophet's going to say it. This is pretty important. But listen to who the message is directed to this time.

Then I spoke to the priest and to all of the people. Now, the message is not just to the king; it's to the people, it's to the religious leaders that are going to be affected by this. And it says, do not listen, verse 17.

I'm sorry, verse 16. Do not listen to the words of your prophets who are prophesying to you. Behold, the vessels of the Lord's house will now shortly be brought back from Babylon.

Behold, do not listen to them. They are prophesying to you a lie. Okay? So, three times in chapter 27, Jeremiah is going to make the statement, submit to the Babylonians.

It's futile. It's useless to withstand them or try to battle your way out of this. But three times, who are the ones that are responsible for this false belief? It is the prophets.

It is the prophets who are prophesying Sheker, who are making promises to the people and the Lord has not sent them. So again, we're back to this issue of prophetic conflict. And you can imagine the driving topic on talk radio in Jerusalem in the last days is, what do we do about the Babylonian crisis? And we could imagine Jeremiah being invited in for the interview and someone on the other side, you can pretty clearly see their positions, but that's the struggle that's going on in chapters 27 to 29.

We come to the second example of this in chapter 28. And I think as we've already talked at an earlier time, one of the most interesting examples of Jeremiah in conflict with a false prophet. But what's going on here is that we not only see two different messages, but in a sense, I think we're drawn into the struggle that the people had in trying to determine which one of these guys is telling us the truth.

There is Jeremiah, who is prophesied that resistance is futile. He's the one who's wearing the yoke. On the other hand, there is Hananiah, who speaks in the name of the Lord, who is referred to in the text as a prophet but who is giving a completely opposite message.

And if you're one of the people, you want to listen to the message of Hananiah because it's so much more positive. In a short while, all of this is going to be over. Jeremiah is saying the exile is going to last 70 years.

If you continue the resistance, you're going to be destroyed. I mean, they're already inclined to want to listen to Hananiah. And so, we have the struggle over discerning a true prophet from a false one.

In the Greek translation of Jeremiah in this chapter, we note something kind of interesting. Hananiah is referred to as a false prophet, a pseudo-prophet. But in the Masoretic text here in Hebrew, both Jeremiah and Hananiah are referred to by the same term.

They are both called prophets. Actually, the term prophet is added a number of times in the MT to emphasize this idea. We have two people here who are both claiming to be prophets.

And I think it's even interesting that we even have certain verses where it's going to refer to both of them as a prophet. For example, in verse five, then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Hananiah the prophet. This gets confusing.

In verse 15, Jeremiah the prophet said to the prophet Hananiah. And so you've got this word prophet all over the place, and it's referring to both of these guys. All right, let's remember the message of Hananiah.

Jeremiah is proclaiming to submit to Babylon. He's wearing the wooden yoke. You cannot resist.

God has decreed the sovereignty of the Babylonians over the nations. Hananiah, in a very aggressive, it takes a lot ofchutzpah to do this, but he interrupts Jeremiah's message. And he takes the yoke off of Jeremiah's neck.

He smashes it to the ground. And he says, listen, Jeremiah has got it all wrong. Instead of this being a long-term problem, within two years, we will be delivered, and everything about this Babylonian crisis will be over.

And as Hananiah is trying to convince the people of his message, in some ways he gives a more convincing performance than Jeremiah does. And there's this, I think there's this narrative thing going on here that I've referred to as prophetic mirroring. Jeremiah is called a prophet.

Hananiah is called a prophet. Jeremiah says, thus says the Lord. Hananiah says, thus says the Lord.

I mean, Hananiah doesn't step up and say, guys, I'm a false prophet. I'm speaking to you in the name of Baal. He says, thus says the Lord.

There may be even the possibility that at times in his life, Hananiah has been a true prophet of God, and God has communicated valid messages through him. Jeremiah performs a sign act. He wears a wooden yoke.

Hananiah performs a sign act. He breaks the yoke and gives a message in connection with that. So, it's difficult.

Something that adds a little bit to the tension of all of this is that Hananiah may have credibility and credentials as a prophet himself, but Hananiah also has a past theological tradition to base his message on. We looked when we talked about Jeremiah's temple sermon at the Zion Psalms, Psalm 46. The Lord is a very present help in a time of trouble, and we know that Zion will not be moved, it will not be shaken, and even if there's a storm that shatters the whole world, Jerusalem is a storm shelter.

And the presence of God, even as these waters are roaring and foaming and raging, the presence of God is like a peaceful river that flows through the city. It's like the spring of Gihon that brings God's blessing to the people. We will not fall because God is with us.

Zion is secure even if it's attacked by an enemy army, and even if these nations rage and roar and foam, God will deliver us. God's going to protect. God has obligated himself to watch over the city of Jerusalem.

Hananiah also had the preaching of Isaiah, who in many ways appealed to the Zion traditions. Listen to what it says in Isaiah 17, verse 12. And the same imagery that's in Psalm 46 is in this passage.

Isaiah says They thunder like the thundering of the sea. The raging of the nations, just like in Psalm 46. They roar like the roaring of mighty waters.

The nations roar like the roaring of many waters, but he will rebuke them and they will flee far away. Chased like chaff on the mountains before the wind and whirling dust before the storm. At evening time behold terror, but before morning they are no more.

So, things might be bad at night, but before the morning ever arrives, these nations that are raging and roaring against Jerusalem, God's going to deliver us. And so, there's this past theological tradition that Hananiah could have very easily appealed to here. He also could have appealed to the story of how God had delivered the city of Jerusalem from the Assyrians in 701.

And the Lord had done that in a really dramatic way. We've talked about this a number of times. The Assyrian army, 180,000 strong, they surround the city.

Hezekiah trusts God. The angel of the Lord goes out in the middle of the night. And so, there's all these things where Hananiah could have said, listen, there are other prophets that have said to you the same things that I'm saying to you.

Why should you listen to this guy Jeremiah who's talking all of this doom and gloom? Okay, something else more specific about Hananiah's message. In 28.3, in the Hebrew text, when he says, within two years, I will bring back to this place. What the text actually says is this was within two days, within two yom.

Now we know that the word yom doesn't always necessarily mean a 24-hour day. And there's a huge debate about that in the days of creation in Genesis 1 that I thankfully don't have to address here. Yom can be a general term for a period of time, the day of the Lord.

But it's interesting to note that he doesn't simply say within two years. He actually says within two days, I will bring back the place. Now, I don't think he literally means 48 hours here, but it's an idiomatic way of saying, look, in a very short time, the Lord's going to restore his people.

28:11, Hananiah, after he's broken the yoke, says to them, thus says the Lord, even so, I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, from the neck of the nations within two days. Okay. So, it's one thing to prophesy two years, but to use this idiom two days, man, the deliverance is coming really soon.

Again, I got to thinking about this in light of the prophets' past theological tradition. Hananiah had a proof text—a passage that he could have gone to.

Hosea, who is a prophetic predecessor to Jeremiah, in chapter six, verses one and two, in that passage, he's going to talk about the return and the restoration of the people of Israel after the judgment. And what he's going to say there is, come and let us return to the Lord, for he has torn us so that he may heal us. After two days, he will revive us.

On the third day, he will raise us up so that we may live before him. So yeah, we may have to go through judgment, but in a short time, within two days or within three, God's going to resurrect us and raise us up. Hananiah is saying the same thing.

So, if I'm one of those people in Jerusalem that day, where one prophet's wearing a yoke and another prophet's tearing off the yoke, I'm a little confused at this point.

It's difficult to tell the difference. Now, there's one more thing that adds to the tension as well.

Jeremiah's reaction to Hananiah is also a little unusual. Because when Hananiah has the chutzpah to step up and break his yoke, it's like, I can imagine that the normal reaction of a prophet would have been to immediately angrily get in this guy's face and point his finger at him. But listen to what Jeremiah says.

Chapter 28, verse 5. Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Hananiah, the prophet, in the presence of the priest and all the people, and he said, Amen. May it be. May the word of the prophet's side come true.

And may he bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the Lord and all of the exiles. Jeremiah, when he hears this message when this prophet has ripped the yoke off his neck and broken it and interrupted Jeremiah's sermon, Jeremiah says, Amen. You know, I'd like to see that too.

Your message sounds better than the one that I've been preaching. So, unless Jeremiah is speaking sarcastically here, Jeremiah may be expressing a real desire that, wow, Hananiah, maybe God sent you to interrupt me. But then we come to see Jeremiah's fuller response.

And Jeremiah is going to explain to people, yeah, it would be great if God would do this. And there was always the possibility that God could step in at the 11th hour. But there's a reason why Hananiah's message is the wrong message for this particular time.

It may have been the right message in the days of Isaiah, but it is not the right message in this particular situation. Jeremiah is going to explain why. And he's going to help these people who had to be struggling with which prophet is who.

Who's wearing the black shirt? Who's wearing the white shirt here? Who's the good guy? Who's the bad guy? Who's the prophet who's telling us the truth? Who's not? Here's what's going to help them sort through this. Jeremiah says in chapter 28, verse 8, the prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied of war and famine and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. Jeremiah says, okay, you got your prophetic tradition, but I have my prophetic tradition as well.

I can go to Hosea and even your Isaiah, your prophet; I can go to Amos; I can go to Micah. There's a tradition that prophets have announced war, famine, and judgment. The response when a prophet announces this is to take that warning seriously.

Amos says, God always, when he begins to move, God is going to speak through his prophets. And so, as a result of that, the trumpet doesn't sound unless there's an emergency to be responded to. So, Jeremiah says there's a prophetic tradition of prophets constantly warning people of judgment and famine and war.

And the proper thing to do at that time is to assess whether we are being unfaithful to God. Are we keeping the covenant commandments? And if Judah would honestly do this at this time, and instead of just blindly trusting in these promises of peace, if they would assess where they stand in relationship to God, they would see the idols, they would see the idolatry, they would see the failure to keep God's commands. But this false ideology of peace has blinded their minds to the truth. Jeremiah says, look, when a prophet speaks judgment, you take it seriously.

Okay. Now, Hananiah, as for you, verse nine, and 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. So, when a prophet prophesies judgment, we take it seriously and we do an assessment.

If a prophet promises peace, we only believe that message when the confirmation comes. And Jeremiah sort of lays this challenge out to the false prophets in chapter 27. Okay.

You're pronouncing, and you're announcing that the judgment is going to be over in a little while. Well, everything that's going on in terms of contemporary events is arguing against that. There is this wave after wave of exile, 605, first group, 597, second group taken away.

Here we're in 593, and they're still assessing. Is God really judging us at the hands of Baal? Jeremiah's saying, look, when a prophet of judgment is warning you, you take time and assess. If you can't think about it theologically, just look at what's going on. If there is a prophet who steps into the midst of this and prophesies peace, we're only going to believe that when it really happens.

And he says to the false prophets in verse 18, if those people truly are prophets and if the word of the Lord is within 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. Okay. He says, look, if they're true prophets and they think this crisis is going to be over, let's give them a little test.

Let them pray to God that God does something kind of simple. Just bring back the vessels that were taken away by Nebuchadnezzar in 597. They can't even do that.

And without some kind of confirmation, in light of the disastrous circumstances they're going through and in light of the repeated covenant infidelity of the Lord,

there's no reason to listen to a prophet of peace at this point. And I think if Jeremiah had gotten into this debate a little bit more, he could have said, look, if you want to talk about Isaiah, let's talk about Isaiah. Hananiah is like, I can go back to Isaiah.

Isaiah prophesied a deliverance of Jerusalem and it happened. You're right. A prophet of peace has to confirm himself.

Yeah, but we still have Isaiah. Jeremiah could have gone back to that book and said that the prophet Isaiah only promised deliverance when Hezekiah responded to the word of God in the right way. And without that kind of response, there is no reason, there is no basis for your message of peace.

And so, the people definitely are caught in a quandary here. You know, who do we believe? Jeremiah says, in light of the circumstances, in light of your covenant infidelity, I'm just in the long tradition of prophets who have warned of calamity and disaster. And in the past, people have responded to that by taking it seriously.

If you're really going to believe this guy's message, that within two yom, all of this is going to be over. Let's see some evidence to show this. So, Jeremiah ultimately, you know, amen, let it happen.

But he pronounces God's judgment. And the sentence that's going to fall on Hananiah, there's a pretty serious thing here. Because of his opposition to the message, here's what Jeremiah says.

For the nation in the place of the wooden yoke that you broke, God is going to put an iron yoke in its place. Look, you listen to these false prophets, and here's what God is going to bring against you. For Hananiah personally, Jeremiah says this.

Listen, Hananiah, the Lord has not sent you. You can do all the prophetic mirroring that you want, but the Lord has not sent you. And you have made this people to trust in a lie.

Therefore, 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. And it tells us the last verse in verse 17, in that same year, in the seventh month, the prophet Hananiah died.

Okay, here's the irony. Here's the punishment that fits the crime. Hananiah had said within two years, the crisis will be over.

The reality was that within two months, Hananiah was dead. The prophets of peace were promising life. The reality is that if they follow them, they will experience the same death that the prophets themselves experienced.



We go to the third example of prophetic conflict in Jeremiah chapter 29. And again, the issue is going to be over submission to Babylon. Now, the context of the opposition changes here, because now the prophets who are opposing Jeremiah are in Babylon.

So, God had his true prophet in Babylon. God had Ezekiel there. God had Daniel.

But God also had, or the people had their false prophets there as well. And they were preaching the same message of peace. This is not going to last long.

This is going to be over in a short while. Here's Jeremiah's message to the exiles in Babylon. And he sends them a letter, it says, in the early part of chapter 29.

And here's what he tells them. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles to whom I have sent into exile in Babylon. Build houses and live in them.

Plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters. Take wives for your sons.

Give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters. Multiply there and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile and pray to the Lord God on its behalf.

For in its welfare, you will find your welfare, or in your shalom, that will come through the shalom of Babylon. 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 their false and empty promises. So, here's Jeremiah's message.

It's the same thing he was saying to the people that were still in the land. Submit to Babylon. And for the exiles, that meant recognizing that you're going to be here for a while.

Settle down. Do the things that you do in normal life. Build your houses, plant vineyards, grow your crops, and have children.

And Babylon, in a sense for these people, has taken the place of the promised land. It's become their promised land. God had said to Israel in Deuteronomy 6, I'm going to give you cities and houses and vineyards that you didn't plant.

You're going to enjoy all these things in the promised land. Well, now, temporarily, Babylon has become their promised land. This is going to be where they experience those things that were associated with the covenant blessings in God's original arrangement with Israel.

Have children. Bear children there. Pray for the peace of Babylon.

Remember the psalm that tells us to pray for Jerusalem's peace? Babylon has replaced Jerusalem, and as you can imagine, this is pretty subversive theology.

Jerusalem's not the city of Shalom anymore. Babylon is. And if you will settle there, and if you will submit to Babylon and give up these ideas that you're going to be there a short while, the Lord ultimately is going to restore you.

Okay? Here's the real hope that Judah has in contrast to the false hopes that the prophets are giving them. And in verse 11, or in verse 10, when the 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. All right, settle down.

The exile is going to last for a while. And here's the promise that many people... Here's the verse that many people in Jer... Maybe the only verse that many people in Jeremiah know. For I know the plans that I have for you declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Okay? Be careful of claiming someone else's promises for yourself. There's a general promise here that God has the welfare and the well-being of his people in mind. But recognize that this is not a general promise that people who know and love God are never going to experience difficulty.

That the Lord is always going to deliver you out of harm; this promise is given to people who have already been taken away in judgment. This promise is given to people who are living in exile already.

This promise is given to people who, in many ways, are not going to experience the blessings themselves. It's a blessing that's given to their children after them. One contemporary Christian writer has said about Jeremiah 29 that the passage gives us a wonderful promise: that wonderful changes begin to take place in our lives as soon as we begin to live our lives according to God's purpose.

All right? I do think Romans 8:28, God works all things together for good. But this is not a promise that everything that you do as a believer will prosper. It's not a general guarantee.

People do the same thing with Philippians 4, verse 13. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. It's the athlete's favorite verse.

Everyone has it on their hat or their shoes or their gloves. I can do all things. I can hit the home run in the ninth inning.

But be careful of taking these promises that are in a specific context. Here, this is a promise given to these exiles that God ultimately is going to bring them out of judgment and danger. Well, the message that Jeremiah gave, because of the subversiveness of its theology, was opposed by a group of prophets.

And now the prophets are not Hananiah and the ones that are located in Judah. It's the prophets that are in Babylon among the exiles. A couple of them are mentioned in this section.

Two of them are in verse 21. Thus says the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab, one of these prophets, and another one named Zedekiah. This is not the king.

This is a prophet by the same name. They are prophesying a lie to you in my name. They were promising.

Look, the exile will be over in a little while. Jeremiah's saying, 70 years, settle down here. These prophets hate that message because they're offering empty promises of peace.

Jeremiah says, behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and he will strike them down before your eyes. Because of them, this curse shall be used by all the exiles from Judah and Babylon. The Lord makes you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire.

And in some way, Nebuchadnezzar ultimately viewed their promises of peace as being subversion. And he put them to death. He roasted them in the fire.

I want us to notice this. What happens to Hananiah? He dies within two months. What happens to Ahab and Zedekiah? They're promising, hey, the Lord will prosper you, and everything's going to go well.

They die because of their message. Very interesting. The prophets of peace are ultimately associated with death.

Real life comes from following the prophets who are truly speaking the word of the Lord. It's not an easy message. It's not a message that dismisses the idea of judgment, but the empty promises of peace are never going to deliver on what they promised.

You can see that in the lives of the prophets themselves. Finally, the last prophet that's mentioned here, Shammaiah. And Shammaiah, like Hananiah, is going to engage in an act of prophetic mirroring.

Jeremiah, thus says the Lord, and he writes a letter to express that, Shemaiah is going to write a letter in the opposite direction, back to the religious leaders in Jerusalem and say, hey, this man, Jeremiah, that's telling the exiles that they're not going to be delivered, that they should just settle down. That man needs to be censured. He needs to be put in prison.

And this whole conflict of prophetic mirroring goes on again. Whose word is going to stand? Jeremiah says, Shemaiah, because he's spoken a lie, because he has not delivered the word of the Lord. This man will never experience the blessings of restoration.

And so constantly throughout this section, the prophets of peace are the ones who are offering these empty hopes. But it's Jeremiah's message that gives life. It's a message that says you need to recognize your sin.

You need to recognize the judgment that God is bringing on you. And God will ultimately restore us when we turn back to him. Prophetic conflict, the prophets of peace, and the messengers of the Lord, the true messengers of God, that's what this section is about.

And the decision that the people make about their response to this message, the decision that the leaders of Judah are going to make about this message in chapters 37 to 39, we're going to see it is absolutely a matter of life and death, how we respond to God's word. The most important decision in life, we're constantly reminded throughout the book of Jeremiah, how we listen to God's word. It is an issue of life and death.

This is Dr. Gary Yates in his teaching on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 22, Jeremiah 27-29, The Prophetic Conflict.