

An Iron Yoke

Jeremiah 27 – 29

by Don Falkos

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Jeremiah received a message from God, "Make a yoke, and harness it to yourself. Go to the king's palace in Jerusalem. Ambassadors are visiting from all of Judah's neighboring nations. Tell them 'Because of your evil ways the God of Israel has handed you over to Babylon. Unless you submit to King Nebuchadnezzar you will be harnessed to Babylon's yoke. You will experience war, famine, and disease until you are conquered. Many years from now Babylon will be conquered because of her own evil deeds, but for now you must submit to her.' " The prophet implored King Zedekiah of Judah to listen.

Jeremiah continued to wear the yoke he had made until one day, in the Temple, a prophet named Hananiah snatched the yoke from his shoulders and smashed it to pieces proclaiming, "The Lord will smash the yoke the king of Babylon has put on your necks."

Jeremiah responded, "That would be wonderful if it were true! You have smashed a wooden yoke; now you are harnessed with an iron yoke. Because the people have believed your lies, Judah and the surrounding nations will become slaves to King Nebuchadnezzar. And as for you, Hananiah, your days are numbered." Two months later the prophet Hananiah died.

Then Jeremiah wrote a letter to those exiled in Babylon encouraging them to, "Carry on with your lives. Build houses, plant gardens, get married, and have children. Don't listen to those who say you will soon return to Judah. You will be in Babylon for seventy years. Make the best of it. The Lord says, 'I know the plans I have for you – prosperity and hope. I will bring you back from exile. You will be my people, and I will be your God.' "