

Jeremiah

Chapter 27

The Yoke of Nebuchadnezzar

In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD. 2 Thus the LORD said to me: “Make yourself straps and yoke-bars, and put them on your neck. 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 hand of the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah. 4 Give them this charge for their masters: ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: This is what you shall say to your masters: 5 “It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me. 6 Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him. 7 All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes. Then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave. ““But if any nation or kingdom will not serve this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, I will punish that nation with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, declares the LORD, until I have consumed it by his hand. 9 So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your fortune-tellers, or your sorcerers, who are saying to you, ‘You shall not serve the king of Babylon.’ 10 For it is a lie that they are prophesying to you, with the result that you will be removed far from your land, and I will drive you out, and you will perish. 11 But any nation that will bring its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will leave on its own land, to work it and dwell there, declares the LORD.””

2 To Zedekiah king of Judah I spoke in like manner: “Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people and live. 13 Why will you and your people die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, as the LORD has spoken concerning any nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? 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 that they are prophesying to you. 15 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 and you will perish, you and the prophets who are prophesying to you.” 6 Then I spoke to the priests and to all this people, saying, “Thus says the LORD: Do not listen to the words of your prophets who are prophesying to you, saying, ‘Behold, the vessels of the LORD’s house will now shortly be brought back from Babylon,’ for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you. 17 Do not listen to them; serve the king of Babylon and live. Why should this city become a desolation? 18 If they are prophets, and if the word of the LORD is with 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. 19 For thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the pillars, the sea, the stands, and the rest of the vessels that are left in this city, 20 which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon did not take away, when he took into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem— 21 thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that are left in the house of the LORD, in the house of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem: 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.”

27:1–29:32 Further attempts by Jeremiah to counteract the teachings of false prophets, who were claiming that Babylon’s doom was near and that rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar was therefore warranted and desirable. (CSB)

Chs 27–28 594 BC. Another confrontation between Jeremiah and the purveyors of false teachings (cf ch 26). (TLSB)

27:1–22 Jeremiah tells the nations (see vv. 3–11), King Zedekiah (see vv. 12–15), and the priests and people of Judah (see vv. 16–22) to submit to the Babylonian yoke. (CSB)

27:1–11 *straps and yoke-bars*. Used to harness oxen to plow or wagon. At the Lord’s command, Jeremiah used a visual aid to demonstrate the futility of joining other nations in resistance to Babylon. This device of animal servitude was to symbolize the subjugation of all to the will of Nebuchadnezzar. All efforts to shake off this yoke would end in disaster, for the Babylonian king himself was God’s servant (see note, 25:9). The Babylonian Empire would exist only until it had served His purpose. Then it, in turn, would become the slave of other nations. (TLSB)

27:1 *beginning of the the reign*. In this case, however, the phrase has been extended in meaning to include Zedekiah’s fourth year (593 B.C.; see 28:1). (CSB)

27:2 *yoke*. Of the kind worn by oxen, it was a symbol of political submission (see vv. 8, 11–12; Lev 26:13). That Jeremiah actually wore such a yoke for a time is clear from 28:10, 12. (CSB)

27:3 *send word*. In his role as a “prophet to the nations” (1:5). (CSB)

Edom, Moab, Ammon. Lands east and south of Judah. (CSB)

Tyre and Sidon. Prominent cities in Phoenicia, north of Judah. (CSB)

envoys ... have come ... to Zedekiah. Perhaps to discuss rebellion against Babylonia. They may have counted on support from Egypt, where Psammetichus II had become pharaoh a year earlier (594 B.C.). Zedekiah went to Babylon in 593 (see 51:59), perhaps to be interrogated by Nebuchadnezzar. In any case, Zedekiah rebelled against him (see 52:3). (CSB)

27:5 *great power and my outstretched arm*. This is power that no human individual or group or nation can resist. (CSB)

27:6 *Nebuchadnezzar...my servant*. Here it means that God uses Nebuchadnezzar to carry out His will.

Given him also the beasts. Nothing would be beyond the reach of Nebuchadnezzar’s dominion (see 28:14; Da 2:38). (CSB)

27:7 It was suicide to oppose the might of Nebuchadnezzar. The Babylonian Empire would dominate the ancient world for a period of three generations. Then a coalition of many nations under the leadership of the great kings of the Medes and the Persians was destined to make a slave of the lordly nation. (TLSB)

him ... his son ... his grandson. Three generations of rulers, not necessarily in direct father-son relationships (cf. Dt 6:2). The words “son” and “father” are often used figuratively in the OT. (CSB)

time for his own land comes. Babylonia will be judged. (CSB)

many nations and great kings. Many nations under the leadership of the great kings of the Medes and the Persians was destined to a slave of Babylon. (TLSB)

27:8 *sword, famine and plague.* Curses for violating God’s covenant (see Lev 26:25–26); the first occurrence of this triad, which occurs 15 times in Jeremiah. (CSB)

27:9 *your prophets.* False prophets. (CSB)

diviners ... mediums ... sorcerers. Forbidden in Israel (see Lev 19:26; Dt 18:10–11). The Hebrew for “sorcerers” is a loanword from Akkadian (the language of Assyria and Babylonia). (CSB)

interpreters of dreams. Including prophets and diviners (see 23:25–28; 29:8). (CSB)

Literally, "your dreams," to show the vanity of such a reliance. (Kretzmann)

27:10 *a lie...prophesying lies.* They were making deliberate misstatements. (Kretzmann)

27:11 *serve ... till.* The Hebrew underlying both words is the same (“work” is the common denominator in serving and tilling). (CSB)

The Oriental despots were satisfied if nations would but accept their sovereignty and pay their tribute-money, resorting to sterner measures only when a nation stubbornly refused to submit. It is ever thus that misfortune and destruction comes upon those who follow the guidance of false prophets. (Kretzmann)

27:12–15 Lest the king of Judah follow the advice of false prophets who urged him and the people not to surrender to Babylon, Jeremiah warned Zedekiah of the catastrophe in store for any nation that does not obey. (TLSB)

27:12 *your neck ... serve ... live.* The Hebrew for all these words is plural, since Jeremiah is speaking to the people of Judah as well as to Zedekiah (see v. 13). (CSB)

27:16–22 Jeremiah countered the delusion of the false prophets with the warning that rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar would make a desolation of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

27:16 *prophesying to you.* As the prophet Hananiah was saying (see 28:1–3). (CSB)

vessels of the LORD’s house. Some were carried off to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. (see Da 1:1–2), others in 597 (see 2Ki 24:13). Still others would be carried off in 586 (see vv. 21–22; 52:17–23). (CSB)

27:18 *If they are prophets ... let them intercede.* If they are true prophets and in communion with the Lord, let them intercede for Judah, because the Lord has announced his intention to judge the nation. (CSB)

27:19 *pillars, the Sea.* Two bronze pillars, one of which was placed on each side of the main entrance to the temple. The sea of cast metal was an enormous reservoir of water that corresponded to the bronze basin made for the tabernacle. The movable stands were the vessels and instruments of worship which had not yet been taken away by the conquerors. (PBC)

27:22 *They shall be carried to Babylon.* In 586 B.C. (CSB)

I will bring them back. In 538 and shortly afterward (see Ezr 1:7–11). (CSB)

Ch 27 Jeremiah predicts that God will let all who submit to the Babylonians live in their own land safely. To accomplish His purposes, the Lord uses people and nations and empires. The way of salvation is the way of humility and repentance: receiving God's Word by faith and walking in His ways. Pray daily for faithful leaders. Thanks be to God that, despite evil worldly leaders, the Gospel prospers and bears fruit among us. • Bless us, heavenly Father, with humility and faith in You as nations and kingdoms rise and fall, knowing You are at work for the salvation of souls. Amen. (TLSB)