

Introduction: Have you ever tried to imagine what it would be like to be Jeremiah? I have, and it is painful. He obeyed God to fully and faithfully proclaim His word for more than forty years during the reign of the last five kings of Judah. He began his ministry during the reign of Josiah, the last good and faithful king of Judah. *** He was told no one would listen to him and obey God. Also, the people of his hometown and family opposed him and threatened his life. One king burned the scroll on which his secretary had written God's word, piece by piece. Another king threw him in prison. The last king of Judah put him at the bottom of a dry cistern to starve to death; but, a servant of the king from Ethiopia rescued him. Worst of all, though his heart was constantly broken because his fellow Jews would not repent, he was told three times not to pray for his people because their punishment was surely determined (7:16; 11:14; 14:11). *** It is hard to imagine anything more humiliating to endure than what we are considering this morning. For several weeks, every morning Jeremiah was required to put the yoke worn by laboring oxen on the back of his neck just above the shoulders and to wear it all day. This was a visible sign of Yahweh God's command to the king, priests and people of Judah to submit to serve the king of Babylon or to die three horrible deaths and only a small remnant surviving in exile from the land. Jeremiah obeyed his God, but the people did not and they were severely punished. However, there was a ray of hope for a future restoration of the remnant of God's people. *** An anonymous psalmist gave God's people a worship song to remind them that proud rebels are in darkness; but, all who repent, and cry out to Yahweh, will be saved from death and will thank Him for His love and wonderful miracles. *** Let's now go deeper, trusting God to change us for the better by His Word.

I. Jeremiah puts an ox yoke on his neck daily, tells the king to submit to Yahweh and the king of Babylon, and not die for listening to false prophets. (*Jeremiah 27:1-15*)

A. Jeremiah is commanded to wear a yoke for oxen and speak for the Creator to tell His people to submit to and serve the king of Babylon to stay in their homeland. (*Verses 1-11*)

1. Early in the reign of Zedekiah, son of Josiah, king of Judah this word was to Jeremiah from Yahweh:

You must make for yourself bonds and yoke-bars and put them on your neck. (*Verses 1-2*)

Jeremiah's yoke: Jeremiah was to attach a yoke bar for oxen to the back of his neck with rope bonds in the early days of Zedekiah, about 595 BC.

2. And send them to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon in the hand of messengers coming to Jerusalem, to Zedekiah; and command them to say to their lords: Thus says Yahweh Sabaoth, God of the hosts (His armies), this you will say to your lords. (*Verses 3-4*)

Speak to nations: Jeremiah will speak to the descendants of Israel's brother and Lot south of Israel, Canaan in Israel, and Tyre and Sidon north of Israel what Yahweh gives him after he sends them (what? maybe) bonds and yoke-bars?

3. I have made the earth, the men and the animals which are on the earth, with My great power and My outstretched arm, and I give it to whoever is upright in my eyes. (*Verse 5*)

I am Creator: The creator of all life on the earth has the right to give it to those He deems worthy to have it by their uprightness and goodness.

Question: What if God finds no such person among His people (see Palms 14 and 53)?

4. And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, My servant, and also the beasts of the field I have given to him to serve him. (*Verse 6*)

Nebuchadnezzar: It is possible that by this time Nebuchadnezzar has been humbled by God (Daniel 4:28-37), because Daniel was in the early wave of captives in 605 BC.

5. And all nations serve him, his son and grandson until the time comes for his land; then many nations and great kings will make him their servant. (*Verse 7*)

Early reign: In nine years, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon will conquer the five nations and Judah, and they will serve him. Jeremiah will say this to the king of Judah while wearing a yoke on his neck!

Yahweh commands Judah to serve Nebuchadnezzar by putting a yoke on Jeremiah

Later: Some thirty five years later, a coalition of nations led by Darius the Mede will overrun Babylon (Daniel 5:17-31).

6. A nation or kingdom will not serve the king of Babylon, and put its neck under his yoke, I will punish that nation with sword, famine and disease until I consume them by his hand. (*Verse 8*)

Punished: If any nation, including Judah, does not serve under Nebuchadnezzar's yoke, its people will die by one of three horrible deaths.

7. You will not listen to your 'prophets' ... who say you will not serve the king of Babylon; for they are prophesying a lie to you so you will be removed far from your land, and I drive you out and you perish. (*Verses 9-10*)

Yahweh says: Yahweh strongly warns His people, through His yoked prophet, that they must not listen to any of the many false prophets in Judah!

8. Any nation that brings its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon to serve him, I will leave in its land, declares Yahweh, to till it and dwell in it. (*Verse 11*)

IF serve Nebuchadnezzar: In order for God's people to remain in their land, the king of Judah must submit to Yahweh's paradoxical command to submit to a non-Jewish king!

B. Jeremiah tells king Zedekiah to submit to Babylon to avoid three terrible deaths that will happen if he listens to false prophets. (*Verses 12-15*)

1. I spoke to Zedekiah king of Judah all these words: Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, serve him and live; why will you [all] die by sword, famine and disease as Yahweh spoke to any nation that will not serve him. (*Verses 12-13*)

Jeremiah to king: Jeremiah faithfully gives the king of Judah all the words Yahweh gave to him while he is still wearing a yoke.

Yahweh commands Judah to serve Nebuchadnezzar by putting a yoke on Jeremiah

Why die: These three horrible deaths are repeated by the fourth horseman of Revelation (6:7-8)!

2. Do not listen to the words of the 'prophets' who say: You will not serve the king of Babylon, for they are prophesying a lie! Yahweh says: I have not sent them, they prophesy falsely in My Name; I will drive you out, you and the 'prophets' will perish. (*Verses 14-15*)

To king: While still wearing his yoke, Jeremiah obeys Yahweh and warns the king of Judah.

Application: We must always be motivated to submit to God's will, even if it means hardship for us and seems paradoxical.

II. If Judah submits to Babylon now, they will be restored later; proud rebels are in darkness until they cry out to Yahweh and are saved into great gratitude. (*Jeremiah 27:16-22& Psalm 107:10-15*)

- A. Jeremiah challenges all Judah to submit to Yahweh now because they will later be restored. (*Jeremiah 27:16-22*)

1. Then I spoke to the priests and the people: Do not listen to the words of the 'prophets' saying: Behold! The vessels of the house of Yahweh will soon be brought back from Babylon; they prophesy a lie; do not listen, you must serve the king of Babylon and live, why will this city become a desolation? (*Verses 16-17*)

Jeremiah to priests and people: Still wearing his yoke, Jeremiah goes to the priests and all the people with the same message he gave the king.

Yahweh commands Judah to serve Nebuchadnezzar by putting a yoke on Jeremiah

2. If they are prophets and the word of Yahweh is with them, they will intercede with Yahweh Sabaoth, God of the hosts that the vessels remaining in the house of Yahweh and the king in Jerusalem will not go to Babylon. (*Verse 18*)

Challenge: Jeremiah challenges the false prophets to intercede with Israel's powerful God to fulfill their (false) prophecies.

3. For thus says Yahweh Sabaoth, God of the hosts about the (Temple) pillars, the sea, the bases and the remaining vessels in this city which Nebuchadnezzar did not take when he took king Jeconiah and the nobles into exile ... (*Verses 19-20*)

Remnant: The first invasion in 605 BC left some religious vessels in the Temple.

4. ... for thus says Yahweh Sabaoth, God of the hosts concerning [these]: They will be carried to Babylon and remain there until the day I give attention to them and bring them back [here]. (*Verses 21-22*)

Punishment: If the people of Judah do not take the servant yoke of Babylon, as Jeremiah is wearing a physical yoke, their God of hosts will force Nebuchadnezzar's yoke on them.

Yahweh commands Judah to serve Nebuchadnezzar by putting a yoke on Jeremiah

Future restoration: But seventy years later in the days of Ezra and Cyrus, king of Persia, they will build a new Temple with the same religious vessels (Ezra 1).

Application: We must act consistent with this truth: God's discipline is easier to endure when we understand our submission as a voluntary offering to God rather than considering His discipline as punishment, because the fruit for our enduring discipline is greater love for God (Hebrews 12:5-14).

- B. Proud rebels are in darkness; but, if they cry out to Yahweh, they will be saved from death and thank Him for His love and miracles. (*Psalm 107:1-15*)

1. Those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death (see Luke 1:79) / prisoners in affliction and irons // because they rebelled against the words of God / and the counsel of the Most High, they despised. (*Verses 10-11*)

Rebels in darkness: Those who rebel against God and His words, despising His advice, are sitting in the dark shadow of death, prisoners chained in affliction.

2. Their hearts were humbled with toilsome trouble / they fell down and none (is) helping. (*Verse 12*)

God humbles proud: God will always humble proud rebels with troublesome labor, knocking them down and no one will help them.

3. Then they cried to Yahweh in their dire strait / and He saved them out of their distresses // He took them out of darkness and the shadow of death / and tore apart their bonds. (*Verses 13-14*)

Cried out and saved: When those in the darkness cried out to Yahweh, He saved them from their dire straits and bonds of subjection Jeremiah wore.

Those who cry out to Yahweh in their subjection are saved

'Shadow of death': 'Shadow of death' occurs eighteen times in the Hebrew Bible: once in Psalm 23, nine times in Job, and in Isaiah (9:2-7) which speaks of the King born from the line of David.

4. They will thank Yahweh for His steadfast love / His wonderful works for the sons of adam. (*Verse 15*)

Double thanksgiving: They thanked Yahweh for His character of strong life-giving, life-changing love and His wonderful miracles only He can do: at the Red Sea, and in the conquest under Joshua.

We thank Him for His love shown on the Cross and the miracles of the Empty Tomb and Pentecost!!!

Application: We must desire and pray for hearts that thank God in every circumstance for

BOTH His character of righteous steadfast love AND the wondrous things He does to draw all people nearer to Him.

Conclusion: Jeremiah puts an ox yoke on his neck every morning, tells the king of Judah to submit to the king of Babylon and not die for listening to false prophets. IF Judah submits to Babylon now, they will not leave the land, but even if they are exiled they will be restored later. Proud rebels are in darkness until they cry out to Yahweh and are saved into great gratitude.

Yahweh commands Judah to serve Nebuchadnezzar by putting a yoke on Jeremiah