

## September 10

**Scriptures:** Read Jeremiah 26, 27 & 28

**Key Verse:** “Now therefore, amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God...” (Jeremiah 26:13)

### Overview

In Jeremiah 26, we see the wickedness of the false prophets, the potential danger of Jeremiah’s message, and God’s plan for his deliverance. Jeremiah was faithful to fulfill the Lord’s task by obediently going to the outer court of the Temple and boldly speaking all the words that the Lord had given him to relay to the people gathered for one of the great Feasts. This occurred early in the reign of Jehoiakim, when there was still hope for repentance (26:3).

Jeremiah exposed their sinfulness and gave a conditional appeal (26:4-6, 13). The angered priests and false prophets immediately arrested him. They were the same ones who were prophesying that there would be peace (27:14). They would have killed Jeremiah if it had not been for the few wise elders, particularly Ahikam (cf. 2 Kings 22:12ff), who stood up in Jeremiah’s defense, mentioning the good result (Hezekiah’s reformation) that came out of Micah’s similar prophetic words (26:18; Micah 3:12). Yet Jeremiah was defended by One greater, the Lord Himself (1:19), and Jeremiah trusted in God, which accounts for his incredible boldness in the face of near death. If they killed him, they would only add to their sin by shedding more innocent blood (26:15), like the blood of Urijah, a prophet of God who spoke the same message as Jeremiah and was killed — he was an unsung hero of faith (Heb. 11:36-40). In the New Testament, James was killed but Peter was delivered (cf. Acts 12:1-8), and though with our limited minds cannot understand the reason why, God’s will was done in each of their lives.

From the content of chapters 27 & 28, it is clear that the event occurred at the beginning of Zedekiah’s reign (26:3, 20; 28:1). However, the first verse of chapter 27 says it was the beginning of Jehoiakim’s reign, which is omitted in some manuscripts, for it was likely miscopied from 26:1 by a transcriber. At the time the Lord gave this message to Jeremiah, Judah was a vassal state subjected to Babylon. Zedekiah and the neighbouring nations still had hopes of throwing off the yoke of Babylon and asserting their complete independence. All these nations, including Judah, had false prophets and soothsayers telling them that they would soon succeed in casting off Babylon; but Jeremiah told Zedekiah that the prophets in Judah, who claimed to have received the word of God, were lying, and the Lord proclaimed that He had not sent them (27:9-10, 14-15). Through Jeremiah, however, the Lord did speak. With Jeremiah’s real-life illustration of the yoke on his neck God warned that they should remain under Nebuchadnezzar’s yoke for a long time; therefore, until the Lord’s own time (Ezra. 1:7-11), they would not receive back the sacred vessels from the Temple that had been carried off to Babylon with Jeconiah (Jehoiachin, cf. 2 Kings 24:12-13). If they did not obey God and subject themselves to Babylon, all the larger sacred furnishings of the Temple would also be carried off to Babylon (27:19-22; cf. 1 Kings 7:21-37; 2 Kings 25:13-17).

In the same year of the events in chapter 27, while Jeremiah was still wearing the yoke, one of the false prophets named Hananiah, the son of Azur, claimed to have a prophecy from God

which contradicted Jeremiah's (22:26, 27; 27:16). In the common manner of the prophets, Hananiah dramatized his prediction by breaking the yoke that Jeremiah had worn (28:10; e.g. 19:10; 2 Chron. 18:10). Jeremiah's response of "amen" (28:6) may have been said with a longing to see his prediction come true. Jeremiah was not convinced, but at that time he had no new word from God, so all he could say was that time would tell if Hananiah was sent by God (28:9). The test of a true prophet was if his predictions came true (cf Deut. 18:20-22). Jeremiah was proven to be the true prophet, for the prophecy he received from God did indeed come true. Within the year, Hananiah was dead, which was the Lord's judgment against him for the serious offense of speaking his own words and claiming they were God's. Even today, believers must be aware that there are still false prophets who need to be warned of the danger in presuming to speak for God. How can one tell a true word from God? Firstly, it must be put to the test to see if it is in accord with the whole word of God; secondly, the life of the one who spoke the word must show evidence of fruit; and thirdly, as Jeremiah emphasized, the word must come to fulfillment if it is truly from the Lord.

## **Prayer**

Faithful God, we pray for a willingness to trust You, even when our limited minds cannot understand Your ways. We surrender ourselves totally to You, that Your will may be done in our lives.