

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## JEREMIAH 27-29

It's been said a **“duel”** is **“a war of two.”**

In Colonial days a duel was a way of settling disputes. Duels were fought with pistols. Two men walked off ten paces, turned to face each other, and fired on command. The man left standing won the duel.

In 1777, Button Gwinnett, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, *and the namesake of our own county*, was killed in a duel with a political opponent.

Even Abraham Lincoln, while an Illinois legislator, had a scheduled duel with a political rival. Both men were talked out of it at the last minute... But it got me thinking, how much more fun politics would be today if we still had duels. Rather than debates, have a duel!

Well, in tonight's chapters, rather than dueling politicians, we have *dueling prophets*. Jeremiah was sent by God with a message - but a false prophet, Hananiah, meets him in the temple to contradict him.

*Clear the streets... board up the windows... get the kids inside...* Tonight, it's a shootout in the temple...

Chapter 27 begins, **“In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying...”** Verse 1 in the newer translations, the NAS and NIV, read, **“in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah...”** And since the bulk of Chapter 27 deals with King Zedekiah, the final king of Judah, it could be that's

the accurate reading.

But it's also possible, the prophecy came in the reign of Jehoiakim, and just wasn't delivered until the days of Zedekiah... Either way it doesn't change the message.

“Thus says the Lord to me: ‘Make for yourselves bonds and yokes, and put them on your neck, and send them to the king of Edom, the king of Moab, the king of the Ammonites, the king of Tyre, and the king of Sidon, by the hand of the messengers who come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah.’” Apparently, Jeremiah is sent to a summit of foreign diplomats.

Ambassadors from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Sidon - Judah's adjacent neighbors - are in Jerusalem to work on a strategy to revolt against the Babylonians.

Imagine, this official meeting is in progress, when suddenly, Jeremiah walks in wearing a wooden harness. It's the yoke an ox wears to pull a plough.

He's warning these nations that Babylon will rule them. It's best they surrender and submit to its yoke.

This was a dramatic picture! Everyone would've recognized that the harness spoke of total domination.

Oriental yokes were heavy and prevented the animal from even lifting its neck... What a contrast when Jesus told His disciples, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” Babylon will be a tough taskmaster, whereas Jesus rules and steers us in love.

The Lord said to Jeremiah, “And command them to say to their masters, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel - thus you shall say to your masters (the kings they represent): ‘I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are on the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it to whom it seemed proper to Me.’” In essence, God drew up a map of the world according to His discretion.

The nations and their sovereignty were forged not by the councils or the power of man, but by the Lord.

“And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field I have also given him to serve him.” Yahweh, the God of Israel, is behind the Babylonian surge and Nebuchadnezzar’s rise to power.

Nebuchadnezzar is an interesting historical character. He was perhaps the most absolute despot the world has ever seen - his reign extended to every beast of the field... And he had an ego to match.

He was a proud man. Yet God referred to him as “My servant.” God had a plan to humble Nebuchadnezzar.

You first see it unfold as Nebuchadnezzar witnessed the God of Israel defend Daniel’s obedience - and then the faith of Daniel’s three friends. The king looked into the furnace and saw a fourth man like the Son of God.

God spoke in numerous ways to Nebuchadnezzar, yet the king still didn’t take God’s message to heart...

It reminds me of the lion walking through the forest. He was asking the other animals, “*who is the king of the jungle?*” The rabbit said, “*You are, oh, mighty lion.*” The deer said, “*Of course, you are.*” Finally, the lion came to the elephant. “*Who is the king of the jungle?*”

The huge elephant picks the lion up in his trunk, whirls him over his head, and slams him to the ground.

The lion picks himself up and says, “*Look, you don’t have to get mad just because you don’t know the answer to the question.*” Nebuchadnezzar, like the lion, just didn’t get it - not until God teaches him a lesson...

At the pinnacle of his power God humbled the emperor. He was strolling along the porch of his palace admiring his great empire, when Daniel 4:30 tells us...

“*The king spoke... “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?” While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven...*

“*King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses. That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.*”

The clinical name for this type of insanity is "lycanthrophy." At one time Nebuchadnezzar ruled over every beast. Because of his pride he became a beast.

Tradition has it that Daniel took care of the king during his madness. We know that when God restored Nebuchadnezzar to *his right mind* he was a *new man*.

Read Daniel 4, the king testifies of his newfound faith. God humbled Nebuchadnezzar, and in my opinion he became a believer. *We'll see him in heaven.*

In verse 7, God reveals to Jeremiah the extent of Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty. "So all nations shall serve him and his son and his son's son, until the time of his land comes; and then many nations and great kings shall make him serve them." Before Babylon fell in 536 BC, both Nebuchadnezzar's son, Evil-Merodach, and his grandson, Belshazzar, would rule over his empire.

Verse 8 continues to describe the extent of Nebuchadnezzar's dominion. "And it shall be, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and which will not put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation I will punish," says the Lord, "with the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand." Therefore do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who speak to you, saying, "You shall not serve the king of Babylon."

For they prophesy a lie to you, to remove you far from your land; and I will drive you out, and you will perish. But the nations that bring their necks under the yoke of the king of

Babylon and serve him, I will let them remain in their own land,' says the Lord, 'and they shall till it and dwell in it.'" To submit to King Nebuchadnezzar was to obey the will of God...

Again, Jeremiah is speaking to a summit of leaders from nations all over the world. Here's their choice: surrender to Babylon and live, or rebel and be crushed.

And here's the odd thing, by this point, Babylon had already invaded Judah twice - in 605 and in 597 BC.

Jeremiah's message wasn't anything they hadn't heard. He was echoing what had become obvious.

The Jews had past the point of no return. Their judgment was inevitable. Yet they continued to hold out hope that God would deliver. Jeremiah is saying their hope is in vain. And those who say otherwise are liars.

A secular source, the Babylonian Chronicles, tells us that at the time, Nebuchadnezzar was having trouble putting down an small uprising on his eastern frontier.

It was a minor revolt that would soon be squashed, but there were false prophets in Babylon who pointed to this situation as evidence that Nebuchadnezzar would soon be toppled and God would deliver Judah.

They were sensationalizing events to promote their own agendas. *And self-proclaimed prophets do this today. Send us money so we can sound the alarm!*

Even in Jeremiah's day God's people had "itching ears." *Tell us only what we want to hear.* Paul wrote to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:3-4) "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires,

because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” People want God to pat them on the back - tell them everything’s ok - not demand that they repent.

Verse 12, “I also spoke to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, “Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live! Why will you die, you and your people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the Lord has spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? Therefore do not listen to the words of the prophets who speak to you, saying, ‘You shall not serve the king of Babylon,’ for they prophesy a lie to you; for I have not sent them,” says the Lord, “yet they prophesy a lie in My name, that I may drive you out, and that you may perish, you and the prophets who prophesy to you.”

Also 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 prophesy to you, saying, “Behold, the vessels of the Lord’s house will now shortly be brought back from Babylon”; for they prophesy a lie to you.” During the two times Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem he took back to Babylon Temple treasures - the golden vessels that had been dedicated to God.

We all should realize if we don’t obey God we stand to lose the treasures He intended to adorn our temple.

The NT teaches that we are the Temple of the Holy Spirit - and the talents, the spiritual gifts, the insights that God gives

us can be squandered if we disobey.

Verse 17, “Do not listen to them; serve the king of Babylon, and live! Why should this city be laid waste?”

But if they are prophets, and if the word of the Lord is with them, let them now make intercession to the Lord of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the Lord, in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, do not go to Babylon.’ “For thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the pillars, concerning the Sea, concerning the carts, and concerning the remainder of the vessels that remain in this city, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon did not take, when he carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem...” Nebuchadnezzar took to Babylon the gold vessels, and left the bronze.

Verse 21, “Yes, thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the Lord, and in the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem: ‘They shall be carried to Babylon...” Jeremiah predicts that eventually all the sacred vessels in the Temple will be taken to Babylon.

“And there they shall be until the day that I visit them,’ says the Lord. ‘Then I will bring them up and restore them to this place.’” *Yet the day will come when they’ll be restored!* That’s exactly what occurs in Ezra.

After Cyrus the Persian overthrew the Babylonians, he issued a decree for the Jews to return to Judah. And he returned the vessels Nebuchadnezzar had taken from their

Temple. Ezra 1 provides the inventory.

What a lesson for us. Even if we do lose the treasures God intended for us to possess, His grace can restore them to us in His time and in His way.

And it's Jeremiah's message in Chapter 27 that sets up up for the duel - the showdown - in Chapter 28...

“And it happened in the same year, at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, who was from Gibeon, spoke to me in the house of the Lord in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying...” Jeremiah is careful to date his confrontation with Hananiah. It was in the 5th month, or Ab on a Hebrew calendar, July-Aug 593 BC.

Hananiah stood up and declared, “Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: ‘I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the Lord’s house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon.’” In two years all the Temple treasures will be returned.

Hananiah claimed to be speaking for God, but we'll learn later that he wasn't. He was speaking lies. *Not everyone who claims to speak for God, really does so.*

Verse 4, “And I will bring back to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah who went to Babylon,” says the Lord, ‘for I will break the yoke

of the king of Babylon.”

Jeconiah was the king Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Babylon in 597 BC. Now Hananiah says He'll return.

This is directly opposed to what Jeremiah predicted.

“Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and in the presence of all the people who stood in the house of the Lord, and the prophet Jeremiah said, “Amen! The Lord do so; the Lord perform your words which you have prophesied, to bring back the vessels of the Lord’s house and all who were carried away captive, from Babylon to this place.” If you read this with some sarcasm in Jeremiah’s voice *you would be right...*

He’s mocking Hananiah, “I wish you were correct. Nothing would make me happier, *but you’re wrong.*”

“Nevertheless hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: the prophets who have been before me and before you of old prophesied against many countries and great kingdoms - of war and disaster and pestilence.”

Hananiah was not just disagreeing with Jeremiah, but with a long line of prophets - *Isaiah, Micah, Joel*, and others had said judgment was coming on Judah.

What Jeremiah spoke was nothing new. It had been confirmed by the men of God who went before him.

This is a line of reasoning we can appeal to when confronting the cults. When a Jehovah’s Witness or a Mormon attacks the deity of Jesus we’re arguing an issue that’s already been settled by more godly men than us. In 325

AD the wise and faithful leaders at the Council of Nicea branded Arius and his followers, those who were denying the deity of Jesus, as heretics.

The doctrines we stand on aren't Johnny-come-lately teachings. These are understandings of Scripture that were hammered out by thousands of years of scrutiny.

It's not just blasphemous, but arrogant, to throw out 2000 years of church history because you hear an interpretation that's more pleasant or easier to digest.

Verse 9, **“As for the prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent.”** Here was the ultimate test of a prophet.

Deuteronomy 18:21 tells us that you identify a false prophet by the fact his prophecy fails. It's always just a matter of time before you find if he's genuine or bogus.

The best way to test a prophecy is give it time!

In verse 10 Hananiah grows bold and daring. **“Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke off the prophet Jeremiah's neck and broke it.”** He gets physical. He strips Jeremiah of his wooden yoke, and smashes it.

**“And Hananiah spoke in the presence of all the people, saying, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Even so I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years.’”** And the prophet Jeremiah went his way...

Remember this was done in the Temple - right in front of the priests and all the people of Judah...

Hananiah upstages the Prophet Jeremiah. He shows him up. Jeremiah is challenged, *and just walks away*.

Let me make a couple of observations...

**First**, the false prophet is usually a good showman. He has to be. He lacks authority in *what he says*, so he has to make up for it by *how he says it*. This is why he's so loud, or bombastic, or demonstrative. His great showmanship makes up for his lack of substance.

And **second**, notice Jeremiah's response... If it was me I would've fought him over the yoke, or clobbered him over the head with one of its pieces. Nobody is going to turn me into a laughingstock!... Yet this duel has an anticlimactic ending. Jeremiah just walks off.

Yet here the Prophet is teaching us a vital lesson.

**God doesn't need us to defend Him.** He hasn't called us to win His arguments. He simply calls us to speak His truth. Give a defense for the faith that is in us.

The pressure to persuade is not on me. Once, I declare what God gives me to say, then it's up to God's Spirit to win the hearts of the people I addressed.

I can walk away confident of what I've said, and of God's ability to verify His truth... Here, we might be tempted to accuse Jeremiah of cowardice. *Why didn't he stay and fight?* But Jeremiah showed more faith by walking away. He knew that truth was on his side, and that God's truth would prevail. He waited in faith!

Jeremiah realized that **God's goal is not to win the**

argument, as much as it is to win the hearts of people.

I've found you can win an argument - ram the truth down someone's throat - and end up losing the person.

Jeremiah didn't want this encounter to turn ugly and end up a brawl. Had he argued with Hananiah it might've legitimized his lies. Whereas, just walking off confidently was probably the most convicting tact Jeremiah could've taken. Truth was on his side!

Verse 12, "Now the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, after Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "Go and tell Hananiah, saying, 'Thus says the Lord: "You have broken the yokes of wood, but you have made in their place yokes of iron." At the time of their duel, Jeremiah had no rebuttal, so he walked off.

But a word of rebuke for Hananiah came later...

He had broken a wooden yoke, but he'll be chained with a yoke of iron. He'll be taken and enslaved with an unbreakable yoke. In the end, *the yoke will be on him!*

"For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "I have put a yoke of iron on the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him. I have given him the beasts of the field also.' Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, "Hear now, Hananiah, the Lord has not sent you, but you make this people trust in a lie. Therefore thus says the Lord: 'Behold, I will cast you from the face of the earth. This year you shall die, because you have taught rebellion against the Lord.'"

Wow, how's that for a definite rebuke. Hananiah predicted in

two years the Jews will return to Babylon. Jeremiah counters him, *you'll be dead within the year!*

Verse 17, **“So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.”** The 7th month was Tishri. It was the festival month. Three feasts occurred in that one month. All the males in Judah would be at the Temple during this time. That means the whole nation would learn of Hananiah's demise. Through its timing God turned the man's death into a national spectacle.

If it happened earlier, fewer people would've known.

Chapter 29 begins, **“Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive - to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon.”** (This happened after Jeconiah the king, the queen mother (her name was “Nehusta”), the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem (one of them was Ezekiel), the craftsmen, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.)” Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim reigned three months, before he was carted off to Babylon. His deportation occurred in 597 BC.

And it was to the Exiles that Jeremiah sent his letter.

Verse 3, **“The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiyah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon:**

build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit.”

This implied they were going to be there for a while. Despite what the false prophet had said they weren't coming home in two years. It would be seven decades!

He writes, “Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters - that you may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace.”

Rather than long for home, and sulk in their new environment, the Jews should embrace life in Babylon.

Jeremiah tells them to marry and start families. Be good citizens. Seek the welfare of their pagan nation, for as Babel prospers so will the Jews who live there.

So much of the Jewish identity was tied to their land and to their Temple. In Babel they were without both.

*How would the Jews and their Jewishness survive?*

Jeremiah had a strategy. Simply stated, he says, *settle in*. Rather than wait for the day when they return to Judah, they need to make Babylon home. Make a life... Build homes... Plant gardens... Start families...

They're not to take over the government, but pray for their pagan leaders so that they will live in peace.

History proved that this was a successful strategy.

The Jews prospered in Babylon. They not only survived, but thrived. Many of the Jews rose to positions of prominence - *Daniel, Esther, Nehemiah*.

During the Exile, away from their Temple, the Jews in Babylon developed the “**synagogue**” or *meeting*. It was a community center where Jews worshipped Yahweh, taught the Torah, and kept their Jewishness alive.

And this is the same strategy that’s kept Judaism alive for the last 2000 years. After 70 AD and the Roman conquest of Judah, Jews were driven into all the world. They’ve been strangers in a strange land, and as they followed Jeremiah’s strategy, they’ve flourished and prospered. Often making their Gentile neighbors jealous, and becoming objects of scorn.

And this is not only the strategy Jeremiah gave to the Jews in Babylon, this is the approach Jesus instructed His disciples to take living in a fallen world. For we too, are strangers in a strange land. We’re exiles in a pagan world, waiting on heaven. We’re headed home.

*But how will we and our **Jesus-ness** survive?* The Lord tells us in Luke 19:13, “**Occupy till I come...**”

In other words, don’t just wait on heaven, get involved in this world. Work to make it a better place...

*Build a life. Start a business. Get married and have some kids.* We even have a synagogue of sorts. The church should be an outpost of heaven on Earth. It’s a Christian community center where we worship Jesus, keep our faith alive, and teach from God’s Word.

And our job isn’t to take over the government, but to be

good citizens. Pray for our leaders, so we can live in peace. Paul told Timothy (2:1-2) to pray, “for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence...”

Like the Jews in Babylon, Jesus’ instructions for His followers was to become a part of the pagan society and influence it person by person from the inside out.

Yes, Jesus is returning, but we’re not all suppose to move to a mountaintop, with guns and food rations, to wait on Him. We need to **occupy till He comes!** We’re to be *in the world, but not of the world*. As it’s been said, “Live as if the Lord is returning tomorrow, but plan as if He’s not coming back for a thousand years.”

Verse 8, “For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the Lord.” The Jews in Babylon were being told to keep their bags packed, *God would deliver them any day now*. Jeremiah says don’t believe them!

“For thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.” It was exactly 70 years after the first deportation of Jews to Babylon that Persia conquered the city and allowed the exiled Jews to return home.

And thus, Jeremiah writes to them in verse 11... It’s a popular verse. It’s on plagues, T-shirts, even tattoos.

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” But when you see that verse, remember it’s context. This was a promise to Exiled Jews living in Babylon, being punished for their sins.

Even while they’re serving their sentence, God isn’t angry toward them. He’s not vindictive. He takes no pleasure in their pain... His *“thoughts toward them are of peace and not evil, to give them a future and hope.”*

This was God’s word to His people in their darkest hour. In the aftermath of their greatest failure. God brought Abraham out of the land of idols, now his descendants have returned. *But there is still hope!*

Even after the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah will say of God in Lamentations 3:23, *“Great is Your faithfulness.”*

The false prophets were prophesying a false hope, but God’s hope was real! Our God, the God of Israel, is the God of second chances. He redeems and restores!

Verse 12, *“Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”* This too is encouraging. Jews were taught they needed to come to a Temple to worship. The Temple was the one place on Earth where God could be found.

But the Jews in Babylon were far in proximity from their Temple - 800 miles. Yet even in this pagan land, if they seek the Lord with *“all their heart”* He’ll be found.

My grandkids are 2 and 3 years old, and they haven't yet grasped the fine art of playing hide-and-seek. They don't give the hiding part much of an effort. It's not their favorite aspect of the game. Their joy is in being found!

And this is true of God. He's not a God who likes the shadows. He loves to reveal. He enjoys being found.

All He asks of us is to seek Him with *"all our heart."*

Tozer once wrote, *"It's not that we don't want God, we do. We just want other things more."* This is why just seeking Him half-heartedly is not enough. We need to pursue Him with effort, and passion, and heart!

I love what Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote, *"Earth is crammed with heaven - and every common bush afire with God - but only he who sees takes off his shoes - the rest sit round it and pick blackberries."*

It's not that God doesn't like being found. He reveals Himself in every common bush. *But are we seeking?*

Verse 14, *"I will be found by you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive. Because you have said, 'The Lord has raised up prophets for us in Babylon - therefore thus says the Lord concerning the king who sits on the throne of David, concerning all the people who dwell in this city, and concerning your brethren who have not gone out with you into captivity - thus says the Lord of hosts: Behold, I will send on them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence,*

and will make them like rotten figs that cannot be eaten, they are so bad.” Remember the prophecy in Chapter 24 - *of the good figs and bad figs*.

Those who surrendered to Babylon were the good figs - those who listen to false prophets were the bad.

“And I will pursue them with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence; and I will deliver them to trouble among all the kingdoms of the earth - to be a curse, an astonishment, a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them, because they have not heeded My words, says the Lord, which I sent to them by My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; neither would you heed, says the Lord.

Therefore hear the word of the Lord, all you of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah (this is not King Zedekiah, but a false prophet by the same name), who prophesy a lie to you in My name: Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall slay them before your eyes.” Jeremiah mentions two false prophets whom God and Nebuchadnezzar will use as examples. Their false prophecies will be silenced.

“And because of them a curse shall be taken up by all the captivity of Judah who are in Babylon, saying, “The Lord make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire...” The king punished the bogus prophets who spoke against him.

Here's a great Bible trivia question. *Name the five men Nebuchadnezzar threw into the fiery furnace?*

Your friends might know Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego - but Zedekiah and Ahab will stump them.

And we're told why Zedekiah and Ahab met such a fiery fate, verse 23, "because they have done disgraceful things in Israel, have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and have spoken lying words in My name, which I have not commanded them. Indeed I know, and am a witness, says the Lord."

"You shall also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying..." Here's another false prophet. "*Nehelamite*" means "Dreamer." This was "Shemaiah the Dreamer."

Back in Chapter 23 Jeremiah spoke of false prophets who were appealing to dreams and visions to support their false messages. Shemaiah was a chief culprit.

Shemaiah sends a letter, "Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: You have sent letters in your name to all the people who are at Jerusalem, to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying, "The Lord has made you priest instead of Jehoiada the priest, so that there should be officers in the house of the Lord over every man who is demented and considers himself a prophet, that you should put him in prison and in the stocks."

This Dreamer writes ordering the replacement of the High Priest Jehoiada - with his own cohort, Zephaniah.

He rebukes the priests for not arresting those who disagree with his false deliverance - *namely Jeremiah!*

He writes, “Now therefore, why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth who makes himself a prophet to you? For he has sent to us in Babylon, saying, ‘This captivity is long; build houses and dwell in them, and plant gardens and eat their fruit.’” Here’s another duel - **dueling letters!** *Shemaiah the Dreamer* wants to appoint from Babylon a High Priest in Jerusalem who’s sympathetic to his false prophecies.

He even wants Jeremiah thrown in the *stocks*. The word means “**neck-irons**.” He wants a ball-and-chain attached to Jeremiah’s neck. Thankfully, his plan fails.

Verse 29, “Now Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the hearing of Jeremiah the prophet.” That must’ve been an awkward moment. *How did Jeremiah react?*

“Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying: Send to all those in captivity, saying (he’s to write another letter to the Exiles), Thus says the Lord concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite: Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you, and I have not sent him, and he has caused you to trust in a lie - therefore thus says the Lord: Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his family: he shall not have anyone to dwell among this people, nor shall he see the good that I will do for My people, says the Lord, because he has taught rebellion against the Lord.” Because he misled God’s people, the Dreamer’s life will end a nightmare.