

Jeremiah and Hananiah: The Faithful Prophet Confronts the False Prophet

Jeremiah 28

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1A. The Person of Hananiah: 28:1

- 1b. His time:
The summer of either 594 or 593 B.C.
- 2b. His home:
Gibeon, about six miles north of Jerusalem.
- 3b. His father:
Azur, also a prophet.
- 4b. His name:
"Yahweh has been gracious"
There are 14 different Hananiahs in the OT.
- 5b. His audience:
 - 1c. The prophet Jeremiah
 - 2c. The priests of Jehovah
 - 3c. The people of Israel

Merrill F. Unger has well said:

The prophet Hananiah was representative of the entire guild of professional prophets, who were men-pleasers instead of God's spokesmen. (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, 1981, 1412).



2A. The Prophecy of Hananiah: 28:1b-4

- 1b. The claim of the prophet: 28:2
Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: I have broken the yoke of the King of Babylon.
- 2b. The content of the prophecy: 28:3-4
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.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.

Unger correctly observes:

Hananiah, not content with general predictions of peace, with consummate presumption predicted without any divine revelation the return of the deportees and the treasure within two years (*Ibid.*, 1413).

- 1c. The experience of the captivity:
The seventy years are shortened to two years.
- 2c. The end of the captivity:
 - 1d. The captivity is rendered short.
 - 2d. The temple vessels are returned.
 - 3d. The king and people will be repatriated.

3A. The Protestation of Jeremiah: 28:5-9

- 1b. The arena of the prophecy: 5
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.

- 1c. The place:
- 2c. The people:

- 2b. The assent of the prophet: 6
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.

- 1c. A desire that the captivity would end in two years.
- 2c. A desire that the people and treasures would be returned.

- 3b. The admonition of the prophet: 7-9

- 1c. The consideration of Jeremiah's words: 7
Nevertheless hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people:

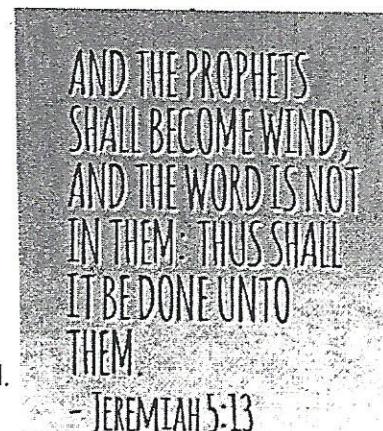
- 1d. Warning directed to Hananiah.
- 2d. Words directed to the people.

- 2c. The consideration of prior prophets: 8
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.

- 1d. The prophets:

Joel, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum and possibly Obadiah.

- 2d. Their prophecies:



- 1e. The extent of the prophecies:
 - many countries
 - mighty nations
- 2e. The content of the prophecies
 - conflict – war
 - corruption – wickedness
- 3c. The consideration of prophetic fulfillment: 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.
 - 1d. The focus of past prophecies is normally evil.
 - 2d. The recipients of Hananiah's prophecy would soon know who is the true prophet.
 - 3d. The test of a true prophet is whether his prediction comes to pass.
 - 4d. The audience should withhold judgment about Hananiah's prophecy.

Charles Lee Feinberg has a splendid summary of the issue at hand:

In the contest between Hananiah and Jeremiah, the antecedent probability was in favor of a prophet who spoke in agreement with the true prophets of the past. The trouble with false prophets was that they always predicted prosperity unconditionally, without need of repentance. It is always less popular to predict calamity rather than prosperity; so the presumption of truth rests with the prophet of calamity (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Charles Lee Feinberg, "Jeremiah," 1986, 549).

4A. The Predictions of Hananiah: 28:10-11

Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke off the prophet Jeremiah's neck and broke it.¹¹ 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.

- 1b. The final rebellion of Hananiah:
 - 1c. Destroyed the symbol of bondage: 10a
 - 2c. Denied the truth of God's messenger: 10b
 - 3c. Deceived the people with a false hope: 11
 - 4c. Claimed divine revelation: 11a
 - 5c. Contradicted clear prophecy: 11b
 - 6c. Concocted additional predictions:



In verse 3 Hananiah predicted the end of the captivity within two years; in verse 11 he predicted the doom of the Babylonian Empire within two years. His actions and pronouncements become ever more erratic.

2b. The fateful retreat of Jeremiah: 11c

The prophet Jeremiah went his way. Jeremiah was certain that his message was from God. He was convinced that God would vindicate His own message through future verification (Deut. 28:22; Jer. 28:9). If an individual rejects the Word of God and rebels against the authority of God, the believer has no further choice than to depart and commit the individual to the judgment of God.

5A. The Pronouncement of the Lord: 28:12-14

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,¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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.

1b. The stern rebuke of Hananiah:

Hananiah's wicked presumption could not unrebuked and unpunished, therefore the Word of the Lord came through Jeremiah to denounce Hananiah's deceitful prediction with a stern prophecy concerning Judah's enslavement.

2b. The severe repercussions:

The people were exchanging the wooden yoke of submission for the inflexible yoke of iron of servitude. Nebuchadnezzar's rule would be so severe that it included the animals.

6A. The Perdition of Hananiah: 28:15-17

1b. The reason for the divine judgment on Hananiah: 15-16

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.¹⁶ 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.

1c. He claimed divine authority: 15b

2c. He lied as a prophet: 15c

3c. He led astray the people: 15d

4c. He encouraged rebellion against God: 16d

2b. The realization of the judgment: 17

So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.

1c. The prediction that he would die within a year.
 There's a play on words here, the "not sent you" of verse 15 parallels that of "sending you" in verse 16 (two Hebrew words *loselaheka*—*mesallehaka*).

Feinberg addresses the justice of the penalty:

Rebellion against the servant of the Lord was tantamount to rebellion against God himself. The Jews knew the penalty for apostasy (cf. Deut. 13:1-5); Ezekiel saw it carried out in his day against Pelatiah (cf. Ezek. 11:13), and in the infant church Peter saw it executed on Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). Jeremiah's prophecy was authenticated in the death of Hananiah, which discredited him as a fraud. Thus the authority of the true prophet was vindicated. Observe the high cost of false prophecy. These events only served to credit Jeremiah's ministry (*Ibid.*, 551).

2c. The death within two months.

Perhaps God in His mercy wanted to give Hananiah one more opportunity to repent of his rebellion. Constable's comments are much to the point:

The prophet who predicted deliverance in two years died in two months. God graciously gave him two months to repent before He put him to death. His death was another object lesson to the people on the importance of obeying God's Word (*Dr. Constable's Notes on Jeremiah*, 2015, 146-147).

7A. Principles for the Believer:

1b. The deceitfulness of false prophets:

- A false prophet can have godly parents like Hananiah
- A false prophet can quote God's Word
- A false prophet can appeal to God in his revelation

2b. The doom of the false prophet:

- Unfulfilled predictions unmask a false prophet
- His sin is ultimately rebellion against God (28:16c; cf. 29:32c)
- His disbelief leads to departure and ultimate doom

3b. The decorum of the believer:

1c. His awareness of the danger:

- 1d. False prophets sometimes look, act and sound like genuine prophets 1
- 2d. False prophets say what people want to hear 3
- 3d. False prophets can communicate good information 6
- 4d. False prophets may be impressive and convincing 10-11

2c. His avoidance of the deceiver: 11d

As stated above, when an individual rejects God's Word, refuses to listen to God's messenger, and rebels against God's authority, a believer has no option but to separate from that individual.

