***Jeremiah 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, 2“Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: ‘I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. 3Within 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. 4And 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.’ 5Then 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, 6and 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. 7Nevertheless hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: 8The prophets who have been before me and before you of old prophesied against many countries and great kingdoms—of war and disaster and pestilence. 9As 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.” 10Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke off the prophet Jeremiah’s neck and broke it. 11And 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. 12Now 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.” 14For 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.”***

***15Then 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. 16Therefore 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.’ 17So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.***

We’re back with Jeremiah tonight, as we continue to look at the prophecy that the Lord sent in chapter 27. Here, Hananiah is named as a false and lying prophet, bringing prophecies of peace that the Lord did not send. We learned in our last time together that the kings, the priests, and the people all love the lies and want to believe what their itching ears hear. But God is Holy and He calls us to Holiness. In Leviticus 19:2, we are told *You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.* Though we will never achieve perfect holiness, our eyes are always toward holiness. We are not called to condone sin. We are called to be a light, so others might see and believe. Just as a light bulb turned off in a dark room is of no help in the darkness, so a Christian quiet is no help in this world darkened by sin. May our Light shine that we might glorify God.

Verses 1-4 *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, 2“Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: ‘I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. 3Within 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. 4And 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.’*  It happened in the same year, meaning the same year as the prophecy of Jeremiah 27 dealt with last week. Zedekiah is king and it is his first year as king. A false prophet named Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet rose up. He was of Gibeon, a city that was located in what is now the West Bank of Israel. Recall with me that in Joshua 9, the Gibeonites lied to Joshua seeking peace, saying they were from a far country. It seems this is another liar from the city of Gibeon before us tonight. It is probable that Hananiah was a priest, as he spoke in the house of the Lord in the presence of the priests. This coming false prophecy is represented as being from the Lord. The prophecy is delivered to the priests and all the people, meaning it was done so openly and publicly. Hananiah sought to contradict Jeremiah. Truth is always resisted by evil. Hananiah seeks to confuse the people. He predicts that the King of Babylon will lose his power and control over Judah and Jerusalem. Within two full years, the yoke and the bond will be broken. Vessels of the temple will be returned, captives will come back, and even Jeconiah will be returned. Hananiah completely contradicts the truth Jeremiah has brought from God. His prophecy is like that of so many of the priests and prophets saying, “Peace, peace.” The people didn’t mind hearing this as it was much easier to accept than Jeremiah’s prophecy of 70 years of captivity, while bearing the yoke and bonds of Babylon. We must never believe what our sin assures us cannot be true.

Verses 5-9 *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, 6and 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. 7Nevertheless hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: 8The prophets who have been before me and before you of old prophesied against many countries and great kingdoms—of war and disaster and pestilence. 9As 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.”* Now, Jeremiah the Prophet agrees! Amen! May the Lord do what Hananiah says rather than what he has said. He loves his nation, and he loves his people. He desires their welfare. He knows that God will only relent when the nation turns and repents. If the prophecy of Hananiah is to be true, then it must mean that the nation turned and sought God! Amen. He so desires for the people to return to God that he would even suffer being called a false prophet himself for the good of the people. Bring back the vessels and bring back the people. What a blessing if that were to happen! **Nevertheless, hear now this word –** Jeremiah now redirects. He is telling not just Hananiah, but all the people listening to listen very carefully. My grandmother used to say – Mark my words and mark them well. Jeremiah is saying mark my words and mark them well. The prophets that have been before me and before you Hananiah. Prophets like Joel, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and many others prophesied against many countries and great kingdoms. These same prophets agreed with Jeremiah in prophesying judgement against the Jews and the surrounding nations. Hananiah is prophesying the opposite. Which should the people believe? In addition to the prophets agreeing with Jeremiah, the general sin and evil among the people agree with Jeremiah. Given the state of their nation and their relationship with God, it is more likely that God will punish iniquity and bring the people back to relationship through captivity. Finally, when previous prophets foretold peace and prosperity, with no need to repent and return to God with humility and a contrite heart, these all turned out to be false prophecies and simply working to please the hearers. The people have only to look at Israel and Assyria just a few short years earlier to know that God is long suffering, but the time will come for judgement.

Verses 10-14 *Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke off the prophet Jeremiah’s neck and broke it. 11And 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. 12Now 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.” 14For 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.”* As commanded by God in the previous chapter, Jeremiah is wearing a yoke as a symbol of the judgement to come. This is an object lesson to the people as he speaks, giving them a visual representation of the judgement God is bringing. They are called to submit to Babylon and not be destroyed. This yoke Hananiah snatched from Jeremiah’s neck, broke it, and declared that the nation and other nations will become free within two years. Of course, we know that this is not the case at all. Jeremiah quietly and patiently went his way. There was no need to continue to argue with the deceived. The deceived are convinced that deception is the truth. The priests and the people are very happy with Hananiah’s message. It does no good to speak to those who refuse to hear. Jeremiah knew that this is God’s battle and God’s message. Then the word of the Lord came – God now confirms the prophecy that He has sent through Jeremiah and so many other prophets. Say this to Hananiah – you broke the yokes of wood, the yokes that were light and easy, and by your disobedience have replaced them with yokes of iron. These yokes no human can break. These will be heavier and bring a greater grief because you refused to hear and led the people astray.

Verses 15-17 *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. 16Therefore 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.’ 17So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.* Jeremiah now calls Hananiah out by name. The prophecy has been confirmed anew by God. The Lord has not sent you Hananiah! You make the people trust in lies. This still happens today with pastors preaching prosperity gospels and self-help! They never talk of sin or repentance, but only present a candy coated god with a marshmallow center. That’s not the God we serve! Hananiah taught rebellion against the Lord. Notice it is against the Lord God and not against the Jeremiah bringing the truth. Hananiah has contradicted God and that is never a safe place to be. He has encouraged the people to resist Nebuchadnezzar, and this will lead to their ruin. Hananiah had said – within two years. God says – let me tighten up this timeline for you Hananiah – with this year you will die. So Hananiah died the same year in the seventh month – Hananiah died two months later. How do we know this? Verse 1 said that this exchange was taking place in the 5th month and Hananiah died in the 7th month. God did not allow this false narrative to hang around two years to see if it would be true. He ended this is two months. It is a very dangerous thing to speak falsehoods in the name of God. Hebrews 10:31 says it so very clearly - *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

And so, we leave Jeremiah again tonight. He continues to faithfully speak the word of God to all who will hear. He does not sugar coat, and he does not make marshmallow treats. He speaks the truth as God leads him to speak. So too must we speak this truth, knowing that God is the Master, we are only the messengers. May we be faithful as we call others to repent and be saved from the wrath and judgement of our powerful and living Almighty God.