



# The **Fiery** Bones

Jeremiah 20:9

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Text

Jeremiah 27:1-22

Topic

Jeremiah tells Judah and the surrounding Gentile nations that The Lord will preserve and bless them if they wear the yoke of submission to Babylon

Title

*"Where There's Yoke, There's Holy Fire"*

Introduction

Mantyhose are the latest fashion accessory for men.

Mantyhose are - you guessed it - **pantyhose for men**. They have been popular in Europe for some time and are now making inroads in America.

Think only guys Arnold would call 'girlie-men' wear them? Scuba divers regularly wear them for extra insulation in cold water and men on horseback wear them to prevent chafing.

Wearing them as a fashion accessory is what's new.

I was thinking about unusual fashion accessories because in our text Jeremiah goes to a summit meeting of national ambassadors wearing something quite unusual.

While it may be impractical to wear bonds and yokes, we should accessorize our lives by acting like bond servants and yokefellows. We might not wear these implements but people can still see us as if we were wearing them.

Jeremiah 27:2 "Thus says the LORD to me: 'Make for yourselves **bonds and yokes**, and put them on your neck,  
Jeremiah 27:3 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.

"Bonds and yokes" were not normal attire for ambassadors. They were symbolic accessories to enhance the message God had given Jeremiah.

Christians are described as bondservants who are to be yoked together with our Master, Jesus Christ. While it may be impractical to wear bonds and yokes, we should accessorize our lives by acting like bond servants and yokefellows. We might not wear these implements but people can still see us as if we were wearing them.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Your Spiritual Wardrobe Is Best Accessorized By Bonds & Yokes, and #2 Your Spiritual Warfare Is Best Achieved In Bonds & Yokes.

## #1 Your Spiritual Wardrobe Is Best Accessorized By Bonds & Yokes

(v1-7)

God had a message for Judah and the surrounding nations and He punctuated it with a stunning visual prop.

Jeremiah 27:1 In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

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Jeremiah 27:3 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.

Jeremiah received this message "in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim." He didn't deliver it until Zedekiah was king of Judah. *He didn't deliver it for fifteen years.*

God is always speaking to you. Some of what He is telling you, revealing to you, is for today; some of it is for a later day. It's one of the reasons why it is so important to be in regular fellowship being taught the Word systematically. Don't wait til the crisis, or for the opportunity, in order to be ready.

Five ambassadors were in Jerusalem having a meeting with Zedekiah. They were wanting to convince Zedekiah to ally with them against Babylon.

Jeremiah was not invited to the meeting. Well, not officially. He was sent with God's authority to address these delegates.

You and I are ambassadors at large. Wherever you are you have God's authority to announce the forgiveness of sins available to men through faith in Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah walked in wearing bonds and a yoke and he brought with him bonds and yokes for the king and all these delegates. He urged them to put them on - or, at least, to wear them when they returned home to show their own kings that God was King.

Jeremiah 27:4 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:

Jeremiah 27:5 '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.

Jeremiah 27:6 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.

Jeremiah 27:7 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.

God revealed to these ambassadors His foreign policy for the Middle East. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was going to rule over them for a period of time as God's servant. God was raising-up Nebuchadnezzar - a pagan king - to do His bidding on the earth.

We say of things like this that God is sovereign; and He is. Sovereignty, however, is an *activity* of God, not an *attribute*. God is love - it's an attribute. He acts sovereignly as directed and even limited by His love.

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God limits His sovereignty by His love in at least three ways:

1. He allows sin to exist in His universe.
2. He allows Himself to be moved by prayer.
3. He allows mankind free-will.

Within His love-imposed limits God rules and He overrules for His glory and to accomplish His eternal purposes in human history.

One unusual comment caught my attention. Did Nebuchadnezzar really rule over wild beasts? Did they serve him - and what does that mean?

Daniel says the same thing about Nebuchadnezzar (2:37-38). I can only conclude that God really did give Nebuchadnezzar a power to control wild beasts. Amazing!

Jeremiah literally wore bonds and a yoke. We are to wear them spiritually.

We 'wear' them when we walk in every situation, and in every role, as if we were yoked with The Lord as His bondservant.

In the New Testament the roles of husbands, wives, children, citizens, employers, and employees are all described. So are the roles of men and women, and leaders and laity, in the church.

The role of women provides a good example for us. A wife is, for example, to be a keeper at home and helpmeet to her husband. In the church she is not to teach or have authority over men. Yet in homes and in houses of God those yokes are being thrown off; those bonds are being broken.

**You can't be a bondservant, a yokefellow, if you throw off your God-given, biblically revealed roles.**

The Lord said His yoke was easy, not at all burdensome. His description of my roles and responsibilities are to be understood as a blessing. The boundaries He imposes are for my good and His glory.

When I submit to The Lord, I might look just as weird to onlookers as did Jeremiah did wearing the bonds and yoke. They might refuse to take for themselves the Lord's yoke. But if I want to be able to speak with authority for The Lord, I'm going to have to accessorize my walk with submission to His well-intentioned, loving boundaries for my life.

## #2 Your Spiritual Warfare Is Best Achieved In Bonds & Yokes

(v8-22)

The remaining verses of chapter twenty-seven urge the people of these nations to go with God's plan to surrender and submit to Babylon. If they would, they could stay in their own land. Sure, they'd have to pay tribute to Nebuchadnezzar, but they wouldn't be overrun and exiled.

In a very real sense these nations would be surrendering and submitting not to Babylon but to God Who was allowing Nebuchadnezzar to have some power on the earth.

For us these verses can picture submitting to God's plans for our lives. Surrounded by the world, with the god of this world on the prowl, remaining yoked as bondservants gives us the victory day-by-day in our spiritual warfare. We never surrender or submit to the world or the devil but as we surrender and submit to God in a world in which the devil has been granted some limited power, our victory depends upon our being yoked bondservants.

Jeremiah first addressed the foreign ambassadors.

Jeremiah 27:8 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.

Jeremiah 27:9 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."

Jeremiah 27:10 For they prophesy a lie to you, to remove you far from your land; and I will drive you out, and you will perish.

Jeremiah 27:11 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.' " ' "

Historians tell us Babylon was having internal strife at this time. These weaker nations thought it the right moment to break-away. Their own advisers told them what they wanted to hear. God was their best foreign policy advisor and He said to trash plans to rebel.

There are always going to be ways that seem right to us. If we must step outside God's boundaries to walk those ways, they are wrong for us. Anytime we throw off God's yoke we are making ourselves prey for the schemes of Satan.

Jeremiah next addressed King Zedekiah.

Jeremiah 27:12 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!

Jeremiah 27:13 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?

Jeremiah 27:14 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;

Jeremiah 27:15 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."

Everyone knew that Jeremiah was the real thing, the genuine prophet The Lord had sent. There were, however, other voices urging a different course of action.

Applying this to us as yoked bondservants I'd point out that we, too, have many other advisers and voices trying to influence us to remain sovereign over our own little kingdoms. Everyday you face and feel pressure from the "ambassadors" of this world to rebel against God.

1. Advertising can be an ambassador of this world sent to pressure you to rebel against God.
2. Entertainment can be an ambassador of this world sent to pressure you to rebel against God.

There are many other such passive ambassadors which can and do promote a worldly message that is in stark and direct contrast to the Gospel of your Lord, Jesus Christ.

There are active ambassadors as well. In Second Timothy 2:26 the Bible says that nonbelievers are the captives of the devil and often unwittingly do His will. They advise you to break the yoke of obedience to Jesus.

The chapter ends with Jeremiah addressing the priest and people of Judah.

Jeremiah 27:16 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.

Jeremiah 27:17 Do not listen to them; serve the king of Babylon, and live! Why should this city be laid waste?

Jeremiah 27:18 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.'

Jeremiah 27:19 "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,

Jeremiah 27:20 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 -

Jeremiah 27:21 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:

Jeremiah 27:22 'They shall be carried 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.' "

In his first assault upon Jerusalem Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captives and certain articles from the Temple. The false prophets were telling the priests and the people that those articles were soon to be returned. Not true; and if they did not submit to Babylon, the rest of the articles in the Temple would be taken and the Temple itself destroyed.

While you and I are submitting to The Lord as yoked bondservants it can seem as if we are losing ground. It can seem as if the devil and those who are in his camp are enjoying victory after victory, looting us, robbing us. Why wear the yoke when it seems counterproductive?

It's never counterproductive. It produces, for example, spiritual fruit in your life. That by itself is enough of a reason to walk with The Lord surrendered to Him and submitted to His will.

As long as we are on the earth in these bodies of flesh the devil is going to have a limited reign over the planet. He is, after all, the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air. It's within the sovereignty of God to allow the devil to continue for a time. If you're discouraged about it, go to the last chapters in the Revelation of Jesus Christ and you can see how it all ends.

Meantime God has determined that our victory be decided by being His yoked bondservants.

Let's suggest a contemporary situation where the devil seems to be gaining ground. Of course you can expect there to be an assault against biblical marriage. The devil wants to undermine it, to destroy it, and thereby undermine and destroy societies. The prophets, diviners, dreamers, soothsayers and sorcerers of this world all combine to tell you that biblical marriage is out of date, old fashioned, if not downright wrong. Get a divorce for any reason; marry a man if you're a man, or a woman if you're a woman. Marry multiple partners. Or don't get married at all - just live together.

How do we fight it? Respectfully I'd say that initiatives and ballot measures are not the ultimate weapon to gain the victory. Notice I said 'ultimate weapon.' We should do those things, support those efforts, for sure.

**But we must embrace the understanding that the real victory is to ourselves be yoked bondservants in our marriages.**

Christians, for the most part, are not showing the world much when it comes to marriage. They too easily throw off the yoke of marriage, refusing to submit to The Lord as bondservants. Thus we have lost our authority - our spiritual authority - to set the standard.

The classic list of weapons in our warfare is in Ephesians chapter six. There you read of the armor of God. Right before your armor is described there is a discussion of the roles of husbands, wives, children, parents, employers and employees. It establishes that the soldier who wants to wield the full armor of God must also, and first, be wearing bonds and yokes.

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There are lots of books and Bible studies on spiritual warfare. Usually they describe how we wield our spiritual weapons. That's all good so long as you understand that in order to wield those weapons you must be surrendered to God and to His plans for your life. They don't really 'work' in your hands if your heart is in rebellion.

The comic book hero, Thor, was portrayed in a recent movie. If you are at all familiar with the mythology or the comic book lore you know he has as a weapon a mighty hammer. There is a scene early in the film in which he goes to retrieve his hammer but it won't budge. He can't lift it. He has no power.

He has no power to wield his hammer because he is acting on his own, for himself, and not in submission to his role as king of Asgard. Later he sacrifices himself to save others and his hammer returns to him, his power returns to him.

It's a crude illustration but I think you understand. We want to wield the hammer without making the sacrifices of submission to God.

God's power is revealed in our wearing His yoke, in walking as His bondservants within His loving boundaries.