

Title:       **“THIS YEAR THOU SHALT DIE”**  
Text:       Jeremiah 28:16  
Subject:    *Death*  
Date:       Sunday Evening — December 31, 2006  
Tape #      Z-17b

### **Introduction:**

I began preparing this message two weeks ago, after reading God’s word to the lying prophet Hananiah in Jeremiah 28. As soon as I read it, I knew the Lord had given me my message for tonight. Turn to the 28<sup>th</sup> chapter of Jeremiah, and we will read the last three verses of that chapter.

(Jeremiah 28:15-17)    “Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. (16) Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD. (17) So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.”

The Lord our God has graciously brought us to the dawn of another year. The word of his prophet pronounced upon the lying prophet, Hananiah, is a word we would be wise to consider. I hope you will hear it as if it were spoken directly to you tonight, as you are anticipating the beginning of the new year. Though it must be qualified with a possibility or, perhaps, even a probability, let it be sounded in the ears of every eternity bound sinner here tonight. — “This year thou shalt die.” It is not only possible, but very probable, that some of us will die before the new year, we now anticipate with great joy, has ended. It may be that I will die this year. Perhaps you will. But we must soon die.

May the Lord graciously “teach *us* to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psalm 90:12), that we may apply our hearts to Christ, who alone is Wisdom (Colossians 3:1-3). May he give us grace to live each day he has appointed for us in this world as if we knew it would be our last. It very well may be that God has said concerning you or me, “This year thou shalt die.”

Carnal men celebrate the dawning of the new year as carnal men, in utter frivolity. Let us enter it with sober minds and spiritual aspirations.

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- Shall we live on God’s earth as loiterers, standing in the way of others?
- Shall we be drones in the vineyard of God, cumbering the ground?

O Lord, arise; help us and deliver us from such, for your name’s sake. Enable us by your Spirit to devote ourselves entirely to your cause in this world, that we may serve our generation in the time you have given us, for the glory of God. If this year is to be my last on earth, O Spirit of God, by your blessing, it may be my best. If my end is near, if my days are almost fulfilled, make me a blessing to many, for Christ’s sake.

**REJOICE IN CHRIST**

Perhaps you ask, “Shouldn’t we rejoice as we remember the past and anticipate the new year? Shouldn’t believers, above all people, have real, heartfelt joy on such a day as this?” Indeed, we should be filled with joy and thanksgiving, with adoration and praise to our ever-gracious God as we remember the days and years of grace we have experienced.

- God our Father has chosen us in eternal love.
- Christ our Redeemer has bought us with his precious blood.
- And God the Holy Spirit has called us “out of darkness into his marvellous light” and has made us new creatures in Christ.
- We are justified, sanctified, forgiven of all sin, and “accepted in the Beloved.”
- We are “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.”

All this and indescribably more God has done for us by his grace! Above all people, let us rejoice! “Rejoice in the Lord always; *and* again I say, Rejoice!” If he has said of me, “This year thou shalt die,” my heart replies, “My times are in thy hand.” They could not be in a wiser, more tender, or more loving hand.

“My times are in Thy hand,”  
My God, I want them there:  
Choose Lord the path that’s best for me  
Throughout my journey here.

“My times are in Thy hand,”  
There is no cause for fear:  
My Father’s providence is good,  
I should be free of care.

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“My times are in Thy hand,”  
I would submissive be:  
Forgive my fears, forgive my doubts,  
Drive unbelief from me!

“My times are in Thy hand,”  
My God, do what You will  
Grant grace to me to honor You,  
To trust You and be still.

**THE POSSIBILITY**

I am not a prophet. I cannot tell you what tomorrow will bring. So I cannot speak to you as Jeremiah did to Hananiah, and say, “This year thou shalt die.” But this I can and must say, soon you shall die. It may be before the new year ends, or even begins.

- This year you may die. — **Your life is the greatest uncertainty in the world.** You have no assurance of another year, another day, or even another moment.
- This year you may die. — **Thousands have died since this time last year.**
- This year you may die. — **Thousands will die before the year’s end.**
- This year you may die. — **You may be young,** but cemeteries are full of the bodies of people who died at your age. Youth is no security against the stroke of death.
- This year you may die. — **You may be strong and in good health;** but good health this morning will not prevent you from dying this afternoon.
- This year you may die. — **You may have a prospering business;** but your business and your plans for it may be left with all the other vanities of this world in a moment’s time.
- This year you may die. — **You may have a family to raise;** but the needs of your family will not prolong the bounds of your habitation here.
- This year you may die. — **You may not have finished your education;** but death will not wait.

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- This year you may die. — You may not be prepared to die, and may try your best not to think about dying; but this year you may die. When the almighty has issued the warrant, you will die.

**JUST SUPPOSE**

Just suppose this really is God’s word to you. — “This year thou shalt die!” What then? How things will change for you, and change forever!

**If, like the rich man our Lord speaks of in Luke 16, you die without Christ,** without the cleansing of his blood, without his righteousness, without his Spirit, without his saving grace, you will lift up your eyes in hell in torment, in the everlasting torments of the damned in hell! No words can describe your everlasting woe!

- Your doubts will all be gone.
- Your questions will all be answered.
- Your fears will all come upon you.
- Mercy will be gone forever!
- Your conscience will torment you forever!

Ye sinners, seek his face,  
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;  
Fly to the shelter of his cross,  
And find salvation there.

**If you die in the Lord,** trusting Christ, washed in his blood, robed in his righteousness, born of his Spirit, save by his grace, like Lazarus, of whom our Savior speak in that same chapter, you will be carried by the angels of God into heaven’s glory! And no words can begin to describe your everlasting bliss! Such is the fulness of the glory and bliss awaiting you that the heart of man has never even conceived it! We cannot even imagine the blessedness and glory of heaven, where God shall wipe all tears from our eyes, the former things are passed away, and we see our all-glorious Christ face to face forever. Death will for you, my brother, my sister, be the end of...

- All your sin!
- All your sorrow!
- All your pain!
- All your sickness!

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- All your longings!
- All your hopes!
- All your anticipations!
- All your doubts, fears, and questions!
- All your unbelief, rebellion, and waywardness!
- All your fallings, failures, and frustrations!
- All your death!

Whether we die this year, or another, is really of no great significance. The only matter of importance is that we die in Christ and that, until we die, we live unto Christ. To that end, I ask my God and Savior to make me as “a weaned child,” weaning me of everything that rivals him, setting my affection on him who loved me and gave himself for me.

**PEACE IN DYING**

We all want to die in peace. But multitudes die in a false peace, a peace that is nothing but a vain delusion. It appears that Hananiah did. He was a lying prophet who went on lying to others and lying to himself until he died. If you find your peace anywhere other than in Christ, you may die in peace; but in hell your peace will end.

Whether the Lord has said of me, as he did Hananiah, “This year thou shalt die,” I cannot know; but I rejoice to know that he has said of me, as he did Zedekiah, “Thou shalt die in peace” (Jeremiah 34:5).

(Jeremiah 34:1-5) “The word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people, fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities thereof, saying, (2) Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire: (3) And thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon. (4) Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah; Thus saith the LORD of thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword: (5) *But* thou shalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which

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were before thee, so shall they burn *odours* for thee; and they will lament thee, *saying*, Ah lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the LORD.”

Zedekiah saw and experienced much evil, trouble, heartache and sorrow; but he died in peace, the peace that only Christ can give, who gives ransomed sinners peace with God.

**I must confess, to my shame, that I have much in common with Zedekiah.** There was absolutely no reason he should have expected to die in peace, be buried in honor, and remembered with fondness. Yet, the Lord God promised that he would be (Jeremiah 34:4-5), and he was. The king of Babylon took him captive, killed his sons before his eyes, then put out his eyes, and bound him in chains (Jeremiah 39:7), but Zedekiah died in peace. **Zedekiah was the 20th and last king of Judah.** Though Jeremiah was his prophet, **“he did evil in the sight of the Lord,”** just as his fathers had done, and **provoked the Lord to anger** (2 Kings 24:19-20).

Yet, the Lord God had chosen him in Christ as a vessel of mercy and was determined to show him mercy. **His name means** either, “the Lord is my judge”, or “the Lord is my righteousness,” and God, who providentially gave him that name, made Christ, the Justifier of his redeemed, the Lord his righteousness. Because Zedekiah died in Christ, who of God was made unto him righteousness, he died in peace. God’s prophet told him, **“Thou shalt not die by the sword,” by violence;** “but thou shalt die in peace.” Though he saw much violence, he died in peace. How could such a rebel, such a sinner as Zedekiah die in peace?

**How can such a rebel, such a sinner as I am, die in peace?** — The only way a sinner can die in peace is to die washed in the blood of Christ, robed in the garments of salvation, and born again by his Spirit. The only way a sinner can die in peace is to die in Christ, believing Christ, having Christ as his righteousness. **Because Christ alone is my righteousness, God says to me,** “Thou shalt die in peace,” and I hope to die in peace. It is written, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.”

**BURIED IN HONOR**

Not only did he die in peace, Zedekiah was buried in honor. It is becoming popular, even among God’s people, to replace burial with cremation. **But**

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**burial is throughout the Scriptures held before us as an honorable and instructive thing.**

- The burial of our bodies distinguishes men from beasts. When a wild beast dies, his carcase is left to rot on the ground.
- We bury one another in hope of the resurrection, laying their bodies in the earth until the resurrection.
- Burial carries with it the implication of our immortality.

When the Lord assured Zedekiah he would be buried, he showed him great favor, saying, “They shall burn *odours* for thee.” God commanded his prophet to tell Jehoiakim that he would be buried in dishonor, with “the burial of an ass” (Jeremiah 22:1(9)); but to Zedekiah, the object of his favor, he promised an honorable burial.

**LAMENTED BLESSING**

Though we are not informed of Zedekiah’s life after the Lord revealed Christ to him, he who was once a curse was obviously made a blessing to many while the Jews were in Babylonian captivity (Zechariah 8:13), because after his death the children of Israel lamented his death as the loss of a great blessing (Jeremiah 34:5).

As this new year begins, whether it is appointed for me to die this year or another, I pray that God the Holy Spirit will give me such grace, that he will make me a blessing to you his people and all whose lives he allows me to touch, for Christ’s sake. When I leave this world, I sure would like to leave it having served my generation by the will of God, having been useful to the souls of men, having been a blessing to the lives of those who have come under my influence.

Make me a blessing, make me a blessing;  
Out of my life may Jesus shine.  
Make me a blessing, O Saviour I pray!

Has the Lord said of you, or of me, “This year thou shalt die”? If you trust his Son, he also says, “*But* thou shalt die in peace.”

Amen.