

## **Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: April 17<sup>th</sup>: Jeremiah 36: Some Notes**

**Themes:** Links in with Chapter 25, Chapter 45, and Chapter 46: 2-12. This is a unique and fascinating insight into how prophetic messages got written down, and so preserved for future generations. There are messages about perseverance (refusal to be silenced); about working with others – arguably, we would not know about Jeremiah except for those named here as working with him in various ways (also at considerable personal cost); and about patient listening before condemning or signing up. There is also a message about the Bible never being casual reading: never something to while away the time until something more interesting turns up.

**Quotations:** “Neither the king nor his officials showed the slightest twinge of conscience as they listened to the messages read.”

**Clarifications:** This is set in 605, with the victory of Babylon over Egypt at Carchemish more or less settling the eventual fate of Judah. It is worth looking closely at precisely what is going on here: who is listening to what, for how long, and how often. The stand-out picture is of a bad king hearing what he doesn't like and destroying the record to stop others hearing it. However, even the king is hearing it for the second time: he heard it first at second hand but in some detail, and then commanded that the original text be brought in and read to him. His advisers were hearing it for at least the third time! Imagine a St George's four hour sermon, being repeated after coffee, and then again after lunch! Note also that there was clearly a reform party in both Temple and Palace, ready to protect Jeremiah and Baruch, and ready to try to persuade the King to face up to Jeremiah's reality. King Josiah won Bible plaudits for listening to the re-discovered scriptures, repenting, and reforming. He hadn't liked what he heard, but he took it on board.

Both Stephen and Paul strained their audience's patience with long sermons. But maybe the 30 second sound bite/ tweet has its limitations?

**Questions:** What is your sermon attention span? How do you handle hearing what you don't want to hear? Preachers usually say in some form “Now, over to you!” Do we pick up that challenge; and, if so, how? Reading or speaking: which makes the most impact?