

Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: November 28: Jeremiah 21: 1-10

Themes: This comes very oddly after the previous passage: the outcast being relied on to intercede with God, and clearly a person of importance; and someone called Pashhur the main intermediary. Note the different parentage of this Pashhur: we have travelled back about 10 years. A weak king who secretly agrees with Jeremiah, but is easily over-ruled by his top officials, is hoping Jeremiah will repeat Isaiah's magic a century before and get God to sign up to repelling the invading army of Nebuchadnezzar/ Nebuchadnezzar. (Both versions of the Babylonian boss's name are used.) Jeremiah returns a negative, and his unwanted advice to surrender to the Babylonians instead of fighting them is consistent with his earlier advice that promises should be kept. The current King was a Babylonian appointee who had sworn allegiance to Babylon. Now he was hoping the Egyptians would help him break his promise.

Quotations: "I'm prepared to wipe out the population of this city, people and animals alike." (21.4) "I'm determined to see this city destroyed." (21.10)

Questions: Is Christian pacifism the only right Christian approach to military threat? Are Governments ever justified in being economical with the truth? (Think about this country in WW2 when the painful truth was that we were losing, but that honesty (a) would have been heard by the enemy as well as the British, and (b) honesty might have guaranteed defeat!) Jehovah's Witnesses refuse to get involved in politics – arguing that only the Kingdom of God matters: are they right or wrong? Should the Government listen to the Archbishops more than to the TUC and the CBI etc? Should a democratic Government always be steered by popular opinion?