

Monday Evening Bible Study Group: December 19th: Jeremiah 23: 9-40: Some Notes

Themes: Jeremiah had started life as part of a professional team. He now feels very much a lone voice – but takes courage from being God’s mouth piece rather than spouting his own thoughts. The lying prophets are saying what they think people want to hear, rather than what people need to hear. (A bit like a doctor re-assuring a patient who actually needs more painful advice.) The Temple is being abused. Jerusalem professionals are now competing with the bad guys of the former Israel, and those of Sodom and Gomorrah. God is a close reality. In Christian terms, the Gospel is tough news as well as good news!

Quotes: “Their unfaithfulness is turning the country into a cesspit.” “I’ll give them a supper of maggot meat with after dinner drink of strychnine.” “Am I not a God near at hand?” “Tell it truly and faithfully.” “Ask questions of one another.”

Clarifications: False prophets continued into the Exile. As before, the sex language is probably both about “adultery” with alien “gods”, and about some of the alien god practices involving sexual abuse.

Questions: Once again, we have to ask how you distinguish a false prophet from a true prophet...especially if the false prophet is saying what we want to hear! At Christmas, we tend to think of the OT line that is reflected in Handel’s “Messiah’s” “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people: speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem!” We really want to be comforted rather than challenged? If someone wearing a dog collar, for example, speaks, we are disinclined to challenge what they say.. unless, maybe, it cuts across our politics! You can well see why the people of Jerusalem were more ready to hear “Everything is fine!”, than to hear “You’re all doomed!” Beware the pat on the back sermon? Jeremiah’s advice to talk to one another, instead of just listening to the false prophets, is interesting. But maybe “One another” doesn’t just mean your social media fan club? Hear the discordant voice?