

Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: January 16th: Jeremiah Chapter 26: Some Notes

Themes: This is a particularly interesting passage. It may or may not repeat the Chapter 7 Temple sermon. I pick out: (1) Threat of destruction followed by possibility of repentance and change producing different results is not really “God changing his mind”. It is God saying that doing evil produces consequences; and changing to good produces consequences, (2) The Jews have not been alone in tending to forget the privilege involves responsibility: status on its own is no guarantee of all going well. (3) A congregation needs to listen to warnings and rebukes as well as to re-assurance and praise. (4) Either the crowd changed sides – first siding with the priests etc and then siding with the princes; or else there were two crowds. Never “go with the crowd”! (5) The authorities are an object lesson in responsible leadership behaviour: no we won’t support a lynch mob, let’s sit own and hear both sides of the argument. Would that politicians didn’t just run with the popular press, but listened to reasoned argument. (To be fair to our politicians – they didn’t run with the apparent majority support for capital punishment.) (5) Thank God for wise elders such as Ahikam: listen to the wise young and to the wise elderly.

Quotes: “As for me, I’m at your mercy.” “You’ve been listening to God, not Jeremiah.”

Clarifications: Ahikam’s father had helped re-discover the scrolls of the law, and Ahikam himself had been part of the party that then went to consult the prophetess Huldah. His son Gedaliah became governor of Jerusalem when the monarchy fell. The reference to Micah is the only Old Testament direct quotation of one prophet by another prophet. Uriah clearly lacked both Jeremiah’s courage and Jeremiah’s friends. We know nothing more about him, but he is a reminder of all the un-named and therefore unknown good prophets who left us no records.

Questions: Do we have the courage of our convictions? Do we have the courage to listen to “both sides”?