

Monday Evening Bible Study Group: January 9th: Jeremiah 25: Some Notes

Themes: We are taken back about 7 years to the reign of the extravagant builder Jehoiakim – though, to be fair, David and Solomon splashed out a bit on building projects too! Jeremiah reviews 3 years of preaching and not being listened to – though again be careful about assuming nobody ever listened to him. If he had not had listening supporters, maybe he wouldn't have lasted 23 years! The core sermon message is: Repent, Reform, Be Faithful. 70 years in Babylon will be the price of deafness: in effect a generation that would not return, with their children and grandchildren being the longer term beneficiaries of the lesson taught to them. The defeat of Egypt at Carchemish (Chapter 46 refers to the battle,) removed that rather unreliable big power ally as a possible defence against Babylon. Jeremiah goes on to forecast disaster for the surrounding nations, and not just for the Promised Land. God is God of all Nations, not just a tribal god.

It is worth emphasising that while other nations are famous for other things, and the Jewish Temple was impressive, the Jewish gift to posterity is The Bible.

Quotes: You never listened (Verse 4). I'll banish every sound of joy – singing, laughter, marriage festivities, genial workmen, candlelit suppers (Verse 10). He's about to put the human race on trial (Verse 31).

Clarifications: It is interesting to speculate on whether prophet Jeremiah, with no radio, no TV, no computers, no phones, no printing, and no public transport as we understand it, and miles away meaning days away, had more difficulty preaching to the nation and nations, than the prophets of today who have all these things but also have competition from thousands of competitors in the public space. Leaders of other nations are also called Shepherds. The other nations represent the nations of which Jeremiah and his Jewish listeners were aware – often as enemies, sometimes as allies. It could be that they are being judged for their hostility to the Jews; but it is more likely that they are being judged for breaking the universal rules about, for example, justice for the under dog and the vulnerable. Leader responsibility is universal.

Questions: How should we read this assertion that God is in charge across the globe? In Western history, national spokespersons are very prone to say that God is on their country's side: God defeated the French at Agincourt, God defeated the Spanish Armada, God defeated the Third Reich. Do we learn more Jeremiah stuff from the Germans who stood up to the Third Reich...often to the point of death? Isn't Jeremiah about OUR consistency, faithfulness, and patient service in adversity: living out and speaking up for the God who believes in justice, and believes in us?