

## Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: Jeremiah 39 & 52, and 2 Kings 25: Some Notes

These three accounts of the siege of Jerusalem really need to be taken together. Quite a lot is word for word the same. It seems a fair assumption that the Jeremiah author/editor wanted to rub in the message of real consequences for real failures: "I told you so." The brutality of a year and a half siege is summed up in the nothing left to eat sentence. The brutality of the punishment of those had (a) broken promises to the Emperor, and (b) wasted significant imperial resources by resisting the siege, speaks for itself. A stark contrast between the butchery and blinding, and the kindness shown to the good people. In between is the long wait of the earlier exiled King of Judah to get release from prison and favourable treatment (but not restoration to his throne) under a new Emperor.

You will spot that the Jewish nationalists were as little prepared to learn then as they seem to be now. Gedaliah, friend of Jeremiah, gets murdered.

One commentary speculates that the "poor people" who go to take over the vineyards etc were the enslaved Jews who had been promised release by the Jewish rulers and then re-enslaved.

Not that a surprising amount of what had been stolen from the Temple was later returned to the Temple – probably because the Babylonians were a bit reluctant to secularise artefacts that had been dedicated to "a god".

Maybe the issues for discussion are, in no particular order:

1. Do you feel Zedekiah met his sad end because he had made an enemy of the Emperor, or because he had made an enemy of God? (Or is that over-simplifying?)
2. Who are the heroes of these chapters?
3. Should you always keep your promises?
4. Is there one incident that stands out for you?
5. The message is that the Chosen People's future lies with the Babylonian Exiles – a rather mixed group of those who had chosen exile and those who hadn't. Why?...especially since Jeremiah is not one of the exiles, and nor is Gedaliah.
6. How do you feel about "collective guilt"?
7. A place of worship should be beautiful; but when does it become merely extravagant, and showy rather than meaningful? Are you sad or glad that St George's has very little stained glass, and no gold decorations?
8. Any favourite phrase?