

June 2022

Phillip writes:

A few weeks ago, as our television screens were filled with pictures of Ukraine and the threat of a wider conflict loomed, my daily bible readings were from the book of the prophet Jeremiah. It seemed so appropriate.



Jeremiah lived some six hundred years before Christ but his name has entered our popular culture as a bringer of bad news. His message was actually addressed to Judah, the southern half of the prosperous and powerful country ruled over by David and then Solomon three centuries earlier. But times have changed and little Judah is now surrounded by the powerful and competing powers of Assyria, Egypt and Babylon.

While all wish for a return to the days of David and Solomon, the talk in political circles is of where it would be best to make a tactical alliance. But Jeremiah's message is that what is required is not a new treaty, but a complete change of heart. There must be a return to a right relationship with God.

The problem is that, particularly among the ruling classes, the worship of other Gods, including the idols worshipped by their pagan neighbours, has crept in. The love and fear of God has been replaced by the love of money, power, and sex. Jeremiah warns that there will be consequences and, as time goes on and no change of heart is apparent, he prophesies a long spell of exile at the hands of the Babylonians.

Some thirty years ago, I was visiting a factory in one of the Baltic States. At the end of a tour of the plant by an engineer, I asked where they had acquired such excellent English. The reply was a slight smile and one word, "Siberia".

Perhaps it's memories of Stalin that explain the attractions of NATO. But, as we look at the current state of our own country, with the decline in the worship of God, the regular peddling of money, sex and celebrity, and the increasing lack of honesty and integrity in society, Jeremiah's message comes down the centuries. There will be consequences unless there is a change of heart and a return to a right relationship with God. Political alliances will not be enough.

Appropriately, my daily readings are now in the book of Revelation and his vision of the end times. The main message is that, while God is still on the throne and he will remember his own, things will get worse until finally Jesus returns to bring this age to an end. But that's what we're all praying for, aren't we? Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Phillip

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