

Jeremiah 7: 1 – 16; Romans 9: 14 – 26

'Deception'

Prayer

Introduction ...

Two rather hefty Bible passages for us tonight! **Jeremiah 7 and Romans 9.** I'm going to concentrate on the first ... part of a sermon delivered by the prophet Jeremiah in the Temple.

If we were to give his sermon a title – it could be along the lines of:

Don't be deceived or

Don't make false assumptions or

Don't deceive yourselves.

We read of Jeremiah proclaiming in **verse 14: Do trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.'**

And in **verse 8: there you are trusting in deceptive words to no avail ...**

What was going on?

In their perception – attending the Temple brought them security and safety ... yet in the rest of their lives – they were acting unjustly, oppressing the needy, stealing, committing adultery – and even murder ... and worshipping other gods.

Yet they assumed ... and were probably being told by leaders ... that was ok so long as they also came to the Temple.

"Not so" proclaims Jeremiah.

In effect **"Who are you kidding?"** and **"you can't fool God – stop fooling yourselves.'**

For us ...

How might we need to hear or apply these words today?

I think we're probably all aware that our lives – each day and all day – are called to be based on, modelled on the life of Jesus ... so not likely to assume that coming to church on its own is sufficient.

But how else might we be deceiving ourselves, how else might we be being deceived or falling into false assumptions ...

Let me try a few out:

That in some way, the UK is more important than other nations?

That our security comes from working hard for a good income?

That because we believe in God, bad things won't happen to us?

It can be easy to fall for the deceptions or false assumptions ... or to find that they've crept up on us ...

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And then there's also the whole area of potential deception by politicians, business, community or even church leaders.

How do we avoid that?

I think for both the self-deceptions and the deceptions by others – 2 sets of saying by Jesus can guide us.

The first: **Matthew 10: 16: Be as wise as serpents** as well as **gentle as a dove'** ...

Be wise as serpents: don't automatically believe what others say or assume ... **be wise.**

This reminds me of an Indian proverb ...

If someone deceived me once – shame on them

If the same person deceived me twice – then shame on me.

And the same saying of Jesus comes from **John 16: 13: The Spirit will lead you into all truth ...**

We don't – thankfully – have to rely solely on our own wisdom. We need to weigh things prayerfully, asking for the Spirit's insights about the things we are told, the things we assume, the ways in which we live ... each day and every day.

Thank God ... for God does not simply criticise – he helps to inform and reform.

Amen.