

Jeremiah 18 - The Potter & The Clay; God's Warning Rejected; Jeremiah Persecuted

II. Thirteen prophecies of judgment upon Judah (Jer 2:1—25:38)

(1) Nine general prophecies of judgment that include offers of repentance (Jer 2:1—19:15)

(I) Ninth message: potter's wheel and broken jar (Jer 18:1—19:15)

(a) Potter's Wheel (18:1-23)

(i) The potter's power over the clay (18:1-4)

(ii) God's power over the nations with the hope that they will repent (18:5-12)

(iii) Judah's covenant rebellion naturally leads to covenant curses (18:13-17)

(iv) Jeremiah 's imprecation against those plotting to take his life (18:18-23)

Jeremiah 18

(I) Ninth message: potter's wheel and broken jar (Jer 18:1—19:15)

(a) Potter's Wheel (18:1-23)

(i) The potter's power over the clay (18:1-4)

1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

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1 The message that came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

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2 "Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will announce My words to you."

2 "Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will announce My words to you."

2 "Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I'll allow you to hear my words."

2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.

- Jeremiah is going to get a special object lesson. He is going to go down to the valley, which is probably the valley of Hinnom. There was both clay and water down there and the potters were typically at the base of that.

3 So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something on the wheel.
3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something on the wheel.

3 So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was doing work at the potter's wheel.

3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.

4 But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make.

4 But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make.

4 But the vessel he was working on with the clay was ruined in the potter's hand. So he remade it into another vessel that seemed appropriate to him.

4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make *it*.

- This was a common artisan's craft; 1 Chr 4:22-23 says that potters would work for kings. Pottery was a big deal.

— So Jeremiah is watching this very common thing but with a different insight. God is saying, "I want to talk to you about this."

— So he goes down to watch the potter, and something goes wrong and the clay doesn't come out the way the potter wants, so the potter puts it all back together and builds something else.

(ii) God's power over the nations with the hope that they will repent
(18:5-12)

5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

5 Then the word of the LORD came to me saying,

5 Then this message from the LORD came to me:

5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

6 "Am I not able, house of Israel, to deal with you as this potter *does*?" declares the LORD. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, house of Israel.

6 "Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter *does*?" declares the LORD. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.

6 "Israel, can't I deal with you like this potter?" declares the LORD. "Look, Israel, like clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand.

6 O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay *is* in the potter's hand, so *are* ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

7 At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot *it*, to tear *it* down, or to destroy *it*;

7 At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy *it*;

7 At one moment I may speak about a nation or a kingdom to uproot it, pull it down, or destroy it.

7 *At what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy *it*;

8 if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I planned to bring on it.

8 if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it.

8 But if that nation about which I spoke turns from its evil way, I'll change my mind about the disaster that I had planned for it.

8 If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

9 Or at *another* moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant *it*;

9 Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant *it*;

9 At another moment I may speak about a nation or kingdom to build it or plant it.

9 And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*;

10 if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will relent of the good with which I said that I would bless it.

10 if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it.

10 But if that nation does evil in my eyes by not obeying me, I'll change my mind about the good that I said I would bring on it.

10 If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

11 So now, speak to the men of Judah and against the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, 'This is what the LORD says: "Behold, I am forming a disaster against you and devising a

plan against you. Now turn back, each of you from his evil way, and correct your ways and your deeds!"

11 So now then, speak to the men of Judah and against the inhabitants of Jerusalem saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "Behold, I am fashioning calamity against you and devising a plan against you. Oh turn back, each of you from his evil way, and reform your ways and your deeds."

11 "Now say to the people of Judah and to the residents of Jerusalem, 'This is what the LORD says: "Look, I'm designing a disaster just for you, and I'm making plans against you. Each one of you must repent from his evil way. Make your ways and deeds right."

11 Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.

12 But they will say, 'It's hopeless! For we are going to follow our own plans, and each of us will persist in the stubbornness of his evil heart.'

12 But they will say, 'It's hopeless! For we are going to follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.'

12 But they'll say, 'It's useless! We will follow our plans and each of us will pursue his own evil desires.'

12 And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.

- One thing in v11-12: we have the word *yoser* = preparing, devising; in the verb form it means preparing and in the noun form it means potter. It is a play on words.

(iii) Judah's covenant rebellion naturally leads to covenant curses (18:13-17)

13 "Therefore this is what the LORD says: 'Just ask among the nations, Who ever heard *anything* like this? The virgin of Israel Has done a most appalling thing.

13 "Therefore thus says the LORD, 'Ask now among the nations, Who ever heard the like of this? The virgin of Israel Has done a most appalling thing.

13 "Therefore, this is what the LORD says: 'Ask the nations. Who has ever heard of anything like this? You have done a most horrible thing, virgin Israel.

13 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Ask ye now among the heathen, who hath heard such things: the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing.

The idea of the potter occurs so often in the Scripture (Job 10:9; 33:6; Is 29:16; 45:9; 60:40). There is also another way that this is used (Ps 2:8-9). Just because they are made by the potter doesn't mean they are made to honor, they are made to dishonor, whatever

pleases the Lord. This is used as an identity phrase in Rev 2:27 in the seven letters to the seven churches. Also used by Paul in Rom 9:20-21.

Couple of observations: the clay is in His hand and under His control. The defects are not in the potter but in the clay. The potter is very persevered, he doesn't give up. The principle lesson here is the Sovereignty of God, His power over the clay is unlimited. The purpose of molding the clay is to change it into something, ie. design.

14 'Does the snow of Lebanon leave the rock of the open country alone? Or is the cold flowing water *from* a foreign *land* ever dried up?

14 'Does the snow of Lebanon forsake the rock of the open country? Or is the cold flowing water *from* a foreign *land* ever snatched away?

14 Does the snow of Lebanon ever vanish from its rocky slopes? Or does the cold water from a foreign land ever cease to flow?

14 Will a *man* leave the snow of Lebanon *which cometh* from the rock of the field? *or* shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken?

- The word *rock* here is the word *sirion*, a Phoenician name for Mount Hermon, which is about 9100 feet high and typically has snow on it most of the year (Cf. Deut 3:9; Ps 29:6).

15 'For My people have forgotten Me, They burn incense to worthless *gods*. And they have stumbled in their ways, In the ancient roads, To walk on paths, Not on a highway,

15 'For My people have forgotten Me, They burn incense to worthless gods And they have stumbled from their ways, From the ancient paths, To walk in bypaths, Not on a highway,

15 Yet my people have forgotten me, and they burn incense to worthless idols that make them stumble in their journey on the ancient paths. They walk on trails, on a way that is not built up.

15 Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways *from* the ancient paths, to walk in paths, *in* a way not cast up;

16 To make their land a desolation, *An object of* perpetual hissing; Everyone who passes by it will be astonished And shake his head.

16 To make their land a desolation, *An object of* perpetual hissing; Everyone who passes by it will be astonished And shake his head.

16 They make their land into a desolate place, an object of lasting scorn. All who pass by will be appalled and will shake their heads.

16 To make their land desolate, *and* a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head.

17 'Like an east wind I will scatter them Before the enemy; I will show them My back and not *My* face In the day of their disaster.'"

17 'Like an east wind I will scatter them Before the enemy; I will show them My back and not *My* face In the day of their calamity.'"

17 'Like the east wind, I'll scatter them before the enemy. I'll show them my back and not my face, on the day of their downfall.'"

17 I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will shew them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.

(iv) Jeremiah 's imprecation against those plotting to take his life (18:18-23)

18 Then they said, "Come and let's devise plans against Jeremiah. Certainly the Law is not going to be lost by the priest, nor advice by the wise, nor *the divine* word by the prophet! Come, and let's strike at him with *our* tongue, and let's pay no attention to any of his words."

18 Then they said, "Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah. Surely the law is not going to be lost to the priest, nor counsel to the sage, nor the *divine* word to the prophet! Come on and let us strike at him with *our* tongue, and let us give no heed to any of his words."

18 Then they said, "Come, let's make up a plot against Jeremiah. After all, the priest's instruction, the wise man's counsel, and the prophet's message won't be destroyed. So let's verbally attack him. Pay no attention to anything he says!"

18 Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

19 Give *Your* attention to me, LORD, And listen to what my opponents are saying!

19 Do give heed to me, O LORD, And listen to what my opponents are saying!

19 LORD, pay attention to me. Listen to the voice of my accusers!

19 Give heed to me, O LORD, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me.

20 Should good be repaid with evil? For they have dug a pit for me. Remember how I stood before You To speak good in their behalf, So as to turn Your wrath away from them.

20 Should good be repaid with evil? For they have dug a pit for me. Remember how I stood before You To speak good on their behalf, So as to turn away Your wrath from them.

20 Should good be repaid with evil? Yet they have dug a pit to take my life. Remember! I stood before you and spoke good on their behalf in order to turn your wrath away from them.

20 Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, *and* to turn away thy wrath from them.

21 Therefore, give their children over to famine And turn them over to the power of the sword; And let their wives become childless and widowed. Let their men also be slaughtered to death, Their young men struck and killed by the sword in battle.

21 Therefore, give their children over to famine And deliver them up to the power of the sword; And let their wives become childless and widowed. Let their men also be smitten to death, Their young men struck down by the sword in battle.

21 Therefore, make their children undergo famine, and deliver them over to death in time of war. May their women be childless widows! May their men be slaughtered! May their young men be slain by the sword in battle!

21 Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their *blood* by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and *be* widows; and let their men be put to death; *let* their young men *be* slain by the sword in battle.

22 May a cry be heard from their houses When You suddenly bring raiders upon them; For they have dug a pit to capture me And hidden snares for my feet.

22 May an outcry be heard from their houses, When You suddenly bring raiders upon them; For they have dug a pit to capture me And hidden snares for my feet.

22 Let a cry be heard from their houses because you have brought a raiding party against them suddenly. For they have dug a pit to capture me and have set traps for my feet.

22 Let a cry be heard from their houses, when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them: for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet.

23 But You, LORD, know All their deadly schemes against me; Do not forgive their wrongdoing Or wipe out their sin from Your sight. But may they be overthrown before You; Deal with them in the time of Your anger!

23 Yet You, O LORD, know All their deadly designs against me; Do not forgive their iniquity Or blot out their sin from Your sight. But may they be overthrown before You; Deal with them in the time of Your anger!

23 But you, LORD, know all their plots to kill me. Don't forgive their iniquity, and don't erase their sin from your sight. Let them stumble before you. When it's time for you to be angry, act against them!

23 Yet, LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay *me*: forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee; deal *thus* with them in the time of thine anger.