

Message #23

Jeremiah 19:1-15

Jeremiah is a book that describes what God will do to His own people if they persist in pursuing sin. Jeremiah is a book that carefully presents the sad reality that it is possible for the people of God to live their lives totally out of fellowship with God. They can actually get involved in evil things and when that happens, if His people persist in their sin, God will chastise His people and His chastisement will not be pretty or pleasant.

God gives His people plenty of grace time to repent. He gives them plenty of rope before they hang themselves. **But if they do not get right with Him, He will make things go wrong for them.**

When God's people persist in abominable things that are degrading, God will cause all kinds of "catastrophic afflictions" to hammer His own people. These afflictions will come at them from all different angles. God's people need to know this and they need to be told this, they need to be warned and shown this. This is serious business. God can and will crush His own people in devastating chastisement.

In chapter 18 of Jeremiah, God used an illustration that He wanted presented to the people. It was an illustration of the Potter and the Clay. God is the Sovereign Potter and His people are the clay. God stands ready to remake and remold His people into something beautiful and honorable if they turn away from evil. **In chapter 18 the illustration of the potential to turn from evil and become a vessel of honor was there. But in chapter 19, the potential for remolding and remaking is gone.**

That is what God wanted Jeremiah to illustrate to His own people. As Potter, He was on the verge of smashing them and destroying them.

God wanted Jeremiah to present another side to God other than grace, forgiveness and toleration. He was sent by God to the people of God to warn them that time was up. No longer was He going to mold them into something beautiful. He was about to crush them and break them down.

In this chapter He continues with the Potter and pottery illustration to make a point:

WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE FORSAKE GOD'S WORD AND TRUE WORSHIP OF GOD AND THEY PERSIST IN DOING THAT WHICH GOD DETESTS, GOD WILL CRUSH THEM AND SMASH THEM AND JEREMIAH WAS TO ILLUSTRATE THAT BY BREAKING AND SMASHING A POTTER'S JAR.

When God's people continually get involved in corrupt and evil things, God will eventually reach a point when He says I have seen enough and I have had enough and I am going to bring various crushing calamities against My own people. Since Jeremiah is a prophet to the nations, this message is for all people in all nations.

We may notice from **verse 1** that “thus says the LORD.” This is all coming from God. Everything you are about to read and see is inspired by God.

Now the illustration that God wants Jeremiah to give concerns a potter. This is the second time God has specifically used this illustration. In Jeremiah 18:1-4, the thing the potter was making was spoiled and didn’t turn out to be what it was supposed to be. The application is obvious. This illustration is slightly different and it is comprised of two parts:

ILLUSTRATION PART #1 – Jeremiah is to buy a potter’s jar. **19:1-9**

According to **verses 1-2**, Jeremiah was to go and buy “a potter’s earthenware jar.” Now this jar (baqbuq - pronounced back-buke) in Hebrew was like a decanter with a wide body and narrow neck and a handle for pouring. It could range anywhere from 4-10 inches high. The actual Hebrew name of this came from the gurgling sound the liquid made when it passed through the opening (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 135). So a jar was something from which you could pour out liquid.

According to **verse 2**, after he purchased this jar, he was to go get some of the elders and senior priests and take them out to the valley of Ben-hinnom (Jer. 7:31) which is by the entrance of the potsherd gate. These were leaders who were to listen to God’s word and watch what Jeremiah would do. The Elders and senior priests would be there and one would think they would be very concerned about the word of God.

Now the “valley of Ben-hinnom” (literally “son of Hinnom”) was a garbage dump area located outside the city. This place is mentioned by Jeremiah in 7:31, 32; 32:35. This was the place where rubbish was left to burn. Josiah had judged this place because it had been a place of child sacrifice (II Kings 23:10). This place became known as “Gehenna” (valley of Hinnom) which was a place of smoldering fire of burning garbage. In the N.T., this place is referred to as “hell.”

The “potsherd gate” was one of many gates in various parts of cities that had walls. Every gate had some name that signified something. The word “potsherd” is a word related to pottery and it may be that the reason why this gate was given this name is because this is where broken pieces of pottery were discarded.

Jeremiah and the leaders are standing in this garbage dump where broken pottery is thrown and it is there that God speaks to these leaders through Jeremiah. I have no doubt that these upstanding religious leaders are wondering what are we doing here.

In **verse 3**, God identifies Himself as the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel. Notice what He wants these leaders and people to “Hear the word” of God. Carefully notice that this address is given to the “kings of Judah” and “inhabitants of Jerusalem.” You would think you would not even need to say that to these people living here. But that was not the case.

So the entire present and future political world and the religious people of the world need to very carefully listen to God's word. These Elders and senior priests needed to communicate this.

Political leaders are very accountable to God for the way they allow their constituency to develop in according to God's word. **If a nation defects from God and His word, leadership is responsible and God will hold them accountable and they had better take the word of God seriously.**

There are six messages God presents to His people.

Message #1 - God will bring calamity judgment to this place against His own people. **19:3**

God does not specifically state what calamity, but just by using this Hebrew word "calamity" it would be serious. The word is "ra" which refers to things that are evil, bad, unhappy, unfortunate and sad (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 772).

He would bring a variety of things on Jerusalem and the people in the land and when He would do it, it would leave the world talking about it. Their ears would be tingling.

Message #2 - God will bring judgment because His people have forsaken Him. **19:4a**

The Hebrew word "forsaken" (azab) actually refers to deserting and leaving and ceasing from a relationship with God (*Ibid.*, p. 617). Not only had the people forsaken God, but they had forsaken God in Jerusalem. They had turned a sacred place into an alien place. They had turned their backs on God and His word. This nation that had seen God do so much had turned away from fellowshiping with the God who had blessed them.

The United States was once a place that was known for its fear and reverence of God. This nation was founded on the word of God and people all over the world knew it. Not now. This nation has become an alien place filled with false religions and aliens from foreign nations who have corrupted this land.

Message #3 - God will bring judgment because His people have worshipped other gods. **19:4b**

This is what happens when aliens dominate. This is what happens when false religions are permitted to exist. This is what happens to the thinking of people when aliens and alien religions infiltrate. False ideas of God totally and completely dominate.

Message #4 - God will bring judgment because they have filled up killing innocent blood. **19:4c**

These were the people of God and they filled the area with abominable worship that even sacrificed and burned their own children (Jer. 7:31; 32:35).

We live in a country that kills over 800,000 babies per year by abortion. We live in a state that kills just under 30,000 babies per year by abortion. We call ourselves a Christian nation and yet we allow innocent babies to be executed and sacrificed because many worship convenience.

Message #5 - God will bring this judgment because they have made sacrifices and offerings to and for false gods. **19:5a**

These were God's own people who turned high places into places for Baal worship. They actually went to the expense to turn a sacred place into a sordid place. This is happening now in many churches.

Message #6 - God will bring this judgment because they do things He never commanded. **19:5b**

This is very important to observe. God carefully observes who is serious about governing their lives based on what He has commanded and those who are not serious. **God takes notice of religious people who follow man-invented things as opposed to His revealed word.**

Most religious people will spend their entire lives following manmade rules and traditions that were never commanded by God.

Because of this, God says in **verse 6**, this former sacred place will be given a new name and will be known as a place of slaughter. The word "topheth" comes from a root word that means "fire-place." God says this place will be known as a place I burned down. God literally did cause the Babylonians to do this to Jerusalem.

According to **verse 7-9**, God would specifically and personally cause five results:

(Specific Result #1) - God would make void the counsel of His people. **19:7a**

The word "void" is intriguing in Hebrew. As we mentioned, the word jar is baq buq and this word void is baq qot, which is very close in spelling. This word has to do with the sound when one pours out the liquid from the jar.

So what God is promising here is that the supposed "counsel" of the religious leaders in all areas of life will be poured out completely and will be seen to be empty and worth nothing.

(Specific Result #2) - God would hand over His people to their enemies. **19:7b**

God takes full responsibility for sovereignly directing enemies of His own people to dominate and destroy them.

(Specific Result #3) - God would cause dead bodies to be eaten by wild animals. **19:7c**

God will permit degrading and dishonorable things to happen to His own people because they would not listen to His word. During the Tribulation, this is exactly what God will do.

(Specific Result #4) - God will destroy the city. **19:8**

At the time God said this, Jerusalem was standing in all of its glory and God says I will bring her down.

(Specific Result #5) - God will cause people to eat dead bodies. **19:9**

Now some read this and say this cannot be literal. To those who think this we need to realize that this did literally happen. God let such starvation to come to His own people that they literally did become cannibals (II Kings 6:26-29).

ILLUSTRATION PART #2 – Jeremiah is to break the potter's jar. **19:10-15**

In **verse 10**, God tells Jeremiah that after Jeremiah told them this, he was to take the jar that he purchased from the potter and break the jar in front of them. God wanted him to break the jar on the ground and shatter it to pieces in front of these leaders. This smashed clay pot would be worthless. It could not be fixed or reused for anything.

Then God said in **verse 11** to tell these leaders and the people, that they were beyond prayer, they were beyond repentance and repair. These people were so hard-hearted that God says all hope of My blessings is gone. Jeremiah was to break the jar as an illustration of what God would do to His own people.

God says this is what I am going to do to My own people. God says I am going to smash and crush my own people and they will not be able to repair the relationship. In **verse 12**, God says this is how I will treat you and this place. I will bring it to nothing and make it a garbage dump. God says I will make this entire city of Jerusalem like "topheth," a fire place.

In **verse 13**, God says my judgment will affect all people no matter where they live. They may be a king or a priest or just average people, but God says I will destroy them and their houses where they were given to idolatry.

According to **verses 14-15**, after Jeremiah had smashed the pot and communicated this to the leaders and people, he went to God's Temple and proclaimed the same message there.

If God's people stiffen their necks against the word of God, God will bring destruction and disaster on them and there will not be one thing they can do to stop it.

G. Campbell Morgan said, "If a man or nation in spite of all the patient grace of God, persist in courses of evil and rebellion, then He will break in pieces. To find in the redeeming purpose of Jehovah a tolerance of sin, is of all evils the most terrible."