

The title of this evening's message is, "*Judas: A Discarded Vessel – Part I.*"

First, this message sets up next Sunday's sermon about Judas hanging himself. If you pay attention – which is what you're going to have to do to really appreciate what we're looking at – you're going to develop a greater appreciation for God's Word. When you see how three books – Zechariah, Matthew, and Jeremiah – written centuries apart can be so seamlessly woven together, you'll appreciate the beauty.

Second, if you search for Bible inconsistencies or contradictions, this is going to be listed as one of the most popular. To be clear I don't think there are any inconsistencies or contradictions in Scripture, but for people looking for them, this is a favorite target, and you'll see why, and hopefully I can show you that it's actually one of the most wonderfully connected sections of Scripture.

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This is going to build off last Sunday's sermon, so let me briefly review...

Jeremiah has been preaching to the Jews for 20 years. Look at **Jer 17:23** to see how they respond...

**Jer 17:23 [The Jews] did not obey nor incline their ear, but MADE THEIR NECK STIFF, that they might not hear nor receive instruction.**

They were stiff, so God sent Jeremiah to watch a potter so he can report to the people what happens to clay that hardens itself in a potter's hands.

Look at **Jer 18:1**...

**18:1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying: 2 "Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear My words." 3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something at the [a]wheel. 4 And the vessel that he [b]made of clay was [c]marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make.**

If clay is soft, pliable, and submissive in the potter's hands, then he can **[make] it into a vessel that seemed good to him.**

**Jer 18:5 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: 6 "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the Lord. "Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!**

So God says He can do the same thing w/ the Jews that the Potter did w/ the clay.

But look at **verse 12** to see how the Jews respond...

**Jer 18:12 "But they say, 'That is in vain! We will follow our own plans, and will every one act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.'**

Instead of being soft and pliable in the Potter's hands the Jews chose to remain stiff, hard, and stubborn,

When clay responds this way it's good for nothing but being discarded, b/c it can't be made into a vessel that seems good to the Potter.

But they wouldn't repent, so in the next chapter God told the prophet to get a potter's flask and break it before the leaders of the nation. This would serve as an object lesson: God was going to use the Babylonians to break the Jews the way Jeremiah broke this vessel.

Look at **Jer 19:1**...

**Jer 19:1 Thus says the LORD: “Go and get a potter’s earthen flask, and *take* some of the elders of the people and some of the elders of the priests. 2 And go out to the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, which *is* by the entry of the Potsherd Gate (or pottery gate); and proclaim there the words that I will tell you,**

We looked at a few verses in this chapter last week – which is good, b/c you're familiar w/ them – but this morning we need to look at them w/ a different lens...

Now instead of seeing Judah you need to see Judas, b/c much of this parallels events at the end of his life.

This looks forward to the potter's field the religious leaders buy when Judas returns the money.

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Look at **verse 3**...

**Jer 19:3 and say, ‘Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, I will bring such a catastrophe on this place, that whoever hears of it, his ears will tingle. 4 “Because they have forsaken Me and made this an alien place, because they have burned incense in it to other gods whom neither they, their fathers, nor the kings of Judah have known, and have filled this place with the blood of the innocents.**

One of the main reasons the Jews needed to be judged is they committed the same sin our nation commits: they murdered their babies. This took place in **the Valley of Hinnom**.

Two quick notes about this verse...

First, as far as whether babies go to heaven, this is one of the premier verses in Scripture supporting their salvation: the sacrificed children are called **the innocents**. Innocent people aren't judged or punished.

Second, these innocent children were being sacrificed, but there's really only been one truly innocent Person who was sacrificed – or one Person who could be said to have **innocent blood**, and that's Jesus – and the reason I mention this is it looks forward to Judas's statement when he betrayed Jesus.

If you write in your bible, circle the words **blood of the innocents** and write “*Matt 27:4*,” which is when Judas said, “**I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.**”

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Look at verse 5...

**Jer 19:5 (they have also built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire *for* burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or speak, nor did it come into My mind), 6 therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “that this place shall no more be called Tophet or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter.**

Jeremiah says this field will become a place where all the Jews will be thrown when they're slaughtered by the Babylonians. So it will stop being a large graveyard for babies. It will start being a large cemetery for all the Jews, when the Babylonians slaughter them, which is why it will start being called the Valley of Slaughter.

We'll see this field become a cemetery for Judas too.

If you write in your Bible, go ahead and circle Valley of Slaughter and write, “*Matt 27:7*.”

It parallels **Matt 27:7** where the religious leaders turned the potters field into a cemetery: **7 And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to BURY STRANGERS IN. 8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.**

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Next look at verse 7...

**Jer 19:7 And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hands of those who seek their lives; their corpses I will give as meat for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. 8 I will make this city desolate and a hissing; everyone who passes by it will be astonished and hiss because of all its plagues. 9 And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and everyone shall eat the flesh of his friend in the siege and in the desperation with which their enemies and those who seek their lives shall drive them to despair.”**

**10 “Then you shall break the flask in the sight of the men who go with you, 11 and say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Even so I will break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot be made whole again; and they shall bury *them* in Tophet till *there is no place to bury.*”**

We read these verses last week and saw how they applied to Judah, but the true and greater reality of these verses is found in Judas. He's the discarded, broken vessel.

Jeremiah broke this vessel, but God was going to break Judas.

We've talked many times before that the OT is about Jesus, and these verses find their fulfillment in Judas, b/c of his relationship to Jesus. These verses are a prophecy about Judas and he fulfilled them...perfectly.

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Now let's jump forward to look at the next few verses in **Zech 11**...

The easiest way to find this book is go to the Gospels and turn to the second-to-last OT book, right before Malachi.

## **ZECHARIAH**

This chapter gives us a beautiful, and less common view of our Savior.

In Jeremiah we saw two object lessons:

- The Potter and the Clay in **Jer 18**
- The Sign of the Broken Vessel in **Jer 19**

In this chapter, the imagery – or object lesson – is that of a shepherd.

The Hebrew word for shepherd occurs 9 times in the passage (vv. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 15 and 16). Usually it's translated as shepherd, but a few times it's translated as fed or feed, but it's still the same word for shepherd. The point is the chapter is about shepherds.

Zechariah acts out a drama or role-play where he acts as two different shepherds:

1. One represents the True Shepherd, Christ
2. The other representing the Foolish Shepherd, or the antichrist.

The people reject the True Shepherd and embrace the Foolish Shepherd.

Leaders or rulers were often called shepherds b/c they led the people, protected them, and provided for them, and there are three separate shepherds in the chapter and they provide an outline for the chapter:

- **Verses 1-3** discuss the **wailing shepherds**, who are the rulers of the nation who led the people astray and are now paying for their sins. These verses describe the future of Israel at the hands of the Romans in 70AD for rejecting their Messiah, the **True Shepherd**, who is discussed in the next verses...
- **Verses 4-14** describe the rejection of the True Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and these verses can be broken up a little more this way:
  - **Verses 4-6** he feeds a flock to be slaughtered, w/ the flock picturing the Jews and Zechariah picturing Jesus feeding the Jews during His earthly ministry before they were slaughtered by the Romans.
  - **Verses 7-14** he pretends to be the Good Shepherd (Jesus) the Jews rejected.

- Verses 15-17 pictures the Worthless/Foolish Shepherd, the Antichrist, the Jews receive for rejecting the Good Shepherd.

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We don't have time to look at all these verses, so I want to draw your attention to the verses related to Judas.

Here's the context for the verses we're looking at...

Shepherds deserve. Zechariah is still acting like Jesus. He continues the drama by asking the people for His wages, or asking them what they think he's worth. Think of it like the Shepherd being done and asking for his last paycheck, or asking them to evaluate his work as a Shepherd:

*“How do you think I've done as your Shepherd?”*

**Zech 11:12 Then I said to them, “If it is agreeable to you, give *me* my wages; and if not, refrain.” So they weighed out for my wages thirty *pieces* of silver.**

The shepherd asks very graciously. He basically says, “Go ahead and pay me if that seems good to you, but if not, don't worry about it. Just give me whatever you think I'm worth.”

They pay him **30 pieces of silver**, and it's important to understand this is an insult. This is like giving a waiter a few pennies. If you look at **verse 13** it's sarcastically called a **princely price**. This prophesies of the Jews seeing Jesus as a worthless Shepherd.

According to **Exo 21:32** this was the amount paid for a slave that had been gored by an ox. You can imagine how useful a slave gored by an ox would be...he'd be worthless, which is how they viewed Jesus as a shepherd.

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We recognize this as a prophecy of Jesus. This is the price Jesus was betrayed – or sold – for by Judas.

If you write in your Bible circle the words **thirty pieces of silver** and write, “Matt 26:15.”

**Matt 26:14 Judas Iscariot [said] to the chief priests 15 “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver.**

The Lord is so disgusted w/ this amount, look what He says to do w/ it...

**Zech 11:13 And the LORD said to me, “Throw it to the potter”—that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty *pieces* of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter.**

Why would a potter be in the temple?

Since the priests used many kinds of vessels, the services of a potter would be necessary.

What did this actually look like?

Zechariah went to the temple (**the house of the LORD**) and threw the money to the potter who was working there, probably while he was making vessels for the priests.

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I need you to notice an important part of this...

Notice the verse twice mentions thirty pieces of silver being thrown in the temple.

That sounds familiar, doesn't it?

If you write in your bible, circle the words **threw them into the house of the Lord** and write, "*Matt 27:3.*"

**Matt 27:3 Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus[ was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders.**

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**MATTHEW**

Now go ahead and turn to **Matt 26**.

Again, we're just going to look at some select verses. Here's the context...

In **verses 6-13**, Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, anoints Jesus w/ perfume. This beautiful and tender situation is sandwiched between two terribly evil events:

- The plot to kill Jesus in verses 1 through 3
- Judas' betrayal in verses 14 to 16

Look at **verse 6**...

**Matt 26:6 And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, 7 a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured *it* on His head as He sat *at the table*. 8 But when His disciples saw *it*, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? 9 For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to *the poor*."**

The parallel accounts in **Mark 14:5** and **John 12:5** tells us this oil was worth 300 denarii. Considering one denarius was a common day's wage, this was a HUGE amount of money.

It says the **disciples** were indignant, but the parallel account in John's Gospel tells us it was Judas who objected to the perfume being used to anoint Jesus...

**John 12:4 But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, 5 "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"**

Of course Judas didn't really care about the money being given to the poor; more than likely he wanted it for himself. JM says the other disciples were undiscerning and supported his objection.

The reason I wanted to look at these verses is they give some context to the amount of money...

- According to **Zech 11:12** the Jews thought Jesus was worth 30 pieces of silver
- Mary – by herself – provided 10 times more than what the whole nation said Jesus was worth. She thought He was 10 times more valuable than the entire nation put together.

**Matt 26:10 But when Jesus was aware of it, He said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. 11 For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. 12 For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial.13 Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.”**

Jesus defended Mary's actions.

Now in the following three verses Judas agrees to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver...

**Matt 26:14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15 and said, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?” And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. 16 So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.**

Hopefully you see the contrast:

- Mary was willing to give up 300 denarii out of her love for Jesus.
- Judas was willing to give up Jesus for a mere 30 pieces of silver out of his hatred of Him.

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Now look at **Matt 27:1**...

Let's look at the verses to see what happened...

**Matt 27:1 When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against JESUS to put Him to death. 2 And when they (the religious leaders) had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor.**

The Jews hated the Romans so you could look at this and say, “*Why would the Jews work w/ Rome?*” There are two reasons:

1. First, the Jews did not have the authority to sentence JESUS to death...but Rome did:
  - a. As much as the religious leaders hated Rome, they hated JESUS even more.
  - b. They were willing to seek Rome's help if it meant being able to crucify Jesus.
2. Second, if the religious leaders could get the Romans to kill JESUS, then they wouldn't look responsible. They wanted JESUS' death to look like something Rome did so they couldn't be blamed.

Now watch what happens w/ Judas as he sees all this take place. Look at **verse 3**...

**Matt 27:3 Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that [JESUS] had been condemned (this means condemned to die), was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.”**

**And they said, “What *is that* to us? You see *to it!*”**

**Matt 27:5 Then HE THREW DOWN THE PIECES OF SILVER IN THE TEMPLE and departed, and went and hanged himself.**

Notice it doesn't say Judas handed the money back to the priests or set it down for them, it says he **threw it in the temple.**

This partially fulfills **Zech 11:13** which twice mentioned the money being thrown in the temple...

**And the LORD said to me, “THROW IT TO THE POTTER”—that princely price they set on me. So I TOOK THE THIRTY *PIECES* OF SILVER AND THREW THEM INTO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOR THE POTTER.**

Now we get to see how the prophecy regarding the potter is fulfilled...

**Matt 27:6 But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood.”**

Crazy they were actually concerned about something like that while they're in the middle of plotting Jesus' death...

**Matt 27:7 And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. 8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.**

So this is how the thirty pieces of silver ended up being used: to purchase this field. It's important to notice they bought this field and turned it into a cemetery; they made it a place for Jewish **strangers to be buried in**. Please keep this in mind.

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One encouraging reality associated w/ this story...

As we know from Jeremiah 18, we're the clay vessels, and we're broken, marred, and disfigured.

Since the money that was obtained by betraying Jesus was used to purchase the potter's field that contained all these broke, worthless vessels, it's like Jesus really did purchase that field where broken, rejected, useless vessels like us are scattered; it pictures the way Jesus purchases or redeems broken, rejected, useless vessels – or pots – like us.

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Here's one interesting twist from this account...

When Mary anointed Jesus, in **John 12:5** Judas said, “**Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?**”



Judas said the money should go to the poor, and potters were one of the poorest of the laboring classes, so in an ironic way, Judas' words were fulfilled in that the money went to the poor like he supposedly wanted, but not the way he expected:

- It wasn't the money from Mary's perfume that went to the poor. That money went to Christ.
- It was the money Judas received from betraying Christ: that money went to the poor.

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Look at **verse 9**...

**Matt 27:9** Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, 10 and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me." (Jer 32:6-9).

Notice it mentions Jeremiah instead of Zechariah, and it relates to three locations in the Book of Jeremiah making this prophecy:

- Jer 18 w/ the Potter and Clay
- Jer 19 w/ the broken vessel
- Jer 32 when Jeremiah purchased a field

Warren Wiersbe said, "*The prophet Jeremiah definitely was involved in the purchase of a field (Jer 32:6ff), and also with a potter's house (Jer 18:1ff), and a burial ground (Jer 19:1-12). Matthew may have been referring to these general facts as background for the specific prophecy written by Zechariah.*"

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Now turn to our last place, **Acts 1** to see the vessel discarded in the field...

When potters made pots but they didn't turn out well, they discarded them in the field where they'd break open. I know it's graphic, but that's what happened w/ Judas when he hanged himself in the potters field...

**Acts 1:18** (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out.

Two things about this verse:

1. First, Judas didn't actually purchase the field himself, but it's worded this way b/c the field was purchased w/ the money Judas returned to the religious leaders and they used it to purchase the field...so it's like he purchased it.
2. Second, it's worded this way – graphically and pretty grossly – b/c Judas is the discarded vessel thrown into the field and busting open.

When Judas hanged himself, either the branch or the rope broke and his body fell to the ground. The verse creates the image of a vessel being discarded and then breaking open in the field.

Jeremiah breaks this vessel in the potter's field and it's very similar to what happened to Judas when he broke open in the field.

So when **Matthew 27:9** mentioned Jeremiah, I believe it was borrowing the following imagery from **Jer 19**:

1. A potter's field and a cemetery.
2. Innocent blood being shed.
3. A vessel being broken open in the field.

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God did not discard Judas. He discarded himself.

Since the field was purchased with Jesus' blood money it reveals Christ's death has the power to redeem all broken, worthless, discarded vessels. Judas could have been one of them if he had repented.