

Jer. 18:1 ¶ The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,
Jer. 18:2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.

Jer. 18:3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.

Jer. 18:4 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 chapter begins with YHWH instructing Jeremiah to go down to the potter's house to receive another message from Him. Jeremiah does as he is told, and he sees the potter working at his wheel. At one point the potter determines that the clay on the wheel has been spoiled, and he starts over with the clay to work toward producing the desired vessel.

Jer. 18:5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Jer. 18:6 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.

Jer. 18:7 *At what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy *it*;

Jer. 18:8 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.

Jer. 18:9 And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*;

Jer. 18:10 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.

The LORD declares that what Jeremiah just witnessed was an object lesson. Israel is like the clay in the hands of the potter. If He decides to declare judgment upon a nation and that nation repents of their evil ways, He would show pity to that nation. On the other hand, if He establishes a nation and blesses it and that nation decides to act wickedly before Him, He will just as surely decide to take vengeance on that nation.

In other words, the LORD is sovereign; He is the one in ultimate authority over what happens on planet earth. Everything happens according to His decreed will; all He has to do is "speak" to accomplish His purpose.

Psalms 47:7-8 "For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness."

I think it is important to note that the people of the nations have a choice, and this ability to choose is according to God's sovereign will.

I couldn't help but be reminded of the record of the prophet Jonah and his ministry to the wicked nation of Nineveh. God had decreed judgment against Nineveh unless they turned to Him in repentance. The nation repented following the example and exhortation of their king, but Jonah was not happy.

He did not agree with God's decision; he thought the LORD had made a bad decision.

No one can question the righteousness of how YHWH exercises His authority. He is holy and righteous in all that He does.

Leviticus 11:44 "For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy...."

1 Samuel 2:2 "There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God."

Daniel 9:14 "Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth...."

Revelation 16:7 "And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."

I think it is interesting to note that Jeremiah was told to go "down" to the potter's house. The Hebrew makes reference to "a lower region...the enemy...." Earth is definitely in the lower regions from heaven, and at this time Judah had positioned herself as God's enemy.

Jer. 18:11 ¶ 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.

After instructing Jeremiah with His object lesson, the LORD sends him to speak to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He is to warn them that God has determined to judge their sin. According to the teaching of the object lesson, the people are encouraged to repent of their evil ways and turn back to God in obedience. Such action is their only hope for deliverance.

This makes me think of the words of the prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 33:11 "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live:"

Jer. 18:12 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.

Amazingly, the people discount the power and authority of Almighty God. They would rather act according to the desires of their flesh. This verse ties directly back to verse 9 from the previous chapter: *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked...."*

It stands out to me that they know their actions are evil. The Hebrew for the word "imagination" references obstinacy and lust from a root word that means

to be hostile, an enemy. They are aware that they have positioned themselves as enemies of God.

Jer. 18:13 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.

YHWH now calls for a witness from the heathen nations. They would never think of treating their “gods” in such a way. It’s even worse in light of the miraculous intervention of the LORD on His people’s behalf so many times throughout their history.

The IVP Old Testament Commentary gave some interesting insight on the reference to Israel as a virgin: “The term translated ‘virgin’ here refers to a woman who is still legally under her father’s supervision. Comparable to such a girl who betrays her father’s trust and honor is Israel’s unfaithfulness to Yahweh, often described in the Old Testament as ‘playing the harlot.’”

Jer. 18:14 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 LORD now makes use of some rhetorical questions to make His point. The words inserted by the KJV translators were not helpful. The NIV is clearer: “Does the snow of Lebanon ever vanish from its rocky slopes? Do its cool waters from distant sources ever cease to flow?”

The application: God’s provision for His people was just as sure if they would repent and keep covenant with Him.

Jer. 18:15 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;

Jer. 18:16 To make their land desolate, *and* a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head.

Jer. 18:17 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.

Because the people had broken covenant with God and had turned to serving idols, God is going to make them as vulnerable to their enemy as the dust is to the east wind. Their land is going to be left desolate, a place that will be scorned by all who see it. God will not intervene this time. When they call out for His help, their view will be of His back in rejection of them instead of His face interceding on their behalf in answer to their cry.

This is another statement of reaping what one sows in reference to a previous verse: *Jeremiah 2:27* “Saying to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned their back unto me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us.”

Jer. 18:18 ¶ 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.

The people didn't like Jeremiah's message from the LORD. They decided to try to destroy him with slander and ignore him. They preferred to listen to the priests and spiritual leaders that told them what they wanted to hear.

The application to the church in America today is obvious.

Jer. 18:19 Give heed to me, O LORD, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me.

Jer. 18:20 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.

Jer. 18:21 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.

Jer. 18:22 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.

Jer. 18:23 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.

In this section Jeremiah turns to the LORD in his frustration. He wants the LORD to pay attention to what his enemies are saying. He states that their actions against him are more than just words, they are digging a pit to imprison him and eventually kill him.

Jeremiah reminds the LORD that he had interceded for his people. Now, however, in light of his obedience to the LORD in the face of such persecution, he calls for the LORD to bring on His judgment; he wants them to suffer death at the hands of their enemy. He doesn't want the LORD to forgive them; he wants them to experience the judgment of God's anger.

At this point Jeremiah is no longer the weeping prophet; he is the angry prophet. Just as David of old, Jeremiah knew that the people were angry at him as God's prophet; they were his enemies because they were God's enemies.

Psalms 54:2-3 "Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth. For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them."

Psalms 143:11-12 "Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble. And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant."