

Fact Sheet for **“The Potter and the Broken Jar”**
Jeremiah 18-20

Pastor Bob Singer
11/18/2018

Jeremiah has long been my favorite prophetic book of the Major Prophets. It teaches me about the character of God and His absolute direction of human history. I can identify with Jeremiah at times and his emotional swings. It reminds me that all the plans and ideas of people that oppose God will eventually prove empty and fail. And it inspires me to a greater commitment to God in my own life.

Jeremiah 18-20 contains the 9th of 13 messages found in chapters 2-25 of this book. These three chapters have all of the things that make Jeremiah my favorite book of the Major Prophets. These chapters begin with a scene at the potter's house. God gives Jeremiah an illustration.

Read Jeremiah 18:1-10

Observe the character of God in these verses. God, who knows the future as well as the past, may change what He declared He would do depending on the response of the people involved. This thought will challenge your theology! And then consider this. God, who has clearly said to Judah that their disaster would not be averted, gives them a call to return to Him, and presumably avoid that disaster.

Read Jeremiah 18:11

Something similar to this is found in the book of Jonah. God proclaimed what sounded like certain disaster against Nineveh. However they humbled themselves before God and He relented of the disaster He had proclaimed against them. God's change of plans would anger Jonah. God does know the future as well as the past, and He knew that the majority of those in Judah would reject His call to repent.

Read Jeremiah 18:12

This seems not to be their actual words but God's summary of their response. So, in 18:13-17 God then would confirm their coming calamity. Now we get a little insight into Jeremiah's humanity. Here is how the people of Jerusalem responded to Jeremiah (*Read Jeremiah 18:18*). Jeremiah pleaded with God for help. He was afraid of what they might do.

Read Jeremiah 18:19

Then Jeremiah's anger appeared.

Read Jeremiah 18:21-23

God then tells Jeremiah to buy a clay jar from a potter.

Read Jeremiah 19:1-2

The Hinnom Valley is located to the west of the temple mound. It is the lowest place in Jerusalem. There they practiced child sacrifice by roasting them in the arms of an idol. The refuse of the city was also burned there. That valley became known as *Gehenna*, to picture the fires of hell. What followed were God's words while Jeremiah held the clay jar.

Read Jeremiah 19:7-9

Their judgment would be brutal. Then God told Jeremiah to break the clay jar for an illustration.

Read Jeremiah 19:10-11

Their doom was certain! *The origin of the word “Topheth” is uncertain, but it possibly came from the word for “cookstove” or “oven.”*

Then Jeremiah came to the temple and proclaimed God’s message of doom. Pashhur, the priest in charge of the temple, heard Jeremiah. Here is what Pashhur did (*Read Jeremiah 20:2*). When Pashhur had Jeremiah released the next day Jeremiah had these words from the LORD for him...

Read Jeremiah 20:3-6

Passhur was obviously a man of some standing, a priest in charge of the temple. He was doing well for himself at that time, but he was not right with God. He wouldn’t finish well. In fact he would finish terrible!

These three chapters close with another expression from Jeremiah’s emotions.

Read Jeremiah 20:7-18

What have we seen in this 9th message in Jeremiah 18-20? How can we apply these things?

1. We’ve seen God’s character. If God declared disaster on a nation or kingdom, and they turned from their evil, God may relent of that disaster. He even made that offer to Judah. On the other hand if God declared blessing on a nation or kingdom, then they turned to evil, God may relent of that blessing. Judah wasn’t thinking of this. And this is true even though God knows in advance how people will respond. This will give me a lot of chance to think about my ideas of God. In any case, I’d rather have blessing instead of disaster. This is a reminder to me to stay close in step with God.

2. We’ve seen the response to God of those who rejected His message, did their own thing, but seemed to be doing well in life. For example Passhur was a very religious Jew, but was not following God. He would end up being severely judged. We live in a world where we are surrounded by so many who are following their own values and ideas, and are not following God. Some of them may even identify as Christians. They seem at the moment to be doing well, but God will bring every act to judgment, everything that is hidden (Ecclesiastes 12:14). This encourages me to watch my own life.

3. We’ve seen a prophet (Jeremiah) who was pressed between God’s call and the people’s rejection of both him and his message. Jeremiah, in his emotions, would cry out to God for help, lash out in anger against his enemies, and even get depressed. But he still continued to follow God. Emotions are part of the human condition. However, Jeremiah’s emotions are even an encouragement to me to keep my trust firmly in the LORD.

It is things like these that have made Jeremiah my favorite Major Prophet. I am always encouraged upward by this book.

I find that there are two verses in Proverbs that sum up everything that these three chapters in Jeremiah are encouraging us to do. I’ve mentioned these two verses before in this series.

ESV Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

If you haven’t committed those two verses to memory yet I would encourage you to do so.