
JEREMIAH 18: 1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

The type of the potter's vessel, and its signification, Jer 18:1-10. The inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem exhorted to repentance, Jer 18:11; but on their refusal, (which is represented to be as unnatural as if a man should prefer the snowy Lebanon or barren rock to a fruitful plain, or other waters to the cool stream of the fountain), their destruction is predicted, Jer 18:12-17. In consequence of these plain reproofs and warnings of Jeremiah, a conspiracy is formed against him, Jer 18:18. This leads him to appeal to God for his integrity, Jer 18:19, Jer 18:20; who puts a most dreadful curse in the mouth of his prophet, strongly indicative of the terrible fate of his enemies, Jer 18:21-23.

Verse 1

The word which came to Jeremiah - This discourse is supposed to have been delivered some time in the reign of Jehoiakim, probably within the first three years.

JEREMIAH 18: 2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear my words.

Verse 2

Go down to the potter's house - By this similitude God shows the absolute state of dependence on himself in which he has placed mankind. They are as clay in the hands of the potter; and in reference to every thing here below, he can shape their destinies as he pleases. Again; though while under the providential care of God they may go morally astray, and pervert themselves, yet they can be reclaimed by the almighty and all-wise Operator, and become such vessels as seemeth good for him to make. In considering this parable we must take heed that in running parallels we do not destroy the free agency of man, nor disgrace the goodness and supremacy of God.

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

Verse 3

He wrought a work on the wheels - אל האבנים al haabnayim, upon the stones, the potter's wheel being usually made of such, the spindle of the moving stone being placed on a stone below, on which it turned, and supported the stone above, on which the vessel was manufactured, and which alone had a rotatory motion. The potter's wheel in the present day seems to differ very little from that which was in use between two and three thousand years ago.

JEREMIAH 18: 4 When the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

Verse 4

The vessel - was marred in the hands of the potter - It did not stand in the working; it got out of shape; or some gravel or small stone having been incorporated with the mass of clay, made a breach in that part where it was found, so that the potter was obliged to knead up the clay afresh, place it on the wheel, and form it anew; and then it was such a vessel as seemed good to the potter to make it.

JEREMIAH 18: 5 Then the LORD's word came to me, saying,

JEREMIAH 18: 6 House of Israel, can't I do with you as this potter? says the LORD. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, house of Israel.

Verse 6

Cannot I do with you as this potter? - Have I not a right to do with a people whom I have created as reason and justice may require? If they do not answer my intentions, may I not reject and destroy them; and act as this potter, make a new vessel out of that which at first did not succeed in his hands?

It is generally supposed that St. Paul has made a very different use of this similitude from that mentioned above. See Rom 9:20, etc. His words are, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" To this every sensible and pious man will answer, Undoubtedly he has. But would any potter make an exceedingly fair and good vessel on purpose to dash it to pieces when he had done? Surely no! And would or could, the God of infinite perfection and love make millions of immortal souls on purpose for eternal perdition, as the horrible decree of reprobation states? No! This is a lie against all the attributes of God. But does not the text state that he can, out of the same lump, the same mass of human nature, make one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor? Yes. But the text does not say, what the horrible decree says, that he makes one part, and indeed the greater, for eternal perdition. But what then is the meaning of the text? Why evidently this: As out of the same mass of clay a potter may make a flagon for the table and a certain utensil for the chamber, the one for a more honorable, the other for a less honorable use, though both equally necessary to the owner; so God, out of the same flesh and blood, may make the tiller of the field and the prophet of the Most High; the one in a more honorable, the other in a less honorable employ; yet both equally necessary in the world, and equally capable of bringing glory to God in their respective places. But if the vessel be marred in his hand, under his providential and gracious dealings, he may reject it as he did the Jews, and make another vessel, such as he is pleased with, of the Gentiles; yet even these marred vessels, the reprobate Jews, are not finally rejected; for all Israel shall be saved in (through) the Lord, i.e., Jesus Christ. And should the Gentiles act as the Jews have done, then they also shall be cut off, and God will call his Church by another name. See on Rom 9:22 (note) and below.

JEREMIAH 18: 7 At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it;

Verse 7

At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, etc. - If that nation, against whom, etc. - And at what instant, etc. - If it do evil, etc. - These verses contain what may be called God's decree by which the whole of his conduct towards man is regulated. If he purpose destruction against an offending person, if that person repent and turn to God, he shall live and not die. If he purpose peace and salvation to him that walketh uprightly, if he turn from God to the world and sin, he shall die and not live.

JEREMIAH 18: 8 if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do to them.

JEREMIAH 18: 9 At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it;

JEREMIAH 18: 10 if they do that which is evil in my sight, that they not obey my voice, then I will repent of the good, with which I said I would benefit them.

JEREMIAH 18: 11 Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus says the LORD: Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return you now everyone from his evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.

JEREMIAH 18: 12 But they say, It is in vain; for we will walk after our own devices, and we will do everyone after the stubbornness of his evil heart.

Verse 12

There is no hope - See Jer 2:25.

JEREMIAH 18: 13 Therefore thus says the LORD: Ask now among the nations, who has heard such things; the virgin of Israel has done a very horrible thing.

Verse 13

The virgin of Israel - Instead of **ישראל** Yisrael, three of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., with the Alexandrian copy of the Septuagint, have **ירושלם** Yerushalem, Jerusalem.

JEREMIAH 18: 14 Shall the snow of Lebanon fail from the rock of the field? Shall the cold waters that flow down from afar be dried up?

Verse 14

Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon - Lebanon was the highest mountain in Judea. Would any man in his senses abandon a farm that was always watered by the melted snows of Lebanon, and take a barren rock in its place? How stupid therefore and absurd are my people, who abandon the everlasting God for the worship of idols!

JEREMIAH 18: 15 For my people have forgotten me, they have burned incense to false gods; and they have been made to stumble in their ways, in the ancient paths, to walk in byways, in a way not built up;

JEREMIAH 18: 16 to make their land an astonishment, and a perpetual hissing; everyone who passes thereby shall be astonished, and shake his head.

Verse 16

A perpetual hissing - שריקות *sherikoth*. a shrieking, hissing; an expression of contempt.

JEREMIAH 18: 17 I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.

Verse 17

I will scatter them as with an east wind - It is the property of this wind, almost every where, to parch up, blast, and destroy grain and trees, and even cattle and men suffer from it. Hence the old metrical proverb: - "When the wind blows from the east, 'Tis good for neither man nor beast."

JEREMIAH 18: 18 Then they said, 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 strike him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

Verse 18

Come, and let us devise devices - Let us form a conspiracy against him, accuse him of being a false prophet, and a contradicter of the words of God, for God has promised us protection, and he says we shall be destroyed, and that God will forsake his people.

Let us smite him with the tongue - On the tongue; so it should be rendered. Lying and false testimony are punished in the eastern countries, to the present day, by smiting the person on the mouth with a strong piece of leather like the sole of a shoe. Sometimes a bodkin is run through the tongue. Blasphemy, calumny, and cursing of parents, are usually punished in that way among the Chinese.

JEREMIAH 18: 19 Give heed to me, LORD, and listen to the voice of those who contend with me.

JEREMIAH 18: 20 Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have dug a pit for my soul. Remember how I stood before you to speak good for them, to turn away your wrath from them.

Verse 20

They have digged a pit for my soul - For my life; this they wish to take away.

Stood before thee to speak good for them - I was their continual intercessor.

JEREMIAH 18: 21 Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and give them over to the power of the sword; and let their wives become childless, and widows; and let their men be slain of death, and their young men struck of the sword in battle.

Verse 21

Therefore deliver up their children - The execrations in these verses should be considered as simply prophetic declarations of the judgments which God was about to pour out on them.

If we consider them in their grammatical meaning, then they are not directions to us to whom our Lawgiver has said, "Love your enemies."

JEREMIAH 18: 22 Let a cry be heard from their houses, when you shall bring a troop suddenly on them; for they have dug a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet.

JEREMIAH 18: 23 Yet, LORD, you know all their counsel against me to kill me; don't forgive their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from your sight; but let them be overthrown before you; deal you with them in the time of your anger.
