

CHAPTER 19

INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH 19

In this chapter is foreshadowed, represented, and confirmed, the destruction of Jerusalem, by the breaking of a potter's vessel the prophet had in his hand; and by the place where he was bid to do this, and did it. The order for it, and the witnesses of it, and the place where it was done, are declared in (^{2490b}Jeremiah 19:1,2); the proclamation there of Jerusalem's ruin is made, (^{2491b}Jeremiah 19:3); the cause of it, their apostasy, idolatry, and shedding of innocent blood, (^{2492b}Jeremiah 19:4,5); the great slaughter of them by the sword and famine, (^{2493b}Jeremiah 19:6-9); and how easy, and irresistible, and irrecoverable, their destruction would be, are signified by the breaking of the bottle, (^{2494b}Jeremiah 19:10,11), when Jerusalem for its idolatry would become as defiled a place as Tophet, where the prophet was, (^{2495b}Jeremiah 19:12,13); from whence he came to the temple, and there repeated the proclamation of the evil that should come upon that city, and all the towns around it, (^{2496b}Jeremiah 19:14,15).

Ver. 1. *Thus saith the Lord, go and get a potter's earthen bottle, etc.]*

From the potter's house, where he had lately been; and where he had been shown, in an emblematic way, what God would do in a short time with the Jews; and which is here further illustrated by this emblem: or, "go and get", or "buy, a bottle of the potter, an earthen one"^{f396}; so Kimchi; called in Hebrew "bakbuk", from the gurgling of the liquor poured into it, or out of it, or drank out of it, which makes a sound like this word^{f397}:

and [take] of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests; the word "take" is rightly supplied by our translators, as it is by the Targum, the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions; for these words are not to be connected with the former, as in the Vulgate Latin version; as if the prophet was to get or buy the earthen bottle of the elders of the people, and of the priests; but those who were the greatest and principal men of the city, and of which the Jewish sanhedrim consisted, were to be taken by the prophet to be witnesses of what were said and done, to see the bottle broke, and hear what Jeremiah from the Lord had to say; who, from their years, it might be reasonably thought, would seriously attend to those

things, and would report them to the people to great advantage; and the Lord, who sent the prophet to them, no doubt inclined their hearts to go along with him; who, otherwise, in all probability, would have refused; and perhaps would have charged him with impertinence and boldness, and would have rejected his motion with contempt, as foolish or mad.

Ver. 2. *And go forth into the valley of the son of Hinnom*, etc.] To whom it formerly belonged, and so it was called as early as Joshua's time, (⁻⁰⁸⁵⁸⁻Joshua 15:8); from the faith and abomination of the place, and the shocking torments here exercised, "hell", from hence, in the New Testament, is called "Gehenna": here the prophet with the elders were to go, for reasons after mentioned; because here their cruel idolatries were committed, and Jerusalem was to be made like unto it for pollution and bloodshed:

which [is] by the entry of the east gate; the way to it out of Jerusalem lay through the east gate of the city. The Targum calls it "the dung gate"; through which the filth of the city was carried out, and laid near it, and where lay the potter's sherds; hence some render it the "potsherd" gate^{f398}; or rather it should be the potter's gate; for that reason, because the potter's field and house lay near it, from whence the prophet had his earthen bottle; others call it the "sun gate"^{f399}, because it lay to the sun rising; but seeing the valley of Hinnom was to the south of Jerusalem, this seems rather to be the south gate; and a proper situation this was for the potters to dry and harden their pots. The Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions, leave it untranslated, and call it the gate Harsith or Hadsith:

and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee; for as yet it was not made known to him what he should do with his bottle, or say to the elders, until he came to the place he was ordered to.

Ver. 3. *And say, hear ye the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah*, etc.] The king and his queen; or the king and his sons; or the king and his princes, and nobles; for there was but one king reigning at a time in Judah, and the present king was Zedekiah; (see ⁻²²⁰¹⁻Jeremiah 21:1);

and inhabitants of Jerusalem; the elders of which, and of the priests, were now before him; to whom he said the following things, that they might tell them to the persons mentioned:

thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; who is able to do whatsoever he pleases in the armies of the heavens, and among the

inhabitants of the earth, and will do so among his own people, notwithstanding his being the God of Israel:

behold, I will bring evil upon this place; the evil of punishment for the evil of sin; such as the sword, famine, and captivity; meaning not on that spot of ground where the prophet with the elders were, but upon the city of Jerusalem, and on all the land of Judea:

the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle; it shall be astonishing and surprising to him; it shall even stun him; he shall stand as one thunderstruck or be so affected with it as a man is at a violent clap of thunder, or at some exceeding vehement sound, which leaves such an impression upon him, and continues with him, that he cannot get rid of it; but seems to be continually sounding in his ears, and they even echo and ring with it; (see ^{<ORBI>}1 Samuel 3:11). The phrase denotes the greatness of the calamity, and the surprise which the bare report of it would bring with it.

Ver. 4. *Because they have forsaken me*, etc.] My worship, as the Targum; they had apostatized from God, relinquished his service, neglected and despised his word and ordinances, and left the religion they had been brought up in, and was agreeable to the will of God. This, with what follows, contain reasons of the Lord's threatening them to bring evil upon them, as before:

and have estranged this place; or made a strange place of it, so that it could scarcely be known to be the same, nor would the Lord own it as his; meaning either the city of Jerusalem, to which the prophet was near, and could point to it; or the temple, which was in sight, and which they had strangely abused, by offering strange sacrifices to strange gods; or the valley of Hinnom, the spot he was upon, and which they had alienated from its original use:

and have burnt incense in it unto other gods; to strange gods, the gods of the Gentiles; and this they did both in the city of Jerusalem and in the temple, and very probably in the valley of Hinnom, where they sacrificed their children: gods

whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah; of whose wisdom, power, and goodness, neither they nor their fathers before them, nor any of their kings, had had any instance; and whose help and assistance, in times of danger and difficulty, they had had no

experience of; and, till now, neither they nor their ancestors had ever owned them, or acknowledged them; nor scarce had heard of their names; nor any of their pious kings, as David, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah:

and have filled this place with the blood of innocents; young children that were sacrificed here to idols, as they were in the valley of Hinnom, which seems to be the place principally intended; so that they were not only guilty of idolatry, but of murder; and of the murder of innocent creatures, and even, of their own babes; which was shocking and unheard of cruelty!

Ver. 5. *They have also built the high places of Baal*, etc.] Or, they have even built, etc. and so the words explain what is before suggested of their idolatry; these were the temples in which they placed his image, and the altars on which they sacrificed to him; as follows:

to burn their sons with fire, [for] burnt offerings unto Baal; the same idol that is sometimes called Moloch, the names being much of the same signification; the one signifying a “lord” or “master”; the other a king; and to the idol under each name they burned their children with fire, and offered them as burnt offerings unto it; which was a most cruel and barbarous way of sacrificing. Some think they only caused them to pass through two fires; but the text is express for it, that they burnt them with fire, and made burnt offerings of them, as they did with slain beasts. It seems very likely that they did both:

which I commanded not; in my law, as the Targum adds; and which was intimation enough to avoid it; though this was not all, he expressly forbid it, (⁴⁰⁰Leviticus 20:2-5);

nor spake [it], neither came [it] into my mind; and it is marvellous it should ever enter into the heart of man; none but Satan himself could ever have devised such a way of worship.

Ver. 6. *Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord*, etc.] Or, “are coming”⁴⁰⁰; a little while and it will come to pass, what follows; to which a “behold” is prefixed, as calling for attention and admiration, as well as to assure of the certain performance of it:

that this place shall no more be called Tophet: as it had been, from the beating of drums in it, that the cries and shrieks of infants burnt in the fire might not be heard by their parents:

nor the valley of the son of Hinnom; which was its name in the times of Joshua, and long before it was called Tophet; but now it should have neither names:

but the valley of slaughter; or, “of the slain”, as the Targum; from the multitude of those that should be killed here, at the siege and taking of Jerusalem; or that should be brought hither to be buried; (see ^{2491b}Jeremiah 19:11) and (see Gill on “^{2472b}Jeremiah 7:32”).

Ver. 7. *And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place*, etc.] The counsel which they took in this place and agreed to, in offering their sons and daughters to idols; and which they took with these idols and their priests, from whom they expected assistance and relief; and all their schemes and projects for their deliverance; these were all made to spear to be mere empty things, as empty as the earthen bottle he had in his hand, to which there is an allusion; there being an elegant pronomasia between the word ^{f401} here used and that:

and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies: such as sallied out from the city, or attempted to make their escape:

and by the hands of them that seek their lives; and so would not spare them, when they fell into them:

and their carcasses will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth: signifying that they should have no burial, but their slain bodies should lie upon the earth, and be fed upon by fowls and beasts.

Ver. 8. *And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing*, etc.] An hissing to its enemies; an hissing because desolate; when its walls should be broken down, its houses burnt with fire, and its inhabitants put to the sword, or carried captive:

everyone that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and hiss; surprised to see the desolations of it; that a city once so famous and flourishing should be reduced to such a miserable condition; and yet hiss by way of detestation and abhorrence of it, and for joy at its ruin:

because of all the plagues thereof: by which it was brought to desolation, as the sword, famine, burning, and captivity.

Ver. 9. *And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons, and the flesh of their daughters,* etc.] For want of food; the famine should be so great and pressing. Jeremiah, that foretells this, was a witness of it, and has left it on record, (²³⁴⁰Lamentations 4:10);

and they shall eat everyone the flesh of his friend. The Targum interprets it, the goods or substance of his neighbour; which is sometimes the sense of eating the flesh of another; but as it is to be taken in a literal sense, in the preceding clause, so in this: so it should be,

in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them; the siege of Jerusalem should be so close, that no provision could be got in to the relief of the inhabitants; which obliged them to take the shocking methods before mentioned. Jerom observes, that though this was fulfilled at the Babylonish captivity, yet more fully when Jerusalem was besieged by Vespasian and Titus, and in the times of Hadrian. Josephus^{f402} gives us a most shocking relation of a woman eating her own son.

Ver. 10. *Then shall thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee.*] The earthen bottle he was bid to get of the potter, (²⁴⁰⁰Jeremiah 19:1); this he is ordered to break in pieces before the eyes of the ancients of and of the priests that went with him out Jerusalem to Tophet, as an emblem of the easy, sure, and utter destruction of Jerusalem; for nothing is more easily broken than an earthen vessel; and so easily was Jerusalem destroyed by the Chaldean army; nor can an earthen pot resist any force that is used against it; nor could the inhabitants of Jerusalem withstand the force of Nebuchadnezzar's army; and an earthen vessel once broken cannot be put together again; a new one must be made; which was the case both of the city and temple; and which, upon the return from the captivity, were not repaired, but rebuilt.

Ver. 11. *And shalt say unto them, thus saith the Lord of hosts,* etc.] Of armies above and below; and so able to execute what he here threatens:

even so will I break this people and this city: the people, the inhabitants of this city, and that itself, by the sword, famine, burning, and captivity:

as [one] breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again; or "healed"^{f403}; a potter's vessel, upon the wheel, such an one as the prophet had seen, and to which the Jews are compared, (²⁴⁸⁰Jeremiah 18:3,4); being marred, may be restored and put into another form and shape; but one that

is dried and hardened, when broke, can never be put together again; so a vessel, of gold, silver, and brass, when broke, may be made whole again; but an earthen vessel never can; a fit emblem therefore this to represent utter and irrecoverable ruin; (see ^{<23014>}Isaiah 30:14). Jerom here again observes, that this is clearly spoken, not of the Babylonish, but of the Roman captivity; after the former the city was rebuilt, and the people returned to Judea, and restored to former plenty; but since the latter, under Vespasian, Titus, and Hadrian, the ruins of Jerusalem remain, and will till the conversion of the Jews:

and they shall bury [them] in Tophet, till [there be] no place to bury: where there should be such great numbers slain; or whither such multitudes of the slain should be brought out of the city to be buried there, that at length there would not be room enough to receive the dead into it; or, as the Syriac version renders it, “and in Tophet they shall bury, for want of a place to bury” in; in such a filthy, abominable, and accursed place shall their carcasses lie, where they were guilty of idolatry, and sacrificed their innocent babes, there being no other place to inter them in: an emblem this of their souls suffering in hell the vengeance of eternal fire.

Ver. 12. *Thus will I do unto this place, saith the Lord, and to the inhabitants thereof,* etc.] To the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants, as was done to the earthen bottle, and as before threatened:

and [even], or also,

make this city as Tophet; as full of slaughtered men and women as that had been of the blood of innocent children; and as filthy, abominable, and execrable a place as that; and to lose its name, as that is foretold it should, (^{<24006>}Jeremiah 19:6); and as Jerusalem did, after the desolation of it by Hadrian, as Jerom observes; for what was built upon the spot afterwards was by the emperor called Aelia, after his own name.

Ver. 13. *And the houses of Jerusalem,* etc.] Where the common people dwelt:

and the houses of the kings of Judah; the palaces of the king, princes, and nobles of Judah, one as well as another:

shall be defiled os Tophet; as that was defiled with the bodies and bones of the slain, and with the faith of the city brought unto it; so the houses of great and small, high and low, should be defiled with the carcasses of the

slain that should lie unburied there; their houses should be their graves, and they buried in the ruins of them: or, “the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, which are defiled”^{f404}, with the idolatries after mentioned, shall be as Tophet, places of slaughter:

because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burnt incense to all the host of heaven; the roofs of houses with the Jews were built flat; and, as they sometimes used them for prayer to the God of heaven, as Peter did, (~~400~~Acts 10:9); idolaters used them to burn incense on to the sun, moon, and stars; to which they were nearer, and of which they could have a clearer view upon the house tops, and therefore chose them for this purpose; and so common was this sort of idolatry, that it was practised upon most, if not all, the houses in Jerusalem; (see ~~300B~~Zephaniah 1:5);

and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods; besides the God of Israel; to Baal, and other Heathen deities.

Ver. 14. *Then came Jeremiah from Tophet*, etc.] When he had broke his earthen bottle, and delivered his prophecy before the elders of the people and priests: or, “from that Tophet”^{f405},

whither the Lord had sent him to prophesy; and whither he went and prophesied, according to his command; but now returned from thence, it being no doubt signified to him, in some manner or other, that it was the will of God he should;

and he stood in the court of the Lord’s house, and said to all the people; this was the court of the temple, called the outward court, or the court of the Israelites, where all the people met; for into other courts they might not enter; here the prophet placed himself, on purpose to deliver his prophecy to all the people; even the same as he had delivered at Tophet to the ancients of the people and the priests; but lest they should not faithfully represent it to the people, and that they might not be without it, he delivers it openly and publicly to them all, in the following words; which both declare their punishment, and the cause of it.

Ver. 15. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel*, etc.] (See Gill on ~~200B~~Jeremiah 19:3”);

behold, I will bring upon this city, and upon all her towns: the city of Jerusalem, and all the cities and towns near it, even all the cities and towns in Judea; of which Jerusalem was the metropolis, and therefore called hers:

all the evil that I have pronounced against it; or decreed against it, as the Targum; all that he had purposed, and all that he had threatened, or spoke of by the Prophet Jeremiah, or any other of his prophets; for whatever he has said he will do, and whatsoever he has solved upon, and declared he will do, he assuredly brings to pass:

because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words; they turned their backs upon him, pulled away the shoulder, stopped their ears that they might not hear what was said by the prophets from the Lord; they neither inclined their ears to hearken to, nor bowed their necks to receive the yoke of his precepts; but, on the contrary, were, as was their general character, a stiffnecked people, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, obstinate and disobedient; and this was the cause of their ruin, by which it appeared to be just and righteous.