

The Potter and the Clay

Introduction:

Theme: A Consideration of the informing Theology of the Potter and the clay.

- I. The imagery of the potter and the clay is based upon the creation narrative.
 - A. This is not just a figure but there is substance to the analogy of the potter and the clay.
 - 1. God really is the Potter
 - 2. Mankind really is the clay

- B. The word form is the Hebrew word for a potter working on a wheel.

Gen 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

The relationship of the potter to the clay is a significant manner of considering the relationship between God and man.

- II. Three important elements in the informing theology of the Potter and the Clay

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.

- A. The potter shapes or molds the clay as it pleases the potter.

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

Isa 64:8 But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

Lam 4:2 The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!

Job 33:6 Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out

of the clay.

Isa 29:16 Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?

Isa 41:25 I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay.

B. The potter reshapes the clay when the clay no longer serves the potter's purposes.

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.

Job 10:9 (NASB) 'Remember now, that Thou hast made me as clay; And wouldst Thou turn me into dust again?

Isa 45:9 Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?

C. The clay has no right to question the activity of the potter.

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.

Rom 9:20 But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'"

Rom 9:21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

Rom 9:22 What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

III. Then there are the references to us as earthen vessels to remind us of our weakness.

2 Cor 4:7 (NASB) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves;

2 Tim 2:20 (NASB) Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor.

IV. We have a striking informing theology of the potter and the clay in the life and death of Judas.

A. The primary purpose of the Matthew account with regard to Judas is continue the fulfillment theme. Not only was Jesus' death, but also the surrounding events that accompanied it were prophesied in Scripture.

B. Judas recognizes that not only was he guilty of betrayal, but also that Jesus whom he had betrayed was innocent.

Mat 27:3 (NASB) Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

Mat 27:4 (NASB) saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!"

C. "The Jewish leaders callous response, "What is that to us?" is both Semitic and classical idiom. But their own words condemn them, for it should have been something to them." D.A. Carson *The Expositors Bible Commentary*

Mat 27:4 (NASB) saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!"

They were right in saying that Judas was responsible for his actions. They were wrong in saying that they were absolved of wrong doing.

D. Now note the striking act of Judas in throwing the 30 pieces of silver into the sanctuary.

Mat 27:5 (NASB) And he threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.

This is in keeping with Zachariah.

Zec 11:12 (NASB) And I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages.

Zec 11:13 (NASB) Then the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD.

E. However, the priests would not accept the money.

Mat 27:6 (NASB) And the chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood."

F. What is quite significant is what the Jewish leaders did with the money.

They bought - note the words - Potter's Field.

Mat 27:7 (NASB) And they counseled together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers.

This is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

Mat 27:8 (NASB) For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

Mat 27:9 (NASB) Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying, "AND THEY TOOK THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER, THE PRICE OF THE ONE WHOSE PRICE HAD BEEN SET by the sons of Israel;

Mat 27:10 (NASB) AND THEY GAVE THEM FOR THE POTTER'S FIELD, AS THE LORD DIRECTED ME."

G. There is a tremendous irony in using the money to buy the Potters field.

Psa 2:1 (NASB) Why are the nations in an uproar, And the peoples devising a vain thing?

Psa 2:2 (NASB) The kings of the earth take their stand, And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed:

Psa 2:3 (NASB) "Let us tear their fetters apart, And cast away their cords from us!"

Psa 2:4 (NASB) He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them.

V. The breaking of the pottery is a manifestation of God's judgement.

Jer 19:1 (NASB) Thus says the LORD, "Go and buy a potter's earthenware jar, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests.

Jer 19:2 (NASB) "Then go out to the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is by the entrance of the potsherd gate; and proclaim there the words that I shall tell you,

Jer 19:3 (NASB) 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 am about to bring a calamity upon this place, at which the ears of everyone that hears of it will tingle.

Jer 19:4 (NASB) "Because they have forsaken Me and have made this an alien place and

have burned sacrifices in it to other gods that neither they nor their forefathers nor the kings of Judah had ever known, and because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent

Jer 19:5 (NASB) and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter My mind;

Jer 19:6 (NASB) therefore, behold, days are coming, "declares the LORD," when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather the valley of Slaughter.

Jer 19:7 (NASB) "And I shall make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I shall cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hand of those who seek their life; and I shall give over their carcasses as food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth.

Jer 19:8 (NASB) "I shall also make this city a desolation and an object of hissing; everyone who passes by it will be astonished and hiss because of all its disasters.

Jer 19:9 (NASB) "And I shall make them eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they will eat one another's flesh in the siege and in the distress with which their enemies and those who seek their life will distress them."

Jer 19:10 (NASB) "Then you are to break the jar in the sight of the men who accompany you

Jer 19:11 (NASB) and say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Just so shall I break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot again be repaired; and they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place for burial.

Jer 19:12 (NASB) "This is how I shall treat this place and its inhabitants," declares the LORD, "so as to make this city like Topheth.

Jer 19:13 (NASB) "And the houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah will be defiled like the place Topheth, because of all the houses on whose rooftops they burned sacrifices to all the heavenly host and poured out libations to other gods.'""

VI. The breaking of the Potter's jars is a sure manifestation of judgment.

Rev 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

Rev 2:27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

VII. Conclusion:

In the potter and the clay, God's sovereignty and human responsibility portrayed.