

## September 6

**Scriptures:** Read Jeremiah 18 & 19

**Key Verse:** “Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause you to hear My words.” (Jeremiah 18:2)

### Overview

The Lord had a lesson He wanted to teach Jeremiah, so he could in turn go and relate it to the people. God illustrated His sovereignty and the conditional nature of His dealings with nations by the fashioning of the clay in the potter’s hands (a common biblical analogy; cf. Isa. 29:16; 64:8; Rom. 9:20-23). Even though God desires to make something pleasant out of His creation, if that nation (the clay) is defective and impure, it will become marred, through no fault of God’s (the potter). In His mercy, the Lord might “pluck up” (judge) the nation in order to refashion it and test it again. If the nation yields to God’s will and is repentant, He will not discard it but rather “build” (bless) it, so that it may be an honourable vessel that is beautiful and purposeful (18:2-10). However, if that nation refuses to be molded according to God’s will, He will purpose to destroy it, for the worthless and impure nation cannot stand against His will. This was the message Jeremiah was to relay to the people of Judah; they were to “return” (i.e. repent) from their evil ways, or else the all-powerful God would indeed bring the nation to destruction (18:11).

Those who responded to Jeremiah’s message with scorn, unbelief, and unrepentance, resolving to do as they pleased (18:12), would be the ones whom God would discard and scatter (chapter 19). He would turn his face from them (not respond to them or show them favour) in the day of His wrathful judgment (18:16-17).

Just as people would be astonished at how Judah had become desolate, it would be even harder to believe that a people would forsake their Source of Living Water for “strange water” which is stagnant, rancid, and even deadly. Such a thing is unheard of, but Judah did this “horrible thing” when they forsook God (18:13-14; cf. 2:11-13). In rejecting Jeremiah, God’s prophet and servant, they were in actuality rejecting God. Their spiritual blindness did not allow them to see that all the other “so-called” prophets, priests, and wisemen were lying; therefore they turned to accuse Jeremiah of heresy (18:18). Finally, Jeremiah realized what God had been telling him all along — the people were hopelessly lost in sin, and whatever Jeremiah said or did would make no difference. Therefore, Jeremiah’s words, which seem vindictive, represent his yielding to the will of God who had purposed to bring these judgments upon the nation of Judah (18:19-23).

In a dramatic and dismal illustration using the same analogy as in 18:3-4, Jeremiah was to break a potter’s earthen vessel into small shards in front of the leaders and people of Judah. While the clay was still on the wheel, there was some hope, for it was capable of being reshaped; but now that the vessel had been baked and hardened, no change was possible, just as Judah, hardened in sin, could no longer change. If a vessel is unfit to fulfill the purpose for which it was made, then there is nothing left to do but break it. By breaking the vessel in the sight of the people, Jeremiah dramatized his prophecy of the destruction that God would bring upon the nation (19:10-11; Ps. 2:9; Rev. 2:27).

The location of his drama was the Valley of the Son of Hinnom (Tophet, later called Gehenna); this was the idolatrous place of infant sacrifice to the god Molech (7:31; cf. 2 Kings 21:6; 2 Kings 24:4) -a major reason for their condemnation and coming judgment (19:2, 4-5). Another idolatrous act for which God would punish them was in the burning of incense upon their rooftops to the foreign gods called “the host of heaven” (19:4,13; cf. Zeph. 1:5). Like the former prophets in the days of Manasseh, Jeremiah predicted that the things the enemy would do to them would be so horrifying that it would make their ears tingle just to hear about it (19:3b; 2 Kings 21:10-12). The root problem for the people of Judah was that they had stubbornly refused to listen to the words of the Lord (19:15), and anyone who rejects God’s Word will ultimately face disaster.

## **Prayer**

Potter of our lives, we yield ourselves to You in wholehearted surrender. Fashion us into Your image, that we may be fit for the purpose for which we were created, and thereby bring glory to Your Name.