

Jeremiah Chapter 19

Verses 1-9: Smashing the jar in front of the elders and priests symbolized the coming destruction of Judah. The opportunity to repent was past, and judgment was now unavoidable.

Jeremiah 19:1 "Thus saith the LORD, Go and get a potter's earthen bottle, and [take] of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests;"

“Ancients of the people ... ancients of the priests”: These were chosen to be credible witnesses of the symbolic action with the “earthen bottle”, so no one could plead ignorance of the prophesy the 72 elders who made up the Sanhedrin were partly from the “priests” and the other tribes (“people”).

Jeremiah 19:2 "And go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which [is] by the entry of the east gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee,"

“Valley of the son of Hinnom” (see 7:30-34; and the note on 19:6).

“East gate”: The gate of “broken pottery” was on the south wall of Jerusalem where the potters formed pottery for use in the temple nearby.

In the last lesson, God sent Jeremiah to a potter's house, and showed him what the potter did with the clay in his hands. Now Jeremiah is told to take the bottle made from clay to the east gate, and have the ancients and the priests to gather there with him for a message from God. The "east gate" is the same as the potsherd gate. It appears the valley of Hinnom was mentioned, because it was the boundary between Benjamin and Judah. This message is for both of them.

Jeremiah 19:3 "And say, Hear ye the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle."

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 Jer. 21:1).

"And inhabitants of Jerusalem. The elders and the priests who 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 (1 Sam. 3:11). The phrase denotes the greatness of the calamity, and the surprise which the bare report of it would bring with it.

The tingling of the ears was a confirmation that the message was from God and not from Jeremiah, even though it came from Jeremiah's mouth. This is a proclamation from God that judgement has been spoken on them for their evil false worship. God will bring great pain to them.

Jeremiah 19:4 "Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents;"

I.e., have alienated it from Jehovah its true Lord, and given it to a strange god. The words refer specially to the guilt of Manasseh (2 Chron. 33:4).

"The blood of innocents": The words seem at first to refer to the Molech sacrifices, which had made the valley of Hinnom infamous. These, however, are mentioned separately in the next verse, and the prophet probably spoke rather here, as in (Jer. 2:34; 7:6), of the "innocent blood" with which Manasseh had filled Jerusalem (2 Kings 21:16; 24:4), where the same word is used.

The word "estranged" means disregarded or rejected. These people of God have forsaken Him. They have not regarded the holy city of God as anything either. In the burning of incense to other gods, they have put their trust in them instead of in the LORD. Their fathers and they had been taught to believe in the LORD. They had never been a people to worship false gods before. They had gone so far that they had sacrificed their children to these false gods. This is the innocent blood mentioned.

Verses 5-6 (see the note on 7:31-32).

Jeremiah 19:5 "They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire [for] burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake [it], neither came [it] into my mind:"

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 (Lev. 20:2).

"Nor spake it, neither came it into my mind": And it is marvelous it should ever enter into the heart of man. None but Satan himself could ever have devised such a way of worship.

This is very similar to devil worship in our day. This worship of the false god Baal was popular, because it involved prostitution with both males and females. Many times the worship was carried on in the high places. This was a very evil false worship, which went directly against the teaching of holiness. God never mentioned this, because it was an abomination to Him.

Jeremiah 19:6 "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter."

"Topheth": Hebrew used the word *toph* for "drum." This was another name for the Valley of Hinnom, an east, west valley at the south end of Jerusalem where, when children were burned in sacrifice to idols (verses 4-5), and drums were beaten to drown their cries. Rubbish from Jerusalem was dumped there and continually burned. The place became a symbol for the burning fires of hell, called Gehenna (Matt. 5:22; compare 7:30-32; Isa. 30:33). It was to become a place of massacre.

"Tophet" means drum. It is believed the valley was named that to drown out the screams of children, when they were burned walking through the fire in worship of false gods. God is so angry with them for their false worship, He will call this the valley of slaughter.

Jeremiah 19:7 "And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives: and their carcasses will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth."

The priesthood had spoken to the people for God in times past. Now God will take this away from them. They have been totally unfaithful to Him. Their counsel had gone bad. He would no longer let them represent Him on the earth. The punishment spoken of here, is repeated from a previous lesson. God will not only let the enemy kill them with the sword, but they will not be buried and the vultures and the beasts will eat their carcasses. Carcasses means dead bodies.

Jeremiah 19:8 "And I will make this city desolate, and a hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all the plagues thereof."

A hissing to its enemies. A 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.

Not only will the people be killed, God will destroy His city as well. When the passerby sees the destruction from the plagues God has sent, they will be astonished.

Jeremiah 19:9 "And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them."

"Eat the flesh": Desperate for food during a long siege, some would resort to cannibalism, eating family members and friends (Lam. 4:10).

This gruesome prophecy (compare Lev. 26:29; Deut. 28:53-57), literally came to pass in each of Jerusalem's great captivities; 586 B.C. (compare Lam. 2:20; 4:10) and A.D. 70 (see Josephus Wars of the Jews 6:4). This also occurred in an earlier siege of Samaria by the Arameans (2 Kings 6:26-31).

Look at the following Scripture with me.

Deuteronomy 28:53 "And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the LORD thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee:"

Both of these Scriptures are saying that the famine will be so great, they will eat their own children.

Verses 10-11: Before their armies went into battle, Egyptian priests would perform rites that involved inscribing the names of their enemies on pottery jars and then smashing them. The Tophet that had been used as a sacred burial site for children sacrificed to the gods would be filled with the corpses from battle; it was the same field where Judas hung himself because of his involvement in the plot so shed the "innocent blood" of Jesus the Messiah (Matt. 27:3-5; Acts 1:19).

Jeremiah 19:10 "Then shalt 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 (Jer. 19:1). This he is ordered to break in pieces before the eyes of the ancients 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.

(Compare verse 1).

Jeremiah has just spoken horrible doom on these people. Now God says, break the bottle you brought with you. The "breaking of the bottle" symbolizes the fact that God has thrown them away.

Jeremiah 19:11 "And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as [one] breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury [them] in Tophet, till [there be] no place to bury."

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.

"Made whole again": Literally, "healed." In this lies the distinction between this symbol and that of (Jer. 18:4). The plastic clay can be shaped and re-shaped until the potter forms with it the vessel he had predetermined. The broken bottle is of no further use, but its fragments are cast away forever upon the heaps of rubbish deposited in Tophet.

"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.

God has given them a visual example of what will happen to them. This place, where they had caused their children to walk through the fire to a false god, now will be a place of death. There will be so many dead, they will run out of room to bury them. This is speaking of the wrath of God coming on His unrepentant people.

Jeremiah 19:12 "Thus will I do unto this place, saith the LORD, and to the inhabitants thereof, and [even] make this city as Tophet:"

To the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants, as was done to the earthen bottle, and as before threatened. And even, or also:

"And even 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 dreadful a place as that. And to lose its name, as that is foretold it should (Jer. 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.

Now God says the whole city will be destroyed just as this area is. Tophet you remember, was a place where the cults had carried on their false religious practices. Of course, this is just at the edge of Jerusalem and is speaking of Jerusalem as well.

Jeremiah 19:13 "And the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods."

"Defiled": Their houses were desecrated by idolatrous worship.

"Burned incense ... host of heaven": Refers to worship of the sun, planets, and stars from flat housetops (compare 32:29; 2 Kings 23:11-12; Zeph. 1:5).

It mattered not whether you were a king or just a citizen, the punishment was the same. They had all worshipped false gods, and they would all die together. The "host of heaven" means the sun, moon, and stars. Everything that is going to happen to them, is because of their worship of false gods.

Jeremiah 19:14 "Then came Jeremiah from Tophet, whither the LORD had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the LORD'S house; and said to all the people,"

When he had broken his earthen bottle, and delivered his prophecy before the elders of the people and priests. Or, "from that Tophet";

"Whither the Lord had sent him to prophesy": And whither he went and prophesied, according to his command. But now returned from there, 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.

It seems when Jeremiah had finished telling the priests and high officials of the coming doom, God sent him into the court of the LORD's house to speak of the certainty of the prophecy. This just confirms what Jeremiah had said at Tophet. All of the early part of the book of Jeremiah has been warnings, over and over to the people. God was allowing them plenty of time to repent, and turn from their worship of false gods, but they do not heed the warning.

Jeremiah 19:15 "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words."

(See Jer. 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 resolved 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, and 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.

They are too proud to repent and turn from the false gods, so God will surely do these terrible things mentioned in this chapter. He loves His people, but they have been unfaithful to Him. They do not want to hear God's Word.

Jeremiah Chapter 19 Questions

1. What was Jeremiah to go and get?
2. Where was Jeremiah to take it?
3. Who was to go with Jeremiah?
4. What was Jeremiah to do there?
5. What is the same as the "east gate"?
6. How will the people listening know the message is from God?

7. What does the word "estranged" mean?
8. To burn incense to a false god means what?
9. How far had they gone with this worship of false gods?
10. What false god is mentioned by name in verse 5?
11. Why was this particular false worship popular?
12. What will Tophet be called after God's judgement on them?
13. What does "Tophet" mean?
14. What are some of the terrible things that will happen, that are mentioned in verse 7?
15. What will the passerby do, when they see the destruction?
16. Where do we find another Scripture that verifies Jeremiah 19:9?
17. After the terrible doom is spoken, what does God tell Jeremiah to do?
18. What does this symbolize?
19. How many will be buried in Tophet?
20. Why does God destroy the houses?
21. Who is affected by the destruction?
22. Where did God send Jeremiah next?
23. Why will God bring this terrible thing on His people?