Jeremiah Chapter 18

May 19, 2024 · AM · https://letgodbetrue.com/sermons/2024/jeremiah-chapter-18/

Chapter 18

Theme: By a potter for God's sovereignty, Jeremiah blasted haughty rebels and prayed against enemies.

Outline:

1-6 Jehovah Was a Potter Over Israel

7-10 He Ruled Nations By Obedience

11-12 Judah's Obstinance Was Profane

13-17 God Would Punish Such Rebels

18-23 They Devised to Their Own Ruin

Preparatory Reading: Jeremiah 6; Daniel 4; Numbers 12; Numbers 16.

Related Links:

A. Short Overview of Jeremiah *(slides; 2024).*
B. *Short Overview of O.T. Prophets (slides; 2023) … The Prophets of the Old Testament, here.*
C. Long Overview of O.T. Prophets *(slides; 2019), here.*
D. Introduction to Jeremiah *(sermons only; 2024), here.*
E. The Dominion of God *(sermons and outline; 2007).*
F. The 'R' Factor about Repentance *(slides; 2015).*
G. Miriam and Korah *(sermons and outline; 2012).*
H. Sons of Zeruiah *(sermons and outline; 2002).*

Introduction:

A. Let us always, but increasing, humbly bow before His inspired word to receive it with ready minds.
B. Life is short. His revealed will is precious. Providence brought this chapter. Who will trust and obey?
C. The content is pretty extreme here, from God as Potter to a profane response to imprecatory prayer.
D. Great lessons are glorious about God, warning about response to truth, and humbling toward others.
E. The chapter is part of Jeremiah's blast against wicked and doomed Judah, but we can profit spiritually.
F. Can we eagerly like the fervent assembly in Nehemiah 8 bow our heads and worship to hear His word?

Jehovah Was a Potter Over Israel – Verses 1-6

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

A. This is the only word we want, and we should never tire of word and words from God.

B. As Jeremiah declared earlier, His word should be the rejoicing of our hearts (Jer 15:16).

C. Lesson: Truth from God among liars and lies beats gold or honey (Ps 19:10; Rom 3:4).

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

A. Let it be said again, Jehovah used all creative means to convict these people to repent.

B. God loves illustrating His sovereignty as a Potter (Is 29:16; 45:9; 64:8; Rom 9:20-24).

C. The more you embrace being His clay and exalting Him as Potter is win-win for both.

D. Lesson: Never disregard, question, or disobey any Bible instruction; it is perfect truth.

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

A. Jeremiah did exactly as God said, though not very exciting or promising for the prophet.

B. When He arrived it was as God had planned, he could watch a potter at work making.

C. There was the spinning blob of clay being formed into something the potter chose.

D. Lesson: If you do exactly what the Bible says, God will take care of the details for you.

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.

A. The potter's first attempt failed, so he balled the clay together and made a different one.

B. **Marred** = To spoil, impair. To damage so as to render useless. Compare Jeremiah 13:7.

C. We sometimes describe a rejection of a vessel by dumping in a bucket and adding water.

D. It was entirely the potter's choice to end the making of one vessel to make a better one.

E. Lesson: Embrace every difference you have from others or from your own life history.

5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

A. God said this would occur. He would speak to Jeremiah at the potter's house (Jer 18:2).

B. What follows is the application, meaning, and value of what Jeremiah had witnessed.

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.***

A. I find it interesting God used "house of Israel" twice then switched to Judah (Jer 18:11), since Israel had already been cast away and scattered about 100 years earlier by Assyria.
B. The question is glorious! He had total dominion over Israel as the potter over the clay.
    1. God loves illustrating His sovereignty as Potter (Is 29:16; 45:9; 64:8; Rom 9:20-24).
    2. The clay has no ability, value, or volition by itself. It is totally subject to the Potter.
    3. The Potter can make a vessel to honor or vessel to dishonor, and the clay has no say.
    4. He could ruin the nation by the Chaldean might and then make it better under Cyrus.
    5. Nebuchadnezzar declared God's sovereign dominion without clay (Daniel 4:34-35).
    6. All men are clay before God, as next verses teach, but Israel for sure by His choice.
    7. Given the context of coming judgment, the picture is to humble them to repentance.
C. Other questions also exalt Him to humble us (Matt 20:15; Rom 9:19-24; 11:33-36; etc.).
D. By the next section, the Potter can destroy nations or make them great by their conduct.
E. Lesson: Exalt God to humble man in extreme ways like this for His glory and your gain.
F. Lesson: Never complain or question God, for then you are clay questioning your Potter.
G. Lesson: God's ability to end a vessel is half the story. He can make the obedient great!

Section Lessons

A. Lesson: Truth from God among liars and lies beats gold or honey (Ps 19:10; Rom 3:4).
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He Ruled Nations By Obedience – Verses 7-10

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

A. When you read of nations here, recall Jeremiah had an international ministry (Jer 1:10).
B. The verbs used at his ordination are similar/same verbs used here (Jer 18:7 and Jer 18:9).
C. Yet the argument is largely the general rule to the specific case of Judah and the Jews.
D. Note again God's great creativity for a new approach to get His people to repentance.

E. Through Jeremiah, God had spoken of their plucking up, pulling down, and destruction.
F. Lesson: There is no difference between God dealing with a man or large or small nation.
G. Lesson: The if-then relationship of God with men is easy, fair, simple, and considerable.

8 If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

A. See God's incredible offer of mercy to Judah of course, but bolstered by Nineveh, etc.
B. God gave Ezekiel, a contemporary, this lesson in precious detail (Ezekiel 18:21-23).
C. Here is double repentance, God repents of threats when nations repent of sins (Jon 3:10).
D. For more encouragement about repentance, see the PPT sermon, *The 'R' Factor* … h ere.
E. Lesson: The severity in the Bible against sin and sinners can be remedied by repentance.
F. Lesson: Never feel hopeless, for Hezekiah and Nineveh's cases were severe, yet altered.

9 And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it;

A. On the other hand, from the previous two verses, God can reverse promises to build up.
B. The greatness and prosperity of nations is by the decree of God (I Chr 29:12; Dan 2:21).
C. Jehovah to Abraham all the way to Moses had promised to make Israel great in Canaan.
D. Jeremiah would convey messages from God to neighboring nations to submit to survive.
E. Lesson: God's promises are sincere and true, but can be compromised, if conditional.
F. Lesson: His favors to nations will be revoked if they turn from Him (Ps 33:12; 144:15).

10 If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

A. Judah should have perceived God had promised them Canaan, but they had forfeited it.
B. Jehovah to Abraham all the way to Moses had promised to make Israel great in Canaan.
C. God gave Ezekiel, a contemporary, this lesson in frightening honesty (Ezekiel 18:24).
D. Yet the argument is largely the general rule to the specific case of Judah and the Jews.
E. Here is double repentance, He repents of promises if nations backslide (II Kgs 18:9-12).
F. Lesson: Backsliding is evil, for it can and will undo God's promises for your best life.

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A. Lesson: There is no difference between God dealing with a man or large or small nation.
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Judah's Obstinance Was Profane – Verses 11-12

11 Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.

A. This short section is typical of the book – a warning with offer and their rebel response.

B. Following His general rules among nations, He "therefore" applied them to Jerusalem.

C. So read it, *thus saith the LORD*, as that stated above, "at what instant I shall speak."

D. God spoke evil against the Jews, as in the general rules just given, would they repent?

E. He was planning and devising their judgment – a war of desolation by the Chaldeans.

F. If they would turn from their evil as just described, He would repent of His evil device.

G. Lesson: The precepts and rules of God's word may be trusted exactly as they are given.

H. Lesson: God is ready, if you encounter a precept or rule of His, to test you by it soon.

12 And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.

A. Their answer is terribly haughty and mocks Jehovah's words of warning very wickedly.

B. They used Jehovah's use of "device" to prefer their own "devices," profanely mocking.

C. They in effect told Jeremiah his preaching was in vain because they would never repent.

D. They had given a similar answer of no hope to convert them much earlier (Jer 2:25).

E. How can men turn so violently evil to say these things – depraved hearts (Jer 17:9-10).

F. When they said their hearts were evil, they sarcastically mocked his indictment of them.

G. Lesson: When you sin presumptuously, how are you different from these vile rebels?

H. Lesson: Let us prepare for preaching and receive preaching by submission to correction.

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A. Lesson: The precepts and rules of God's word may be trusted exactly as they are given.

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God Would Punish Such Rebels – Verses 13-17

13 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Ask ye now among the heathen, who hath heard such things: the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing.

A. To limit backward review, use only this chapter to see how Jehovah built a good case.

B. Based on their haughty and rebellious scorn of Jeremiah, a conclusion can be drawn.
   1. Even pagans did not blaspheme their idols like the virgin of Israel did to Jehovah.
   2. What follower of any religion declares no hope of ever doing what the god expects?
   3. We saw this unprecedented forsaking of Jehovah in an earlier comparison (Jer 2:11).

C. God and Jeremiah used the most intimate name for Israel to magnify their rebellion.

D. Lesson: The example of those in other religions should provoke us to greater passion.

14 Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken?

A. Here are metaphors of the superiority of Jehovah to any other idol god or pagan religion.

B. Lebanon's fruitful fields or plains were surrounded by mountains with melting snow.
   1. It would be foolish for men to desert a well-watered place, how much more GOD?
   2. Recall how Jehovah was compared to the fountain of living waters (Jer 2:13; 17:13).
   3. Whether well-known waters of Lebanon or another, it is folly to leave them or GOD.

C. The second rhetorical question says any good source of flowing water is not forsaken.

D. The sense of the verse is easy by what comes next, and use of "forsaken" here is neat.

E. It is foolish to even consider leaving the only living and true God and a perfect religion.

F. Lesson: The only way to live is by the Bible, and any departure is as foolish as these.

15 Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up;

A. But Judah had made the foolish and fatal mistake that the metaphors had just mocked.

B. In the context, who would be so foolish to take his farming from Lebanon to the desert.

C. They forsook the living and true God to instead burn incense to vanity – worthless gods.

D. False prophets and priests took Judah away from Jehovah's religion of ancient paths.

E. Recall the previous mention of old paths as the true and tried religion of God (Jer 6:16).

F. Instead, they now walked in an unproven and unprepared way. Think civil engineering.

G. Lesson: The perilous times of the last days turn from the truth to fables (II Tim 4:3-4).

16 To make their land desolate, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head.

A. Leaving perfect flowing water will reduce a land to desolated desert, so forgetting God.
B. Their forgetting Jehovah would totally ruin their nation for as long as God left the curse.
C. Jeremiah has wisely applied all four verses of the rules for nations above (Jer 18:7-10).
D. From Judah's great prosperity under its best kings, it would be seen as a terrible shame.
E. God reduced some nations, like Babylon itself, to literal perpetual hissing as it is today.
F. Lesson: We must not live like Jehu, Solomon, Demas who turned back and astonish us.
G. Lesson: We should live like Paul, who fought, finished, and kept the faith gloriously.

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

A. The east wind is a simile, and we know from here was terrible and elsewhere (Ps 48:7).
B. Though the enemy, Chaldeans of Babylon, came from the east and north, it is a simile.
C. He started this section calling them a virgin; He ended by promising His back, not face.
D. The coming war with Chaldeans was their calamity, but Jehovah would not help them.
E. He would turn His back on them, for they had turned their back on Him (Jeremiah 2:27).
F. Lesson: Wisdom says the same to fools rejecting her – she will mock their calamity.
G. Lesson: We want our God to cast all our sins behind His back, but never turn His back.
H. Lesson: How to have His favorable face always? Do what they did not. Trust and obey.

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They Devised to Their Own Ruin – Verses 18-23

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

A. The Jews conspired against Jeremiah after he warned of desolation; they had mocked him and told him there was no hope; they would follow their own devices (Jer 18:12).
B. They now conspired mocking God's choice of words "devise" and "device" (Jer 18:11).
    1. Jeremiah had preached that God had devised a device of Chaldean war against them.
    2. Now they used the words to mock Jeremiah by devising devices against the prophet.
C. They planned their conspiracy to attack him verbally and to reject all of his preaching.
D. They planned their rebellion on the basis they were as ministerially gifted as Jeremiah.
    1. Their priests knew the law, wise men good counsel, and prophets had God's word.
    2. As God's ministers (though God had not spoken to them), their preaching was better.
    3. Thus, they could preach the nation would have peace, and the people believed them.
    4. Jeremiah had corrected this arrogance by mocking God's word as vain (Jer 8:8-9).
    5. Jehovah had then consigned them to judgment for lying about peace (Jer 8:10-12).
E. This is the same kind of presumption by Miriam/Aaron and Korah and his company.
    1. Moses' siblings presumed, "Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?" But then it reads, "And the LORD heard it" (Numbers 12:2).
    2. Korah, leader of 254 princes, presumed, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LOD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD? (Numbers 16:1-3).
    3. For more detail about the earlier conspiracies, the sermon, Miriam and Korah.
F. Poor Jeremiah – he faithfully preached the truth that surely came to pass, but was hated.
G. Lesson: Every preacher, Jeremiah or Paul, is checked by one rule – Bible (Acts 17:11).
H. Lesson: Men today will not endure sound doctrine so they pile up scratchers with fables.

19 Give heed to me, O LORD, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me.

A. The one-verse summary of the conspiracy led Jeremiah to pray against them as follows.
B. As Hezekiah laid Sennacherib's letter before God, Jeremiah asked Him hear the Jews.
C. All pastors, like Jeremiah and Paul, trust or ask God to see and hear their adversaries.
D. Lesson: It is amazing men resent God's word and His preachers, like in America today.

20 Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them.

A. Jeremiah appealed to what he had done for them – warned them of divine wrath coming.

B. He had preached by a divine call and only God's words for Judah's good and salvation.
C. Now, as the previous verse details, they intended to reject his words and slander him.
D. He asked God to consider the exchange – they repaying him evil for his good to them.
E. Good for evil, divine; good for good and evil for evil, human; evil for good, diabolical.
F. Here they dug a metaphorical pit for his soul; later they will put him in a literal dungeon.
G. Lesson: Though our God is omniscient, sometimes you may pray for Him to remember.
H. Lesson: With great care, let us never be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

21 Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and let their men be put to death; let their young men be slain by the sword in battle.

A. The prayer's petitions or requests are simple enough to easily grasp – families killed.
B. The reason for his hard prayer is in the verses 18-20 – conspiracy to repay evil for good.
C. The prophet's furious, imprecatory (cursing) prayer needs to be carefully understood.
    1. We have encountered prayers like this already (Jeremiah 11:20; 12:3; 15:15; 17:18).
    2. We also find in the Psalms such imprecatory prayers (Ps 5:10; 6:10; 10:15; 31:17-18; 35:4,26; 40:14-15; 58:6; 69:22-28; 70:2-3; 71:13; 83:16-17; 109:6-10; 144:6).
    3. He was a prophet; his words were inspired here, not from personal, fleshly revenge.
    4. The words certainly made good sermon content, as inspired, like his other warnings.
    5. He was a prophet; he knew their doom was sealed; his content was truly prophecies.
    6. Other inspired or glorified prayers are similar (Ps 139:22-22; Gal 5:12; Rev 6:9-11).
    7. Such prayers usually had the glory, truth, worship of God the highest (Rev 6:9-11).
D. We have balancing factors in the scriptures to keep us from ordinarily praying this way.
    1. We divide between our enemies and His enemies to pray for ours (Matt 5:43-48).
    2. If we allow personal injuries to drive praying, we will likely exceed in vengeance.
    3. We know God loved Moses and esteemed his intercessory prayers (Psalm 106:23).
    4. Jesus' example, followed by Stephen, was very merciful (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60).
    5. Jesus corrected the spirit of James and John trying to be like Elijah (Luke 9:51-56).
    6. David, in spite of his imprecatory prayers, rejected his nephews' spirit (II Sam 3:39).
    7. The example of martyrs on earth, with much Spirit and grace, was very benevolent.
    8. Prophets, apostles, those glorified, know reprobates and prophecy, which we cannot.
E. Lesson: Imprecatory prayers in the Bible like these are right, righteous, and reflect God.
F. Lesson: Self-righteousness or pride or vengeance can corrupt our spirits to pray evilly.
G. Lesson: We can instead in humility and love follow our Lord's example and command.

22 Let a cry be heard from their houses, when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them: for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet.

A. The prayer's petitions or requests are simple enough to easily grasp – terror for revenge.

B. The reason for his hard prayer is in the verses 18-20 – conspiracy to repay evil for good.

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   8. Prophets, apostles, those glorified, know reprobates and prophecy, which we cannot.

E. Lesson: Bible contrasts – David or Saul, David or Joab, Jesus or Jonah – choose best.

F. Lesson: Recall David's sad cry when crowned, *Ye sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me.*

G. Lesson: The lower we put ourselves in spirit and prayer, God will lift us closer to Him.

23 Yet, LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me: forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee; deal thus with them in the time of thine anger.

A. The prayer's petitions or requests are simple enough to easily grasp – no forgiveness.

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E. Lesson: Let us live and love like the martyrs with their love of truth but humble mercy.

F. Lesson: Let us die like Stephen with a prayer to Jesus while following Jesus' example.

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