

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Jeremiah: Prophet Of Judgment Followed By Blessing

Part XXXVII: The Sovereign Potter And The Stubborn People: Recipe For Severe Judgment (Jeremiah 18:1-17)

I. Introduction

- A. God is totally sovereign over men so that He can either bless or punish them, and yet the sin of man is so great that the hardened and rebellious will still stubbornly reject him, bringing on themselves enormous judgment.
- B. This was the case in ancient Judah of Jeremiah's day, and viewing this fact in Jeremiah 18:1-17 instructs us:

II. The Sovereign Potter And The Stubborn People: Recipe For Severe Judgment, Jeremiah 18:1-17.

- A. In still another object lesson, God told Jeremiah to learn of and thus clarify to Judah His infinite sovereignty over the nations that Judah might revere the Lord and repent of her wicked idolatry, Jeremiah 18:1-11:
 - 1. The Lord sent Jeremiah down to the potter's house and there hear a message from Him that was connected to what the potter was doing while making clay pots there, Jeremiah 18:1-2.
 - 2. When he arrived at the potter's house, Jeremiah saw him at work producing a clay pot on the "wheels," plural, Jer. 18:3. Ryrie explains that "(o)n a vertical axis were two circular stones; the lower one was spun by the potter's feet, causing the upper one to rotate also. The clay was placed on the upper wheel" in the center, and the potter would carefully use his hands to form the base and rising edges of the clay pot while it spun around on the upper wheel, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Jeremiah 18:3.
 - 3. The vessel that Jeremiah first saw the potter forming was marred in his hand, so he punched it down into its original clay mass and began to make another vessel as it pleased him, Jeremiah 18:4.
 - 4. God then spoke to Jeremiah with a message for him to give to the people of Israel, a message that He was like the Sovereign Potter and the clay in His hand like the nation Israel, Jeremiah 18:5-11:
 - a. At what time God would declare judgment on a nation or a kingdom to pluck it up and break it down to destroy it like the potter had destroyed his initial formed clay pot, He could otherwise decide not to destroy it if the nation repented of its evil so that it no longer was spiritually marred in His hand, Jeremiah 18:5-8.
 - b. However, at any time that a nation God had decided to develop and build only to find that it did evil, God could decide to change His plan and instead destroy that nation in judgment, Jeremiah 18:9-10.
 - c. Thus, God wanted Jeremiah to give this illustration of the potter and the clay to the people of Judah, informing them that as the Sovereign Potter, He was planning to destroy them in judgment for sin, but that if they repented, there was the implied hope that He would change His plan and spare them, v. 11a. For this reason, God urged the people through Jeremiah to repent that He might spare them, Jeremiah 18:11b.
- B. However, this illustration from Jeremiah did not cause Judah to repent, for she was committed to idolatry, choosing to stay committed to her own plans in great stubbornness, Jeremiah 18:12.
- C. Thus, Jeremiah had to give a message from God of great judgment to stubborn Judah, Jeremiah 18:13-17:
 - 1. Jeremiah was to claim that Judah alone had decided no longer to follow her God; unlike all the pagan nations that resolutely followed their false gods, Judah's people had done what was unnatural among the nations, opting to depart from their true God, a gross deviation from the norm for any nation, Jer. 18:13.
 - 2. The melting snow of the mountains of Lebanon never vanished from its rocky slopes, and its cool waters never ceased to flow, but Judah's people had acted unnaturally, Jer. 18:14 NIV; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1153. The contrast between the natural faithfulness of melting snow and unnatural Judah is huge, Ibid.
 - 3. Judah had thus unnaturally forgotten God, burning incense to idols that made her stumble as she left the ancient righteous paths for unknown idolatrous ones, causing her to wander to her harm, Jer. 18:15; Ibid.
 - 4. Judah's land would thus be laid waste in judgment, the nation becoming an object of lasting scorn as all the Gentiles who passed by would be appalled and shake their heads in mockery, Jeremiah 18:16.
 - 5. God would thus scatter them among the nations like a wind from the dry, hot desert to the east, and God would show them His back in the day of their disaster rather than His face in blessing, Jer. 18:17; Ibid.

Lesson: For rejecting the message of His total sovereignty over them as to whether He blessed or punished them, deciding in their unnatural stubborn rebellion to stick to their idols, God would severely punish Judah's people!

Application: (1) May we recall how vulnerable we are to God's absolute sovereignty over us that we reverently obey and not disobey Him. (2) If we note that we or others are functioning in an unnatural way in the spiritual realm as Judah was in Jeremiah's era, may we know that spiritual stubborn rebellion is involved, and adjust accordingly.