

Jeremiah 19

God is continuing with his *show-and-tell-lessons* with Jeremiah. The potter can teach us much about ourselves. Chapter 18 was about redemption and re-purposing of the clay. Now we are taught about the other side of the equation. What about those who harden their hearts, and refuse the hand of the potter?

Read Jeremiah 19:1-9: God sends Jeremiah to go and buy a clay jar from the potter, and to take public witnesses. Jeremiah will dash this bottle in the potter's field as an illustration and prophecy against Judah. You can redeem soft clay, if you are soft-hearted...but once you harden (like a bottle), you cannot be re-made. You cannot fix a cracked bottle.

The History of the Potters Field

The potter had a field that was likely of a heavy clay soil, for making pottery. The potter also needed a place to throw his flawed and cracked dishes and pots that could not be used. There had to be piles of clay shards.



This potter's field was likely littered with broken pottery shards all over. This is the same potter's field that Judas Iscariot made famous after betraying Jesus.

There is a lot of history tied to this potter's field in the Old and New Testaments.

- The potter's field is in a place called the **Valley of Ben Hinnom** (son of Hinnom). During the reign of Ahaz and Manasseh and other evil kings, it was a place of intense idol worship. The worship of Baal and Molech promoted adultery and resulted in many unwanted illegitimate children. This valley is where all of these unwanted children were disposed of by burning them. Their practice was supposedly to sacrifice these *love children* to their gods by putting them in the fire. The earth can serve as a witness or a recording device to what took place on this desecrated ground. It is the perfect location to have a mass murder of the residents of Jerusalem.

- *“Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, (Genesis 3)*
 - *“What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. (Genesis 4)*
 - *Hear now what the LORD says: “Arise, plead your case before the mountains, And let the hills hear your voice. Hear, O you mountains, the LORD’s complaint, And you strong foundations of the earth; For the LORD has a complaint against His people, And He will contend with Israel. (Micah 6:1-2)*
- The sounds of so many babies screaming and crying while being burned to death was too much to take, so the child offering ceremonies incorporated a drum roll, to drown out the screams and crying. The word for drum in Hebrew is **Tophet**. This valley became known as Tophet, for its constant drumming. We lived a couple miles from one of the local high school marching band practice fields. At nighttime you can hear drums from far away. The residents of Jerusalem may not have all participated, but they had very clear nightly reminders as they heard these drum rolls. Being complicit with such a tragedy makes you partially to blame.
 - Over time, this Valley became known as **Gehenna**. It had served as a potter's dump for broken bottles that were unsavable. The adjacent gate to Jerusalem was called the potsherd gate. Broken pots are comparable in scripture to unsaved men. Over time, it became the city dump for all refuse. Gehenna had non-stop fires from burning trash. Gehenna (the potters field) was piled up with burning donkey carcasses, human waste, and all kinds of trash. Gehenna became a synonymous comparison to **Hell**.
 - Isaiah coined the phrase that became synonymous with references to hell: *"And they shall go forth and look Upon the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For **their worm does not die, And their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.**" (Isaiah 66:24)*





- Psalm 23 talks about the fearful place of the **Valley of the Shadow of Death**. *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; (Psalm 23:4).* We historically have attributed this to a non-specific representation of scary situations. The word for shadow of death is *Tsalmaveth*. It is actually a dark dungeon that is deep in the earth, identified as a place of the dead and holds the terrors of darkness. It is the grave and alternately used for extreme danger. The word used here for *valley* is specifically a narrow and deep gorge. Perhaps David was speaking prophetically about Jesus going to the earthly equivalent to hell before facing and overcoming the spiritual hell after his crucifixion.
- - Jesus faced the forces of darkness head-on after he celebrated his Passover. He went into the Valley of Kidron (place of darkness). It is also called the Valley of Jehosaphat (*Yahweh judges*). *It is us When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered. And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples. Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?" They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am He." And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. (John 18).*
 - Gehenna is to the south and west of Jerusalem's walls, and the Kidron Valley is to the east.

Akeldama

Jeremiah prophesied that this potter's field would be like Gettysburg, in that it would flow with the blood of many lost lives in a concentrated area. Jeremiah prophesies that countless lives will end here; and this will become a place of horrors. The Babylonians would have a field day killing Jews here. This judgement ultimately stemmed from years of idolatry and ignoring their creator. God coined the name **Valley of Slaughter**. It will be a place where vultures engorge themselves on rotting flesh.

The potsherd gate was the city exit where everyone threw their cast offs and refuse to burn. The potters field not only served as his pottery dump; but it also became the pottery dump and eventually city dump for Jerusalem.

This was not only a prophetic Old Testament picture of Jerusalem's destruction and mass death sentence and appointment to hell. It was carried into the New Testament. When Judas sold out the location of Jesus to the priests, he was paid 30 pieces of silver (which is the redemption price of a slave). He realized that his bribe resulted in the death of an innocent man. He tried to return his finder's fee to the priests. The priests could not receive *blood money* compensation in their treasury, so the priests bought the old potters field, and named it **Akeldama** (*the field of blood*). This became where the place where they would bury the bodies of strangers, criminals and the poor. Jesus was lumped in with Gentiles, thieves and the poor. This is that same potter's field. It was a field of blood for many reasons spanning multiple times of history. God always uses fitting judgements.

*Judas realized But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood." And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Therefore that field has been called **the Field of Blood** to this day. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me."* (Matthew 27:6-10)

So it was broken on that day. Thus the poor of the flock, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the LORD. Then I said to them, "If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain." So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter. (Zechariah 11:11-13)

- **Read Jeremiah 19:10-14:** Jeremiah broke the bottle, and bury it in Tophet, and then go to the temple to prophecy. He basically was saying this cannot be fixed. The horrors of Tophet will now visit the residents of Jerusalem. The voices of the screaming babies would re-visit them. He also said the rooftop idolatry that took place all over town would also bring them to account. The people have hardened their hearts, just like a bottle is hardened. Neither can be repurposed. In fact, so many will die there, that there won't be any bare ground to bury bodies.



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