



bb-TBC-23

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☰ Context	Mike Coles
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↗ Related to Projects (Column)	<u>NLR bb-TBC - Study Guide</u>
☰ Status	Broadcast Libsyn-ced

☰ Type	Bible Series Preaching
☰ Working Title	Two Visits to the Potter's House
Σ days left	-8
☰ with Allan H	
☰ with Ron B	

Introduction:

The first as a spectator, the second as a buyer...

▼ Personal associations.

Burslem, Stoke on Trent, Royal Doulton, Josiah Wedgwood and generations of my family for almost 200 years. I grew up among the smoke of the pottery kilns and my adventure playground was a series of 'shard-rucks' of pottery refuse tips; more of that later. I worked as a labourer in the Josiah Wedgwood factory for almost 2 years in my early twenties as a potter's labourer and with Jeremiah 18 & 19 in mind I watched the processes.

You would probably be surprised at how many allusions there are to potters and their work in the Bible. Jeremiah is by no means the only writer to use metaphors from the making and breaking of pots. It all starts in Genesis and ends in the Revelation.

▼ Genesis 2:7–8

And Jehovah God **formed** man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.
And Jehovah God planted a garden eastward, in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had **formed**. (Genesis 2:7–8 ASV)

The man 'formed, shaped, potted'

formed H3335 יָצַר **yatzar**

potter H3136a יוֹצֵר yotzer

cf. and the rib, which Jehovah God had taken from the man, **made** he a woman, and brought her unto the man. (Genesis 2:22 ASV)

The woman 'built'

ASV mg. **buildded** he into a woman

made H1129 בָּנָה banah

GK H1215 | S H1129 בָּנָה bānāh 377x

v. [root of: 1218, 1220, 1221, 1224, 1230, 4445, 4447, 9322; cf. 1201, 1426; 10111 [also used with compound proper names]]. Q to make, build, rebuild, establish; Qp, N to be built, established. → build, build (up); fashion.

▼ Revelation 2:27

“He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’—as I also have received from My Father; (Revelation 2:27 NKJV)

Recap:

▼ The Conflict among the Covenants;

But which is true? I will never leave you nor forsake you or I will forsake you and hide my face from you. We are both true but there is a vital passage of scripture in the prophecies of Jeremiah which explains the way in which prophecy works. God's word is utterly reliable and he will never fail but there are working principles that must be added to that statement otherwise we should be driven to admit that God's word has not been true.

After all, the throne of David is currently not in Jerusalem, and as far as I know there's not a single identifiable descendent of David alive today on Earth. The temple and its priesthood to know longer operating although God said both his covenants were everlasting. How can we understand these things? There are two parts to the answer.

Let's see what Jeremiah has to say in one of those messages from God. It comes from a prophecy in which God was addressing the house of Israel that got into captivity some 140 years previously. That nation has been removed from its land and resettled in various parts of the Assyrian Empire. It had vanished, and only the memory lingers on. But God has not given up and he sends a message to Jeremiah about a potter having to remake a pot because something had gone wrong with it while it was spinning on the wheel.

I worked with a potter working on a wheel. It was a never-ending fascination to watch the clay rise and fall under the Potter's hands. As

long as the clay is in his hands and responsive he can remake it... fresh, differently as the Potter designs. Jeremiah uses this picture as an illustration and then draws out vital and unchanging principles about the way in which a prophetic word operates.

▼ Jeremiah 18:1–4 NET version

The LORD said to Jeremiah:

“Go down at once to the potter’s house. I will speak to you further there.”

So I went down to the potter’s house and found him working at his wheel.

Now and then there would be something wrong with the pot he was molding from the clay with his hands. So he would rework the clay into **another kind of pot** as he saw fit. (Jeremiah 18:1–4 NET)

This is not a promise to repair it but to replace it with 'another kind of pot'.

This lasting principle comes in two parts;

Reversible curses... and blessings

▼ Jeremiah 18:7–8

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

if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. (Jeremiah 18:7–8 ASV)

▼ Good News

Apparently, God's curses are conditional as well as his blessings. Until the very last word is spoken there is always hope. Even if God did not specifically give the 'conditions' and his judgement seem absolutely final that is still the possibility of him reversing his decision. There are several vivid examples of this in the Scriptures.

▼ The story of Jonah...

ends with a petulant prophet who wanted God's disastrous judgement to come on the capital city of his enemies. He had brought a word of absolute, impending catastrophe. "In 40 days Nineveh will be destroyed." No escape clauses, just a single stark sentence. "40 days and it is over." But the Ninevites repented and God spared them and Jonah is angry. We can paraphrase his protest; "I knew you would do that, it's just like you!" Jonah 4:2

▼ The story of Manasseh

The nation of Israel had all evil kings but the nation of Judah had some evil ones too. The worst thing in Judah was a man called Manasseh. He was easily as bad as any of Israel's kings and suffered his own personal captivity. The Assyrian king took Manasseh off to Babylon what is the rule by the Syrians and that was the end of the matter... Oh, no it wasn't. While in Babylon this most wicked of Judas kings found genuine repentance.

▼ 2Chronicles 33:11-13

Wherefore Jehovah brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh in chains, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

And when he was in distress, he besought Jehovah his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.

And he prayed unto him; and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that Jehovah he was God.

(2Chronicles 33:11-13 ASV)

▼ Prodigals

This is one of the great themes in the Bible, God can restore the Prodigal. And the Bible is full of them; Prodigal kings Prodigal prophets, Prodigal wives, prodigal sons, Prodigal apostles... almost no end. Each one is proving the validity of this amazing truth that even when God has pronounced the sentence, between the sentence and the execution, it is time to change and when change comes God 'changes his mind' too.

▼ Ezekiel 18:30-32

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord Jehovah. Return ye, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherein ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the

Lord Jehovah: wherefore turn yourselves, and live. (Ezekiel 18:30–32 ASV)

▼ Bad News

this is genuine good news and we rejoice in it but this principle works in both directions as Jeremiah makes very plain;

▼ Jer 18:9-10

And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; 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. (Jeremiah 18:9–10 KJV)

If God promises blessing and those to whom it has been promised act sinfully then God will 'change his mind' about the blessing that he had promised.

▼ There is a sense then in which every promise that God makes is conditional

Responses

even if he doesn't specify the conditions. As we read Jeremiah 18 we see how God applied this principle to two separate nations.

To the nation of Israel, the house of Israel, already in captivity, it becomes a promise of hope.

To the nation of Judah relaxing its arrogant complacency, it becomes a dire warning.

Jeremiah applies the same principle to the promise of God's blessing or to the threat of God's curse. During his day the people of the nation-state of Judah were Bible-sure that God must continue to bless them, but Jeremiah spells out, letter by letter, the principal. If God promises 'blessing' but those to whom he promises 'blessing' turn aside into sin, then God will not keep his promise; the blessings will be forfeit because they were always intrinsically 'conditional'.

In fact, this passage of scripture is giving us a vital key to the interpretation of a prophecy. There is no harm in repeating; it is telling us that all God's promises are conditional, even those which may appear to be non-conditional.

▼ Their response: Jeremiah 18:11–12

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

But they say, It is in vain; for we will walk after our own devices, and we will do every one after the stubbornness of his evil heart. (Jeremiah 18:11–12 ASV)

▼ God's response to their response:

▼ a half chapter of deadly judgements Jeremiah 18:13-23

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

Shall the snow of Lebanon fail from the rock of the field? or shall the cold waters that flow down from afar be dried up?

For my people have forgotten me, they have burned incense to false gods; and they have been made to stumble in their ways, in the ancient paths, to walk in bypaths, in a way not cast up; to make their land an astonishment, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and shake his head. I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.

¶ 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.

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

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

Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and give them over to the power of the sword; and let their wives become childless, and widows; and let their men be slain of death, and their young men smitten of the sword in battle.

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.

Yet, Jehovah, 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 thou with them in the time of thine anger. (Jeremiah 18:13–23 ASV)

▼ and another visit to the Potter's House for Jeremiah:

▼ Jeremiah 19:1–15

¶ Thus said Jehovah, Go, and buy a **potter's earthen bottle**, and take of the elders of the people, and of the elders of the priests; and go forth unto **the valley of the son of Hinnom**, which is by the entry of the gate Harsith, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee;

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

Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, that they knew not, they and their fathers and the kings of Judah; and have filled this place with the blood of innocents, and have built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons in the fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal; which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind:

therefore, behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that this place shall no more be called Topheth, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of Slaughter.

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 hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies will I give to be food for the birds of the heavens, and for the beasts of the earth.

And I will make this city an astonishment, and a hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all the plagues thereof.

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 in the distress, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their life, shall distress them.

¶ Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee,

and shalt say unto them, Thus saith Jehovah 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 in Topheth, till there be no place to bury.

Thus will I do unto this place, saith Jehovah, and to the inhabitants thereof, even making this city as Topheth:

and the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, which are defiled, shall be as the place of Topheth, even 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.

¶ Then came Jeremiah from Topheth, whither Jehovah had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of Jehovah's house, and said to all the people:

Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all its towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it; because they have made their neck stiff, that they may not hear my words. (Jeremiah 19:1-15 ASV)

▼ NET Bible:

The exact location of the Potsherd Gate is unknown since it is named nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. It is sometimes identified, on the basis of the Jerusalem Targum, with the Dung Gate mentioned in Neh 2:13; 3:13-14; and 12:31. It is probably called "Potsherd Gate" because that is where the potter threw out the broken pieces of pottery that were no longer of use to him. The Valley of Ben Hinnom has already been noted in 7:31-32 in connection with the illicit religious practices, including child sacrifice, that took place there. The Valley of Ben Hinnom (or sometimes Valley of Hinnom) runs along the west and south sides of Jerusalem.

To many in Jerusalem it became a fight between what God had said and what God was saying and to the last they believe that God will not allow

the Davidic monarchy and the Levitical priesthood to end. When the armies of Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, took its king captive and looted the Temple of its most sacred relics, and burned it to the ground, the people of the covenant were stunned. As one writer expressed it, 'the battering rams of Nebuchadnezzar's army breached the theology of Israel'.

How long is 'forever'?

We ought to examine the word 'everlasting' too. In our English Bibles, it is sometimes translated 'eternal'. Just how long is 'forever'. In the New Testament 'eternal' is often the translation of a phrase that literally means 'to the ages of the ages'. perhaps the best translation for this word is 'age lasting'. But what is an 'age' and how long does an 'age' last?

In the Old Testament, it is usually a translation of the word **עולם לְעֹלָם**

The Nephilim were in the earth in those days, and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them: the same were the mighty men that were of **old**, the men of renown. (Genesis 6:4 ASV)

Whatever our view on these 'Nephilim' do we regard them as being 'eternal'?

GK H6409 | S H5769 **עולם לְעֹלָם** 439x (used 439 times in the Old Testament) n.m. [cf. 6518; 10550]. everlasting, forever, eternity; from of old, ancient, lasting, for a duration. → ancient; eternal; everlasting; forever.

sometimes in means 'in perpetuity', sometimes if means for an aeon a long, but fixed, period of time.

▼ An illustration: Exodus 21:5–6 ASV

But if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free:

then his master shall bring him unto God, and shall bring him to the door, or unto the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever. (Exodus 21:5–6 ASV)

The word or phrase translated here as 'for ever' is that Hebrew word **עולם לְעֹלָם**. We might have translated it everlastingly but it is obvious that we have to understand it in its own context. As we say from time to time; 'Bible words don't have definitions they have histories'. Or as we seen before words have a semantic range and we have to translate the word in its context to give it its true meaning. **עולם לְעֹלָם** it seems, is a word-bundle

and we need to give attention to context, context, context. For example, our passage in Exodus 25 does not mean that in heaven **everlastingly** we shall find people who decided to stay with their Hebrew Masters 3500 years ago and are still acting as bond-servants.

Tracing through the use of the Hebrew word: will give a clear sense of the way in which the word is used. The Temple lamps, for example, did not burn everlastingly but through that eon year. The Davidic throne did not remain in Jerusalem everlastingly but for a long time. The priesthood that was given to the live vertical family everlastingly ended finally in 8070. We need to examine the context of the Hebrew word: as we interpret bible prophecies.

So we begin to see that the varying coexisting covenants were not mutually exclusive but were part of the way in which God was conveying truth and preparing mates for even greater truth. It is well to be conscious that when we have apparent inconsistencies in the Bible it is not the Bible which needs modification but usually around way of thinking.

A Summary:

In 'The Better Covenant' Chapter 8, and in our study guides 22 and 23, we examined the issues at stake when covenants seem to be contradictory and discovered a vital lesson that all God's promises are 'conditional' even those which seem to be unconditional. We saw the way that Jeremih struggled to bring the 'current' word of God to a people who are comforting themselves with words that God had said long ago. It is not that God has forgotten or abandoned his promises but often those promises need to be interpreted in the light of the relevant context. We saw two that the word 'everlasting' is highly context-sensitive and that many things said to be 'everlasting' were actually just for fixed periods of time.