

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Jeremiah Chapters 19-20

12/17/14

Bible Study Notes - Chapter 19

1 This is what the LORD says: "Go and buy a clay jar from a potter. Take along some of the elders of the people and of the priests² and go out to the Valley of Ben Hinnom, near the entrance of the Potsherd Gate. There proclaim the words I tell you,³ and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, you kings of Judah and people of Jerusalem. This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Listen! I am going to bring a disaster on this place that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle.⁴ For they have forsaken me and made this a place of foreign gods; they have burned incense in it to gods that neither they nor their ancestors nor the kings of Judah ever knew, and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent.⁵ They have built the high places of Baal to burn their children in the fire as offerings to Baal—something I did not command or mention, nor did it enter my mind.⁶ So beware, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when people will no longer call this place Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter.

7 "In this place I will ruin the plans of Judah and Jerusalem. I will make them fall by the sword before their enemies, at the hands of those who want to kill them, and I will give their carcasses as food to the birds and the wild animals.⁸ I will devastate this city and make it an object of horror and scorn; all who pass by will be appalled and will scoff because of all its wounds.⁹ I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and daughters, and they will eat one another's flesh because their enemies will press the siege so hard against them to destroy them.'¹⁰ "Then break the jar while those who go with you are watching,¹¹ and say to them, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I will smash this nation and this city just as this potter's jar is smashed and cannot be repaired. They will bury the dead in Topheth until there is no more room.¹² This is what I will do to this place and to those who live here, declares the LORD. I will make this city like Topheth.¹³ The houses in Jerusalem and those of the kings of Judah will be defiled like this place, Topheth—all the houses where they burned incense on the roofs to all the starry hosts and poured out drink offerings to other gods.'" ¹⁴ Jeremiah then returned from Topheth, where the LORD had sent him to prophesy, and stood in the court of the LORD's temple and said to all the people, ¹⁵ "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'Listen! I am going to bring on this city and all the villages around it every disaster I pronounced against them, because they were stiff-necked and would not listen to my words.'"

19:6 The Valley of Ben Hinnom was the garbage dump of Jerusalem and the place where children were sacrificed to the god Molek. It is also mentioned in 7:31-32. Topheth was located in the valley and means "fireplace." God declared that the place of sacrifice would become a place of slaughter. The killers of the innocent would be judged by losing their own lives.

19:7-13 The horrible carnage that Jeremiah predicted happened twice: in 586 B.C. during the Babylonian invasion under Nebuchadnezzar, and in A.D. 70 when Titus destroyed Jerusalem. During the Babylonian siege, food became so scarce that people became cannibals, even eating their own children. (See Leviticus 26:29 and Deuteronomy 28:53-57 for prophecies concerning this; and see 2 Kings 6:28-29; Lamentations 2:20; 4:10 for accounts of actual occurrences.)

Bible Study Notes - Chapter 20

Jeremiah and Pashhur

20 When the priest Pashhur son of Immer, the official in charge of the temple of the LORD, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things, ² he had Jeremiah the prophet beaten and put in the stocks at the Upper Gate of Benjamin at the LORD's temple. ³ The next day, when Pashhur released him from the stocks, Jeremiah said to him, "The LORD's name for you is not Pashhur, but Terror on Every Side. ⁴ For this is what the LORD says: 'I will make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends; with your own eyes you will see them fall by the sword of their enemies. I will give all Judah into the hands of the king of Babylon, who will carry them away to Babylon or put them to the sword. ⁵ I will deliver all the wealth of this city into the hands of their enemies—all its products, all its valuables and all the treasures of the kings of Judah. They will take it away as plunder and carry it off to Babylon. ⁶ And you, Pashhur, and all who live in your house will go into exile to Babylon. There you will die and be buried, you and all your friends to whom you have prophesied lies.'"

20:1-18 This event took place during the reign of Jehoiakim of Judah. Jeremiah preached at the Valley of Ben Hinnom, the center of idolatry in the city. He also preached in the temple, which should have been the center of true worship. Both places attracted many people; both were places of false worship.

20:1-3 Pashhur was the official in charge of maintaining order in the temple (see 29:26 for a description of the responsibility). He was also a priest and had pretended to be a prophet. After hearing Jeremiah's words, Pashhur had him beaten and locked up instead of taking his message to heart and acting on it. The truth sometimes stings, but our reaction to the truth shows what we are made of. We can deny the charges and destroy evidence of our misdeeds, or we can take the truth humbly to heart and let it change us. Pashhur may have thought he was being a strong leader, but he was really a coward.

20:4-6 This prophecy of destruction came true in three waves of invasion by Babylon. The first wave happened within the year (605 B.C.). Pashhur was probably exiled to Babylon during the second wave in 597 B.C. when Jehoiachin was taken captive. The third invasion occurred in 586 B.C. when the temple was destroyed.

Jeremiah's Complaint

⁷ You deceived^[a] me, LORD, and I was deceived; you overpowered me and prevailed. I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me. ⁸ Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So the word of the LORD has brought me insult and reproach all day long. ⁹ But if I say, "I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot. ¹⁰ I hear many whispering, "Terror on every side! Denounce him! Let's denounce him! All my friends are waiting for me to slip, saying, "Perhaps he will be deceived; then we will prevail over him and take our revenge on him." ¹¹ But the LORD is with me like a mighty warrior; so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will fail and be thoroughly disgraced; their dishonor will never be forgotten. ¹² LORD Almighty, you who examine the righteous and probe the heart and mind, let me see your vengeance on them, for to you I have committed my cause. ¹³ Sing to the LORD! Give praise to the LORD! He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked. ¹⁴ Cursed be the day I was born! May the day my mother bore me not be blessed! ¹⁵ Cursed be the man who brought my father the news, who made him very glad,

saying, "A child is born to you—a son!"¹⁶ May that man be like the towns the LORD overthrew without pity. May he hear wailing in the morning, a battle cry at noon.¹⁷ For he did not kill me in the womb, with my mother as my grave, her womb enlarged forever.¹⁸ Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?

20:7-18 Jeremiah cried out in despair mixed with praise, unburdening his heart to God. He had faithfully proclaimed God's word and had received nothing in return but persecution and sorrow. Yet when he withheld God's word for a while, it became fire in his bones until he could hold it back no longer. When God's living message of forgiveness and love becomes fire in your bones, you also will feel compelled to share it with others, regardless of the results.

20:14-18 Probably as troubling as the self-loathing that oozes from these verses is the stark contrast between the exuberant confidence of the previous paragraph and the sudden inward turn of revulsion. In Jeremiah's honestly recorded moments of despair, however, we can find hope. If someone with such intimate awareness of God's presence struggled with insecurity, we ought not to be surprised over our own failures and weaknesses. Jeremiah doesn't give us an excuse, but an example. No matter how we may feel about ourselves at any moment, God remains unchanged, loving, and present.