

CRYSTALLIZATION-STUDY OF JEREMIAH AND LAMENTATIONS, Week 5

**God as Our Sovereign Potter
Making Us His Vessels, His Containers, to Contain Him**

Scripture Reading: Jer. 18:1-10; Isa. 64:8; Rom. 9:15-16, 19-23; Acts 9:15; 2 Cor. 4:6-7

Jeremiah 18:1	The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying,
Jeremiah 18:2	Arise and go down to the potter's house , and there I will let you hear My words .
Jeremiah 18:3	So I went down to the potter's house, and he was there doing work at his wheel.
Jeremiah 18:4	But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand; so he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good for the potter to make.
Jeremiah 18:5	And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,
Jeremiah 18:6	Am I not able to do with you, O house of Israel, as this potter does? declares Jehovah. Indeed, as the clay is in the hand of the potter, so you are in My hand, O house of Israel .
Jeremiah 18:7	At the moment that I speak about a nation or about a kingdom, to pluck it up or to break it down or to destroy it,
Jeremiah 18:8	And if that nation concerning which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will repent of the evil that I intended to do to it.
Jeremiah 18:9	And at the moment that I speak about a nation or a kingdom, to build it up or to plant it,
Jeremiah 18:10	And if it does evil in My sight by not listening to My voice, then I will repent of the good with which I said I would benefit it.
Isaiah 64:8	But now, Jehovah, You are our Father; / We are the clay; and You, our Potter; / And all of us are the work of Your hand.
Romans 9:15	For to Moses He says, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."
Romans 9:16	So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy .
Romans 9:19	You will say to me then, Why does He still find fault? For who withstands His will?
Romans 9:20	But rather, O man, who are you who answer back to God? Shall the thing molded say to him who molded it, Why did you make me thus?
Romans 9:21	Or does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?
Romans 9:22	And what if God, wishing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,
Romans 9:23	In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy , which He had before prepared unto glory,
Acts 9:15	But the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me , to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;
2 Corinthians 4:6	Because the God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One who shined in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
2 Corinthians 4:7	But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.

God as our **sovereign Potter** has absolute right over us as His pottery; it is crucial that we see a vision of God's sovereignty. [God as our sovereign Potter has absolute right over us](#). To have sovereignty is to have absolute right over something. God's right is absolute because we are His pottery. I hope that the Lord would have mercy on us in these days. We all need to see this vision; we need to pray that we would see the same vision of God's sovereignty that Jeremiah saw. Although the word sovereignty may not be a part of our daily vocabulary, the Bible reveals that there is such a thing as God's sovereignty. In fact, sovereignty is a characteristic of God. It is one of God's attributes. *(Excerpt from The Ministry of the Word, Crystallization-Study of Jeremiah and Lamentations Vol. 24, No.6, pages 98-99)*

Day 1

I. [God as our sovereign Potter](#) has absolute right over us as His pottery; it is crucial that we see a vision of God's sovereignty—Jer. 18:1-10; Isa. 64:8; Dan. 4:3, 34-35; Rom. 9:19-23:

- A. Sovereignty refers to [God's unlimited authority, power, and position](#)—Rev. 4:11; 5:13:
 1. As the sovereign One, God is [above](#) everything, [behind](#) everything, and [in](#) everything— 1 Kings 22:19.
 2. God has the full capacity to carry out what He wants according to the desire of His heart and according to His eternal economy—Dan. 4:34-35; Eph. 1:4-5, 9-11.
- B. Romans 9:19-23 refers to God's sovereignty:
 1. "Who withstands His will? But rather, O man, who are you who answer back to God? Shall the thing molded say to him who molded it, Why did you make me thus?"—vv. 19b-20:
 - a. We need to realize who we are; [we are God's creatures](#), and He is our Creator— Isa. 42:5.
 - b. As His creatures, we should [not resist His purpose or answer back to Him](#), the Creator—Rom. 9:20.
 2. "Does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?"—v. 21:
 - a. God is our Potter, and we are the clay in His hand; [God, our Potter](#), is [sovereign](#)— Jer. 18:1-6; Isa. 64:8.
 - b. As our Potter, God has the [absolute right over us](#); regarding us, He has the right to do whatever He desires; if God wills, He can make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor—Jer. 18:6; Isa. 29:16; 64:8; Rom. 9:21.

C. God's sovereignty is the basis of His selection; His selection depends on His sovereignty—vv. 11, 18; 11:5, 28.

As His Creatures, Our Needing to Not Resist His Purpose or Answer Back to Him, the Creator

As His creatures, we should not resist His purpose or answer back to Him, the Creator. We should not have anything to say. **We should simply recognize who He is—He is the Creator.** Leviticus 18 through 22 contains many commandments. In these chapters, when the Lord gave a commandment, He concluded it with "I am Jehovah." In other words, we do not need to say anything. We do not need to question. The answer is "I am Jehovah." When I read this, it reminds me of my father, who had nine children. Sometimes our father would tell us to do something, and we would question him, asking, "Why? Why do we have to do that?" His answer was, "Because I'm your father; that's why." He did not owe us an explanation or a reason. He was our father. I believe that this is somewhat the Lord's attitude towards Israel: "I am Jehovah, your Creator. That is all you need to know." (*Excerpt from The Ministry of the Word, Crystallization-Study of Jeremiah and Lamentations Vol. 24, No.6, page 101*)

Day 2

II. God as our Potter has sovereignly created us to be His **vessels**, His **containers**, to contain Himself according to His predestination—2 Cor. 4:6-7; Eph. 4:6; 3:19b; Phil. 2:13; Heb. 13:20-21; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:20-21; Eph. 1:5, 11:

- A. God's purpose in creating man was to make man His vessel, His earthenware container, to **contain and be filled with Christ** as life for the building up of the Body of Christ as God's great corporate vessel for His expression—Gen. 2:7; Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Cor. 4:7.
- B. The basic teaching of the whole Scripture is simply this: God is the very content, and we are the containers made to receive the content; we must contain God and be filled with God so that we can be **vessels unto honor**, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work—2 Tim. 2:20-21.
- C. If we do not contain God and know God as our content, we are a **senseless contradiction**—Eccl. 1:2-3, 14.
- D. All of Paul's fourteen Epistles can be summed up in two words—**open vessel**:
 1. The degree to which God can dispense Himself into us depends on the **degree of our openness**; God wants us only to love Him and to keep ourselves **open to Him**—2 Kings 4:1-7; Matt. 5:3; John 1:16; Isa. 57:15; 66:1-2.
 2. Decadence starts from self-complacency; **progress starts from hunger and thirst**—Deut. 4:25; Luke 1:53; Phil. 1:25; Rev. 3:16-18.

For what purpose did God create man? **It is only that man might be His container.** I like to use this word container because it is clearer than the word vessel. It is clearly seen in Romans 9:21 and 23 and 2 Corinthians 4:7 that God created us to be His containers in order to contain Himself. We are only empty containers, and God intends to be our only content. To illustrate, bottles are necessary to contain beverages, and light bulbs are necessary to contain electricity. If we look at the bottles made for beverages or the light bulbs made for electricity, we will realize that these "peculiar" containers are quite specific articles; they were made for a particular use. We people are also "peculiar" containers, for we too were made for a specific purpose. The bulbs once made must now contain electricity; otherwise, they would be meaningless and good for nothing. Likewise, if the bottles never contain a beverage, they also would become meaningless. Man was made purposely to contain God. **If we do not contain God and know God as our content, we are a senseless contradiction.** (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1964, vol. 3, pp. 183-184*)

Day 3 & Day 4

III. In His sovereignty God as our Potter has the **authority** to make the ones whom He has selected and called to be **vessels of mercy unto honor and glory**—Rom. 9:11, 18, 21-24:

- A. We were chosen by God according to His **sovereign mercy**; God's mercy is the most far-reaching of God's attributes, saving us out of our wretched position into a condition that is suitable for His grace and love—Eph. 2:1-4; Heb. 4:16; Matt. 5:7; 7:1; 9:13:
 1. According to our natural condition, we were far removed from God, totally unworthy of His grace; we were **eligible only to receive His mercy**—Eph. 2:4.
 2. **Man's disobedience** affords God's mercy an opportunity, and **God's mercy brings man to salvation**—Rom. 11:32.
 3. We were created to be **vessels of mercy** to contain Christ as the God of mercy—9:11-13, 16, 20-21, 23; Lam. 3:21-24; Luke 1:78-79.
 4. Because of God's mercy, we responded to the gospel when others did not respond, we received a word about Christ as life when others refused to receive it, and we took the way of the Lord's recovery when others drew back from taking this way—Hymns, #296, stanza 3.
- B. "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy"...So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy—Rom. 9:15a, 16:
 1. Our concept is that the one who wills gains what he wills to obtain and that the one who runs gains what he runs after—v. 16:
 - a. If this were the case, God's selection would be according to our effort and labor.
 - b. On the contrary, **God's selection is of God who shows mercy**; we do not need to will or to run, for God has mercy on us.
 - c. If we know God's mercy, we will neither trust in our effort nor be disappointed by our failures; the hope for our wretched condition is in God's mercy—Eph. 2:4.
 2. If we would serve God in His New Testament economy, we need to know that it is wholly a matter of **God's sovereign mercy**—Rom. 9:15-16; Heb. 4:16:
 - a. If we know God's sovereignty, we will thank Him for His mercy, realizing that **we are under His sovereign mercy**—Rom. 9:15.

- b. The expression sovereign mercy means that **God's mercy is absolutely a matter of God's sovereignty**; being a vessel of mercy is not the result of our choice; it **originates with God's sovereignty**—v. 18.
 - c. The only thing we can say to explain God's mercy to us is that in His sovereignty **He has chosen to be merciful to us**—vv. 15-16, 23.
3. In God's sovereign mercy our hearts are inclined toward Him; because of His mercy to us, we seek Him day by day—Jer. 29:12-13; Deut. 4:29; Isa. 55:6; Psa. 27:8; 105:4; 119:2; Heb. 11:6.
 4. The more we see that everything related to us is a matter of God's mercy, the more we will bear our responsibility before the Lord; however, **even our willingness to bear responsibility is of God's mercy**.
 5. Regarding His recovery, God has mercy on whom He will have mercy.
- C. Romans 9 reveals the **principle** that **everything depends on God's mercy**—vv. 15-16:
1. The apostle Paul applies this principle to the Israelites, showing us that **everything that happened to them was of God's mercy**—vv. 16, 23.
 2. There must be **at least one time** when we **see God's mercy** and definitely **touch His mercy**—Eph. 2:4; Matt. 9:13:
 - a. Concerning this matter, our eyes need to be opened at least once; there must be at least one time when we see that everything depends on God's mercy.
 - b. Whether we see this all at once or we realize it through a process, the minute we touch this matter, we touch not a feeling but a fact; this fact is that everything depends on God's mercy.

Day 5

- D. "Let us therefore **come forward** with boldness to the throne of grace that we may **receive mercy** and **find grace** for timely help"—Heb. 4:16, cf. v. 15; Luke 15:20-24.
- E. In His sovereignty God the Father has had mercy on us; therefore, we must **praise and worship Him** for His sovereign mercy:
1. "Father, we enjoy Thy mercy, / Ever fresh and ever new; / Every morning shed upon us, / It refreshes as the dew. / How we taste it! / Giving Thee the praises due"—Hymns, #26, stanza 5.
 2. "Father, Thy mercy with Thy love and grace / Did we obtain; / And in Thy mercy, with Thee face to face, / We'll e'er remain; / And for Thy mercy we would worship Thee / Through all our days and through eternity"—Hymns, #25, stanza 3.
- F. We were created to be vessels of **mercy unto honor to contain Christ as the God of honor** (2 Tim. 2:20-21; Rom. 9:21) so that we may honor God and men (Judg. 9:9):
1. Being vessels unto honor is not the result of our choice; it **originates with God's sovereignty**—Rom. 9:21.
 2. The believers are vessels unto honor with Christ as their treasure **through regeneration**—2 Cor. 4:6-7.
 3. The believers are vessels unto honor **through their cleansing** of themselves from the vessels unto dishonor—2 Tim. 2:20-21.
 4. Vessels unto honor are those who honor God by **living and walking by the Spirit** (Gal. 5:16, 25) and those who honor men by **ministering the Spirit** to them (2 Cor. 3:6, 8).

Day 6

- G. We were created to be **vessels of mercy unto glory** to contain Christ as the God of glory:
1. **Glory** is God Himself expressed and manifested—Jer. 2:11; Acts 7:2; Eph. 1:17; 1 Cor. 2:8; 1 Pet. 4:14; Col. 2:9; Psa. 24:7-10.
 2. The Lord was able to tell the Father, "**I have glorified You on earth**, finishing the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4); this means that while the Lord was living on earth, **He manifested and expressed the Father**.
 3. **The release of the glory of Christ's divinity** (Luke 12:49-50) was His being glorified by the Father with the divine glory (John 12:23-24) in His resurrection (Acts 3:13) through His death; in Christ's glorification He, as the last Adam, became the life-giving Spirit for His divine dispensing (John 7:39; Luke 24:26, 46; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:6).
 4. As vessels of mercy unto honor and glory, we have been prepared by God **unto glory** through glorification—the last step of God's full salvation—Rom. 8:21, 23, 29-30; Phil. 3:21.
 5. According to His sovereign authority, God created, formed, and even made us for His glory—Isa. 43:7; Rom. 9:23:
 - a. We were predestinated by His sovereignty to be His **containers for His glorious expression and manifestation**.
 - b. This is the climax of our usefulness to God—the goal of God's selection according to His sovereignty—vv. 11, 18.
 - c. The glorification of God is the purpose of our service—7:6; 11:36.
 - d. The **highest service** that we can render to God is to express Him for His glory—1 Cor. 6:20; 10:31; Rom. 6:4.
 - e. God's glory is wrought into the church, and He is expressed in the church; hence, to God is the glory in the church; that is, God is glorified in the church—Eph. 3:16, 20-21.
 6. We have this **treasure, Christ as the God of glory**, dwelling within us, the earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7); "this treasure" (v. 7) indwelling us is "the face of Jesus Christ" (v. 6), the presence of Christ, "the person of Christ" (2:10).
 7. When we turn our heart to the Lord, **we are beholding the Lord Spirit as the presence of Christ in our spirit**, and we are "being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit"—3:16-18; cf. 2 Tim. 4:22.
 8. To **behold the glory** of the Lord is to see the Lord ourselves; to reflect the glory of the Lord is to enable others to see Him through us—Isa. 60:1, 5.

According to His Sovereign Authority, God Creating, Forming, and Even Making Us for His Glory

According to His sovereign authority, God [created, formed, and even made us for His glory](#). The three words created, formed, and made are all found in Isaiah 43:7, which says, “*Everyone who is called by My name, / Whom I have created, formed, and even made for My glory.*” These same three words appear in Genesis 1 and 2. In Genesis 1:1 there is the word created; in Genesis 1:26, the word make; and in Genesis 2:7, the word formed. God formed the body of man out of red clay, the earth. The Hebrew word for *Adam* means “red clay.” When you add another ending, the word becomes *adamah*, which means “the earth, the ground.” So the name Adam indicates that he was formed out of earth.

To create something is to cause something to come into being that has never been before. It did not exist, and it came into being. To make something is to use some existing materials to make them into something, but to form something is to fashion it in the way that a potter forms a vessel. For this reason, in God’s creation of man, we see all three of these verbs. This shows [the attention that God paid to make, to create, this container for Himself](#). (*Excerpt from The Ministry of the Word, Crystallization-Study of Jeremiah and Lamentations Vol. 24, No.6, page 112*)

When We Turn Our Heart to the Lord, Our Beholding the Lord Spirit as the Presence of Christ in Our Spirit, and Our “Being Transformed into the Same Image from Glory to Glory, Even as from the Lord Spirit”

When we [turn our heart to the Lord](#), we are [beholding](#) the Lord Spirit as the presence of Christ in our spirit, and we are “*being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit*” (3:16-18 ; cf. 2 Tim. 4:22). The more we behold the Lord, the more we receive the life-giving Spirit. We can do this by turning our heart to the Lord and by [reading His Word](#). When our heart is turned to the Lord, our face is unveiled, and we are infused through the word of God with the glory of God. [This causes us, the vessel, to be conformed to the treasure](#). How wonderful! (*Excerpt from The Ministry of the Word, Crystallization-Study of Jeremiah and Lamentations Vol. 24, No.6, page 114*)