



Jeremiah 4Q 2015 Lesson 6

Symbolic Acts

SABBATH

We have talked a little bit about where the time of Jeremiah's prophetic calling fits in Israel's history as a nation, it is important to understand the time of Jeremiah within the context of the wider history of Israel – which was characterized by seemingly endless repetitions of apostasy and rebellion. Those rebellious repetitions included a partially completed conquest; the time of Judges with all its atrocities; the united monarchy with Saul's apostasy; David's adultery and Solomon's idolatry, followed by the divided monarchy (when Judah split off), with endless lists of bad kings, interrupted by a few good ones; the Assyrian captivity of the northern tribes; and the degradation of Judah that finally led to the Babylonian exile.

“During all these times, God had sent men, women, judges, prophets, priests, and kings to bring about Israel's repentance and return to the Lord, but without success. It should not surprise us that God finally used symbols and messages that pointed to the *irreversibility of His judgments*.”

The validity of this statement, of course, depends on how one defines “His judgments”. If these are defined as accurate diagnoses of hearts, minds, and characters...then the statement is correct –

“Israel is stubborn as a mule. How can God lead him like a lamb to open pasture? Ephraim is addicted to idols. Let him go.” Hosea 4:16-17 MSG

The impending Babylonian captivity was *NOT* God's inflicted punishment or judgment on Israel. It was the inescapable consequence of repeatedly ignoring God's instructions, his natural laws (letting the land rest from farming), and removing themselves from His protection and blessing.

“Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?” After all, the man who makes the pots has the right to use the clay as he wishes, and to make two pots from the same lump of clay, one for special occasions and the other for ordinary use. (GNT)

Is that crystal clear for everybody? Paul is referencing some of the symbolism used both by and for Jeremiah, and we will talk more about that in a bit, but wanted to read this text in context from The Remedy New Testament paraphrase starting with verse 16:

“Our healing doesn't depend on some effort, desire, or work on our part, but on the fact that God is merciful and offers the Remedy freely to everyone. For the Scripture says of Pharaoh, “I raised you up so that I might pour out my truth upon you and that my character might be known throughout the entire world. And even though you resisted me and fought against me, I was patient and merciful with you.” Therefore, God is merciful to whom he chooses, and stern to those he chooses. One of you might protest and say, “Then why does God still blame us, if he does whatever he wants?” But, this complaint



only shows how little you know about God and his methods and purposes. You confuse God's desire to heal and restore everyone to his original ideal with his wise plan to assign different duties and responsibilities to different individuals. You also fail to realize that different conditions require different applications of the Remedy. Doesn't the potter have the right to use some clay to make pottery for noble uses, and from the same clay to make pottery for ordinary purposes? What if God, choosing to reveal what will happen, patiently continued to offer treatment to those who refuse his healing Remedy, and yet they refused to take his free cure anyway? What if, in this way, God revealed that such people prepare themselves for death and destruction? What if he did this to make the richness of his character known to those who would accept the Remedy, and thus, by the revelation of the truth about himself, prepare them to be fully transformed into Christlike glory? This is what he has done! He has called all people, both Jews and Gentiles, to healing and restoration into Christlikeness of character and into partnership with him to spread the Remedy."

Do those texts take on different meaning using this perspective?

Three symbols from Jeremiah were chosen this week to illustrate God's lessons from Jeremiah to the citizens of Judah

- The Potter's Clay
- Smashing a Clay Jar
- The Linen Belt

Read the first paragraph from Sabbath afternoon's lesson...

"The significance of the Jewish economy is not yet fully comprehended. Truths vast and profound are shadowed forth in its rites and symbols. The gospel is the key that unlocks its mysteries. Through a knowledge of the plan of redemption, its truths are opened to the understanding." Christ's Object Lessons, p. 133.

This was written at least one hundred years ago. Do we now "fully comprehend" the significance of the Jewish economy?

What direction of revelation is this going?

What is the reality and what is the symbol?

What is the clearest presentation of the "gospel" that has been presented so far?

Who is the most reliable witness about what God is really like? "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." John 14:9

Most Christians do not really believe this. Who would you rather see and greet in heaven? If someone were to invite you to go to see God, who would you ask for?

Would you need someone to go with you into God's presence?

Many see God with a split personality: both good and bad in the same person, almost as if there were two faces on His Head. When God separates those on His right hand from those on His left: Matthew 25:31 – 46 What will His face look like when He sends those who have not chosen Him to eternal destruction? "They insist on turning away from me... How can I give you up, Israel? How can I abandon you?" Hosea 11:7, 8

What sorrow God has for the loss of His children

The life of Christ sheds light on the Old Testament, not the other way around. Many people have devised or



understood how the plan of salvation works from looking at the sanctuary service and then interpreted Christ and His Mission from that perspective. Rather than looking at Christ and understanding the sanctuary service based on the clarity revealed by the life of Christ.

What are some common problems that come from extensive use of symbols and symbolic language?

- Focusing too much or exclusively on the symbol rather than on the object or reality it points to. If you have a real, physical object...and you have a shadow of that object, which is another definition for a symbol...what is the best way to learn more about the physical object? Spend time studying the shadow or symbol of the object...or spend time studying the actual object? Can you think of any Biblical examples of when this happened?
- There is also significant opportunity for misunderstanding both the symbol and the object. If we misunderstand the ultimate reality, we will likely misinterpret the symbols...and vice versa. Look at how a misunderstanding of the penal substitution/atonement model of salvation can cause the earthly sanctuary symbols and rituals to be misinterpreted – and that can go both ways as well. The quote from COL in Saturday’s lesson speaks effectively to this subject, but as I read the entire chapter...the paragraphs before and after really spoke to me and encouraged me in my study – especially when studying some of these symbols or beasts or prophecies...I can get frustrated, so hopefully they can encourage you as well:

“The words of truth will grow in importance, and assume a breadth and fullness of meaning of which we have never dreamed. The beauty and riches of the word have a transforming influence on mind and character. The light of heavenly love will fall upon the heart as an inspiration. The appreciation of the Bible grows with its study. Whichever way the student may turn, he will find displayed the infinite wisdom and love of God. The significance of the Jewish economy is not yet fully comprehended. Truths vast and profound are shadowed forth in its rites and symbols. ***The gospel is the key that unlocks its mysteries.*** Through a knowledge of the plan of redemption, its truths are opened to the understanding. Far more than we do, it is our privilege to understand these wonderful themes. We are to comprehend the deep things of God. Angels desire to look into the truths that are revealed to the people who with contrite hearts are searching the word of God, and praying for greater lengths and breadths and depths and heights of the knowledge which He alone can give. In giving us His word, God has put us in possession of every truth essential for our salvation. Thousands have drawn water from these wells of life, yet there is no diminishing of the supply. Thousands have set the Lord before them, and by beholding have been changed into the same image. Their spirit burns within them as they speak of His character, telling what Christ is to them, and what they are to Christ. But these searchers have not exhausted these grand and holy themes. Thousands more may engage in the work of searching out the mysteries of salvation. As the life of Christ and the character of His mission are dwelt upon, rays of light will shine forth more distinctly at every attempt to discover truth. Each fresh search will reveal something more deeply interesting than has yet been unfolded. The subject is inexhaustible. The study of the incarnation of Christ, His atoning sacrifice and mediatorial work, will employ the mind of the diligent student as long as time shall last; and looking to heaven with its unnumbered years he will exclaim, “Great is the mystery of godliness.” COL pp 132-133



So...if you ever feel like your Bible study is futile...that you're not getting it? Or if you read almost weekly in your lesson quarterlies that we are not capable of or meant to understand how God works...God's ways are higher than our ways, etc., this author says "We are to comprehend the deep things of God."

Symbols: Their meaning - Past, Present, and Future

- Past: reminders of something that happened in the past
 - Abraham's altars
 - The parts of the Passover service. We often think of this as a temple service, but for many it was a local, home service/ritual (see Deut 14:22 - 26)
 - Pillar of stones at the Israeli side of the Jordan River where the Children of Israel crossed over
 - Emblems instituted at the Last Supper
- Present: Warnings, knowledge, guidance/instruction/explanation
- Future: Hidden meanings, convey information not comprehended at that time (jets, rockets, TV)
 - Daniel
 - Revelation
 - Matthew 24

Some symbols have all three meanings:

- Wedding ring
- The Sabbath has very similar qualities

Some biblical symbols are used for two different (almost contradictory) meanings.

- Lion: Christ, Satan
- Snake: Christ, Satan

What is more important: the symbol or the reality to which it points?

SUNDAY

Truth in Symbols

Read Genesis 4:3-7 story of Cain and Able's sacrifices

Read paragraph #2. Do you really think either Cain or Able understood the situation in those terms?

Why did Able's sacrifice satisfy the requirement and Cain's did not? Was it because God demanded it or was there something intrinsic within the sacrifice itself that made Cain's offering unacceptable?

"Why this frenzy of sacrifices?" God's asking. "Don't you think I've had my fill of burnt sacrifices, rams and plump grain-fed calves? Don't you think I've had my fill of blood from bulls, lambs, and goats? When you come before me, whoever gave you the idea of acting like this, Running here and there, doing this and that—all this sheer commotion in the place provided for worship? "Quit your worship charades. I can't stand your trivial religious games: Monthly conferences, weekly Sabbaths, special meetings—meetings, meetings, meetings—I can't stand one more! Meetings for this, meetings for that. I hate them! You've worn me out! I'm sick of your religion, religion, religion, while you go right on sinning. When you put on your next prayer-performance, I'll be looking the other way.



No matter how long or loud or often you pray, I'll not be listening. And do you know why? Because you've been tearing people to pieces, and your hands are bloody. Go home and wash up. Clean up your act. Sweep your lives clean of your evil doings so I don't have to look at them any longer. Say no to wrong. Learn to do good. Work for justice. Help the down-and-out. Stand up for the homeless. Go to bat for the defenseless." "Come. Sit down. Let's argue this out." This is God's Message: "If your sins are blood-red, they'll be snow-white. If they're red like crimson, they'll be white like wool." Isaiah 1

So what is God looking for in a sacrificial offering?

- Romans 12:1 – Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. The Message says, “Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.”
- 1 Peter 2:4-5 – As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him — you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
- Psalm 51:17 – My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

Read Numbers 21:4 - 9: The Bronze Snake on a pole/standard

- People believed God and looked and were healed
- Came at some cost of commitment
- You had to go to a place where you could see the snake or the snake could come to you. You had to get out of your tent.
- The story of my back pain and inability to move. If Sharon had called an ambulance, how was that going to help?

Earthly sanctuary service: Read the 4th paragraph “All through the Old Testament, the earthly sanctuary service was the most detailed symbolic representation of the plan of salvation.” “The most important of all truths taught there: . . .”

What do you think is the most important truth taught by the sanctuary service?

The people must make a sacred Tent for me, so that I may live among them. Exodus 25:8

“For sin pays its wage—death; but God's free gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23

Christ / God should be in the center of our camp / lives, and he is continually ministering to our needs and best interest. God is Holy and yet in the midst of our daily lives.

What we do (whether in worship or daily live) means everything to God

“Great peace have the which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them. Those who love your law have perfect security, and there is nothing that can make them fall.” Psalms 119:165

“In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed,



that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice.**” DA 761.4

Read next paragraph: “In fact, through the sanctuary. . .”

- What went wrong?
- What needs to be “put right”
- What is God like?
- What is God doing to restore the universe
- Can God be trusted with power
- How do you define love

How you understand these symbols will largely determine your view of these current “God actions”

Most people define love as something that is inward focused: about themselves

- Love is the outward focus of the mind for the benefit of others
- Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.” John 3:3

Unless we are born again we cannot even understand God’s perspective, let alone go to where God is.

I like the quote from PP 431 in Sunday’s lesson that reads:

“The Israelites saved their lives by looking upon the uplifted serpent. That look implied faith. They lived because they believed God’s word, and trusted in the means provided for their recovery.”

That faith and trust in the means provided for our recovery - the remedy - is still how we are saved today.

MONDAY

The Potter’s Clay

The lesson gives us 6 texts that compare God’s children to clay (including the creation of man). Is God maybe pointing out some differences between a creator and his creations?

Isaiah 29:16
(MSG) Doom to you! You pretend to have the inside track. You shut God out and work behind the scenes, Plotting the future as if you knew everything, acting mysterious, never showing your hand. You have everything backward! You treat the potter as a lump of clay. Does a book say to its author, “He didn’t write a word of me”? Does a meal say to the woman who cooked it, “She had nothing to do with this”? (NIV) Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the Lord, who do their work in darkness and think, “Who sees us? Who will know?” You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, “You did not make me”? Can the pot say to the potter, “You know nothing”?

Isaiah 45:9



(MSG) That I've singled you out, called you by name, and given you this privileged work. And you don't even know me! I am God, the only God there is. Besides me there are no real gods. I'm the one who armed you for this work, though you don't even know me, So that everyone, from east to west, will know that I have no god-rivals. I am God, the only God there is. I form light and create darkness, I make harmonies and create discords. I, God, do all these things. "Open up, heavens, and rain. Clouds, pour out buckets of my goodness!

Loosen up, earth, and bloom salvation; sprout right living. I, God, generate all this. But doom to you who fight your Maker— you're a pot at odds with the potter! Does clay talk back to the potter: 'What are you doing? What clumsy fingers!' Would a sperm say to a father, 'Who gave you permission to use me to make a baby?' Or a fetus to a mother, 'Why have you cooped me up in this belly?'" (NIV) "Woe to those who quarrel with their Maker, those who are nothing but potsherds among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'The potter has no hands?'

Isaiah 64:8

(MSG) Still, God, you are our Father. We're the clay and you're our potter: All of us are what you made us. Don't be too angry with us, O God. Don't keep a permanent account of wrongdoing. Keep in mind, please, we are your people—all of us.

(NIV) Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, Lord; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look on us, we pray, for we are all your people.

The quarterly mentions that Jeremiah faced nearly constant rejection and persecution for his message of warning and repentance...he was undoubtedly discouraged and may have wondered at times whether saving the Israelite nation was worth the struggle and the fight.

Read the second paragraph: "No question. . ." Do you believe "the Lord is in control of the world.?"

Do you believe "He will triumph, regardless of appearances now.?" Why? What kind of power will he use? What kind of power has he used?

Radio station on Friday said that God is in control and just as he "forced" Saul to be converted he could force any of us at any time. Is that true? If that is true, why did He not do it in the past all the time? Why does He not do it now? (Or is He doing it now and I / we are missing it?) What of free will?

What kind of power has God so far used in this world?

- creation
- flood
- release of restraint
- Christ's life

Has God ever forced people to do His will? examples?

Will God change His tactics?

What do we do with the concept of God's sovereignty?

Monday's lesson concludes with:



"We can rest assured that, despite the reality of human free will and free choices, and the often calamitous results of abusing that free will, in the end, we can hope in the absolute sovereignty of our loving and self-sacrificing God, whose love is revealed on the cross. Evil won't triumph; God and His love will."

TUESDAY

The Degeneration of a Nation

What a timely title, right? As a nation, Judah was kind of in a downward spiral...they had forsaken God, they were offering incense to other gods, shedding innocent blood with human sacrifices, and had "estranged" the physical temple and/or their spirit temples.

"The crucial point, though, is that the nation was to be holy, special to the Lord, something different and distinct from the nations around them. But that's not what happened. They lost their unique character, the distinctiveness that would have made them a witness to the world. They became just like everyone else."

The quarterly asks, what lessons are here for us? Should there be a difference in divorce rates in Christian versus non-Christian homes? Should Christian homes have lower rates of domestic violence than non-Christian homes?

"I am going to do this because the people have abandoned me and defiled this place by offering sacrifices here to other gods—gods that neither they nor their ancestors nor the kings of Judah have known anything about. They have filled this place with the blood of innocent people, and they have built altars for Baal in order to burn their children in the fire as sacrifices. I never commanded them to do this; it never even entered my mind." Jeremiah 19:4, 5

Last sentence of the first paragraph:

"They lost their unique character, the distinctiveness that would have made them a witness to the world. They became just like everyone else."

How did they do that?

- Dress
- Music
- Culture

Why is that important? What is important about being different? In what ways were they to be different?

Story of surgery frustrations/behavior/speech

- This "Moses" had much less provocation than Moses did with the COI at the rock.
- "Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. . . And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry," Ephesians 4:23, 24, 26 (NLT)-
- Had to apologize
- Statements of those to whom I offended.

How are we truly to be different from the world?



“But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!” Galatians 5:22 (NLT)

“Behold,” said Jesus, “I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” Christ did not suppress one word of truth, but He always spoke it in love. He was never rude, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not scold human weakness. He fearlessly condemned hypocrisy and evil, but tears were in His voice as He spoke His sharpest rebukes. Every person was precious in His eyes. The servants of Christ need to have close fellowship with God, or else when others irritate them self may rise up and they release a torrent of words that are not like the dew or the soft showers that refresh the withering plants. God’s servants are to fasten their eyes on Christ’s loveliness. Then they can present the gospel with divine tact. And the spirit that is kept gentle when dealing with difficult people or circumstances will speak more effectively in favor of truth than any argument, no matter how strong.” {HH 160.3}

How did Judah offend God? Jeremiah 19:4

- Forsaken me (God)
- Estranged this place
- Burned incense to other gods
- Filled this place with blood of innocents

Ways I offend God

- Poor
- Aliens
- “Others”
- Abortion
- Workers who are in different jobs than I am
- Administration personnel

Read 1 Corinthians 13

Last night, the strongest hurricane that has ever been measured and recorded in the Western Hemisphere slammed into the western coast of Mexico. What did you do when you heard about it?

- Shook your head
- Thanked God for it being somewhere else,
- Did you do anything positive, physically, to assist with this disaster?

The Lord condemned Israel for forgetting the poor, the widows, the orphans. We do not have poverty of the widows and orphans in this country like they did in ancient Israel. We do have poverty, poor education, poor career opportunities for:

- single mothers
- 80 percent of children born in the United States have minimal health insurance
- CDC 2013: 40% of children are born to unmarried mothers

Children born to unmarried mothers are more likely to grow up in a single-parent household, experience unstable living arrangements, live in poverty, and have socio-emotional problems.[1] ,[2] ,[3] ,[4] As these children reach adolescence, they are more likely to have low



educational attainment, engage in sex at a younger age, and have a birth outside of marriage.[5] ,[6] ,[7] ,[8] As young adults, children born outside of marriage are more likely to be idle (neither in school nor employed), have lower occupational status and income, and have more troubled marriages and more divorces than those born to married parents.[9]

Women who give birth outside of marriage tend to be more disadvantaged than their married counterparts, both before and after the birth. Unmarried mothers generally have lower incomes, lower education levels, and are more likely to be dependent on welfare assistance compared with married mothers.[10] ,[11] ,[12] ,[13] Women who have a nonmarital birth also tend to fare worse than childless single women; for example, they have reduced marriage prospects compared with single women without children.[14] ,[15] - See more at: <http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=births-to-unmarried-women#sthash.UHQ4Su4W.dpuf>

There are more people in poverty in the US now than anytime within the last 50 years.

“We love because God first loved us. If we say we love God, but hate others, we are liars. For we cannot love God, whom we have not seen, if we do not love others, whom we have seen. The command that Christ has given us is this: whoever loves God must love others also.” 1 John 4:19, 20

WEDNESDAY

Smashing the Jar

God instructs Jeremiah to go buy a clay pot, then invite a few of the city leaders and church elders out to the city gate...go over the bullet list of atrocities we just covered in Tuesday’s lesson, warn of the impending catastrophes... and then smash the clay pot into a gazillion pieces and say,

“This is what God-of-the-Angel-Armies says: I’ll smash this people and this city like a man who smashes a clay pot into so many pieces it can never be put together again. They’ll bury bodies here in Topheth until there’s no more room. And the whole city will become a Topheth. The city will be turned by people and kings alike into a center for worshiping the star gods and goddesses, turned into an open grave, the whole city an open grave, stinking like a sewer, like Topheth.”

This behavior did not appear to win Jeremiah any friends, and sadly failed to serve its symbolic purpose to wake up or convict the Israelites. In fact, Prophets and Kings p.432 says,

“The prophet’s words, instead of leading to confession and repentance, aroused the anger of those high in authority, and as a consequence Jeremiah was deprived of his liberty. Imprisoned, and placed in the stocks, the prophet nevertheless continued to speak the messages of heaven to those who stood by. His voice could not be silenced by persecution.”

Read the highlighted box at the bottom of the page

“Think of something ruined - ruined beyond repair. What was it originally made for and what happened to it that now rendered it useless? How careful we need to be that this doesn’t happen to us!”

Did the thing get ruined because it was stated to be so? Or did it not have inherent qualities that made it so. We believe something is good, bad / useful or not useful because of its inherent qualities: not because someone declares it to be so. Something remains useful unless the declaration changes us, our perceptions, so that it is no



longer useful. Just because something is declared correct, does not mean it is correct and vice versa.

THURSDAY

The Linen Belt

Read Jeremiah 13:1 – 11

- The story of the linen waistband
- Buy belt / girdle / innermost piece of clothing / underwear / loincloth
- Wear belt next to himself / contact / close to him
- Journey 350 miles, 1 month long?
- Bury the linen sash in the River Euphrates
- Travel back Home
- Travel back to the River Euphrates
- Dig up the sash
- The sash is ruined

FRIDAY

Further Thoughts

David Livingstone was a missionary in Africa at a time when that was very difficult to do. He eventually died in Africa. You could say he paid the highest price possible for the gospel of Christ, yet, there was no debt that he was paying.

“To many minds the origin of sin and the reason for its existence are a source of great perplexity. They see the work of evil, with its terrible results of woe and desolation, and they question how all this can exist under the sovereignty of One who is infinite in wisdom, in power, and in love. Here is a mystery of which they find no explanation. And in their uncertainty and doubt they are blinded to truths plainly revealed in God’s word and essential to salvation.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 492.