

## **Can the Clay Tell the Potter What to Do?**

### **Isaiah 29:13-24**

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#### **I. HISTORICAL AND BIBLICAL CONTEXT**

##### **A. Historical Background**

The purpose of the Bible is to lead people to a personal relationship with God as Savior. But everything taught by the Bible on any subject is helpful and instructive for the complete Christian life. So, the Bible's declarations about the earth and history are completely trustworthy. The Bible is not just a useful body of human ideas. It makes clear the mind of God Himself. All the Bible does is conveying the reliable idea and its effectiveness. God is intelligent and able to communicate with man, whom He created in His image, so He is faithful and true from Genesis to Revelation. God gave these prophets and apostles distinctive functions as guided by the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. Chapters 28-35 is still giving us the prophecies of judgment and blessing on Judah to listen, hear the speeches as God continues to use the illustration for all to adhere to the coming judgment.

##### **B. Biblical Context**

At this time, Judah was so overcome with lethargy, spiritual sluggishness, inactivity, and stupidity regarding the truth that even their prophets, rulers, and wise men were blind-so blind and lacking in spiritual perception that God's Word was a sealed book to them (29:11). The cause of their blindness was hypocrisy, lip service, willful sins, and hardness of heart. They forgot they were created by the Creator. The Potter (God Almighty) is He who will protect/guide us. He is enormous/powerful!!

God today is righteous in his choosing. (Isaac over Ishmael; Jacob over Esau; the righteous over the sinners in Israel; Israel over Paroah and the Egyptians; Jews over the Gentiles to carry on his program purposefully. God hardens the same grounds of mercy. If men will accept and be privileged/confident to humble themselves, then God will avail. Mercy is the effect of a right attitude, and hardening is the effect of stubbornness/obstinacy/ or the wrong attitude toward God. It's clay and wax in the sun; it hardens one and softens the other. The responsibility is with the materials, not with the sun. Men are more responsible than those materials, for they have wills to make proper choices. The only sense in which God hardened/hard-bitten Pharaoh (or us) was in giving him the occasion to harden his own heart or obey. Such is the choice all men must make daily. Who are we to reply against God? Who are you to blame God for your sinfulness?

Cannot God deal with you as is necessary (Jer. 18:1-17? If he had to damn those who harden themselves; may He not do so without our criticism?

We don't have to search for Christ, He is nigh/near and only need to be acted upon? You already have it, just recognize it. The gospel is right in front of us, the Bible, if you will accept it. It is plain and easy to be confessed with your mouth (Rom. 9:10-13).

## **II. THE LESSON: "Can the Clay tell the Potter What to do?" (Isa. 29:16; Rom. 9:21)**

**ICE-BREAKER CLASS DISCUSSION:** Demonstration/illustration of clay vs potter! (Assigned Scriptures to participants on different versions of same verse; read out loud.)

Here are the causes of spiritual blindness (v. 13) and defense of Jerusalem would be so inadequate; it would be like a man trying to warm himself in a bed that was too short, with a cover too narrow to wrap himself in (Isa. 28:20).

1. **vv. 13-14. "The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught.<sup>[a]</sup><sup>14</sup> Therefore once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish."**

The Lord says beware: 1) Drawing near to God with the mouth alone 2) Beware of Honoring Him with the lips only 3) Removing the heart far from Him 4) Fearing Him only after the precept of men, pleasing men and not God!

God has done so much marvelous work that he will proceed and do something more to astound his people. Look at the gospel work in the NT-teaching, preaching and healing all manner of sickness and disease among his people, the creation of new lives, and the fullness of what Christ Jesus and His followers have done which caused even the wise of the world to stumble, harden their hearts, and be lost! Jesus is a savior of life and death to those who rejected it. (1 Cor. 1:18-31).

Look at how many people at 2bc that have been saved in 2024! This is a wonder! Praise God for us to have a New Year's message of hope of moving on and up; and have expectation for more renewed lives. God is doing wonders and a marvelous work still yet. Look how we still have possibilities to cross over with no carry-overs into 2025!! Indeed, we are to heed from the lessons of the prophetic Word of God from Isaiah 29. This is a dire warning for us, the remnant today. Let's us not pervert things to make it appear the potter is the clay, or more qualified than the clay to form anything. You seem to think that

God knows nothing of your deceptions, but He does (Heb. 4:12-13). Let's us beware that God is the framer of our frame; let us be fruitful and in the future of Christ's return, all will be healed. Be a fruitful field and have joy in Jehovah God and hear the words of this Book.

**2. vv. 15-16: 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?"<sup>16</sup> 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"?**

Woe to judgment of these classes of people who do their work in darkness and think, "Who sees us? Who will know?"

- a) The terrible one (the Antichrist, that wicked one) v. 20; 2 Th. 2:8)
- b) The scorner will be consumed (v. 20)
- c) The wicked will be cut off (v. 20; 2 Th. 1:7-10; Jude 14—15)
- d) They make men offend in word, or give false evidence
- e) Lay snares for the righteous and pervert judges
- f) Turn the just aside for reward and defraud men for a thing of nothing.

**3. vv. 17-19. "In a very short time, will not Lebanon be turned into a fertile field and the fertile field seem like a forest? In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness, the eyes of the blind will see. Once more the humble will rejoice in the LORD; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.**

Amid challenges, heaviness and sorrow, adversities, suffering there is restoration! All of us are witnesses to the power of God. Regardless of whether you live in an urban area, Isaiah's vision of God's peace is instructive. As you sow the seeds of righteousness in your community, you give the Spirit an opportunity to bring a blessing on you and your neighbors.

Those "seeds" may involve feeding the hungry, shutting down a business based on immorality, or simply praying for civic leaders. RISC/Homeless Ministries and the other awesome 2bc ministries. Whatever action you take, know that the Spirit can multiply your efforts many times. "The fruit in a fertile field is sown in peace by those who make peace" (James 3:18).

What's the hurry? Perhaps you feel rushed or caught on a treadmill, always focused on a deadline, always thinking about what is happening next rather than what is happening right now. The people of Isaiah's time were consumed with anxiety about the Assyrians. They were busily making plans and preparations in case the enemy invaded. But God warned them the key to understanding the threats of Assyria was not in frenetic activity, but in quiet, confident trust in Him/God. It was not that wise planning had no value; it did.

But faith in God demands a certain amount of ceasing from work to reflect on one's situation and the Lord's ability to handle it.

That's why we should remind God that we remember his wonders! Glory! Try not to stagger (not from being intoxicated from what you have experienced, be confident, but not from the ignorance of the Lord and His ways!!

**4. vv. 20-21. “The ruthless will vanish, the mockers will disappear, and all who have an eye for evil will be cut down— those who with a word make someone out to be guilty, who ensnare the defender in court and with false testimony deprive the innocent of justice.”**

The threat of judgment has two parts: The Assyrian army will be the immediate cause (vv. 16-22); and the Lord of Hosts will be the Ultimate cause! The miscarriage of justice through legal technicalities, or winning case through lies or clever arguments.

**5. vv. 22-23. “Therefore this is what the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, says to the descendants of Jacob: “No longer will Jacob be ashamed no longer will their faces grow pale. When they see among them their children, the work of my hands, they will keep my name holy; they will acknowledge the holiness of the Holy One of Jacob, and will stand in awe of the God of Israel. <sup>24</sup> Those who are wayward in spirit will gain understanding; those who complain will accept instruction.”**

There is always a word of hope and restoration despite the troubles! Waste will be transformed, the deaf will hear; after a lifetime in the dark, the blind will see, the castoffs of society will be laughing and dancing in God, the down and outs will be shouting praise to the Holy One. Those that are cynical will be like extinct species. The scoffers will be gone – never to be heard of again. Gone are the people who corrupted the courts, gone the people who cheated the poor, gone the people who victimized the innocent.

### **III. CONCLUSION:**

Here is the message of God, the same God who redeemed Abraham will redeem us; no longer there will be shame, the gift of many who believe in God will honor God by living holy lives, in holy worship. Those who got off track will be back on track! These are warnings to those that are stubborn, proud, jealous, disobedient and rebellious! Be consistent and persistent as we pray, meditate, study, and fellowship in unity. The complainers and whiners will learn gratitude. A better time is coming! These are warnings to those that are stubborn, proud, jealous, disobedient and rebellious! The Message of the Cross is alive! There is an invitation at the end of every lesson, just be transformed and renewed in the Word and trust in God!