

A Visit to the Pottery

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Within the context of God showing mercy upon whomever He chooses, having mercy on some, compassion on some, but wrath on others, the Apostle Paul rhetorically asks, *Why does God still find fault with human beings; who can resist His will*. Paul answers himself by going on to ask, *Who are you, O man, to answer back to God?* (Rom 9:19-20). “Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use” (v. 21)? Continuing the concept: does the potter consult the clay before shaping it into a vessel for honored or dishonorable use? Who has heard of such a thing? And if the potter does not consult the clay, then whatever input or influence the clay has in what the potter will do with the lump comes from characteristics inherent to the lump...clay is a descriptive term given silicates that are typically less than 2 μm in size, and are distinguished by their flake or layered shape, their affinity for water, and their plasticity. Clay is not silt, or just any stone flour, but one of three or four specific groupings of microscopic stone particles. And to make clay *workable*, clay is wedged or pugged to remove air bubbles and to evenly distribute moisture. Hence, if human beings are as clay in God’s hands (Isa 64:8), then human beings can only tell God what He will do with us by our initial *workability* while we undergo wedging and kneading; for once the lump is centered on the wheel head and begins to take shape, God makes from the person what He chooses.

In this age when most potters purchase their clay from common suppliers, the digging and preparing of the clay as part of the process of *throwing* a wheel spun vessel is lost from the analogy of disciples being vessels created for honored or dishonorable use. For most Christians, the analogy begins with the lump of clay centered on the wheel and beginning to take shape. This is what the prophet Jeremiah saw (Jer 18:2-4) when he went to the potter’s house to hear the words of the Lord. But if Jeremiah had arrived earlier and had stayed longer, he would have seen the potter prepare the clay from its rawest form to the firing of the vessel. As it was, Jeremiah saw a vessel spoiled in the potter’s hand and reworked into another vessel as it seemed good to the potter.

Are disciples made for dishonorable use vessels that have been spoiled by the Master Potter’s hand, or were these vessels of dishonor intended to be such vessels from the beginning? Could these vessels have spoiled themselves while they were being formed, thereby giving them power over the Potter? Are men more powerful than God? The question is foolishness, but there will be teachers of Israel that use Jeremiah’s visit to the potter’s house to give human *free will* godlike stature.

From the same lump of clay, God will make vessels of two kinds, one for honored use and one for dishonorable use (a chamber pot to be broken because of its uncleanness). The Apostle Paul asks, “What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory” (Rom 9:22-23)? So the two kinds of vessels are vessels of mercy that will be for honored use, and vessels of wrath that will be for dishonorable usage.

What if the above is the case? What if God has made of humanity two kinds of vessels? Is one of these kinds that portion of humankind with no knowledge of God? Again, there will be teachers of Israel who would have disciples believe that *Christians* are vessels of mercy while every other human being is a vessel of wrath, but these same teachers do not agree among themselves as to which of them are genuine *Christians*, and which *Christians* [along with all Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and pagans] are also, because of their dead faith, vessels of wrath prepared for destruction from the foundation of the earth. Plus, has the person with no knowledge of God been prepared by God to be spun into either a vessel of mercy or a vessel of

wrath? What if the person without knowledge of God turns suddenly to God and pleads for mercy? Will God not grant this mercy? According to what the Lord told Jeremiah, He will, indeed, repent of the harm He had intended.

The teachers of Israel who would have disciples believe that Christians are all vessels of mercy argue that the clay lying undisturbed in the earth has been prepared for wrath—and this is not true. Only the clay on the wheel will become a vessel of wrath, or of mercy. Until dug, the clay neither knows God, nor has been prepared by God to be spun. Therefore, the clay needs knowledge of God before being centered on the wheel head, and spun into either a vessel of mercy or of wrath. So it isn't from all of humanity that God now makes vessels of wrath or of mercy; rather, it is of disciples, meaning that some disciples have been shaped by God to be sons of destruction, just as Judas Iscariot was a son of destruction.

What are the consequences of God patiently enduring vessels of wrath that He has created for destruction? Why do this? Why create vessels for destruction? Why endure them? Will not enduring them spoil the clay, souring the lump from which the clay is taken for vessels of mercy?

Yes, enduring vessels of wrath will give rise to clay that can only be worked into more vessels of wrath as the love of many grows cold (Matt 24:12). But the third part of humanity (Zech 13:9)—the part without prior knowledge of God [the undug clay]—will, by enduring to the end, be saved (Matt 24:13 with Jer 18:7-8), but not saved by its former knowledge or its former righteousness. Rather, this third part will be saved by new found faith in God that comes through the world being baptized by the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28).

What if God has endured lawlessness in vessels that He has prepared for destruction for the purpose of demonstrating His wrath? What if His wrath is reserved for only these vessels? Will not the remainder of humankind then escape His wrath?

The reality of preparing vessels for wrath is that all of humankind must, necessarily, become either vessels of wrath or vessels of mercy before the end of the age; all of the clay must be dug and brought to the wheel. No person can remain neutral, suffering as a civilian during a war fought in the person's homeland. Therefore, God's patient enduring of vessels of wrath forms the precursory condition necessary for pouring out the Holy Spirit on all flesh [i.e., baptizing the world in Spirit]. God enduring what He intends to destroy sets the stage for forming every person into either a vessel of wrath or of mercy. But His enduring ends with Him *coming in fire, with chariots like whirlwinds, rendering God's anger in fury and His rebuke with flames of fire* (Isa 66:15). The slain of the Lord will be many on the day of His return (v. 16). Vessels prepared for destruction will be destroyed, for these vessels of clay cannot contain His wrath.

What if God broke off faithless cultivated olive branches to graft onto the root of righteousness wild olive scions, knowing in advance that these wild scions will bear worthless fruit? Does He seek their worthless fruit, small, bitter, all skin and pit? A person would not think so. So what is it that God seeks from grafting wild scions to righteousness other than the faith of these scions, faith that will cause these scions to begin bearing cultivated fruit, faith that works contrary to nature, faith that will make the cultivated branches jealous? Or has He grafted these wild scions onto righteousness to be vessels of wrath through which He can demonstrate His justice and His power, demonstrating that He will send even His own lawless sons into the lake of fire?

The Apostle Paul uses several analogies to make a complex point: when God began working with the patriarch Abraham, God selected one man from all of humanity to form from this man a "cultivated" variety of humankind that would be easily worked into vessels for honored use in His household. Abraham bore fruit that God found desirable in the same way that one apple [or olive] seedling in tens of thousands bears fruit worth propagating through continued selection. God did the selecting of a man in the same way that, say, Luther Burbank selected fruit varieties. And God did the propagating through delivering a son of promise to first Sarah, then two sons of promise to Rebekah, with one of Rebekah's sons being hated [or a son of wrath for dishonorable use] and one son being loved. Then from the loved son came the cultivar *Israel*, a man and a nation that prevails with God. So of all humankind, only one lineage became the natural cultivar selected by God to bear the fruit of righteousness.

What happens to a cultivar that grows *branch sports* that bear worthless fruit? Are these branches not sawn off and thrown into the fire? What happens when most of the branches bear worthless fruit? Are they left on the good trunk, or are they not all sawn off? They are sawn off. And the trunk sets leaf buds where the cuts have been made, and from these leaf buds will eventually grow new branches that will bear fruit true to the cultivar—and this is the history of the natural cultivar grown from the patriarch Abraham, with the exception that the new branches continued to bear mostly worthless fruit, for the faith of Abraham was lost through the leafy branches taking pride in being descended from the patriarch.

When all of the new growth on a cultivar are leafy branches growing upright as suckering shoots from framing branches, the tree will bear no fruit—suckering shoots grow few fruiting spurs, so they must be pruned away to let sunlight rest on lateral branches. Thus, when these leafy branches, bearing no fruit of righteousness, began to count their uprightness as righteousness, the cultivar was prime for radical pruning, even to God sacrificing the only righteous Branch on the cultivar so that from this branch would come the scions that returned the cultivar to bearing the fruit of righteousness. Growing upright as a water sprout brings forth no fruit of righteousness, only leaves and bag worms.

Not all clays will make fine vessels; not all cultivars bear fruit of equal value. And the Apostle Paul mixes metaphors as he conveys what he has received by revelation (Gal 1:12)—the visible things of this world reveal the invisible things of God (Rom 1:20), but are only shadows of realities in a supra dimension that bear in complexity to our known world the relationship of clay to flesh. Therefore, only through metaphors can the realities of heaven be described in this world. The means by which life is imparted in the heavenly realm isn't through physical breath; yet, *breath* is used as the metaphor for this means, for through breath life comes to flesh, made from the elemental elements of the earth. Hence the juxtaposition of inert stone and flesh [living stone, made alive through the addition of *breath*] somewhat accurately conveys the relationship between living human beings and glorified sons of God. And this relationship is further refined through employing an additional metaphor, that of seed-bearing vegetation: Jesus said of Himself (John 12:24) that He must die as a grain of wheat dies in order to produce much fruit, with this *fruit* being righteousness in servants (*vv.* 25-26). So the mixing of metaphors is unavoidable, for what is without breath does not reproduce itself. It is, thus, the inclusion of *spiritual breath* [*pneuma 'agion*] that transforms the metaphor of *phyllosilicate* minerals rich in silicon, aluminium oxides, hydroxides, with trapped structural water, in layered stratum, into the clay on the Master Potter's wheel, clay that will bring forth the fruit of righteousness.

But the clay on the Master Potter's wheel will be made into vessels of wrath as well as into vessels of mercy—the same clay dug from the earth, the same spiritual breath added to make the clay workable...where is the difference? Does the clay have absolutely no say in what it will be? Can it not appeal to the Potter for mercy? And it is the *hard determinism* of the clay having no say in what it will be that causes the visible Christian Church to shy away from *predestination* (*προορισμός*) as taught by Augustine and Calvin, accepting instead [while rejecting the man] the teachings of Pelagius. Unfortunately, once the Master Potter begins shaping the clay, the time for decision has passed: the clay has made up the mind of the Master Potter as to what He will make from the centered ball. It was during the centering process that the clay influenced the Potter by the clay's workability.

Both vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy will bring forth the harvest of righteousness, but they will do so through differing means.

If the Lord required of Abraham, to whom the promises were given while he was still uncircumcised, the sacrifice of his firstborn son of promise after circumcision—and if God willingly sacrificed His firstborn Son at Calvary—then is it beyond the Father's love to not also sacrifice the Body of His firstborn son as well as the Head, making first the Body perfect through its liberation from the sin that presently dwells in the flesh? Shall the Head live without the Body? Shall the Christ not reign over many kings and lords? Indeed, He will. And who are these kings and lords if not today His students and servants? Is it not enough for the student to be like his or her Teacher, and the servant like his or her Master (Matt 10:24-25 & John 12:25-26)?

If, indeed, the student is like his or her teacher, then will not the student be likewise sacrificed as an acceptable sin-offering “in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom 8:3-4)? Is the head only of a lamb sacrificed? Is not the body also sacrificed with the head? Of course it is. Then, if the Body of the Lamb of God was not yet formed when the Head was sacrificed, does the Body escape being sacrificed because it was not at Calvary to physically die on the rocky outcropping as the Head died?

How shall it escape if it were to escape? Has not every generation of the Body from Calvary until now died because of the sin that continues to dwell in the flesh even though the old creature was crucified with Christ, who came to condemn sin in the flesh? If sin is condemned in the flesh, is not the flesh then condemned because of the sin in it? Why has the flesh of disciples died if not because liberation through Jesus’ death at Calvary is of the Spirit [*Pneuma*], and not of the flesh? The *Logos* came from heaven to be born as the man Jesus (John 1:1-3, 14); He was Spirit [*Pneuma*] dwelling in flesh. His death at Calvary was the acceptable sin offering for the liberation of the self-aware old creature that dwells in a tent of flesh, just as the death of Egyptian firstborns was the acceptable sin offering for God’s liberation of natural Israel from bondage to Pharaoh. And as the circumcised nation that left Egypt could not enter God’s rest because of unbelief, the old creature cannot enter heaven because of its unbelief. A new creature, born of Spirit, born from above, must be born into the same tent of flesh in which the old creature dwelt in a manner analogous to how uncircumcised children were born to the circumcised natural nation in fabric tents in the wilderness. This new creature, like the uncircumcised children of the nation that left Egypt, will enter God’s rest. And it is this new creature that will be made into either a vessel of honor or one of dishonor: the old creature dies with Christ at Calvary, and should be no more once the new creature is born as a son of God.

Thus, it can be seen that the self-conscious life causing a person to be a human being forms *the old creature* and *the new creature*. This conscious awareness is not the flesh, is not of the flesh, but derives from an outside cause, a biologically defensible argument as animal *instinct* becomes better understood. The conscious awareness of *creature* dwells in a tent of flesh, and crucifixion with Christ is of the self-aware life that causes a person to be human. Crucifixion is, obviously, not of the flesh, which remains in bondage to sin (Rom 7:21-25). But before the coming of the Lord, the fleshly tents of His Body will, collectively, be liberated from bondage to sin as the natural nation of Israel was liberated from bondage to Pharaoh. Lives will again be given (Isa 43:3-4). The lives this time will be of the firstborns of spiritual Babylon, the reigning kingdom of the world—and the giving of these lives will form a type and shadow of the sixth trumpet plague (Rev 9:13-19). It will not be this sixth trumpet plague although the many false prophets of Israel will so identify it.

So there is no mistake: the seven endtime years of tribulation will begin with the liberation of the Church, the Body of Christ, from bondage to sin through the empowerment of disciples by the Holy Spirit, and preceding this liberation, the lives of men will again be given as ransom as they were in Egypt. Then approximately three and a half years later, the third part of humanity will be liberated from bondage to sin and death, this liberation preceded by the sixth trumpet plague.

When the collective tents of flesh composing the Body of Christ are liberated from sin, the Body will then form an acceptable sin offering for the condemning of sin in the flesh of Israel—

- Just as the sacrifice of the Head that came from heaven to be born of water set *the new creature* free from the law of sin and death, the sacrifice of the Body of Christ that comes from dust and water to be born of Spirit will set all of Israel free from sin and death.
- But the sin-offering does not set free human beings that are not then of Israel. For them, a ransom still must be paid.
- Israel is analogous to the clay in the potter’s house, with the remainder of humanity being analogous to undug clay wherever it might be found.

Sacrificed together, Head and Body, the Lamb of God will liberate both *the new creature* and the tent of flesh in which *this creature* dwells from sin and death. No longer will the born anew Israelite die from “natural” causes even though this Israelite remains dwelling in a tent of flesh—and this is a mystery that has been poorly understood: when the Body of Christ is liberated from bondage to sin, the death of the flesh will only come from outside the disciple. The empowered disciple can be martyred, that is killed by others. But this liberated disciple will not die from the indwelling of sin in his or her flesh, for no sin will dwell within the person unless the person takes sin back into himself or herself. Then, no sacrifice remains for the person, who has committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit [*Pneuma 'Agion*]. The lawless disciple will die when Christ kills him or her upon His return. The flesh of this lawless disciple will visibly perish, and the spiritual life this disciple had will be cast into the lake of fire.

The whole of humankind is as undug clay, and is as forests of wild olives, with the common element being that God has not intervened to either dig the clay, or to root out the wild rootstock; God consigned the world to disobedience (Rom 11:32) when He drove Adam from His garden before Adam could eat of the Tree of Life (Gen 3:22-24). A flaming sword kept Adam from returning to the garden where *Life* grew with *Knowledge of Good and Evil*. It is this juxtaposition around which the mysteries of God have grown as a hedge to prevent the wild descendants of Adam from working their way to salvation. So from then till now, most of humanity has life as spiritually lifeless clay, buffeted by the winds and waves of time, weathered veins eroded by the cares of this world; has life as one tree in a rainforest, roots starved for nutrients, branches striving for height to catch a few rays of light, stretching for fifteen minutes of fame.

Mercy is to wrath as honor is to dishonor—and as the promise of *life* is to possession of *knowledge of good & evil*.

When every person has been born of Spirit (Joel 2:28), humankind will be without indwelling sin, but before all of humanity is liberated from sin and death to become the great nation promised to Abraham, lives will again be given as they were before the liberation of Israel from Egypt and the liberation of the Church from sin. For a second time within three and a half years, a third of humankind will be slain by angels of God, or by angels released by God. And it is this second sacrifice of humanity that causes the man of perdition to declare himself God (Dan 12:11 with 2Thess 2:3-4) shortly before the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Christ (Rev 11:15 with Dan 7:9-14)...and the student, here, will be maligned as his Teacher was; for those disciples who are of the synagogue of Satan will say only someone with a demon will teach that the Body of Christ remains today in physical bondage to sin, or that they as praise-filled Christians are lawless vessels created for the wrath to come, or that possessing the *knowledge of good & evil* without being born of Spirit condemns the person to disobedience.

God is love; so how does the Father enduring with much patience vessels of wrath express this love? Again, how does the Father creating vessels for wrath express love? Linguistically, to destroy these vessels is why He has endured them with patience. But why prepare vessels for destruction? Where is love in preparing vessels to be broken in the course of their intended use? And the many questions reflect the long standing dilemma of Christianity: if God gave to circumcised Israel the choice of life or death, good or evil (Deu 30:15-30), has He not also given this same choice to uncircumcised Israelites? If God is not a respecter of persons—and He is not—He must give to both the same choice.

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the saints at Rome, the Father had not long-suffered the lawlessness of disciples, but of the circumcised nation that had been cultivated as a tree on Judean hillsides for a millennium and a half. And from this cultivated tree, one Branch only bore righteous fruit, with that fruit set as a flower bud on a fruiting spur that grew when Israel left Egypt...it takes a year and a half for a spur to bear fruit. The spur grows from spring to late summer, when it sets a flower bud for the following spring's blossom. That blossom, if pollinated, sets fruit that ripens during the summer and is harvested a year or so after the bud is set. And moving from analogy to spiritual reality, a year [as with a day] is like a thousand years. The approximately 1500 years between when Israel left Egypt (ca 1450 BCE) and when Jesus

began His ministry (ca 27 CE) is analogous to the year and a half from new growth on the fruiting spur to ripe fruit. Likewise, the approximately 1500 years from the beginning of Jesus' ministry to when a remnant of spiritual Israel left spiritual Babylon (ca 1525-27) to rebuild the house of God in the Jerusalem above is analogous to the length of time the circumcised nation was in physical Judea before the physical coming of the Righteous Branch. Therefore, employing the same analogy, the righteous Body of the Lamb appeared [and has since grown from] when a remnant of the Church left spiritual Babylon with the Protestant Reformers in the same way that the righteous Head of the Lamb appeared among the circumcised nation in the 1st-Century CE. The circumcised nation, here, equates with the Church in spiritual Babylon. But the righteous Body will not be born until the seven endtime years of tribulation begin. Thus, the years between, say, 1527 and 2017 are a time of growth for the Body in a manner analogous of Jesus reaching physical maturity in 17 CE [Jesus would have been about twenty years old in 17 CE, and thirty years old in 27 CE, this based upon Jesus being crucified on the 14th of Nissan in 31 CE].

Not all of the Body is the Body (Rom 9:6-8): when the Reformers expelled Radical Anabaptists from the Reformed Church, they expelled the Body from the Body, and there was then twins conceived in the womb of Isaac [Rebekah's womb is Isaac's womb] (Gal 4:28-31), with both twins garmented by Christ's righteousness. But one twin was hated, and one loved. Thus, the Body of the Son of Man became a divided Body, with the glorified Jesus remaining its uncovered Head.

Yes, the Body of Christ is now divided in the womb of Isaac, but this Body cannot remain divided. The hated son shall not inherit with the loved son.

- The divided Body must become the Bride, and will become the Bride by being sacrificed by God as the Bridegroom was sacrificed.
- But two cannot marry one Bridegroom; thus, one son must die.
- The loved son will live spiritually, but die physically [or be willing to].
- The hated son must die spiritually while living for a time physically.
- Thus, the loved son is given in sacrifice as the Body of the Lamb, and the hated son will be given in sacrifice as bulls and goats were for physical Israel.
- Except for a remnant (Rev 12:17), both sons will experience death, either physical or spiritual, during the first half of the seven endtime years.

The love of God is not the love of humankind, as God's ways are not the ways of men. Today, the portion of the Church that remains in spiritual Babylon is reckoned as the scribes and the Pharisees were to Christ, and as the beasts were to the first Adam. No helpmate was found among the beasts for the first Adam; no helpmate was found among the hypocrites [spiritual beasts] for the last Adam; and no helpmate is found for the Body of Christ among the lawless Church in Babylon.

The hated son will be a man of the fields: he will be a great evangelizer, well able to engage the ideological beasts of this world, but lawlessness will overtake him and will again take him captive. And this lawlessness will cause him to slay his righteous brother—and the cause of the lawlessness will be the Sabbath commandments, the least of the commandments (Matt 5:19).

The hated son, today, still in the womb of the last Eve, remains in spiritual Babylon, serving its king while singing praises to Christ Jesus. It is this hated son who, when born in a day, will cover himself with his own hairy righteousness rather than walk uprightly before God. It is this hated son that will slay or attempt to slay his righteous brother as Cain slew Abel...this cannot be said too many times, for perhaps, the evil this hated son does to his righteous brother will cause the natural branches to, by faith, profess that Jesus is Lord, thereby saving themselves. Both the righteous son and the natural branches will be pursued by this hated son once the seven endtime years begin.

The Bride of Christ doesn't try to enter God's rest on the following day as did the circumcised nation that left Egypt. But today, the hated son, even while still in the womb, attempts to enter God's rest on the following day. When born in a day, attempting to enter God's rest on the following day will constitute blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

The Father's love is manifest in His wrath and in His power, and in showing mercy to those vessels which He had prepared beforehand for glory. But since He is not a respecter of persons, the lump of clay from which both vessels prepared for honored and for dishonorable use are formed must be offered the choice of life or death. The circumcised nation was offered this choice on a single day (Deu 30:15 — compare with Num 13:25 through 14:42), not on many days. On one day (evening actually), the nation that left Egypt rebelled against God because of its unbelief, and chose not to enter God's rest but to choose another leader and to return to Egypt (Num 14:4). And when this nation made that choice, God sealed that choice by pronouncing a death sentence upon everyone twenty years old and older when Israel left Egypt.

- When the last Eve gives birth to two sons on a day, the liberated [from sin] hated son will choose death over life—and God will send a great delusion over the many disciples that constitute the great falling away so that the hated son cannot repent (2Thess 2:11-12).
- On that same day, the liberated loved son will choose life, and probable martyrdom at the hand of the hated son.

For all disciples, past, present, and future, on one day choice was, is, or will be given and made—and that day is *the day of salvation* for the Israelite. On that one particular day, the Potter lets the clay tell the Potter what the clay can be. From that day forward, the Potter works the clay into the vessel the Potter desires to make from the clay. From that day forward, the lump becomes a vessel for honored use, or for dishonorable use. The lump becomes a bowl or a chamber pot, a vase or a crock, a lamp or a burial urn. The choice of bowl, vase, or lamp rests entirely with the Potter. Likewise, the choice of a chamber pot, crock, or urn is the Potter's. The clay had all the say in its outcome that it will be allowed, and this say was given and accepted when the clay was yet nothing but a lump, a spiritual infant too young to practice guile.

As the nation that rebelled in the wilderness of Paran (Num chap 14) chose its fate through its unbelief on a particular day, and as the disciples constituting the great falling away will choose their fate through their unbelief on a particular day, every disciple through belief or unbelief will chose his or her fate on a particular day. There were many days on which the nation that left Egypt could have chosen to believe God; there will be 220 days on which the disciples constituting the great falling away could chose to believe God. But eventually, time expires, and as in a sporting event when the clock runs out, *the day of salvation* ends. A decision is forced upon the Israelite—and the decision to choose death is not reversible, for God will not allow repentance after experiencing His goodness. Rather, He will now shape the lump into a vessel of wrath, a vessel for dishonorable use.

Therefore, as a potter takes a ball of clay and places it in the center of a turntable [the wheel head], thereby giving to this lump of clay his or her undivided attention as the wheel begins to revolve rapidly, God draws a human being from the world, centers the person's orientation, and gives to the person His undivided attention. God expects no more from the person than the potter expects from his or her ball of clay—and expects no less.

The clay is pressed, squeezed, and gently pulled into shape as the wheel head revolves rapidly, with this process of pressuring imparting to the clay rotational symmetry so the clay remains stable and doesn't wobble side to side. The nature of the wheel limits form to radial symmetry along a vertical axis, a facet of visiting the potter's house imbedded within the words of the Lord the prophet Jeremiah received, but missed by Protestant Reformers: events in the visible world occur along the horizontal or "x" axis, for these events form the *shadow* of events in the invisible, timeless heavenly realm. Thus, from humankind's perception of the passage of time, all phenomena have a beginning and an end along an "x" axis time continuum. But from the perspective of the supra-dimensional heavenly realm, movement is along the vertical or "y" axis; for spiritually, no time passes between when a phenomenon begins and when it ends. Hence, shadows of heavenly events (like the shadow of a man standing) lie across history whereas the event itself is like the shaping of a vessel that has radial symmetry, this symmetry remaining constant even though the shape of the vessel changes as the potter works the clay. Therefore, only by observing the shadow cast along the "x" axis can the person confined within time "see" the changing shape of the vessel along the "y" axis.

Practical application of the above concept allows disciples born of Spirit to see how, collectively, they appear to God and to the angels in the heavenly realm. To itself, the Church will always see itself as the acceptable Body of Christ, loved by the Father for the Head's sake. But when Jeremiah went to the potter's house, the words he heard were,

If at any time I [*YHWH*] declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it. And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it. (Jer 18:7-10)

And in applying these words, the Church collectively looks like the ancient circumcised nation of Israel, which, because of its unbelief, was rejected by God. He who initially declared only *good* toward the Church, a nation that was not before a people, has now declared that the righteous requirements of the law are in force, these requirements demanding that the sinner receive the wages for his or her uncovered sin. But the collective Church, hearing only what it wants to hear from God, scours whatever is good and decent from the consciences of disciples, labeling pursuing *good* as *legalism* that should be avoided in all situations. Instead of causing its firstborns to pass through physical fire as the circumcised nation did, the Church now collectively erases the laws of God from the hearts and minds of spiritual infants, thereby condemning these infants into the spiritual lake of fire if these laws cannot be rewritten on those delicate tablets of flesh.

The potter first works the raw clay to distribute moisture and force out air. A little water will keep the clay flexible and from cracking; too much and the clay will not hold symmetry. And the Master Potter works the raw clay in a similar manner: He takes a lump of clay and centers that lump on his [or her] wheel before shaping a vessel [God draws a person from the world and centers that person on His potter's wheel]. If the clay is too stiff or too wet, the potter is limited as to what can make from the lump. Likewise, if a disciple lacks the faith to hold its shape [i.e., too wet, too much of the world present] the Master Potter cannot make from the lump the same vessel as He can from a more firm lump. And if the lump resists being shaped, the lump becomes common stoneware that, when fired, will whet iron, but is used for purposes without honor.

The analogy circles back upon itself as if it were centered on the wheel head: the broken off branches of the cultivated olive are burned to *fire the clay*, thereby transforming *greenware* that is very brittle and only handled with care into a *bisque* or *biscuit ware*, which has ceramic permanency but is still in need of a glaze and a second firing...when a vessel is shaped for honored or dishonorable use, God sets the vessel back to dry until it is leather hard. The only modification that can be made to the vessel is through a final sanding or scraping prior to firing. The vessel will not become what it is not although the vessel can still be easily broken: the Apostle Paul tells disciples to live lives worthy of their high calling, for even though they have been shaped into vessels of honor, they can still be broken by neglecting the work begun in them.

It is from the remnant of the Church that left spiritual Babylon in the 16th-Century that the Body of Christ has grown although this is not to say that there were not vessels made for honored use prior to when this remnant left Babylon: just as there were honorable circumcised Israelites scattered among an idolatrous people throughout the 1500 year history of the circumcised nation before the coming of the Branch, there were worthy disciples scattered throughout the first 1500 years of the Church's history. But in both cases, the nations as wholes have been lawless and idolatrous, with this remaining the case as much of the Anabaptist remnant settled in now burgeoning communities on the Babylon side of the Jordan where children of the remnant continue to toil in Babylonian captivity.

When the twelve spies returned and Israel rebelled against God, Moses prayed for the nation, quoting the words of the Lord back to Him, saying ""The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and fourth generation."

Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now” (Num 14:18-19). The Lord had said of Himself that He was slow to anger and abounded in steadfast love, but He would not allow any adult of this rebelling nation to enter into His rest, except for Joshua and Caleb (*vv.* 20-23). Enough was enough. No repenting would change His mind (*vv.* 40-42). The nation would die in the wilderness, but not before an uncircumcised nation was raised up to take its place virtually man-for-man (compare Num 2:32 with Num 26:2-4, 51).

The wrath of God and His mercy is seen in the Book of Numbers, where a circumcised nation is replaced by an uncircumcised nation because of the unbelief of the circumcised nation (Heb 3:17-19). Wrath fell on vessels that had been prepared for wrath by testing God ten times. Mercy was given to children dwelling in the same tents as their fathers. But this mercy was conditioned upon these children being circumcised once they entered into God’s rest (Josh 5:2-7).

A Jew is not one who is circumcised outwardly, but one circumcised inwardly (Rom 2:28-29). Thus, before God no distinction can be made with hands or made through biology (Gal 3:27-29). The promise came to Abraham while he was still physically uncircumcised: his faith was counted as righteousness. By faith he left the land of his father and left his father’s household to follow God, so his faith was manifest by those things that Abraham did; for faith without works is dead rhetoric.

Today, the person drawn from the world by the Father—as clay dug from an embankment—must make a choice. Good and evil has been set before this person while he or she remains a shovelful of clay. From this shovelful, God will make either a vessel of wrath to be endured for a season, or a vessel of mercy to be honored in His household.

If by faith, the shovelful of clay chooses to live as a Judean, keeping the commandments of God and walking in all His ways, loving God with heart and mind and neighbor as self, God finds this shovelful of clay to be workable, and makes from this lump a vessel of honor. But if the shovelful tells God that it wishes to remain as it is, a Gentile in a land of Gentiles, then God will make from this latter lump a vessel of wrath, to be broken upon Christ’s return.

A disciple can utter words about the love of God, can know Scripture, can sing praises about the glory of God, but if the disciple, by his or her lack of faith, chose not to live as a Judean when choice was given on the person’s day of salvation, the disciple is now a vessel of wrath—and you can determine which you are, a vessel of honor or dishonor, by whether you will today live as a Judean. If you won’t keep the commandments; if you earnestly contend for the lawlessness of the Church in Babylon; if you will not keep the commandments, but call keeping the commandments *legalism*, then prepare yourself to be broken upon Christ’s return. You have been warned. God had that much love for you.

The love of God is such that He will work all of the world’s supply of clay into vessels before the world is baptized by fire, thereby turning the world into a very hot kiln where those vessels that were initially fired at Christ’s return will have their glazes set...*biscuit ware* is normally a plain red, white, or brown, its color coming from the clay used. These vessels are then adorned with glazes and fired again at a higher temperature.

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