

## Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: November 14: Jeremiah 18 & 19

**Themes:** Potters and Pots. Three (at least) sermons. Jeremiah has to defend himself, and maybe blurs the line between God's perceived anger and his own very understandable anger. The potter analogy for God, and for us as pots, needs reflection. The potter shapes what is already there. God creates from scratch. The dust/clay may be inherently malleable or less malleable, but dust and clay have no independent agency. We may be more or less malleable, based on history and circumstances, but we do normally have choices to make. King Saul, God's "chosen", ceased to be usable and was rejected. King David often got it wrong (sometimes very badly wrong), but was more willing to repent and change.

**Quotations:** "I will think again, and give up on the plans I had for them." (18.10)  
"Straighten out your lives." (18.11) "My people have left me to pursue the big lie." (18.13) "Should I get paid evil for good?" (18.19) Strike while the iron of your anger is hot?" (18.23) "So it's pay day!" (19.6) "This people will turn into cannibals." (19.9)

**Clarifications:** Child sacrifice seems the most improbable of practices, but the logic is that the sacrifice to a demanding god has to be pure/perfect. ...and of great value to the person doing the sacrifice. Recall the Abraham/Isaac story; and the Christian shock/horror alongside "God sacrificed His only Son..." One of the Judges fulfilled his vow to sacrifice his daughter. Perpetual snow – c.f. climate change, with all the old natural scenery certainties gone! Potters like bakers had their own quarters in a city – unlike today's conventions for shops. The God of all nations has expectations of all nations. Topeth/ Ben Himmon South West of Jerusalem; place of sacrifice, rubbish dump. Cannibalism seems to be even more shocking than child sacrifice.

**Questions:** How do we let ourselves be shaped – group pressures, work culture, family expectations, Party loyalty? Do we give up (maybe on each other) too easily? Do we give up on God too easily? Can we manage to forgive 70x7 times? Does God forgive that often? Do we tend to call liking our prejudices to be confirmed "consistency"? Are we selectively deaf? Being open-minded versus being faithful? An awkward one: Doesn't God know in advance what is going to happen, and if so how come He has to change His mind?