

Make Me As Clay

Introduction:

1. The image of the potter and his clay is used by God in the days of Isaiah and Jeremiah to call attention to various aspects of His relationship with His people.
2. First, the element of authority is evident. The potter necessarily has authority over the clay as God has authority over His people.
3. Second, the image is sometimes used to reflect on the changes that God's people need to undergo as they are shaped by His will.
4. A third, and more positive element of the image is that God is in the business of forming His people into something useful. And so—the song that we sometimes sing, written by Clyde Williams and his wife, says, “Make me as clay, in the potter's hand.”
5. In this lesson we will survey the use of this image in Isaiah and Jeremiah. And contrast this image with the idea of idols being the works of men's hands. Finally we will try to make some application to ourselves as we discuss the fact that we are His workmanship, created and formed and gently molded into what God wants us to be.

Discussion:

I. Israel was the work of God's hands.

- A. Isa. 64 opens with a statement of praise to the Lord, but it recognizes sin and the need for salvation and appeals to God in submission saying, “All of us are the work of Your hand.”
- B. Isa. 65 is God's response. Verses 17ff describe how He will create a new heavens and a new earth. Jerusalem will be created for rejoicing and gladness.
 1. Compare this to our previous study regarding the new heaven and new earth in Rev. 21.
 2. When people give themselves into control of the Lord then He shapes them into something glorious.
 3. And yet He had spread out His hands all day long to a rebellious people who followed their own thoughts (Isa. 65:2-7).
 4. Their idolatry is clearly described (vs. 3ff).
- C. In Jer. 18, God himself, uses the image of the potter and the clay.
 1. Here God portrays Israel as a spoiled vessel, but remade into another vessel.
 2. Thus God's authority over the vessel, Israel, is illustrated.
 3. Yet, Israel is different than a piece of clay. She has the ability to influence her outcome. Through repentance and turning from her evil way she can influence God so that He will remake her. There is hope, but she chooses hopelessness (12). She continues to burn incense to worthless gods (15).
- D. But God is in the business of redemption and He recognizes those who will return to Him from their idols (Isa. 43:1, 5-8). These are those He creates for His glory (7). These are those He forms for Himself (21).

II. While God's people are the work of His hands idols are the works of men's hands. This is a radical and profound contrast. The difference is in worshiping the Creator vs. worshiping that which you have created.

- A. God predicted before Israel went into Canaan that this would happen (Deut. 4:28). Note that these gods can neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.
 - 1. God called on the people to promise not to worship “the work of the hands of craftsmen” at Mt. Ebal (Deut. 27:15).
 - 2. Moses predicted at the end of his life, that they would provoke the Lord to anger “with the work of your hands” (Deut. 31:29).
- B. The essence of self-made religion is to devise within your own heart a plan for worship and then to make with your own hands gods to worship.
 - 1. During the period of the kings Solomon was involved in this (1 Kings 11:1-8).
 - 2. Jereboam took it to the next level (1 Kings 12:28-33).
 - a. He consulted (28). With whom? Certainly not God, nor the prophets of God.
 - b. He did what he devised in his own heart (33).
 - c. He made two golden calves.
 - 3. The kings after him followed his pattern. Of Baasha it is said, he provoked the Lord to anger, “with the work of his hands” (1 Kings 16:7).
- C. Idol worship is described throughout the O.T. as worshiping gods made by the work of men’s hands (2 Kings 19:18; 22:17; 2 Chron. 32:19; Isa. 2:8; 17:8; 37:19; Jer. 25:6-7, 14; 32:30; Hos. 14:3; Mic. 5:13).
- D. The statements in Psa. 115:4 and 135:15-18 start with idols created by the work of men’s hands, observe that though they have eyes they cannot see and though they have ears they cannot hear, and conclude, “Those who make them will become like them.” I.e., blind and deaf because they will not hear nor see the revelation that God is giving.

III. We are God’s workmanship (Eph. 2:10).

- A. We who listen to the revelation of the Creator become clay in the Potter’s hand.
- B. Even though we have sinned and marred the image in which we were created. He is remaking us according to His good pleasure (Jer. 18:4).
- C. But we must be as clay in the potter’s hand—pliable, soft and receptive to the Creator’s formation.
- D. We must give up self-made religion (Col. 2:23). We must give up a stiff-necked approach (Jer. 17:23) and allow God to work us into vessels of honor. He is creating us for His glory (Isa. 43:7).

Conclusion:

- 1. So, make me as clay in the potter’s hand.
- 2. Mold me; make me, as You’d have me be.
- 3. Though marred by sin, take full command and make me as clay in the potter’s hand.