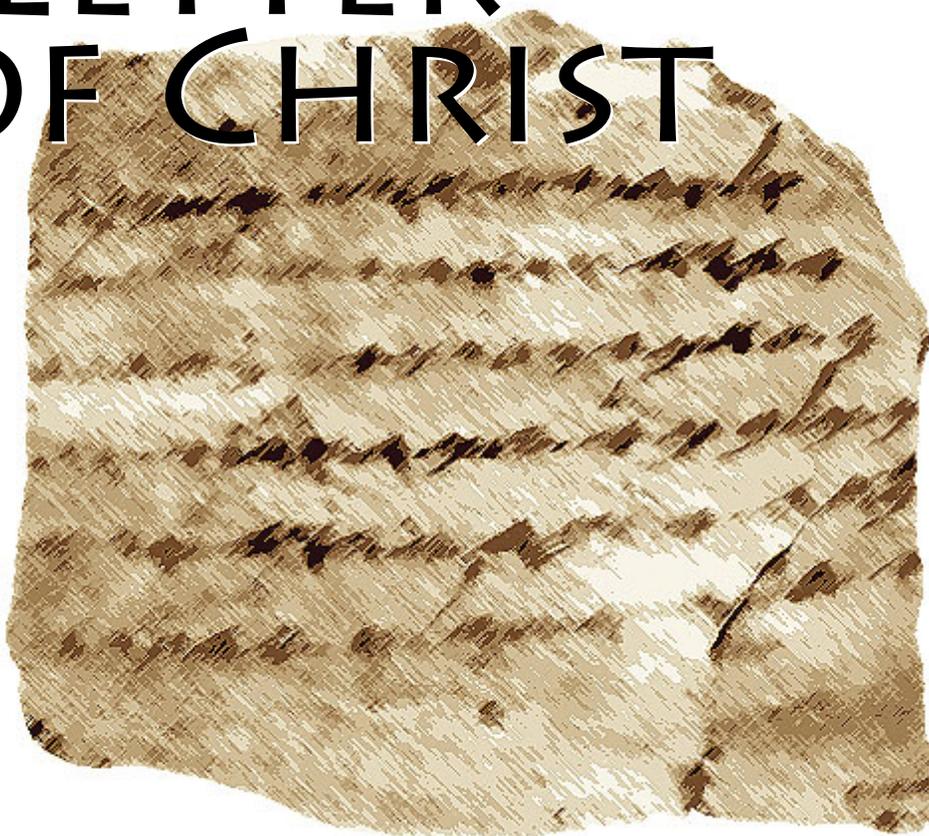


A LETTER OF CHRIST



IN THE ANCIENT WORLD few things were as plentiful and inexpensive as the ubiquitous clay pot. Used for storing and serving everything from water and wine to grain, these vessels could be artfully shaped, brightly painted and expensive, but more often were crudely fashioned, plain, cheap—and common as dirt.

They also were quite fragile. It took very little effort—say, setting it down a little too hard on the edge of the well—for them to break. When this occurred, the pot was not repaired but thrown out and replaced. In Jerusalem there was a quarter in the city in which the potters worked, and nearby there was even a “potsherd gate” in the city wall where, presumably, the refuse of broken pottery was discarded.

Thus says the Lord, “Go and buy a potter’s earthenware jar, and *take* some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests. Then go out to the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is by the entrance of the potsherd gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you...”

Jeremiah 19:1-2

As commonplace as the pots themselves were the sharp-edged pieces of broken pots—in the parlance of the modern archaeologist, ostraca. The bits and pieces of shattered pottery were used as the ancients’ scratch paper and memo pad. When a bill of lading needed to be tallied, when a teacher’s note had to be sent home with a child, when a quick shopping list had to be made—all these and more were scratched or painted onto the surface of a jagged potsherd.

In fact, a collection of potsherds used in this way are far more valuable to the archaeologist than trinkets of gold or silver in piecing together the life of the ancients. Over the centuries ostraca were used for voting ballots, receipts, medical prescriptions, student exercises and personal messages. Thus an utterly worthless scrap of broken pottery became useful, even valuable, because of the writing on it.



Man, as born, is just a base, earthen vessel.

“By the sweat of your face
You will eat bread,
Till you return to the ground,
Because from it you were
taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall
return.”

Genesis 3:19

Like those ancient pots, we may have our simple utilitarian purpose, but we are of little lasting value and easily replaced. But then Christ comes into a life—indeed, He is so personal a Savior that *on* that life He writes His own! First He changes our heart of stone to one of flesh, a suitable dwelling place for His Spirit.

“Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you...”

Ezekiel 36:26-27a

Then he begins writing Himself into our life: letter by letter, page by page. He begins crafting in us a *new* composition, something that will not just be more useful—even valuable—but an earthen vessel that will actually reveal His glory.

You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

2 Corinthians 3:2-3

When the Christian stands before others he does so as a letter of Christ—not because of anything *he* is, but because of the resplendent wonder dwelling within.

For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.

2 Corinthians 4:6-7

But just like that ancient clay pot, to become someone truly useful, someone that will carry an eternal message and stand for something that will still be effective long after our initial usefulness has passed out of the narrative, we must be broken. The arrogance and selfishness with which we are born must be replaced by a spirit of brokenness and contrition before the Lord.



“For My hand made all these things,
Thus all these things came into being,”
declares the Lord.

“But to this one I will look,
To him who is humble and contrite of spirit,
and who trembles at My word.”

Isaiah 66:2

The humble earthen vessel must realize his low estate, that he is nothing whatsoever in himself, bereft of worth, bereft of standing, and bow before the lordship of Christ alone. Only then—only when Christ Himself has been written across his broken spirit—does the lowly potsherd become ostraca, and something of value for the ages.

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

James 4:10 NKJV

