



## Christ the Potter by Sellers S Crain, Jr.

All Scriptures and comments are based on the **New King James Version**, unless otherwise noted.

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Pottery

1. It has become more for commercial use, or in pottery classes, or as art objects.
2. Before plastic and Styrofoam cups and plates, it was used for dinnerware. Metal vessels were also used, but they were so expensive only wealthy people could afford them.
3. A lot of pottery has been uncovered from Israel's early years, and also from other nations of the world. It amazes me how much some of those pieces on Antique Road Show are priced for. Some pieces are appraised at over a million dollars, and Chinese porcelain can bring much more.
4. The money Judas received for betraying Christ after he tried to give it back, threw it down and went out and hanged himself, was used to purchase a burial place for paupers, unknown persons, and criminals. that had been a potter's field. (**Matthew 27:3-10**) This was fulfilled prophecy (**Zechariah 11:12-13**)
5. Many communities in the United States had Potter's Fields for the burial of such people, including Nashville. It is located on 18th Avenue and Jennings Street. The name was changed from Potter's Field to Davidson County Cemetery in 1960.
6. Job after being covered with "painful boils from the sole of his feet to crown of his head" must have sat on a potter's field with pieces of broken pottery laying around using a piece to scrape himself. (**Job 2:7-8**)
7. Later he said he was God's spokesman and was, "formed out of clay." (**Job 33:6**) The word clay in Hebrew is *chomer* meaning a refined clay that is ready for use. Interestingly the Hebrews word for "dust" is *aphar* which refers to unrefined clay. (**Genesis 2:7**) The Hebrew word for formed is *yiser* which refers to an action being performed by an artist, sculptor, or potter. Obviously, God (*Elohim*; involving all three members of the Godhead; **Genesis 1:1, 26**) was the potter forming man out of unrefined clay. It is important to remember that Scripture gives us many examples of where each member of the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, were engaged in the same activities.

#### B. The Bible has much to say about God being the potter.

##### 1. Old Testament:

- a. "Woe to him who strives with his Maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are

you making?' Or shall a handiwork say, 'He has no hands'?" (**Isaiah 45:9**)  
A potsherd is a piece of broken pottery.

- b. "But now, O Lord, you *are* our Father; we *are* the clay, and You our potter; And all we *are* the work of Your hand." (**Isaiah 64:8**)
- c. "'O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?' says the Lord? 'Look at the clay in the potter's hands, so are you in My hands;' O house of Israel!" (**Jeremiah 18:9**) Jeremiah had been sent by God to a potter's house to observe him making a piece of pottery. At first it was marred, and he remade it into a vessel of honor. The difference between the vessels of honor and dishonor is their use.

## 2. **New Testament:**

- a. "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself of the latter, he will be a vessel of honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work." (**2 Timothy 2:20-21**)
- b. **Romans 9:17-24** This passage concerns God accepting the Gentiles. Once considered vessels of dishonor, but He through His mercy "prepared them for glory."
- c. All of these statements are used to teach Calvinistic Predestination. The false doctrine that God selects each individual before he is ever born to be saved or lost. The Bible teaches Predestination and Election, but not John Calvin's version.

## C. **We are all clay in the potter's hands.**

1. It is important to carefully study the passage in **Romans 9**. The main purpose was to explain why God had a right to reject Israel who had the law, but had not "attained to righteousness" of the law. While God accepted the Gentiles, who did not have the law, but "attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith."
2. It is God's right to accept who He chooses and to reject who He does not choose. His choices are not arbitrary. He does not determine before we are born to accept some and to reject others. He does, however, decide who He will reject, and who He will receive. He chooses to accept those who receive His gift of grace through Jesus Christ. He chooses to reject those who decline or refuse to accept it.
3. He has predestined us from "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will." (**Ephesians 1:4-5**)
4. "For those He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He predestined, these He also called, these He also justified, and whom He justified He also glorified." (**Romans 8:29**)
  - a. God's foreknowledge did not mean He caused all things to happen the way they have. That would mean free will was obliterated. It only means He knew beforehand what would happen. Because He knew beforehand certain people would accept salvation, He determined that they should be conformed to the image of His Son.
  - b. He also gave them the opportunity to hear the call of the gospel and the chance to accept or reject it. The choice was theirs alone.

#### D. How does this fit into **Hebrews 11**, the great faith chapter of the Bible?

1. We can learn how God molded people of the past by His word, and how they received it.
2. We can see that while God was the primary potter, the preincarnate Christ was involved. We are told, for instance, that Moses chose to "suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he looked to the reward." (**vv. 25-26**)
3. We find another statement regarding Christ preincarnate involvement with God's people when Paul wrote, "For they drank of that Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ ... nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them tempted, and were destroyed by serpents ..." Christ was in that cloud that followed them, and when they tempted God, it was Christ they tempted. (**1 Corinthians 10:4, 9**)
4. Isn't it reasonable then to conclude that Christ was involved in the molding of the lives of the heroes of faith recorded in this chapter?
5. After giving us examples of the life God wants us to live in Christ, the writer goes on to say that in living this life, we should be "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross despising the shame and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (**Hebrews 12:1-2**)

## II. THE HEROES OF THE FAITH

### A. Faithful lives of those before the flood.

1. Obviously, Cain and **Abel** were told what kind of sacrifice God expected them to give which was a blood sacrifice for sin. Otherwise, God would have had no reason to reject Cain's offering and to tell him if he had done right, his offering would have been accepted. (**Genesis 4:7**)
2. **Enoch** "walked with God," and "before he was taken had this testimony that he pleased God." (**Hebrews 11:5**) How would he know how to please God if God had not instructed him.
  - a. There is a contrast here between these two godly men, in that one died because he was righteous, and the other because of his righteousness was taken before death.
  - b. Enoch was the father of Methuselah who lived 969 years, and he was also the grandfather of Noah.
    - 1) The name Methuselah can be defined as "when he dies it will be sent." Methuselah died the year the flood came.
    - 2) This could mean that Enoch being such a righteous man who lived 365 years was taken early sparing him from the ungodly condition existing before the flood.
3. "By faith **Noah** ... prepared an ark for the saving of his household; by which he condemned the world and became the heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." Why did he build the ark? He was "divinely warned" by God "of things not yet seen," and it caused him to be "moved by godly fear" to obey God. He was instructed by God how to build the ark and to prepare it for the coming flood. (**Genesis 6:13-16**)

### B. The faithful Patriarchs.

1. "By faith **Abraham** obeyed ... "God and left his home in the UR of Chaldees and lived a nomadic life in the promised land but never receiving the promise "for he waited for the city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God." (**Hebrews 11:8-11**)

- a. It is important to notice that women are not left out of this roll call of the faithful. **Sarah** is mentioned first (**Hebrews 11:11-12**).
  - 1) **Rahab** is mentioned as one who believed in God though she was a sinful woman from a heathen nation. (**Hebrews 11:31**) She was the great-grandmother of King David, and an ancestor of Jesus Christ. (**Matthew 1:5-6**)
  - 2) "Women received their dead raised to life again." (**Hebrews 11:35**)
  - 3) The **widow of Zarephath** and
  - 4) the **Shunammite woman**. (**1 Kings 17:17-20; 2 Kings 4:8-37**)
- b. Abraham offered up his promised son **Isaac** when he was tested by God believing He would raise him from the dead "which He also received him in figurative sense." (**Hebrews 11:15-17**)
2. **Isaac** blessed Jacob and Esau in keeping with God's eternal purpose. As Paul reminds us, it was God's purpose that "the older shall serve the younger." (**Romans 9:13-14**) God's foreknowledge of the kind of life Esau would chose to live may have been involved in His decision.
  - a. He did not value God blessings of being the first born. He "hated/ despised his birthright." (**Genesis 25:34**)
  - b. He was ruled by his physical appetites. (**Hebrews 12:16**)
  - c. He took wives from the Hittites showing his disregard for his family's heritage and future. (**Genesis 28:8-9**)
3. **Jacob**, when he was dying, blessed Joseph's sons and each of his own sons in keeping with God's purpose. (**v. 21; 48:1-2; Genesis 49: 1-27**) The royal line would come from Judah. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from..." (**v. 10**)
4. **Joseph** by faith told his brethren that God would deliver them out of Egypt and take them to the promised land, and charged them to take his body with them when they left. (**Genesis 50:22-26**)
5. The faith of **Moses**, who apparently being taught by his mother to trust in God, refused to be called Pharaoh's daughter's son "choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God." (**v.24-25**)

### C. Other great people of faith.

1. **Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel** and **the prophets** who through great hardship "worked righteousness and received promises," and gained great victories for God (**Hebrews 11:32-34**) These men all had weaknesses, but their faith in God remained and sustained them.
2. **Others mentioned** were imprisoned, tortured, and martyred for their faith, yet they also did not receive the promise.
3. These **godly men and women** were molded by the word of God when they believed and obeyed it. They were not saved by faith alone. (**James 2:24**)
4. The last verse of this chapter provides us with the main purpose of it, and that is "**God having promised something better for us; that they should not be made perfect apart from us.**" They died not seeing the fulfillment of God's promise of a Savior, of salvation from sins, and the better home reserved in heaven for them and for us. We through Christ have received what they only hoped for awaiting our home in heaven.

### III. THE LIFE GOD IS MOLDING FOR US TO LIVE IN CHRIST

#### A. Steps in molding clay

1. The clay must be **pliable**. God cannot begin to mold our lives unless we are pliable and willing to hear and obey His will.
2. Clay requires a lot of **water** to soften it. Jesus said He was the water of life. (**John 4:13-14**) The more we drink of this living water the more pliable we will become.
3. The clay has to be **centered** on the wheel. Our lives must be centered on Christ. (**John 14:6; Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:1-4**)
4. Clay has to be **shaped**. The skillful hands of the potter can shape it the way he wants it to look. God will personally mold, shape and transform us through the words of Christ. (**Matthew 4:4; Romans 10:17; Colossians 3:16**)
5. The clay has to be **lifted up**. Christ lifts us up when we believe His words. (**John 12:32; 16:33; Matthew 11:28-30; Philippians 4:6-8; 4:13; 1 John 5:4**)

#### B. God is molding us today through His Word.

1. Christ was the Word "who was with God and was God" and was "made flesh and dwelt among us..." (**John 1:1. 14**)
2. He said His words were not His own, but were God's words.
  - a. "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on my own authority. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him." (**John 7:16-18**)
  - b. "I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true, and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him." (**John 8:26**)
  - c. "For I have not spoken of my own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command what I should say and what I should speak, and I know His command is eternal life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak." (**John 12 :49-50**)
  - d. "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I speak to you, I do not speak on My own authority, but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe in Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me, or else believe in Me for the sake of the works themselves." (**John 14:10**)
  - e. "He who does not love Me does not keep My words, and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father who sent me" (**John 14:24**)
3. The most important thing to remember about the word of Christ is that we will be judged by it. (**John 12:48**)

## IV. CONCLUSION

- A. The **gospel accounts** tell us what we are to believe concerning God and His Son Jesus. The **epistles** tell us how we are to live because of what They have done for us. The **Revelation** tells us what will become of us if we refuse to obey God's word through Christ.
- B. This lesson emphasizes that God has predetermined those who would be saved are people of faith and actions. The men and women mentioned in the faith chapter of **Hebrews** were not saved merely because they believed. They believed enough to act on what God told them to do.
- C. We have the choice to make of whether we believe enough in God to obey Him or to reject His word concerning His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus said. "Therefore, I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." (**John 8:24**)