
TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP**JOIN A SERVE TEAM****NEW HERE?****CONNECTION CARD****STAY UP TO DATE****SUBSCRIBE TO DIGITAL BULLETIN**

Series: The Living Word**Title: The Word of God is a Hammer****Text: Jeremiah 23:29**

God still speaks today. While he may guide us in many ways, he has given us one authoritative, trustworthy, and life-giving source for hearing his voice: his Word, the Bible. Throughout this summer series, we are exploring the images Scripture uses to describe itself and discover how God speaks through the Bible to guide, nourish, shape, and transform his people.

Today, we look at an image we understand well, but that is rarely used in the Scriptures. Jeremiah 23:29, the Lord describes his word: *Does not my word burn like fire?...Is it not like a mighty hammer that smashes a rock to pieces?*

Jeremiah 23:16-29

- Jeremiah ministered in Judah from roughly 627 BC until sometime after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC, spanning the reigns of Josiah through Zedekiah, roughly forty years.
- He spoke on behalf of the Lord to a nation that still had a temple, a monarchy, and a professional class of prophets, but was drifting toward covenant collapse.
- The passage is a sustained indictment of the prophets who prophesied and lied in the Lord's name. It contrasts two kinds of prophetic speech: the false prophets who speak visions from their own minds, borrow each other's phrases, and promise peace when there is no peace, against the true word of the Lord, which Jeremiah describes in verse 29 as fire and a hammer that shatters rock. The Lord is cross-examining the prophets and letting the nature of his own word serve as the verdict through the means of a question.

The Image of a Hammer

- The image of a hammer is one that we all know well. We may not know the Word of God, the Bible, but we know what a hammer is. That's the nature of a metaphor: comparing something known to explain something that is unknown.
- While we might have in mind a framing hammer, the hammer image in Jeremiah is drawn from metalworking and quarrying, both familiar trades in ancient Judah, and would have evoked the physical labor of breaking stone for building or extracting ore, not an abstract metaphor for force.
- The Lord chose a specific image, not a generic tool, to describe his word as a heavy tool used for the hardest breaking and shaping work.
- Smashing rocks to pieces is a violent act. This verb is used elsewhere for smashing pottery, shattering nations, and breaking bones. It does not describe gentle reshaping. The rock is not chiseled with precision; it is broken apart.

- In Jeremiah 23:29, fire and hammer are paired. Fire burns and purifies; a hammer strikes and breaks. The Lord is claiming that his word does both, which the false prophets's comfortable words could never do.

How does the Word of God work like a hammer in our lives today? God's Word does not merely inform us. It forcefully transforms us. It breaks what sin has hardened so God can shape us into people who reflect his purposes and the image of his Son, Jesus. The Word of God, as a hammer, breaks us and

1. The Hammer Breaks Our Hard Hearts

- Sin hardens us gradually, like curing concrete; every unconfessed sin and ignored conviction adds another layer of hardness.
- In Ezekiel 36:26, the prophet Ezekiel promises the Lord *"will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart."*
- The word for rock in Jeremiah 23:29 describes bedrock, something fixed, permanent, and unmovable. A hard heart is stubborn, has grown entrenched, and is comfortable ignoring God and his word.
- As a hammer, the word of God strikes with conviction. What has hardened over time can be shattered with one word, one encounter with the living, active word of God.

2. The Hammer Breaks Our Illusion of Autonomy

- The false prophets acted on their own without ever hearing from the Lord or spending the time to be in the presence of the Lord to hear from him. The prophets built a false reality through their autonomy, that everything was fine.
- Autonomy is self-rule. It's the old temptation from Genesis 3, when the serpent tempted the first couple into thinking they could be like God and choose for themselves.
- When we live apart from the word of God, our autonomy often takes us to places we do not want to go. The illusion is that we can live on our own apart from God, but the invitation from Jesus is "Come, follow me."

3. The Hammer Shapes Us into Something Useful

- The hammer doesn't just destroy. In a blacksmith's hand, the hammer forms and shapes. Every strike on heated steel removes a weakness and creates strength, until raw metal becomes a plow, a horseshoe, or a useful tool.
- Without the hammer, metal stays weak and brittle. Without God's Word at work within us, we stay spiritually immature. God's conviction and correction shape us into his sons and daughters, deeply loved. We are God's workmanship (Ephesians 2:10) created in Christ to do good works. God is not finished with any of us.

Where does God's word need to work like a hammer in your life to strike with conviction, to break your hard heart, to shatter your autonomy, and shape you into his useful purpose?

Summer Reading Plan

Join us in reading one chapter each day through the Gospels using BibleProject's Gospel Reading Plan on the Bible App. We started Luke 1 on Tuesday, July 21.

