

# **JONAH**

**BY**

**Raymond H. Saxe, Th.D.**



**JONAH**

NOTE: In the brief span of a few hours, God provided three items which changed the complexion of Jonah's situation with vigor! The prophet could make no mistake about it—God was speaking to him! What was the lesson for the day? Listen!

- c. TEACHINGS. Verses 10, 11. The same Hebrew verb is employed about Jonah (V.10) and God (V.11) in the translation of the word "pity" and "spare." The point is this. Jonah pitied and was grieved over the gourd. God has the same attitude over the people of Nineveh. Jonah's situation was over something for which he had provided no labour; God's was over a people whom He Himself had created, the bulk of whom were children (120,000). How could Jonah be so unconcerned and blunder at the purpose of God to save the lost!

#### CONCLUSION

God could have slain Jonah, but He didn't. There were lessons to be learned. Whether he learned them we are not told. The Bible is silent on this. But they are in the Book for us today. It speaks to your mind and mine. What is our reaction to the lesson? Think of this! Do we realize that God loves and He does this that men might live (John 3:17). Are we self-centered and full of prejudice and bigotry; Do we really have a concern for the Ninevites we know to be saved? Before you cast a stone at Jonah, how does it stand with YOU? Is your life for self or God? Amen.

about Jonah's attitude against Nineveh. Let's face it: a lot of what goes for true Christianity is hypocritical. Why? Because it is full of feelings AGAINST souls of men who need the Saviour Whom we preach came to die for them. Consider this in your thinking of race, national enemies, etc.

- c. **SELFISHNESS.** Verse 5. The height of Jonah's action is seen in his construction of a booth. This Succath was to protect him in a beastly heat so he could watch what judgment God would rain down upon Nineveh. The 40 days were up and so he waited to see God's entrenched wrath upon an enemy of Israel. True, he did not know the depth of Nineveh's repentance, but what he thought was a situation from which to view disaster actually became a one-room school house! What a lesson he learned! Or did he?

## 2. REBUKED BY GOD.

The disappointed, disgruntled, and faultfinding prophet of God had something to hear from God. It is terrific. He was soundly rebuked by God's:—

- a. **QUESTIONS.** Verses 4, 9. Twice over the Lord asked Jonah if he actually had some solid reasons to advance for being angry. It is a good thing to be angry with sin and be disturbed over situations which are inconsistent with God's will and Person, BUT what manner of spirit are ye?" (cf. Luke 9:51-56)? Jonah was much like the elder son in Luke 15:25-32. The point is simple: Jonah was more concerned about himself than he was for others!
- b. **PREPARATIONS.** Verses 6-8. Three times are listed as having been prepared by God. The Hebrew verb used is the same as in 1:17 (2:1 of Hebrew). It signifies appointment of constituting by God. Here are the items he prepared:—
  - 1. **A GOURD.** This was commonly called a "palmchrist." It grew 8 to 10 feet high with but one leaf on a branch. Very easily injured.
  - 2. **A WORM.** The Hebrew term here is elsewhere rendered "scarlet or crimson." This is what God used to level the comfortable shade palmchrist which had come up over night and sheltered Jonah for a day—a blood red worm!
  - 3. **A WIND.** The wind here is probably better considered one which was silent and expressive of stillness. The word "vehement" comes from a verb which means to cut off. It was sultry and still!

## JONAH

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ern king flourished because of the decline in Syria of Behadad II and in Assyria of such kings as Shalmaneser IV and Ashurdan III. Jonah knew that Israel needed revival. He yearned for his people like Paul (Rom. 10: 1). He feared that a nation like Nineveh (Assyria) would bring havoc upon the nation Israel. He was in real straights. It produced action in him.

4. The action of Jonah was counteracted by God who brought a stinging rebuke to the prophet. Check out the ACTION in the text and mark the lessons God has for your soul. **THE ACTION OF PREJUDICE:**

#### 1. EXHIBITED BY JONAH

This is seen in his:—

##### a. FEELINGS (Verses 1, 3, 8, 9. Three statements are made in this connection:

1. HIS DISPLEASURE. Verse 1. This really points to the fact of Jonah's anger with God. Indeed, he disputed God
2. HIS ANGER. Verse 1. This word might also be rendered "grief". The thought is that Jonah grieved over what would become of his own nation. He was pro-Israel intolerantly!
3. HIS DESIRE. (Verses 3, 8, 9. Three times Jonah admits his desire to be dead. One may say he did this because he had fulfilled his mission, but in a truer sense he could not bear to see another group touched by the Lord! True he felt he had failed in his mission with Israel (cf. Elijah in 1 Kings 18 and 19), but he showed his bigotry toward Nineveh by his desire to be done with his life and his ministry to that "heathen nation."

##### b. PRAYERS. (Verses 2-3). There is at least one favourable factor here and it is that Jonah did not complain OF God to others, but TO God Himself. What was his complaint? It was about:—

1. GOD'S GRACE. cf. Joel 1:13 and Ex. 34:6,7.
2. GOD'S MERCY. The form of this and the preceding word are intensive in Hebrew, hence "intensely gracious and merciful!"
3. GOD'S PATIENCE. He is geared to slowness in anger.
4. GOD'S GRIEF. This is a better sense than the word "repent." He is grieved at the thought of judgment against men. What a characteristic of God!

NOTE: This was the very reason (Jonah says so in V. 2) for his having run to Tarshish. Think of it. A man full of bigotry and prejudice AGAINST Nineveh. Therefore he fled from a divine commission! God was NOT displeased at Jonah's vehement concern for Israel, but He was

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## JONAH 4:1-11

BUT it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry

2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

3 Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

4 Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?

5 So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

6 And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Johan, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.

7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

8 And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.

10 Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

## INTRODUCTION

1. Intolerance of the views of others is commonly called bigotry. The true child of God must never fall into being such a person even though he holds firmly to the ABSOLUTE Word of the living God!

2. Oftentimes akin to bigotry is prejudice. This is the act of prejudgment. It is a decision registered before the evidence is all in hand. Only a part of the facts are admitted, for they are either unconsciously ignored or deliberately disallowed. Jonah was guilty of both of these evils. He was intolerant of God's view of things. He prejudged a whole nation and condemned them before it was necessary.

3. Not to excuse Jonah, but to explain his case is didactic. He lived during the infamous days of the son of Jehoash, Jeroboam II. This north-

## PREFACE

The Book of Jonah, although it has come under great attack from Biblical critics, provides us with one of the most practical lessons in man's response to the will of God and God's response to the believer's disobedience. We see in Jonah a man who initially rejects the direct leading of God, a man who God has to discipline and deal with rather severely and nearly to the point of death, a man who then responds to God's will and has a successful ministry in what God has called him to do, and then a man who becomes discouraged from the results which he sees.

We as believers can criticize Jonah because of his failings but a better approach is to place ourselves in his position recognizing that we might respond in an identical fashion and that God might similarly have to deal with us. Utilized in this way the book is capable of clearly demonstrating to us our own weaknesses and God's response to them in his grace.

These notes were prepared for congregational use as the messages were presented. The purpose is to provide in an outline form a survey of the Book of Jonah. It is anticipated that the reader will first consider what the verses have to say and then utilize the notes to guide him in the meaning of the appropriate passages.

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **THE ACTION OF PREJUDICE - JONAH 4:1-11**



#### 4. GRACE (Verse 10)

Grace actually connotes God's generosity towards those who deserve just the opposite. God expended grace in sending Jonah to preach to Nineveh. He could have sent his prophet elsewhere, but he chose to bring salvation to this nation. As Jonah preached, the message was truly heeded. Hence, the text affirms concerning God that:

a. HE SAW--the reality of their faith.

b. HE REPENTED--by changing His posture toward them because they had done this toward Him.

#### CONCLUSION

Today the Word has been preached. To the best of our knowledge, the ministry has not been in the energy of a man, but in the Spirit of God. We trust God for spiritual results in the lives of those who have heard. In your present position, what is God's stance toward you? If you persist in evil, then it is judgment (Rom. 6:23), but if you turn to Him in earnest commitment of your total personality, then it is life everlasting (John 3:16). What will it be for you?

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## 2. BELIEF. (Verse 5)

Oh, what a beautiful recording this is: "As the people of Nineveh believed God." The factor which this statement affirms is absolutely important to the understanding of the item mentioned above. Repentance is actually the companion of vital belief in the Lord. Indeed, belief is the first consideration of this section. What followed showed that the Ninevites had really believed!

Many are concerned that "only believism" is a spurious doctrine of the Word of God. Properly understood, however, it is the **ONLY** one taught in the Word. The Hebrew verb employed here is followed by the noun "God" which, in turn, is prefixed with a preposition meaning "in". This preposition points up the fact of commitment to the Person of God and not merely an affirmation to a series of statements about HIM! When one commits himself to the Lord, the deep matters of which this text speaks will occur. Perhaps not in identical fashion, but most assuredly in essence.

## 3. HOPE. (Verse 9)

The question which is raised by this verse is not a matter of unbelief, but one of ignorance. The Ninevites did what they believed to be acceptable with God. They had confidence He would:—

- a. **TURN**—in His intent toward them. He would not now destroy them (cf. V.4).
- b. **REPENT**—in showing a different thought toward them. It is not that God changes HIS mind, but that the people would change and hence He would then react differently toward them. This Hebrew verb means to lament or grieve and therefore suggests the idea of true emotional concern for the nation in its altered position before HIM.

When Jonah ministered the Word God had given him (cf. 3:2), the Spirit of God worked in that whole city of Nineveh. They believed God and repented truly toward God, self, and sin. They sensed that God would look with favour upon them for their reception of His message to them. Such hope is not dimmed, for the text notes a final item in the series of results for Biblical preaching. Here it is.

3. **THE BEASTS.** Verses 7-8. These speak for all the possessions of the people. They draped everything with a sense of conviction before God for the shame they had wrought before HIM (cf. Rom. 3:22-23).

**b. ITS CHARACTER**

True repentance will involve both a change of attitude or feeling and a change of mind about God, self, and sin. But the text provides noticeable concomitants which give evidence of internal changes! Look at them:—

1. **FASTING.** This is a topic very seldom touched upon today. But it is in the Bible and ought to be heeded. On several occasions, fasting is included as being associated with repentance for sin as here (cf. 1 Sam. 7:6; 2 Sam. 12:16, 21-23; 1 Kings 21:27; Neh. 9:1-3; Dan. 9:3; Joel 1:14; 2:12, 15). To fast one voluntarily abstains from eating. Properly construed, it is evidence of reality with God.

2. **WEARING.** Sackcloth was usually of goats hair and was worn by mourners (2 Sam. 3:31) prophets (Isa. 20:2), or captives (1 Kings 20:31). In the instance described by Jonah, the material is obviously a notation of deep contrition before God. Even animals wore it! The whole of the man and the whole of his possessions felt the impact of the Word!

3. **CRYING.** The usual Hebrew verb for crying is employed here, but it is strengthened by a verbal adjective meaning strength or vigor. These people meant business. They exerted their whole beings against sin, but their cry was toward God! He hears such prayers.

4. **TURNED.** One may "say" he has repented, but these did it! Each person did it for himself ("everyone") for this act toward God cannot be performed by absentee ballot! They turned their ways and they turned their hands. Hence, both actions and activities were touched. When this sort of thing happens, it must be the result of the Spirit of God! Here is patent evidence that the worship of God and the continuance in evil are mutually exclusive!

**NOTE:** Let those who study the Word consider the true significance of repentance and cease from making a mockery of a concept which has personality and activity shaking penetration!

## CHAPTER I

### SUMMARY OF ENTIRE BOOK:

### THE RUNNING PROPHET

## INTRODUCTION

1. Here is a book which has really come under the scathing attack of the critics! By the power of God the testimony of the Lord has stood firm.

2. Jonah was an accredited mouthpiece for God to the northern kingdom during the sinful days of Jeroboam II (782-753 B.C.). He was a patriot of the first order.

*II KINGS 14:24-27*

*24. And he (Jeroboam) did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.*

*25. He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet which was of Gathhepher.*

3. The life of Jonah is a challenge to every child of God. The reason is that the will of God is so evidently being considered. As one reads the Book, he becomes impressed with the FOUR ACTIONS taken by the prophet in connection with God's will for his life. Study them carefully and you will be personally blessed.

## THE FOUR ACTIONS OF JONAH.

### 1. Jonah RUNNING FROM God.

*JONAH 1:1-17*

1. Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

2. Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

3. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish, from the presence of the LORD.

10. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

*JONAH 3:5-10*

5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them

6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything: let them feed, nor drink water:

8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

9 Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not;

10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

## INTRODUCTION

1. There is a lot of agitation today for something new. Change is the trigger word upon 1000 lips. Thinking people will accept the revolutions in proper perspective.

2. Some items never change. These are the absolutes of the Word of God. God's Word never changes nor is it intended to change (1 Peter 2:38). Therefore, Biblical preaching will NEVER be in for a change! It is the Word which sanctifies (John 17:17). Therefore, let the Word be preached, one can expect the Spirit of God to Work in hearts. This is the peculiar dynamic of the ministry of a servant of God who obeys the injunctions of the Spirit. If something can be expected, just what? That's a fair question and the Bible has the answer in the incident of Jonah preaching at Nineveh.

## RESULTS OF BIBLE PREACHING:

### 1. REPENTANCE

This attitude toward sin was demonstrated and detailed. Mark these items.

#### a. ITS LEVEL (Verses 5-8)

1. THE PEOPLE. Verse 5. All the populace was involved

2. THE LEADERS. Verse 6. The "king" is specifically mentioned

## CHAPTER 9

THE RESULTS OF BIBLICAL PREACHING  
JONAH 3:5-10

Here Jonah is seen as a fugitive from the Lord. Two specifics are noted to show that this is true. The prophet ran from:

## a. THE WORD OF GOD (Verses 1:1-2).

The Word of the Lord to the prophet is clearly stated: arise, go, cry. These are simple terms and easy to understand. **BUT** how tragic - Jonah was disobedient to them. Obedience is really the essence of true belief.

*JOHN 10:27-28*

*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them,  
and they follow me: And I give unto them  
eternal life; and they shall never perish,  
neither shall any man pluck them out of  
my hand.*

## b. THE PRESENCE OF GOD (Verses 1:3,10).

It must be admitted that one cannot flee from God's presence (cf. Psalm 139). What Jonah did do was move out of the orbit of obedience to the service of the Lord. The progressive decline in the life of the prophet is clearly noted; **HE WENT DOWN, HE FOUND, HE PAID, HE WENT DOWN INTO** (Verse 3). Broken fellowship and service is not usually an instantaneous matter. It is a dead process.

## 2. Jonah RUNNING TO God.

JONAH 2:1-10

2. And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.  
4. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.  
9. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.

From the fugitive of the first chapter, Jonah now moves to demonstrate his heart as a plaintiff before God. How his heart reaches out for the Lord! He ran to:

## a. PRAY. Careful reading of the prayer notes that it includes these elements:

- 1) A PREPARED HEART (Verse 2). This is marked by his affliction. Normally real prayer is not experienced until one is desperate!
- 2) A PLEADING HEART (Verse 2). He cried unto the Lord. Depth of feeling reaches to the heaven! It is sad to write

but so true, the days of crying before the Throne of God seem all but gone! One wonders how many hearts know the groaning of the Spirit (Romans 8:26).

3) **A PIERCED HEART** (Verse 9). So driven thru was Jonah that he genuinely remembered the Lord. When all else faded, he turned again to the Lord and found Him available!

b. **PROMISE**. Jonah's promise included:

1) **REPENTANCE** (Verse 4). He was intent on looking again to the Lord. It meant he would turn from his own path to the Lord's! True repentance is just this—turning to God from self!

2) **SACRIFICE** (Verse 9). From the private feelings of repentance, Jonah moved to show them. He reinstituted the remembrance of the Levitical offerings. This showed his public intention with the Lord.

3) **SERVICE** (Verse 9). This is the full expression of God's claim upon the prophet's life. Nothing was kept back!

### 3. Jonah RUNNING WITH God.

#### JONAH 3:1-10

AND the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying,

2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

3 So, Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.

4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, heard nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed nor drink water:

8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

9 Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

was a large city "to God." This last phrase is included in the original, but not in the English translation (AV). Apparently even God Himself—by His measurements—considered this city large (about 60 miles in circumference).

### 3. THE PROCLAMATION OF TRUTH (Verse 4)

The text of the Word is faithful to report the ministry of Jonah the prophet of the Lord. In essence, it is described as:

a. **DEFINITE**. There is no hedging here. In reading the account, it is certain that Jonah had a simple, direct, and specific word to give. There was no watered down, compromised, message. He spoke the Word of the Lord! Paul noted the importance of this sort of preaching (cf. 1 Cor. 1 and 2).

b. **DREADFUL**. The city would be "overthrown" is the message of judgment provided. The verb indicates a turning of the city upside down (cf. Gen. 19:21, 25). Let's not trifle with the dreadful doom which God promises to those who turn aside the precious Son of God. Since the Bible is true, it behooves everyone to flee from the wrath to come (Heb. 10:31).

c. **DETERMINED**. 40 days were set by God for the time of judgment. This is the Biblical number for testing (cf. Gen. 7:4, 17; Deut. 2:7; 8:2, 4; 9:9; 29:5; Acts 1:3). We do not know when our blessed Lord will draw the door of grace and shut to outer darkness those who have failed to receive our Christ. But in the counsels of an eternal God, the time of grace is limited.

### CONCLUSION

If ONLY we really understood the grace of God. But after studying this portion we should have a better sense of His great and abounding love which we do not deserve! Thank God, we can come to Him again IF WE WILL. Will YOU? Amen

could fulfill the direct commission of God to this particular Jonah! See elsewhere in the Word this truth supported (1 Sam. 3; Acts 8;9). Here is God's detailed word to Jonah:—

1. **ARISE.** Same as in 1:2.

2. **GO.** This is an imperative form. No option for Jonah. It's a command.

3. **PREACH.** It is interesting that there is a subtle change in the use of the preposition with the verb here as compared with the earlier commission (cf. 1:2). There the preposition signifies that Jonah was to preach "against" the city of Nineveh, but here he is commissioned to preach "to" the city. This change of preposition suggests that there is hope for the city. One wonders if this is not really due to the change in the prophet.

4. **PREACHING.** Here is a vital factor in the whole story. That Jonah is to preach is to be the Word of God and not his own words! Any preacher worth his salt before God will do this and only this (cf. Num. 22:35, 38; Haggai 1:13; 2 Timothy 2:2).

## 2. THE DECISION OF JONAH. (Verses 3-4)

The question here is: what did Jonah do with the commission of the Lord? Jonah decided:

a. **TO ACT.** "So Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh."

Jonah was now as ready to do something as he had been in an earlier chapter. But this time his action was in keeping with the divine order. Readiness to do the will of God is so essential for any claim to dedication unto the Lord.

b. **TO OBEY.** "according to the Word of the Lord."

What a sweet word this is! The Hebrew preposition is very similar to the Greek one which means "accordance and conformity with some rule or model." True obedience is that which is in keeping with the rule or standard of the Word of God! For a child of God, there IS NO OTHER standard! For examples of this preposition see other portions of the Word (2 Kings 1:17; 1 Sam. 13:14; Psalm 7:18).

c. **TO PERFORM.** "And Jonah began to enter. . ."

Praise the Lord, The intent to act and obey actually issued in full performance. Glory to God. This is noted in the fact that he entered the city and cried to it! Many talk about service with the Lord, but very few actually get at it. It is interesting to note that Nineveh

Here is a glorious picture of one who desires to experience the will of God. What blessing is evidenced here. Jonah ran with God to:

a. **PREACH.** True preaching involves:

- 1) **A SENT PREACHER** (Verse 1). No sense preaching if God has not sent you! This is the single true mark of a servant of God. Mark the fact that God had never changed his original commitment to Jonah.
- 2) **A SELECT PEOPLE** (Verse 2). God had a specific group to whom Johan was to preach. No other prophet would do. It is important that one be certain he is WHERE God wants him.
- 3) **A SOUND PROCLAMATION** (Verse 2). What Jonah spoke was important too. It had to be exactly what the Lord had bidden him (cf. Numbers 22:18).

b. **PERFORM.** Here is a marvelous truth. As Jonah did what God told him to do, he had fantastic results. Here they are:

- 1) **THE COMING OF THE WORD** (Verse 6).
- 2) **THE CONVICTION OF THE SOUL** (Verses 7-9). In their utter uncertainty, they turned to God and obtained certain mercy.
- 3) **THE CONFIDENCE IN GOD** (Verse 5). The active faith of the ninevites is abundantly evident here.
- 4) **THE CONDUCT OF GOOD WORK** (Verse 10). It's really great to read how lives were changed by the miracle working power of God!

**NOTE:** It will be everlastingly true that the one who enjoys the will of God will flourish therein. Check this out as outlined in Psalm 1.

## 4. Jonah RUNNING AGAINST God.

### JONAH 4:1-11

**BUT** it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

2 And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

3 Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

## JONAH 4:1-11 (continued)

4 Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?  
 5 So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.  
 6 And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.  
 7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.  
 8 And it came to pass then the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.  
 9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.  
 10 Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in the night, and perished in a night;  
 11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

Now here is a real enigma—how can a saint enjoy the blessings of His perfect will and then renounce them; How is it that one may experience joy in the Holy Spirit and then turn from Him? This is what Jonah did. Mark well his actions. He moved against:

a. **GOD'S CHARACTER** (Verse 2). God is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, full of kindness, does not delight in judgment. What a God! How could one possibly oppose Him? Jonah, like the rest of us, demonstrated how much men are unlike the Lord. Oh, to be like HIM!

b. **GOD'S CONCERN** (Verse 11). The Lord is concerned with global and cosmic interests. All are precious to Him, even our enemies! Jonah could not get this into his heart!

**CONCLUSION.** The will of God. That's the big point. It is our largest opportunity. Oh, to be found in its fullness and to delight therein. Wherever you are, think of His will. First it is His will that you should be saved from your sins (2 Peter 3:9). Then it is His will for you to keep pace with Him (Romans 12:1-2). How are you running now? Check yourself carefully and take the action necessary to bring Him the greatest glory. Amen.

## JONAH 3:1-4

AND the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying,  
 2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.  
 3 So Jonah arose, and sent unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey  
 4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

## INTRODUCTION

1. There is no second chance for the salvation of the soul. Once a person has been removed from this present life's scene, the opportunity to be born again is forever lost (Luke 16:19-31).

2. But for the child of God who is disobedient, there is another opportunity for SERVICE. Were this not God's plan in grace, who would stand (Psalm 130:3-4)? This was the blessed experience of Jonah. He was a vessel made over again (Jer. 18:4).

3. How this all happened is recorded in the text of Scripture. Take time to digest these elements of the case:

## 1. THE COMMISSION OF GOD (Verses 1-2)

## a. REPORTED (Verse 1)

The fact of the commission assumes two important items:

1. The true repentance of Jonah.
2. The true mercy of God.

But note that:

1. The word arrived. "The word of the Lord came." It is the word of "Jehovah." The same covenant-keeping God speaks (cf. 1:1). Hebrew noun for "word" implies the spoken word. It is this sort of thing which provokes the child of God to hearken!

2. The word directed. "to Jonah". This is the same Jonah (1:1). Not against him, but to him. The Lord always speaks to His own (cf. John 10:27).

3. The word repeated. "The second time." It is probable that Jonah performed what he said he would in Jerusalem (2:9). Whilst there the word of the Lord came again and it was the same word (cf. 1:2). There is significance to the repetition of God's Word (cf. Gen. 41:32).

## b. DETAILED (Verse 2)

One must distinguish between the "general" call of the Lord for all believers and His "specific" call to pertinent individuals. No one else



**CHAPTER 8**

**JONAH'S SECOND CHANCE - JONAH 3:1-4**

**CHAPTER 2**

**A GOD SENT MAN – JONAH 1:1-2**

## JONAH 1:1-2

NOW the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,  
2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

## INTRODUCTION

1. When God sent John into the world to perform HIS responsibilities words were uttered which have never been surpassed (see John 1:6). The man from God is really something to witness!

2. God is not a deistic sort of Being. He is ever-lastingly concerned with His creation. Theologically this is called His providence. Practically it is an assertion of His constant interaction with men. He does this through ordained servants commissioned for that purpose.

3. Jonah was part of God's total program of reaching the cosmos with His divine message. He was the vehicle of prophetic utterances. There is much to learn from this man's life. As a messenger of the Lord, consider these FACTORS which aver that a God-Sent Man is one with special equipment and call.

## JONAH WAS A MAN WITH:

## 1. A DIVINE WORD PROVIDED (Verse 1)

This is so simple, but yet ever so sublime. The Word of God coming to a man! Those were the days of prophecy and days in which God spoke to men with the intent of revelation. Today we believe that revelation has ceased (for it is all in the canon of our Bible), but the fact that God speaks to men (out of His Word) is never denied.

The writer to the Hebrews notes that God spoke in many parts and many modes in the Old Testament (1:1). One needs only to read the Scriptures in a cursory fashion to realize that revelation in the first instance was progressive. All was not made known at once. It was given in a variety of forms such as law, prophecy, history, psalm, sign, type, etc. How the Word of God came to Jonah is not clear, but it did come to him. This EXPIRATION in its truest sense. Words originated with God and were impregnated into the life of His prophet.

## 2. A HUMAN CHANNEL PERSONALIZED (Verse 1)

The only time that the Bible mentions these two names in construct is here—Jonah, the son of Amittai. The former of the two names means "dove" and this is indicative of "mourning love." Here is a defect in the character of the man who moaned over his responsibilities for God. The name "Amittai" is associated with the word which means "truth faithfulness." Would To God he had demonstrated this sort of desire with

1. His deliverance from the Lord (V.9).
2. God's activity with creation (V. 10).

What all this amounts to is this: when a child of God bends before the Lord, he is enabled of the Lord to triumph despite his own inabilities (Luke 5:5). Oh, to submit to the purpose and will of God. If you find yourself at wits end corners today, turn to Him (Psalm 107:6, 13, 19, 28). It is forever true that . . . He setteth the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock (Psalm 107:41). Amen.

The verb "observe" is the Hebrew for "diligently watch, pay deference to, count." This is what he had done. He had idols of the flesh, intellect, ambition, pride, self-will. But these all proved to be "lying vanities." They vanished like air into air. He had come now to see the fearful error of his way. Repentance sees the futility of one's own way and thence turns to the Lord!

#### b. THEIR GOD'S MERCY.

This is the positive side of repentance. In turning to self and the lying vanities mentioned, Jonah had ignored and forsaken the mercy of God! This he now admitted and acknowledged the bankruptcy of his position. Anything of self and this world is a denial of God's mercy. But it's a hard thing for men to come to Him; they yearn to depend upon themselves. Isn't this the crux of so many who do not turn to the Lord?

#### c. THEIR EARNEST PRAYER

Prior to this, Jonah did not pray, but now he does. Here his cry in such phrases as "O Lord, MY God," "I remembered the Lord," and "my prayer came in unto Thee." Men will never turn to the Lord as long as they have some hope of working out solutions for themselves.

### 3. BY THEIR PERFORMANCE OF THE FRUIT OF AFFLICTION.

When God's children aver:

#### a. THEIR DESIRE TO SACRIFICE

There is a sort of anticipated deliverance in these words. But in a sense Jonah says that he would, if he had the opportunity, present the sacrifices described by the law and he would do this with the voice of thanksgiving. Nothing forced now, but willingly.

#### b. THEIR DESIRE TO VOW

The question here settles upon his own life should God return it to him. He had given himself to the Lord, now he vows this shall truly be the case.

### CONCLUSION

All of the above is in a sense the attitude and activities of the believer. Lest one feel, however, that this is promoting a sort of "do-it-yourself" spiritual rehabilitation, mark carefully that Jonah admitted

the Lord in all his actions. A study of names in the Bible will often reveal how suitably the servants of the Lord were named (e.g. Elijah which means "the Lord is my God" and Elisha which means "my God is salvation").

No mistake should be made. God's word came directly to this man. We do not in any sense whatsoever deny nor question the historicity of his existence. Indeed to do so would impugn the very truthfulness of Christ Himself (Matthew 12:39-41).

God will not speak a word of commission to you and also to someone else. He will call you out from the masses for His own specific use and glory. Do not confuse this with the call to salvation (Matthew 11:28) or the general call to serve Him (John 12:16). When God zeros in on someone for a peculiar ministry, it will be like that word of God which came to Jonah, the son of Amittai.

### 3. A SPECIFIC PLAN PROGRAMMED. (Verse 2)

When the Word of the Lord came to Jonah, it came with specific injunctions. Three of them are given in the text:

a. **ARISE.** This is the common verb and bears no special significance semantically. It does mean something in connection with the call of God. Excuses could be given. Hinderances could be advanced. But the big item in the Word here is that obedience was expected. There was something to do implicit in the word: The status quo was not acceptable. There were things to do, so action was demanded.

b. **GO.** Here again is the common verb for going. But the deep significance is latent in it for it suggests a change of position. Somewhere to go! It was Nineveh. Here was a call to Jonah to serve as a "foreign missionary." This city was probably 600 miles from the place where Jonah heard the Word of God. It was the largest city in the world at that time and including its suburbs was 60 miles in circumference. It was a place which Jonah hated in the natural flesh, but God called! How many can testify to God's call to a place which was entirely undesirable to them in the flesh!

c. **CRY.** The verb here means to call by name and suggests the idea of imploring. When Jonah arose and went, he would have something to say when he got there. God never commissions a man without a message! A study of called men will reveal how true this is. In the case of Jonah, his message was one of judgment to come because of wickedness. The general term for wickedness is used. But it had reached such proportions that it has risen to the nostrils of our holy God (cf. Gen. 4:10; 6:5; 18:20, 21; Hosea 10:4, 15).

This item should once and for all settle the question which is being raised today. God has standards! Anything which is contrary to His person and will is sin (1 John 3:1:10). Long lists of sins are provided in the Word (cf. Rom. 1). What is stated as sin in the Word is often considered "sickness" and "maladjustment" today in our society. Sin is Sin and always will be IF you use the yardstick of God's Word. God hates it. Those who love Him will not compromise with it. Contrary to the popular notion, you can hate sin and yet love the sinner. Acceptance does not demand the removal of a standard which is God-given! Beware of the philosophies of men!

NOTE: God does not work in stereotypes. He is a God who deals with men as they are and in the specific situations in which they are. But the essential ingredients will always be there: a call or word from the Lord, a personal word to the individual, and a program to be initiated. Check out in some others lives and see how God sent a man to fulfill His purpose (cf. Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Paul and Annanias). Your soul will be thrilled. Then apply these factors to your own soul! God will be honored.

2. **DEPTH CLOSED HIM.** The verb here has basically the same meaning as the previous one, namely, to surround. Hence, this is an expansion of the preceding phrase. The word depths means the mass of raging waters so called from the noise and roaring. That Jonah was in the caverns of the sea is without doubt!

3 **WEEDS TRAPPED HIM.** The verb used here means to bind around or bind fast. Like a grave band, the weeds of the depths had saddled Jonah's head.

NOTE: If one takes the depths to be around Jonah's body and the weeds his head, the whole body was covered completely. The terror of it all is that the affliction had reached inside to his soul also! He felt himself completely estranged from God.

#### b. THEIR DIRECTIONAL MOVEMENT

The key verb here is "went down." It notes the extent of the removal and the direction thereof. Disobedience and rejection of the will of God can only lead in one direction — down! This descent is explained as:

1. **THE BOTTOM.** The word used here is the Hebrew for "cuttings off." It notes the extremities and foundations of the mountains which are in the depths of the sea.

2. **THE EARTH.** The bar of the earth seems to indicate that the bars which are related to the gates of sheol were drawn before him. Hence, he was incarcerated in the recesses of an eternal doom! There was no further point to which he could move.

#### c. THEIR INTERNAL DISTRESS.

Physical discomfort is one matter, but when the very essence of a man is touched—then! This is the point to which Jonah had been brought. Here are his own words: "When my soul fainted within me . . . (v.7)." The verb here means to be "dizzied" or—"overwhelmed." It is used of faintness from heat (4:8), thirst (Amos 8:18), and exhaustion (Isa. 51:20). When a film comes over the eyes and the brain is, as it were, mantled over—that's the thing that happened to Jonah. Men must come to this end for God to work.

#### 2. BY THEIR REPENTANCE FOR THE CAUSES OF AFFLICTION.

When God's children acknowledge:

##### a. THEIR OWN VANITY.

In a strong statement, Jonah points to the fact that he had trusted in the flesh and pursued a path which was outside the will of God.

## JONAH 2:4-10

4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

5 The waters compassed me about, even to the soul the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.

7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.

10 And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

## INTRODUCTION

1. All know the experience of suffering! It is the common lot of all. But those who suffer because of disobedience to the will of God know the sting of suffering and the sweetness of God's unfailing mercy! This is the case with Jonah.

2. The fish's viscera became the prayer room for the fleeing prophet. There he poured out his soul unto the Lord. It was in the depths of his need that he lifted his heart to the Lord. What a prayer meeting this was! How we need more like these.

3. But God delivered his servant from his affliction. He never allows His children to wallow in despair — IF they turn to Him. How does He do this?

## SPIRITUAL MEANS BY WHICH GOD DELIVERS:

## 1. BY THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF THE FACTS OF AFFLICTION.

When God's children admit:

## a. THEIR REMOVAL FROM GOD.

This is what Jonah did. The verb "cast out" means to be driven forth or expelled. It is used of mire and dust (Isa. 57:20) and of waves (Isa. 57:20). Also of the nations (Ex. 34:11) and of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:24). He had wilfully withdrawn from the Lord; Now God had expelled him from before His eyes! It is a terrific picture of despair.

Three phrases are used to detail the dreadful situation of the prophet:

1. WATERS COMPASSED HIM. These came even to his soul. To draw a breath would have meant death.

## CHAPTER 3

## WHAT DO YOU MEAN? — JONAH 1:3-10

## JONAH 1:3-10

3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

4 But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

7 And they said everyone to his fellow, Come and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us? What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?

9 And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the Lord the God of heaven, which hath made the sea, and the dry land.

10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

## INTRODUCTION

1. The story of Jonah is so human and so much like the experiences of others who know the Lord. The more you read it, the more you become involved in the affairs and circumstances of your own life.

2. Jonah had some real problems. Not the least of them was his inability to listen to God's charge for service. What this meant for him and how it affected the rest of his contacts is given attention in this section. He was a man who demonstrated the fact that you can't live any portion of your life unto yourself.

3. Trace carefully the episode as recorded and see at least three who are touched by the actions of the prophet. Along with this you will find lessons of spiritual content you will not want to forget. They all accent the matter of **DISOBEDIENCE**.

## CHAPTER 7

## THE DEPTH OF AFFLICTION - JONAH 2:4-10

## NOTE:

For both of the "cries" listed above, the Bible notes amazing response. Two distinct verbs are employed to mark the "hearing" of the Lord. The second one varies from the verb to cry only a kindred letter: *Shivati* and *Shamata*. It is just that close for Him to hear when we cry! Hallelujah. But this is the price which must be paid if the voice is to reach heaven!

## 3. THE POWER OF PRAYER (Verse 3)

Some often feel that their situation is beyond the power of God. They feel He could not possibly intervene in their behalf. Perhaps this is one of the big reasons for the Book of Jonah. Consider the power of Jonah's prayer to extricate him from a fearful bondage. It is described:—

- a. **AS CAST INTO THE SEAS.** The common verb for "cast" is used here. Two prepositional phrases indicate the force of that experience of being "thrown" by God. The first one notes that Jonah landed into the "eddy depth" which is where Pharaoh's army landed and sank like a stone (cf. Ex. 15:5, 10). This terrible depth is forcefully described further as the "heart of the seas." It is on account of phrases like these that many believe Jonah actually sank to the very bottom 'ere the fish swallowed him.
- b. **AS COMPASSED BY FLOODS.** The phrase used here speaks of the currents or floods of the ocean which surrounded him. No escape was possible. He knew the dregs of God's movement with him.
- c. **AS PASSED BY BILLOWS AND WAVES.** The "billows" are the waves which break at the shore or in the midst of the sea. The word "waves" speaks of the fountains and springs which wall up the waters. It was into a terrible tempestuous sea that Jonah was cast! Out of all this, the prayer which he presented to God delivered him (Jonah 2:10).

## CONCLUSION

God has spoken to your heart. You know you should give your soul to prayer. Make certain that the prayer of your heart is in keeping with the gravity of your need. Pray IN your need; don't wait for deliverance to pray. Pray with a sincere spirit of that God knows you are willing to pay the price of "crying!" You will experience the power of God moving into your deep need and drawing you out! Oh believer friend, lift your heart to God in prayer. He will hear! Amen.

## ASPECTS OF JONAH'S DISOBEDIENCE

## 1. THE FLIGHT OF JONAH. (Verses 3 and 4)

## a. ACTION OF JONAH (Verse 3)

A series of verbal words explain exactly what Jonah did. Mark them in your Bible:

- 1) *Rose*. The big item here is that Jonah stood up to disobey and not to heed the Word of the Lord. He rose to flee! He couldn't go from the Lord (Psalm 139), but from His influence and from the place where he could fulfill God's Word.
- 2) *Went down*. Like the man in the New Testament, Jonah was on the descent (Luke 10:30). Sin always leads this way.
- 3) *Found*. The ship was there and the wayward servant of God located it! How tragic. He ferreted out help to disobey God.
- 4) *Paid*. The price of disobedience is always there.
- 5) *Went down to go*. A second rehearsal that the way of Jonah was down. He seemed to have done all in his attempt to get away from the Lord. He had taken the fullest measures.

## b. REACTION OF GOD. (Verse 5)

God's measures are in response to what Jonah had done. He apparently allows men to go a certain distance and then—then He moves it to show it is His doing and not theirs! Again mark the verbal words of action:

- 1) *Sent*. The original means that God sent along a wind. The wind was no ordinary blowing.
- 2) *Caused*. With the wind came a terrific tempest. Jonah had sought peace, but found instead the restlessness of the elements at his heels. The word "great" is used to qualify both the wind and the movements of the sea.
- 3) *Made*. Jonah seems to personalize the ship so as to give it the ability to think for that is the meaning of the verb "like." It is as if an inanimate object sensed its own danger. It was ready to think it would break in pieces.

## NOTE:

Any movement against the will of God will provoke the movement from God!

## 2. THE PLIGHT OF THE MARINERS: (Verses 5-7).

## a. WITH THEMSELVES (Verse 5)

- 1) *Afraid*. This is the common verb for fright and it made them withdraw from the Supernatural!
- 2) *Cried*. This verb means to exclaim, cry, and this by way of complaint. To implore for help.
- 3) *Cast forth*. The literal translation is "to lighten from against them." They did not realize that the whole weight was the prophet. Nothing is so onerous and heavy as sin!

## b. WITH JONAH (Verses 5-6)

- 1) *Gone down*. A man who runs from God also runs from man. He shrank from himself and cared not to communicate with others.
- 2) *Lay fast asleep*. Literally he was snoring. He was oppressed, with a deep sleep and stupified. It may have been that the sorrow of the whole thing had got to him (Luke 22:41). It was in this condition that the master of the ship came to him and rebuked him for failing to be involved in the tragedy which had befallen them (V.6). He asked him bluntly "What ails you?" The master of the ship and his crew all knew that the present storm was no common one. The surges were an infliction borne down from God and above the skill of man. They all left their oars, sails, cables, and gave themselves and their hands to heaven and called upon God. The master also recognized that Jonah's God was *the* God.

## c. WITH EVIL (Verse 7)

The major concern here is that evil had befallen them. Who was to blame. The lot was cast and fell upon Jonah (cf. Prov. 16:33). It was God who guided the lots. As a result, something had to be done with Jonah to still the roaring sea which kept on accusing him!

## 3. THE BLIGHT OF GOL (Verses 3-10).

## a. BY THE SAILORS (Verse 8)

There are five successive quick questions in a court scene on that turbulent sea. A hearing and defence were allowed!

- 1) Whose cause? Literally this means: "for what to whom?" Was he guilty against someone? They did not press the fact of guilt before God.

one's burdens upon the Lord" (1 Peter 5:7). One can well imagine the content of this prayer, but one may also be assured that prayer of any sort is pleasing to God (be it thanks, praise, request, or confession).

- b. GOD-his. The word for "Lord" is "Jehovah" in the original Hebrew. This name has usually been taken to mean the "covenant keeping God" (as based upon the experience of Moses in Exodus 3:14). This is followed by the phrase "his God." Whether we like it or not, a fleeing prophet still claims Jehovah as "his." There was yet that blessed tie with God of Heaven on a personal level (cf. 15:11 ff.). This is the magnitude of God's infinite grace. It teaches the eternity of the relationship which God establishes with those who are His own!
- c. FISH-belly. The miracle of the Jonah experience will never really be fathomed. But here is a man who dwelt inside one of God's sea monsters for three successive days and nights and did so in a fashion which enabled him to pray! The word "belly" is the inmost part, apparently the stomach. One a miracle—working God, could perform this!

## 2. THE PRICE OF PRAYER (Verse 2).

Two major factors are listed here. They concern the attitude in which Jonah's heart was when he talked with God. Mark these as examples of the sort of prayer spirit which God honors.

- a. CRIED—affliction. The verb for "cry out like a trumpet." It is also used of a cock crowing. Therefore, it is a strong cry for help! The noun "affliction" means literally "distress or strait." It was the pinch that Jonah was in which made him cry aloud unto God. The name of God which is used is "Jehovah" and thus it appears that Jonah was actually pleading with a God Who keeps covenant with His servants—albeit in this case His servant was not living up to his side of the bargain! It is important again to note that the cry of Jonah was "by reason of" the afflictions. God had brought the situation which in itself caused Jonah to petition God. What further proof need we of Romans 8:28!
- b. CRIED—hell. The verb for "cry" here means to be rich or opulent. It suggests a powerful cry for help and expresses the feelings of one who implores aid (cf. Psalm 18:42; 30:3; 72:12; 88:14). The word for "hell" is "sheol" and here means the belly of the fish. It is the pit in which he now finds himself. He felt he had gone to the depths and could not possibly be extricated.



## JONAH 2:1-3

THEN Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,  
 2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice,  
 3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

## INTRODUCTION

1. God works in mysterious ways in order to bring about His ultimate glory. For Jonah this meant the three days and three nights in the belly of a fish (Jonah 1:17).

2. Taking the last verse of chapter one as the first of chapter two, the opening words set the stage for what follows. Jonah did not die in the fish! Jonah did not get mauled and stricken there. God spared him and in this tremendous gracious act elicited prayer from the heart of his fleeing servant.

3. Prayer is important no matter how it is provoked. It should be studied, particularly when it is found in the Word of God, and examined to such a point that one learns some of the elements of Bible prayers. Take Jonah's prayer as an example of the kind of praying which pleases the heart of God.

## STRATEGIC ASPECTS OF JONAH'S PRAYER:

## 1. THE PLACE OF PRAYER (Verse 1).

Daniel prayed in a lion's den (Dan.6); Stephen prayed whilst he was being stoned (Acts 7); Paul prayed in a jail (Acts 16). The great dictum of Luke 18:1 bears upon the truth here: men ought always to pray! There are no space limitations to prayer.

But note that in this place of prayer for Jonah, three items are worthy of mention:

- a. JONAH-Prayed. Up till now there is no mention of prayer by Jonah in the book. But in the tight situation he found himself, he lifted his heart to God. It was a big "then" which came into his life! Let us not weary with people who are often "forced" to pray. It may be that God is wrestling with them like Jonah. The verb for "pray" is of uncertain origin, but it may well mean to "roll", hence the same idea as is found in the New Testament of "rolling

- 2) What occupation? Was it an ordinary one? Was it one which was displeasing to God? What had he left?
- 3) Whence comest? Where were you before you got on this boat?
- 4) What country? Was he a foreigner or what?
- 5) What people? What national group did he belong to?

## b. BY THE PROPHET (Verse 9)

Jonah confessed the truth. He noted two facts about himself:—

- 1) I am a Hebrew. This is a term normally employed to distinguish from the heathen (cf. 32 times in the Old Testament: Gen. 40:15 Exodus 1:19).
- 2) I fear God the Lord. This phrase means he stood in awe of Him. Jonah added that He is the One Who is: the God of both Jews and Gentiles (heaven). He is the One who controls the raging sea and the dry land. He is both the Creator and the Supreme Being. No doubt with Jonah as to Who God is!

## CONCLUSION.

It is clear that the flight of Jonah was not allowed to stand unreacted to by God. The sailors were in a pitiful situation because of the dead weight of a disobedient servant of God. God Himself became dishonored. One of the most striking statements of all Scriptures, however, is noted at this time: "Why hast thou done this (Verse 10)?" Why did you who worship the one true God flee from HIM? It has well been said "Avowed skepticism cannot do a tenth part of the injury to practical faith, that the constant spectacle of the huge mass of worldly unreal belief does." It is really not so strange that the world should reject the Gospel. This is a patent explanation but God help you not to hide behind it for you are eternally responsible to believe on Christ no matter how numerous are the cases of unbelief! Amen.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **SELF CONDEMNATION - JONAH 1:10-16**

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **PRAYER FROM A FISH - JONAH 2:1-3**

Support for this position is gained from the Word. A day in the Word is from sundown to sunup (Gen. 1:5). Thus the Lord rose on the first day, which began at sundown on the Sabbath (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1).

That the night and day apparently are of 12 hours duration is taught by the Word (John 11:9). This would require 24 hours for the entire day.

The fact that the day following our Lord's death was the Sabbath is resolved by noting a series of Sabbaths at this time. Actually, the Word speaks of many Sabbaths (see Lev. 23). The Sabbath considered at our Lord's death was that of the Passover and not the week sabbath (cf. Luke 23:54; Mark 15:42; John 19:31). Apparently there were a series of three Sabbaths at His death—Passover, Unleavened bread, and the weekly one (see Matt. 28:1 where the plural is used).

Some may retort that it really doesn't matter on which day. Well, it does because the Lord gave a sign to Israel and that sign was of Jonah. His authority as the Son of God can only be substantiated by three days and three nights in the tomb. If this is not true, then you cannot have an infallible Saviour! If you can't believe Him for this, how can you believe Him for anything else?! Salvation is by believing the Word of God, just as God gave it and as God meant it!

## CONCLUSION

That God prepared a fish has fantastic implications for the child of God. It means that God designs to fulfill His cause in His servants. He intends to see His purpose fulfilled. He will be glorified. You can trust Him. He is ever true. Oh, come to Him now as your personal Lord and Master! Amen.

## JONAH 1:10-16

10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought and was tempestuous.

12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.

13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

14 Wherefore they cried unto the Lord, and said, We beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee.

15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

16 Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows.

## INTRODUCTION

1. Words of amazement and wonder are recorded in the Word of God. One such statement is that found here (V.10): "Why hast thou done this?" Indeed, the inconsistency of believers is the marvel of the young Christian, the repulsion of those without, the hardening of the unbeliever. It will ever be so. All nature seems to cry out to and against the unfaithful Christian!

2. Surely, sin is foolishness. But had not our Lord warned us of the waywardness of men's hearts, such unrealities and inconsistencies would be a sore trial of faith. Hence, what would seem to be a scandal is but a testimony of the truthfulness of the Word of God (cf. Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 1-6).

3. But what is to be done about all of this? Is there no solution to the problem? Yes, thank God there is! Heaven is God's answer to the wicked devices of men's strategies (1 John 3:1-3; Phil. 3:21). Meanwhile, however, there are other ANSWERS. Some of these are suggested in the text. Here they are:

## 1. DIRECTION FROM JONAH (Verses 10-12)

That Jonah was fleeing from the Lord was patent. Indeed, the prophet had devulged this to the heathen sailors. This being the case, the sailors determined to inquire what could be done with the culprit to relieve the disaster.

It is known that Jonah was a prophet. The lot had marked him out as the sinner. He must give direction. Others would follow and obey. To make things more pointed, the sea like a thing which was alive and obedient to its Master's will. The Hebrew can be rightly rendered: "the sea was going and was whirling." It held its course and the waves tossed. The whole marched on like battalions which were marshalled for the end to which they had been created. The sea was out to avenge the Lord. It is terrific to read this portion of the Word of God for it unequivocally teaches the divine power in natural forces.

Specifically, Jonah directed the men to lift him up and impose him (literal translation) upon the sea! These are drastic instructions to be sure. BUT, the Word of God says that Jonah "knew" that it was for his sake that the tempest had been sent. What does this mean; It means that Jonah had divine revelation of the incident to the intent that he interpreted God's message in the storm (cf. Heb. 1:1)! Let no one miss the wonderful truth of Jonah's obedience NOW to the revealed will of God. Sometimes hearts must go through the storm before they yield to the Lord (cf. Isa. 43:2).

NOTE: Jonah's self-condemnation here raised other important issues:

- a. Sin, even when confessed, must be punished. Thank God He often lays it on His Substitute (Isa. 53:6).
- b. Sin must be dropped to gain peace. Check these verses (Isa. 48:18, 22; 57:19-21; Psalm 32:4-5).
- c. Sin demands complete obedience (1 Sam. 15:23).

## 2. ATTENTION TO THE SEA. (Verse 13).

Spontaneously the men on the ship tried to avoid Jonah's assessment of the situation. This is always the way of the flesh. It seeks to find another way" than that which God has established (cf. John 10:1). Man's ways always differ from God's (Isa. 55:8-9). When will man ever learn to digest this truth!

Real energy was put by the sailors into their effort. The Hebrew verb for "rowed hard" is "dig." Like a man turning up dirt, so these men dug their oars into the water to firmly bring the ship to land. But all was in vain. Here was the reverse of the Flood. There the ark stayed up by the power of the divine will. Elsewhere the ship did not sink with its crew and passengers at the power of the divine will (Acts 27).

Do not interpret recklessness in actually being prepared to lose life than cause death as of God. It wasn't in this instance. Of our Lord, that crowd was prepared to kill HIM and spare themselves, so they thought!

a fish large enough to swallow a man, with enough gas on its stomach to keep a person in oxygen for days, and devoid of gastric juices so that it could not digest a fleeing prophet! We trust the account not because it has some scientific basis, but because God said it! We dare to trust God!

### c. A HIDDEN PROPHECY

"And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." This is another wonderful miracle. It is just too tremendous to realize that when Jonah came out, he was none the worse for his experience. He was not unconscious, he was not macerated and mauled. He was not affected mentally. He immediately went about to perform his responsibility to preach the Gospel to the Ninevites! But all of this must be related to the New Testament for Jonah was a prophet (Matt. 12:38-42)! These "three days and three nights" were more than a historical event; they were in fact a prediction of the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

## 2. THE INTENTION

### a. ABOUT GOD.

The most obvious intention of the incident in the life of Jonah is that God was not taken by surprise by what happened. It was all pre-arranged. God has appointed a fish for the pick up! This is both comforting and a warning. The former because it notes the marvelous care of the Lord for us in whatever our need may be. A warning in that Jonah was commanded to preach to the Ninevites and this he would do! God has prepared all things for us and will never be found wanting (cf. Psalm 23:5; 68:40; Hebrews 11:16, etc.).

### b. ABOUT ISRAEL.

Jonah stands as a testimony to Israel that God's purposes through her will be fulfilled. Prophetically it cannot be overlooked that God will prepare for Israel's safety in the latter day (Rev. 12:6).

### c. ABOUT CHRIST.

Here is the most exciting intent of the passage. Christ quotes the experience of Jonah as a defence of His own deity (Matt. 12:38-40). There is no other sign than this for the nation. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ are THE sign to the nation that He is the Son of God, the Messiah sent as prophesied by the Old Testament.

A long and arduous debate has raged about the time of our Lord's death and the length of His stay in the tomb. A careful study of the Word of God, rather than a commitment to the Talmud would indicate that our Lord was actually crucified on Wednesday so that He might truthfully fulfill the "three days and three nights" of the Jonah prophecy.

## JONAH 1:17

17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

## INTRODUCTION

1. When a man catches a fish it is just a common experience of life. But when a fish catches a man, then it is real news! So it is with the contents of the text for this message.

2. Because of this account, the Word of God has been subjected to more critical opposition than is conceivable. Men in their blind unbelief and rejection of the supernatural have found here a ground for denying the historicity of the Scriptures. To those who believe God the Book has been supported more thrillingly as the Word of God because of the testimony of Jonah! The very truth of Christ is at stake and thus the entire revelation of God as it stands in the Bible.

3. Mark the following two points for remembrance from the story. Note that the verse as it stands is considered the first of the second chapter in the Hebrew Bible and this harmonizes better with the events recorded.

## 1. THE EXPLANATION

## a. A DIVINE ACT.

"The Lord had prepared a great fish." The Hebrew Name for God which is used here is "Jehovah". This is the name by which He is known for His covenant keeping character with Israel (cf. Ex. 3:14). The verb for "prepare" originally meant to "divide out" or "measure out" hence the resultant thought of "appointing or constituting." It is used elsewhere in Jonah (4:6, 8). What God prepared is described as a "fish." The noun comes from a verb meaning to "multiply." The New Testament uses a similar word, but does not identify the kind of fish it was (Matt. 12:40).

## b. A HUMAN DILEMMA.

"To swallow up Jonah." The verb for "swallow" has the added thought of doing the act with "eagerness and greediness." There was no doubt a reason for the fish's presence in the sea! Periodically, well-meaning persons step forward to defend the Word of God with reports of some fish which has actually swallowed a man. Indeed, some reports even give accounts of having found a man within the belly of the fish. This is all supposed to give credibility to the Jonah account. Actually, the miracle of the event lead us to believe that we should not be seeking

It is interesting that the two phrases in Verses 11, 13 are identical in the original (the sea wrought and was tempestuous). God never lost control of the forces which He had established! This is true unto this very hour. How comforting!

## 3. PETITION BEFORE THE LORD. (Verse 14)

Let it be noted that the men did not appeal to their own gods as they had done (V.5), but now they speak to the Lord! And this they do with vigor. With deep need they moved their voices toward heaven. Two specific Hebrew verbs are used, one twice, to emphasize their desperation of appeal. They asked God for three requests:

a. **PERSONAL SAFETY.** They did not want to be held accountable for the life of Jonah. Somehow they knew that life was for life, blood for blood (cf. Rom. 1:19-20). Complete exoneration for the deed about to be done was requested prior to its commitment.

b. **PRACTICAL JUDGMENT.** They felt that Jonah was more innocent than they, yet before God he was guilty! It is as if their whole lives came up before them and they pled with God not to look with disfavour upon them because of this one more act of transgression. Sounds like real confession.

c. **PERFORMANCE OF GOD'S WILL.** Here is a concise confession of faith for men who apparently had come to see and know the true God (Psalm 135:6).

## 4. ACTION AGAINST SIN (Verse 15)

Jonah had instructed the men to lift him up and impose him upon the sea. The same two verbs are used in this verse to indicate the action of the sailors. It is a tremendous case of the disobedient servant of God yielding to the will of the Father. How much like our Lord (John 10:17-18). But the answer to what must be done is this—judgment of wrong doing!

It is truly a miracle that the sea ceased from its raging (literally in Hebrew, the sea stood!). Normally the waves continue to swell when the wind ceases, but God Who was responsible for it all wrought a miracle. The sea obeyed like His servant (cf. Matt. 8:26). When God's will is done the peace of God is experienced.

## 5. DEDICATION FOR LIFE (Verse 16)

It just seems that this verse is placed in our Bibles to show the reality of these mariners' desire before God. Three major actions are listed:

**SELF-CONDEMNATION**

(Deut. 6:13, 24)

- a. They fear the Lord (Jehovah). Proper relations with God bring about godly fear (Prov. 1:7)
- b. They offered sacrifices to the Lord (Jehovah)  
A true worshipper comes with this!
- c. They vowed vows. This was a promise to do afterwards what they could not then do!

**CONCLUSION**

If there is any passage which affirms the truth that men are required to live up to the light that they have, this is it. It was from all points of view a strange situation, but God brought Himself the glory and that even among the heathen! May God help us to obey what we do know to be His will and then see Him work wonders for His glory alone.  
Amen

**CHAPTER 5****GOD'S PREPARATION — JONAH 1:17**