

pressive of stillness. The word "vehement" comes from a verb which means to cut off. It was sultry and still!

**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. vv. 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.

## THE BOOK OF JONAH

### "The Action of Prejudice"

Jonah 4:1-11

#### 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 northern 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 was:-

#### 1. EXHIBITED BY JONAH

This is seen in his:-

- a. Feelings vv. 1, 3, 8, 9. Three statements are made in this connection:
  - 1) His displeasure. v. 1. This really points to the fact of Jonah's anger with God. Indeed, he disputed God.
  - 2) His anger v. 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. vv. 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 this life and his ministry to that "heathen nation."

- b. Prayers. vv. 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 2:13 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 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. v. 5. The height of Jonah's action

is seen in his construction of a booth. This Succath was to protect him in the 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. vv. 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. vv. 6-8. Three items 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 or 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 ex-