

Jonah

I. Introduction.

1. The book of Jonah is believed by some to be fiction. But I tell you it is fact! It is preserved in God's Word which is inerrant (without error) and infallible (not capable of erring). (II Peter 1:21; II Tim. 3:16)

2. Jesus, Himself referred to Jonah in Mat. 12:39-41.

3. In Gen. 1:21 the Bible stated clearly of "great whales"--sea monsters. Job. 7:12 and Ezk. 32:2 speaks of whales.

4. The writer of Jonah called it a great fish. (Jonah 1:17) This is no contradiction for a whale is a great fish.

5. So I have no trouble believing this story for it is recorded in God's Word. If the Bible said that Jonah swallowed a whale, I would believe that also. We need to believe what God's Word says.

6. The author (human instrument) of this book is not mentioned but it is believed to be Jonah due to the introduction in verse 1 being like many minor prophets (called minor by man because of the length) who wrote the book that bears their name. (Joel 1:1) Jonah wrote under the direction of God's Spirit making no attempt to excuse his own faults and failures. This ought to give us hope.

7. Jonah was a prophet. Jesus said so in Luke 11:29-30 and it is recorded so in II Kings 14:23-25. Israel's borders were expanded due to Jonah's prophecy. He was from Gath-hepher, a city that is now identified with a village named El Meshed, NE of Nazareth in the inheritance of Zebulun.

8. The time this event occurred is believed to be 770 BC about 50 years before Israel went into Assyrian captivity. The dates in the Scofield Bible are at times okay and at other times they are off, which is the case here. We get this date because Jeroboam II began reigning in 799 BC and Jonah was a prophet during his reign.

9. Why was this book written? Not just to have a story to tell our children. Not just to focus on Jonah, a man trapped in the belly of a great fish, but to focus on the grace of God because a wicked nation of people was engraved on the heart of God. (II Peter 3:9)

10. We can outline the book as follows:

A. Chapter 1: Jonah and the storm--Jonah fleeing from God.

B. Chapter 2: Jonah and the fish--Jonah praying to God.

C. Chapter 3: Jonah and the city--Jonah speaking for God.

D. Chapter 4: Jonah and the Lord--Jonah learning of God.

CHAPTER 1:

II. Jonah Fleeing From God.

V. 1

1. "Jonah" = name means dove--symbol of mourning love, which he may have done over his people and not Nineveh.

2. "Amittai" = name means the truth of God.

3. "The word of the LORD came, saying" = indicates a command from Jehovah, the self-existent One; what He said is recorded in verse 2; the way God spoke was not so important as the fact He spoke.

V. 2

1. Jonah was called to go to Nineveh to deliver a message of judgment upon them, due to their wickedness.

2. "Nineveh" = the capital of Assyria, a nation moving toward world power in that day; founded by Nimrod who was a hunter of men (Gen. 10:9, 11); described as "great" = not so much due to its size as it was by its power.

3. "Cry against" = herald forth a message of judgment; as to whether He told Jonah what the message was at this time or later we do not know; this is equivalent to preach or prophecy.

4. "Their wickedness" = history tells us that the Assyrians were a cruel and heartless people who thought nothing of burying their enemies alive, or skinning them alive, or impaling them on sharp poles under the hot sun; their wickedness was not the mere mass of human sin (I John 5:19) but evil-doing towards others.

5. "Is come up before me" = the Lord knows all; this means the cry of their wickedness is come up unto me and it is time to act--to punish (Gen. 4:10); this is similar to Exo. 3:9 even though they had been crying for over 80 years, but now it is time to act.

V. 3

1. "But Jonah rose up to flee" = he rose up as the Lord had said, but not as other prophets to obey, but to disobey--to flee "from the presence of the LORD" = from the face of Jehovah; this may mean from God's special presence in Jerusalem; you may say, "That sorry Jonah!" Before you get down on Jonah, look at what he was facing and put yourself in his shoes and see what you would do.

2. Jonah preferred to renounce his office as prophet rather than execute his mission. Why?

A. It has been stated that Jonah was a Jew and the people of Nineveh were Gentiles and he did not want to have anything to do with those Gentile dogs, as they were called by the Jews. But this was not the case since the message he was to carry to Nineveh was one of judgment--destruction in 40 days.

B. The real reason. Assyria had already begun to cut off Israel (the Northern Kingdom) and demanded tribute from them. Thus, Jonah was called by God to deliver a message to Israel's enemy and his enemy. He did not want to go because he knew they might repent and if they did, the Lord would hold back their destruction and Israel would be doomed eventually.

C. In essence Jonah said, "If the city of Nineveh is going to be overthrown, then let it be overthrown. I would rather disobey God than see my enemies saved from defeat." Jonah said, "I resign my office, my calling, and my preaching. Let Nineveh go to hell!"

3. "Tarshish" = a city on the south coast of Spain; the farthest place of the known world at that time; Nineveh was north-east from his home and he instantly set himself to flee to the then, furthestmost west.

4. "From the presence of the LORD" = Jonah knew that man could not escape from the presence of God, for David had said so in Psa. 139:7-10; Jonah fled from standing before Jehovah as His servant and minister; notice he did not pray for direction.

5. "Went down to Joppa" = a city on the Mediterranean Sea; geographically Joppa is at a lower elevation than Jonah's city Gath-hepher, which is north east of Nazereth, thus he went down.

6. "Found a ship going to Tarshish" = he located a ship headed west that had room for him "so he paid the fare thereof" = bought a ticket to sail.

7. "Went down into it" = boarded the ship.

8. "To go with them" = with the crew; Jonah told them (verse 10) that he was fleeing from God's service, but knowing and caring nothing about Jehovah, they took him on board when he paid his fare, and thought nothing of his private reasons for joining them.

V. 4

1. "The LORD sent out a great wind into the sea" = Mark 4:41 states that the wind and sea obey the Lord; in this case He "sent" = to cast forth; hurled; sometimes He allows the devil to use the wind. (Ex. Elijah in I Kings 19:11-12)

2. The consequences of Jonah fleeing from God were tragic. He lost God's voice and He now speaks to him in a "great wind" which caused a "mighty tempest" in the sea. This is defined as a hurricane or a wind rapidly changing its points of compass. This was like the Euroclydon of Acts 27:14.

3. "Was like to be broken" = thought to be dashed in pieces.

V. 5

1. "Mariners" = "every man" = "his" = the sailors.

2. "Were afraid, and cried every man unto his god" = these were men from different localities, thus, they had different gods--idols; these men did not know the truth, but amid their religious error they knew there was an object of reverence.

3. "And cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten *it* of them" = this could refer to all the spare tackling, the moveables, and the cargo to ease the ship of its weight.

4. "But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep" = the ship had lower decks and Jonah went down into the innermost deck before the storm arose to withdraw himself from sight and notice; his journey to Joppa may have been long and tiresome, probably losing sleep as he fled from God; therefore, he went to sleep rather quickly.

V. 6

1. "Shipmaster" = equivalent to the captain.

2. "What meanest thou, O sleeper" = how can thou sleep so soundly when our danger is so imminent?

3. "Arise, call upon thy God" = the sailor's prayers had not been answered so they arouse Jonah, noting something special about him, perhaps his prophet's dress, or observing that he was an Israelite, and therefore, a worshiper of Jehovah, of whose power they had heard.

4. "If so be that God will think upon us" = he does not only call Jonah's God, "thy God" but also "the God" since the Hebrew construction has the definite article "the" attached; the shipmaster is acknowledging the God whom Jonah worshiped to be the God.

5. "That we perish not" = that God may save us; it is not just an heathen prayer which he asks Jonah to offer; it is the prayer of the creature in its need to the God who can help.

6. The shipmaster must have known from experience that this was no common storm but an infliction borne down from God--the God.

V. 7

1. "They" = "every one of his fellow" = "us" = "we" = the sailors.

2. Jonah may have prayed, as he was asked to, but the crew finding the storm still violent, came to the conclusion that it was sent by Heaven in punishment of some crime committed by one on board. So they cast lots.

3. "Cast lots" = this was a popular form of divination among pagan nations, and still is; exactly what they did we know not; they may have had a box of stones, one for each man on board, all white except one black; the one who drew the black stone was the guilty culprit; could be something like throwing dice to see which one was guilty; Mat. 27:35 fulfilled Psa. 22:18 concerning casting lots for Jesus' seamless robe; casting a lot to the Jew did not suggest gambling, but the OT method of learning the will of Jehovah. (Pro. 16:33)

4. "For whose cause" = the unusual nature of the tempest showed them that it was sent in judgment.

5. "The lot fell upon Jonah" = whatever type of lots they used Jonah was pointed out as the guilty culprit.

V. 8

1. "Then said they unto him" = after Jonah was pointed out, the crew proceeded calmly to investigate his guilt; they gave him opportunity to confess his crime; in their excitement they bombard him with question after question, asking him about his business, his journey, his country, and his parentage.

2. "Tell us, we pray, for whose cause this evil *is* upon us" = they desired that Jonah would confess his guilt with his own mouth.

3. "What is thine occupation?" = no answer; we could answer for him--the office of prophet, which he had left.

4. "Whence comest thou?" no answer; we could answer for him--from standing before God, as His minister.

5. "What is thy country? and of what people art thou?" = no answer; we could answer for him--the people of God, whom he had left in fleeing from God.

V. 9

1. Jonah answers simply the central point to which all these questions centered on.

2. "I am a Hebrew" = this was the name by which Israel was known to foreigners.

3. "I fear the LORD" = I (Jonah) worship, reverence Jehovah, who is not a local deity like the false gods whom you adore, but the Creator of heaven and earth, the Maker and Ruler of sea and dry lands and in whose hands are all things.

4. "The God of heaven" = by saying this Jonah taught the sailors that there is one Lord of all, and this evil had fallen on them because they were with him, the renegade servant of God.

V. 10

1. "Then were the men exceedingly afraid" = before they had feared the tempest and the loss of their lives; now they feared God.

2. They "said unto him" = they asked Jonah a question.

3. "Why hast thou done this?" = equivalent to "What is this that thou hast done?" These are words of amazement and wonder--why hast thou not obeyed so great a God, and how thoughtest thou to escape the hand of the Creator? this is not a question of inquiry, for he had already told them that he had fled from the presence of the Lord; these are words of exclamation of horror and amazement of Jonah's folly and sin.

4. To be rebuked by heathen sailors must have added to his remorse.

V. 11

1. "What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us?" = they knew him to be a prophet; they ask him the mind of God; the lots had marked out Jonah as the cause of the storm; Jonah had himself admitted it, and that the storm was for his cause, and came from his God.

2. "That the sea may be calm unto us" = literally, may be silent from upon us, so as no longer to bear down upon us.

3. "Wrought, and was tempestuous" = the sea was going and whirling.

V. 12

1. Jonah would not have said what he did except God inspired him to do so. He pronounced his own sentence.

2. He said, "I know that the fault is mine, and deserves death; therefore, take me up and cast me forth into the sea." He would not be his own executioner (commit suicide) but would bear a death righteously inflicted by others, whose safety he was endangering by his continued presence.

V. 13

1. "Nevertheless" = without regarding the statement Jonah had stated.

2. "Rowed hard" = used violent efforts; describes the great efforts they made; they endeavored to force their way through the waves with oars, as the use of sails was impractical.

3. "To the land" = to get back to land; seems they were not that far off shore when the great wind arose; this lets us know that it did not take God long to get hold of His prophet who fled from Him--He did not let His child go long without dealing with him. (Num. 32:23)

4. The crew would not lay hands upon Jonah, striving hard to get to land, and escape the risk of bloodshed, willing to lose life rather than cause its loss. They were careless as to their own safety, while anxious about others.

V. 14

1. "Wherefore" = in view of the fact that they could not reach land and the great wind did not cease.

2. "They cried unto the LORD" = they no longer prayed to their gods as before (verse 5) but to Jehovah, the God Jonah had made known to them.

3. "We beseech thee" = to pray with urgency; this is an earnest, submissive request, repeating the words of beseeching, as men do in great earnestness.

4. "Let us not perish for this man's life" = let us not become subject to death for taking this man's life; they seemed to know something of the law given to Noah that punished murder. (Gen. 9:5-6; Rom. 2:14-15)

5. "Lay not upon us innocent blood" = charge us not with the guilt of shedding innocent blood (Deut. 21:8); innocent blood is the blood of a person who has done nothing wrong concerning the law; the crew was coming to a point that they were going to throw Jonah overboard and they wanted to make sure he was not innocent before they did so.

6. "For thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee" = "the whole affair has happened according to thy will; the tempest, the lot, and the sentence are all the working of thy providence."

V. 15

1. "So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea" = they did not lay hold of him in violence, but lifted him, as it were, bearing him with respect and honor; they cast him into the sea, not resisting, but yielding himself to their will.

2. "And the sea ceased from her raging" = ordinarily, the waves still swell, when the wind has ceased; but the sea, when it had received Jonah, was hushed at once, to show that God alone raises and stills the sea; it stood still like a servant when he has accomplished his mission.

V. 16

1. "Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly" = they recognized the supernatural element in the transaction, and conceived an awe and fear of Jehovah, who had wrought these wonders.

2. "Offered a sacrifice unto the LORD" = the text implies that they made a sacrifice immediately after the wind ceased and not when they reached shore as some think; even though they had thrown the cargo overboard, they no doubt had some animals on board to sacrifice to their gods but now they sacrifice them to Jehovah.

3. "And made vows" = something promised to God; we do not know exactly what these vows were; some believe they vowed to make other sacrifices in the future when it was in their power.

4. It has been supposed that these sailors embraced Judaism and became proselytes. At any rate, they showed themselves to be believers on this occasion.

V. 17

1. "The LORD had prepared a great fish" = note "had;" the Lord did this in Gen. 1:21 about 3200 years before this event; now He ordered that the fish should be at this place to swallow Jonah.

2. "To swallow up Jonah" = it seems, from Jonah's thanksgiving in Chap. 2, that he was not swallowed at once but sank to the bottom of the sea; God preserving him in the sea would have also been a miracle as well as preserving him in the fish's belly.

3. "Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" = God used the natural agency of the fish, but the preservation of Jonah's life was supernatural; the time that Jonah was in the fish's belly was a hidden prophecy of which Jonah did not know or understand; he just recorded the time at God's direction and later Jesus used this recorded fact to confirm His most solemn statement concerning His resurrection (Mat. 12:40); this type confirms the truth.

4. The consequences of Jonah fleeing from God were tragic.

A. He lost God's voice--for now God had to speak in thunder and lightning.

B. He lost his spiritual energy and went to sleep in the ship.

C. He lost his power in prayers and even his desire to pray. The heathen were praying but Jonah was sleeping.

D. He lost his testimony with the men on the ship.

E. He lost his influence for good, because he was the cause of the storm.

F. He almost lost his life, but God was patient and longsuffering with him (Rom. 8:28) and prepared a fish to swallow him. Had he not repented while he could, he would have lost his life.

5. Lessons learned from this chapter.

A. It did not take God long to get hold of him and he hadn't drank a beer or committed adultery or murder. God did not let His child go long without dealing with him.

B. He endangered the lives of all on the ship with him. This could apply to the home and also to the church. If you are in sin, you are not just hurting yourself but all who you are connected to. Repent while there is an opportunity to do so.

C. Jonah had to be dealt with for the safety of the crew. The same is true in the church. Church discipline is necessary, and that is not something you do to hurt someone but to help them.

CHAPTER 2:

III. Jonah praying to God.

V. 1

1. "Then" = after three days and three nights in the belly of the fish.
2. "Prayed" = the Hebrew word refers to a prayer of thanksgiving rather than a prayer of petition; Jonah is thanking the Lord for his deliverance from the sea of which he details that experience in verses 2-7; verse 7 seems to speak of a deliverance already experienced rather than one expected; no one but Jonah could have known these details; therefore, this is another argument for him being the human instrument who penned down this book.
3. When Jonah realized he was saved from drowning, he uttered his gratitude, and saw that he might hope for future deliverance.
4. How he passed the days we cannot tell. Some have thought he was unconscious but this is not consistent with typology. Our Lord, while in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights, "preached to the spirits in prison." (I Peter 3:19) Jesus was conscious thus, Jonah, the type, was conscious too.
5. "The LORD his God" = Jonah acknowledges Jehovah as his God.

V. 2

1. "I" = "my" = "mine" = Jonah.
2. "LORD" = "he" = "thou" = Jehovah.
3. "Cried" = to call out; notice he does not say "I cry" but "I cried;" he does not pray for the future, but gives thanks for the past; Jonah is fulfilling I Thess. 5:18.
4. "By reason of mine affliction" = out of my "affliction" = trouble; he had been cast into the sea by the sailors at his request; he was carried to and fro helplessly with no known escape from his trouble except by death.
5. "He heard me" = equivalent to "thou heardest my voice" = he may have spoken aloud as he was being cast into the sea but the context indicates this was when he was in the sea; if that be true then he could not have uttered an audible voice for the waters choked out his speech but he cried out of his heart; the Lord hears our heart's cry; this means the Lord, not just heard, but He answered and delivered Jonah; the great fish never opened his mouth except to destroy life but now it swallowed Jonah, to save life--this was in answer to Jonah's cry, which had to be a cry of a repentant heart.
6. "Out of the belly of hell" = this is equivalent to "by reason of mine affliction;" this is not talking about the belly of the fish; this is referring to the watery grave, and he was counted among the dead.

7. "Hell" = sheol in the Hebrew, hades in the Greek; the unseen world; he was as though dead when he was engulfed in the sea.

V. 3

1. "Thou" = "thy" = Jehovah; the Lord.

2. "Thou hast cast me into the deep" = the sailors were the agents of the Divine will.

3. "The deep" = in the midst (depths) of the sea.

4. Jonah continues to describe the affliction, from which God had already delivered him.

A. "The floods compassed me about" = refers to the sea with its currents which in the Mediterranean Sea move from west to east and strike against the Syrian coast.

B. "All thy billows and thy waves passed over me" = speaks of the breakers of the sea and rolling waves; Jonah acknowledges God's hand in the punishment by the use of the words "thy billows and thy waves."

V. 4

1. "Then" = while in the sea.

2. "I" = Jonah.

3. "Thy" = Jehovah; the Lord.

4. "Said" = again this is his heart speaking for the water choked out his speech.

5. "I am cast out of thy sight" = a strong term, implying banishment with violence; at first he fully expected to die in the sea.

6. "Out of thy sight" = literally from before thine eyes; from thy protecting care; Jonah had wilfully withdrawn from standing in God's presence and now God had taken him at his word and as it seemed, cast him out of it.

7. "Yet" = surely.

8. "I will look again toward thy holy temple" = I will turn in prayer to that holy place where thou doest manifest thy presence; the Jews were taught to turn towards Jerusalem when they prayed (I Kings 8:29; Dan. 6:10); he could no longer look with the bodily eye even toward the land where God showed the marvels of His mercy, and the temple where God was worshiped continually, but what he could not do in the body, he would do in his soul.

V. 5

1. "The waters compassed me about" = different word from verse 3; to surround.
2. "Even to the soul" = as he sunk in the deep sea, the water strove to penetrate at every opening; to draw breath, which sustains life, to him would have been death; there was but a breath between him and death.
3. "The depth closed me round about" = encircling, meeting him whithersoever he turned, holding him imprisoned on every side, so that there was no escape.
4. "The weeds were wrapped about my head" = the weeds were well-known sea weeds which were wrapped around his head, like a grave band.

V. 6

1. "I" = "me" = "my" = Jonah.
2. "The bottoms of the mountains" = refers to where the mountains seem to be cut off by the ocean floor; the roots of the mountains.
3. "The earth with her bars was about me for ever" = return to the earth was shut out for him; the gate by which he might return was locked behind him; he adds, "for ever," as it was to all appearance, because he had no power in himself of returning to earth and life.
4. "Yet" = in spite of all, he was preserved.
5. "Thou" = "LORD my God" = Jehovah; he thankfully acknowledges that Jehovah has proved Himself a beneficent God to him.
6. "Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption" = refers to being delivered from death; the tense is past tense, thus, this lets us know Jonah is thanking God for his deliverance from the sea.

V. 7

1. "Fainted" = overwhelmed--translated so in Psa. 142:3; literally "was covered;" refers to that physical exhaustion when a film comes over the eyes, and the brain is mantled (covered) over--at that point he:
2. "Remembered the LORD" = all his former thoughts of Jehovah had been forgotten but now the LORD is what revolves in his mind.

3. "Prayer" = supplication; praying for something specifically, probably deliverance from the sea; the word involves worship; thus, Jonah was praying to be delivered from the sea but was worshiping the Lord as being right in what he was experiencing.

4. "Thee" = the LORD" = "thine" = Jehovah.

5. "My prayer came in unto thee" = no sooner had he so prayed, than God heard.

6. "Into thine holy temple" = he turned in thought to thine holy temple, the sanctuary where God's presence was most assured, like the psalmist in the wilderness (Psa. 63:1-2) or like the exiles by the waters of Babylon when they remembered Zion. (Psa. 137:1)

V. 8

1. Jonah contrasts the joy and comfort arising from the thought of God with the miserable fate of idolaters.

2. "Observe" = to hedge about; court; pay deference to; reverence.

3. "Lying vanities" = vain things; empty things; false things; this is referring to idols--anything but God. (Psa. 31:6; Jer. 18:15; Hos. 12:11; I Cor. 8:4)

4. "Forsake" = leave; to desert; to abandon; to depart from.

5. "Their own mercy" = their state of favor with God--the mercies shown to them as "the mercies shown to David" (Isa. 55:3); this refers to God Himself, the Fountain of mercy and goodness.

6. Jonah does not, in this, exclude himself. His own idol had been his false love for his country, that he would not have his people go into captivity, when God would. He would not have Nineveh, the enemy of his country, preserved. Therefore, by leaving his office, he left God--forsook his own mercy.

V. 9

1. "But" = introduces a contrast--a change of heart--repentance.

2. "I will sacrifice" = the Hebrew indicates "I gladly would sacrifice" = as it depended, not on him, but on God, whether he was able to worship again in the Holy land; without a miracle of God, he could do nothing.

3. "With the voice of thanksgiving" = the OT sacrifices were to be offered with prayer and praise--thanksgiving.

4. "I will pay *that* that I have vowed" = again the Hebrew does not say "I will" but "I would;" "I will" depends upon himself and "I would" depends upon God; this refers

chiefly to himself, his life which God had given back to him; indicates the obedience of his remaining life in all things.

5. These promises were made by Jonah with a repentant heart. This is not like someone in the hospital bed telling God "if you will raise me up, then I will serve you." Man should not put conditions on God. Jonah did not. He basically said I would if I could without any conditions attached. He knew he was receiving from the hand of God what he deserved and he was not complaining but thanking the Lord for what He had done thus far.

6. "Salvation *is* of the LORD" = this is an honest confession of Jonah with a repentant heart; deliverance from anything is wholly Jehovah's; all belongs to Him so that none can share in bestowing it; no one can have any hope of any deliverance apart from the Lord.

7. The Lord seems to wait for the full resignation (giving up) of the soul, for the soul to be wholly surrendered to Him and then He can show His mercy. This is the place Jonah got to and on this confession, Jonah is restored.

V. 10

1. The Lord commanded the Prophet to go to Nineveh and he disobeyed and now He commanded the great fish to spit out Jonah on dry land and the fish obeyed. All of God's creation obeys Him except man. (Mar. 4:41)

2. "Vomited out Jonah" = to eject the contents of the stomach by the mouth; the great fish cast Jonah out of his mouth, as a burden to it.

3. "Upon the dry *land*" = probably on the coast of Palestine, where he had started from; some think he was spit out on the outskirts of Nineveh but that is not possible geographically (no sea joins Nineveh) and the Lord would never make his journey shorter and easier after his rebellion; in reality now, he is farther from Nineveh than he was when he was in his home town of Gath-hepher.

CHAPTER 3:

IV. Jonah speaking for God.

V. 1

1. "The word of the LORD came unto Jonah, saying" = indicates a command from Jehovah; what He spoke is recorded in verse 2; the way God spoke is not so important as the fact He spoke.

2. "The second time" = the command formerly given is renewed; he has been forgiven and restored to his office.

V. 2

1. "Arise" = same thing He told him in Jonah 1:2; this word seems to indicate he was in some settled home, perhaps again in Gath-hepher, his home town.

2. Some believe that he went up to Jerusalem to pay his vows as he had promised. Then he traveled to his home town where this second command came to him. Jonah does not supply these details nor does he speak of himself, but of the mission only, as God taught him.

3. "Nineveh" = the capital of Assyria, a nation moving toward world power in that day; founded by Nimrod who was a hunter of men (Gen. 10:8-9,11); described as "great" = large and powerful.

4. "Preach" = same word is translated "cry" in Jonah 1:2; here he was to preach "unto" the city while Jonah 1:2 says to cry "against" it.

5. "Preach unto" = seems to imply that Nineveh had some interest in the message that Jonah was about to deliver. How could this be? Nineveh was wicked, idolatrous, ungodly, vile, and any sinful name you want to attach to them--they met the qualifications. Why the change? We do not know for certain but history reveals that the people of Nineveh worshiped the fish god--part human and part fish. They believed the fish came up out of the sea and founded their nation and also that messengers came to them from the sea from time to time. No doubt many may have seen Jonah vomited up by the fish. Can you imagine the people as they saw this great fish vomit up Jonah on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. There he lay squirming, trying to regain some strength and focus his eyes after three days of darkness, laying in the midst of whale "puke." Those who saw Jonah in that situation thought they had seen one return from the dead. Can you imagine their reaction? That message of this miracle traveled far and wide and reached Nineveh before Jonah arrived. Therefore, they were ready to listen to that prophet's message.

6. What was Jonah to preach? "the preaching that I bid thee" = the proclamation (message) that the LORD commanded him to preach--herald forth.

V. 3

1. "So" = and; a conjunction joining the order of events.

2. "Jonah arose and went" = he now was as prompt to obey as he was to flee before.
3. "Unto Nineveh" = it could have taken him 40 days to travel the distance from Geth-hepher to Nineveh; the distance is at least 800 miles and if he traveled 20 miles per day, which is the average distance a man traveled in a day, it would have taken him 40 days.
4. "According to the word of the LORD" = in accordance with the command of Jehovah.
5. "Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey" = some tradition uses these figures to say Jonah was three days journey from Nineveh when the Lord told him to go preach and he made that three days journey in one day (verse 4); the only problem is that this is just not so; Nineveh was an exceeding great city (large and powerful) possibly 60 miles in diameter, thus, three days' journey to cross it and Jonah went (verse 4) one day's journey into the city before he began to preach; the city is believed to have had 1,000,000 population.

V. 4

1. "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey" = 20 miles.
2. "And he cried" = same Hebrew word as preached in verse 2; to herald forth.
3. "Said" = preached.
4. "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" = this was an eight word message in our English language; it was a message of;
 - A. Destruction = "overthrown" = the same word is used in Gen. 19:21(speaking of Zoar), 25 of Sodom; means completely destroyed.
 - B. Condition = "yet" = denotes the longsuffering of God; Sodom wasn't given 40 days before God destroyed it; God was good to Nineveh (Rom. 2:4); He gave them 40 days to repent even though God did not say this was a conditional message, but He was willing to wait 40 more days on sinners who were the enemies of God and the enemies of God's people, Israel; He was not willing the Ninevites perish, therefore, he gave them 40 days. (II Peter 3:9)
5. We do not know how long Jonah cried out the message but it brought results.

V. 5

1. "So the people of Nineveh believed God" = nobody slept during his message; everybody's eyes were turned upon a man who looked as if he had returned from the

dead; they listened to the message because of the miracle of Jonah's deliverance from the great fish and the whole city was moved.

2. "Believed God" = means they believed what God said through His prophet to be true; implies trust and hope.

3. "Proclaimed a fast" = to abstain from food and possibly water; the people did this without a decree from the king; fasting says "no" to our appetites.

4. "Put on sackcloth" = a sign of mourning (Gen. 37:34) and of humility and utter dependance on God; this is a rough coarse cloth that would bring discomfort to the body; the custom of changing the dress in mourning was not confined to the Hebrews; sackcloth says "no" to our appearance.

5. "From the greatest of them even to the least of them" = all did so, male and female, royalty and servants.

V. 6

1. "Word came unto the king" = this could include the message of Jonah and the action of the people.

2. "He arose from his throne" = he lost no time; he heard and he arose; denotes haste and diligence.

3. "And he laid aside his robe from him" = refers to a large costly upper garment; it is the name of the goodly Babylonian garment which Achan coveted. (Josh. 7:21)

4. "And covered *him* with sackcloth" = a sign of mourning, humility, and utter dependence on God; the king makes the fast and mourning official by joining the people of the city.

5. "And sat in ashes" = he trades his throne for a pile of ashes; this is a graphic way of declaring that man is nothing in the face of danger (Jer. 6:26); an ash pile says "no" to our ambitions.

V. 7

1. "He" = "his" = the king of Nineveh.

2. "He caused *it* to be proclaimed and published" = he cried and said.

3. "By the decree" = applies to a mandate (command) issued by royal authority.

4. "The king and his nobles" = this was not an absolute monarchy; the king having nobles (leaders) in his kingdom let us know things had to be cleared through them;

there are some who believe this king was a monarch invested with sovereign power and he associated with these nobles in humility occasioned by alarm, and because he saw that they were of the same mind as himself; what ever the case, a decree went out--a decree that extends from here to the end of verse 8:

A. Let the animals as well as man, fast. (verse 7b)

V. 8

B. Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth.

C. "Cry mightily unto God" = with intensity; reveals a strong desire because they realized the need.

D. "Let them turn" = repent.

1) "Turn from their evil way" = not ways but singular; the way man is in is evil--bad; having qualities that tend to injury; refers to direction--repentance = a change of mind, attitude, action, and direction; a turning from sin to God, taking up sides with Him against yourself.

2) "Turn from the violence that *is* in their hands" = refers to deeds; implies to injure; hands are the instruments that use violence.

G. The proclamation (decree) of the king basically says:

1) Stop everything you are doing.

2) Put every thing on hold.

3) Donot feed the animals.

4) Forget your jobs.

5) Forget meal preparation.

6) Forget washing your clothes.

7) Stop all normal activity.

8) Why "O king?" = verse 9.

V. 9

1. "Who can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" = an expression of hope that the Divine wrath may be averted by the

timely repentance; just maybe God (capital G) will change His mind that we be not destroyed.

2. "God will turn and repent" = these two verbs do not signify that the Ninevites thought God was fickle (wavering; unstable); they indicate, instead, that these pagans believed the Lord's greatest desire was not to destroy men but to save them; the word "repent" when used of God, does not denote sorrow for sin; instead it points to a decision on God's part to change His method of dealing with His creatures.

3. We need to learn from this king's decree. Everything else in our life has a tendency to take priority over God--cares of this world--thorns that choke the seed. (Mat. 13:22) We can't even stop part of our normal activity for one week of meeting, that we might hear from God. We can't even stop long enough for Sunday School and church past 12:00 PM. We say we need revival but KY Wildcats come first. Our physical family comes first. Our jobs come first. You might say, "I've got to pay my bills." If you had a message like Nineveh, after 40 days, you wouldn't need a job for you would be destroyed and the only thing that would matter then is, "How is your standing with the Lord?" You may say, "We don't have that message." Maybe not, but we may have less time than that for America. We need revival! Are we willing to stop everything like Nineveh and cry mightily and turn from our evil way? God says, if we will, He will. (II Chron. 7:14)

V. 10

1. "God saw their works" = "that they turned from their evil way" = their whole way and course of life was evil; they repented of not just one or two sins, but all their whole evil way.

2. "God repented of the evil etc." = means a change of mind; the word "repent" when used of God, does not denote sorrow for sin; instead it points to a decision on God's part to change His method of dealing with His creatures; there was no real change in God, but the object of His threatening was that He might not do what He threatened.

3. God's threatenings are conditional even though it was not mentioned in Jonah's message. God's expressions of wrath serve to quicken man to repentance. In the case of Nineveh the Lord did not change in His essence but only His way of dealing with man was changed.

4. Revival came to Nineveh because one man of God with the marks of God's chastening upon him preached what God would have him to and God moved on the people and they said no to appetites, no to appearance, no to ambitions and cried out and turned--repented and God turned and spared an entire city from destruction.

5. The real miracle of the book of Jonah is not Jonah being preserved in the fish's belly for three days and nights and being vomited up. The real miracle of this book is God in grace and mercy sparing a nation of confessed sinners simply on their repentance and

their giving heed to the message of the prophet. Nineveh was not destroyed until about 170 years later.

6. May we let this message sink in and ask God to give us a burden that we may see our need and stop the ordinary activity, cry mightily, and turn from our evil way. If we don't we are going to lose what we have in America, in New Hope Baptist Church, and in our homes. If we lose that, we might as well be destroyed. May we turn before it is too late.

CHAPTER 4:

V. Jonah learning of God.

V. 1

1. "But" = reveals the contrast between God's reaction in Jonah 3:10 and Jonah's reaction due to what God did.
2. "It" = what God did.
3. "Displeased Jonah exceedingly" = greatly irritated and vexed; disturbed.
4. "Angry" = inflamed; raging; described as "very" = denotes in a great degree; he gives his reason in verse 2.

V. 2

1. "He prayed unto the LORD" = he at least did not murmur or complain of Jehovah, he complained to Jehovah of Himself; he carried his complaint to Jehovah and was prepared to submit it to Him, even while he questioned the wisdom of His clemency.
2. "I pray thee" = a particle of entreaty--"Ah! I pray thee."
3. "Was not this my saying" = was not this what I said to myself, that God would spare Nineveh if it showed signs of repentance.
4. "My country" = Palestine in Gath-hepher, where the original message reached him.
5. "Therefore" = in view of my thoughts.
6. "I fled before unto Tarshish" = I made haste to flee with Tarshish as the final destination of my fleeing.
7. "Knew" = to have absolute positive knowledge; it is good to know something.

8. He knew "That thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil:"

- A. "Gracious" = unmerited favor in granting repentance to sinners, which none of us deserve.
- B. "Merciful" = compassionate; keeps us from getting what we do deserve--hell.
- C. "Slow to anger" = longsuffering; forbearing--holding back judgment and wrath.
- D. "Great kindness" = the loving kindness of God in condescending to the need of His creatures, even the Ninevites.
- E. "Repentest" = the word "repent" when used of God, does not denote sorrow for sin; instead it points to a decision on God's part to change His method of dealing with His creatures.
- F. "Thee" = Jehovah.
- G. "Evil" = refers to the judgment pronounced by Jonah--a message from God that Nineveh would be overthrown (destroyed) in 40 days.

V. 3

- 1. "Therefore" = in view of the fact that the Lord had spared Nineveh.
- 2. "Now" = at this time.
- 3. "LORD" = "thee" = Jehovah.
- 4. "O" = a cry of desperation.
- 5. "Take, I beseech thee, my life from me, for it is better for me to die than live" = Jonah had rather die than see the evil which was to come upon his country--the Assyrian captivity of Israel--the northern kingdom; because his word was not fulfilled, he wishes to die, yet he will not take his own life; this is a foolish request.
- 6. The time of this request cannot be actually determined. Some think it was 40 days after he preached the message God gave him. Others think it was before the 40 days had passed. I am inclined to believe this was before the 40 days passed due to verse 5 where he went out of the city and waited to see what would become of the city.

V. 4

- 1. "Then" = when Jonah prayed to die the Lord answers his prayers.

2. "Doest thou well to be angry?" = the Lord asked him to consider whether or not his anger was justified; there is a right anger against sin (Eph. 4:26), but this question suggested to Jonah that his anger was not right.

V. 5

1. "Went out of the city" = knowing that the Lord had changed His mind (Jonah 3:10) about the city's being overthrown, he waited outside the city "till he might see what would become of the city" = he may have thought, at least hoped, that the Lord would still destroy the city, perhaps with an earthquake or be burned with fire like Sodom; this phrase seems to indicate the time of Jonah departing the city was sometime during the 40 days his message spoke of.

2. "And sat on the east side of the city" = the opposite side to that by which he had entered and where the high ground enabled him to overlook the town, without sharing in its destruction.

3. "And there made him a booth" = a temporary shelter constructed of branches interlaced; lean-to; he preferred a booth outside the city than the hospitality of the king inside the city.

4. "And sat under it in the shadow" = the branches may have given him some shade but they did not keep out the extreme heat of that area.

V. 6

1. "LORD God" = Jehovah Elohim.

2. "Prepared" = made ready; provided; in a sense commanded.

3. "A gourd" = we do not know exactly what type of vine this is; whatever the plant was, its growth was abnormal since it seems it have come up in one day or possibly one night; there is nothing too hard for God; He just speeded up the growth of this vine; a vine with large leaves to give shade to Jonah in his booth; no doubt the branches out of which the booth was made had wilted in the heat and did not provide sufficient shade as the day wore on.

4. The gourd was given "to deliver him from his grief" = refers not so much to the physical discomfort occasioned by the heat, but rather to the condition of his mind, the vexation and disappointment under which he was suffering.

5. "Was exceeding glad" = literally rejoiced with a great joy; Jonah may have seen in this providential shelter an indication that God approved of his intention to wait and see what would happen.

6. We see the grace of God in this--God even blesses His own when they are not in full fellowship with Him. It is amazing how quick the Lord can turn our sadness into gladness. The sheltering gourd was a gift of God--a handful of purpose for a weary downcast pilgrim feeling sorry for himself.

V. 7

1. "But" = a contrast between Jonah's gladness and what God was going to do.
2. "Prepared" = made ready; provided; in a sense commanded.
3. "A worm" = a caterpillar which may have punctured the stem and caused the plant to wither--die; really at God's command it withered.
4. "When the morning rose the next day" = in the earliest dawn, before the actual sunrise; Jonah seems to have enjoyed the shelter of the gourd one whole day.
5. Lesson to learn: Everything visible is stamped with uncertainty. The withering of the plant came about in a natural way, but was ordered by God at a certain time in order to give Jonah the intended lesson.

V. 8

1. "When the sun did arise" = when morning came.
2. "God" = Elohim.
3. "Prepared" = made ready; provided; in a sense commanded.
4. "East wind" = the wind of the east, blowing over the sand--deserts, intensely increases the distress of the heat; described as "vehement" = sultry; very hot, burning and oppressive; describes the wind coming off the desert sands that would bake an individual if not properly covered.
5. "The sun beat upon the head of Jonah" = his position on the east of the city (verse 5) exposed him to the full force of the scorching sun and wind; even the well-seasoned Arab seeks the shade during the day, and journeys by night.
6. "Fainted" = to grow weak and weary; not completely passed out but almost.
7. "Wished in himself to die" = he prays for death; he did not murmur but prayed that God would end his life here; it is amazing how quick the Lord can turn our gladness into sadness.
8. "And said, *It is better for me to die than to live*" = he was concerned more for himself than others; this statement reveals the manifestation of self; Jonah's statement implies

he was more concerned about the gourd for his own comfort than the salvation of the heathen city; Paul was not that way. (Phil. 1:21,24)

V. 9

1. God said, "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" = God ask him to consider whether or not his anger was justified; there is a right anger against sin (Eph. 4:26), but the question suggests to Jonah that his anger was not right.

2. Jonah said, "I do well to be angry, even unto death" = "I am right to be angry, as that my anger almost kills me;" deprived of the shelter of the gourd, Jonah is immediately depressed, and in his unreasoning anger defends himself against the reproaches of God's voice; vehement anger leads men to long and love to die, especially if they are unable to remove the hindrance which angers them.

V. 10

1. "The LORD" = Jehovah; you will notice a variety of the use of the names of God in this book; why, I do not know; that doesn't matter because the LORD is God and God is the LORD.

2. "Thou" = Jonah.

3. "Pity" = compassion; indicates that his heart was moved by the withered gourd; it belongs to this passing world, where nothing lovely abides--all things beautiful hasten to cease to be.

4. "For which thou hast not laboured, etc." = this phrase refers to the sovereignty of God--God is God and He has a right to do His own will with His own.

5. Jonah's action and reactions were due to a gourd "which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven." (Mat. 6:20) The Lord is rebuking Jonah and showing him his priorities were wrong, and why He spared Nineveh. (verse 11)

V. 11

1. "Spare" = from same Hebrew word as "pity" in verse 10; to have compassion for; refers to people not gourds.

2. "Should not I spare" = if Jonah had pity on a gourd, the Lord can have pity on people with souls.

3. "Sixscore thousand" = 120,000; refers to babies too young to know their right hand from their left hand; at what age this is referring to, I do not know for sure; I do know

some two year olds who know their right hand from their left; this is not talking about an age of accountability, which is spoken about in Deut. 1:39 where it refers to knowledge of good and evil, not right and wrong and not right hand and left hand; the age of those spoken of in Deut. 1:39 is 20 years old.

4. "And *a/so* much cattle" = the Lord's mention of this was to show Jonah that even cattle are more important than plants.

5. God spared Nineveh "because of their works" = repented. (Jonah 3:10) Also, He was moved partly because of these helpless children. You cannot tell how much your home has been blessed because of helpless children. Mothers, make room for the children. Every baby is a blessing. (Psa. 127: 3, 5b)

6. The book of Jonah closes without telling us what happened to Jonah. His name is only recorded one time outside this book and that is in II Kings 14:23-25 during Jeroboam II's reign, where the prophecy of Jonah concerning Israel's borders were expanded. We do not know if that prophecy was before the book of Jonah or afterward.

7. What happened to Jonah? I believe he got things right with the Lord because God used him to write this book--a holy man. (II Peter 1:21) God could not control Jonah without the prophet's surrender. Everything in nature obeys the Word of God; the prepared fish obeyed; the prepared gourd obeyed; the prepared worm obeyed; the prepared wind obeyed. Everything in God's creation obeys God but man, and man has the greatest reason to obey.

8. Therefore, it does seem that Jonah got right, confessed his sins, and continued his ministry. And God spared the city for another 170 years. God is full of grace and mercy.

9. Do not use Jonah to excuse sin, for you cannot get into sin and stay there if you are saved. God loves His own and chastens them betimes--before it is too late, quickly. The whole book of Jonah probably covers less than six months of time.

10. God will prepare for you what you need, when you need it, just like He did for Jonah.

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