

The Book of Jonah

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Jonah, Lesson 1

Read Jonah 1:1-11

Introduction

No book of the Bible has been subjected to more scorn and ridicule by skeptics and infidels than the book of Jonah. There may be one exception, that being the first three chapters of Genesis. Despite the criticism of men, the Lord vouches for its genuineness. Matthew 12:40 says, "For as Jonah was three days..." etc. The Lord used the experience of Jonah as a type of His own death and resurrection and in doing so lifted the book above the realm of fiction, allegory, or fable.

The attacks upon the authority of the book proceed from several sources: The infidel - He laughs and rejects the story, insisting that it is merely fable and fiction. There are those who accept the book as being inspired, but then only consider it as a parable or allegory with spiritual lessons, but deny its literalness. Another group consists of sincere Christians who believe the story of Jonah because incidents have been recorded of sailors surviving after similar experiences. This group believes and accepts the story because it has been proven possible.

The demand for proof of this incident may be sincere and motivated by the highest purposes, but to remove the element of faith, and seek for natural evidence instead, we destroy the message. We should beware of over-emphasis on the miracle of the great fish. The book is filled with the supernatural, such as the gourd, the

worm, the east wind, and Nineveh. We must not remove this story from the realm of the miraculous.

The book of Jonah is the story of a man, the prophet of the Lord, who had one of the strangest experiences in all of human history. The place from which he prophesied was the bottom of the sea. The pulpit from which he preached was the stomach of a fish. More striking was the prophecy itself, for Jonah preached the gospel of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He preached eight hundred years before Christ was born.

In all of the N.T. there is no clearer picture of the death and resurrection of our savior (see Matthew 12:40). In taking the book of Jonah to illustrate his death and resurrection, our Lord authenticates the genuineness and historicity of the book. There are many other pictures of death and resurrection in the O.T. that Christ might have used. For instance:

- In Genesis 1, we have the earth rising out of the waters of judgment, then life appeared on earth. This happened the third day of creation. It is a clear picture of life after death.

- The ark rested on the seventeenth day of the seventh month upon Mount Ararat, after being engulfed in the waters of death. Why did the Holy Spirit record the exact date? See Genesis 8:4. The answer is clear when we remember that the Passover was kept on the fourteenth day of this same month. The Passover is a picture of the death of Christ. He then arose three days later on the seventeenth day of the month. This is an indisputable picture of the death and resurrection.

- Isaac would have been another example.

- Joseph also illustrates this great truth. He, too, was in the place of death, but was exalted to the throne. By choosing Jonah from all the other available types and shadows, He raised the book of Jonah from the realm of doubt and speculation and established it as infallibly inspired.

Jonah 1:1 - "The Word of the Lord came unto Jonah."

Jonah 1:2 - "Arise and go to Nineveh that great city."

This verse tells of the commission which the Lord gave to him. The message he was commissioned to preach was one of judgment, "Cry against it; for this wickedness is come up before Me."

In Jonah 3:4, that message is given in greater detail, "Yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be destroyed." The Lord had borne with their wickedness a long time. At this point, He sets a deadline. Unless Nineveh repents, it will be destroyed in 40 days. This reminds us that God will not always plead with men; His patience will run out one day.

There comes a time when judgment must fall, unless the warning of God is heeded. Some examples can be seen in regards to the nations before the flood, Sodom, and the rich farmer. One day you will hear your last sermon, and receive your last invitation to come to Christ. God's deadline is fixed unalterably, "It is appointed unto men once to die" (see Hebrews 9:27). The patriarch said, "I know not the day of my death."

"Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart."

"Boast not thyself in tomorrow [...]"

"Flee from the wrath to come."

“Now is the accepted time [...]”

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ [...]”

Jonah: Lesson 2

Jonah 1:3 says, "But Jonah rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord." God had commanded Jonah to arise and go to Nineveh and preach coming judgment upon that city. Jonah arose alright, but did exactly the opposite. As a Jew, he could not bring himself to preach a message to the Gentile city that would bring repentance and God's favor upon them. Instead of going east, he headed directly west.

Here is a picture of a prophet of God out of communion with God. Jonah is an eloquent type of various aspects of the Christian life and faith:

- He is the perfect picture of a backslider.
- He is the type of a sinner for whom Christ died.
- He is the type of the death and resurrection of Christ.

Notice how sin blinds the eyes of God's servant and twists his reasoning. [Mention the fact of sin being in a believer's life and the sin of disobedience. Consider Peter's disobedience.]

Jonah was a prophet. He knew he had been called of God; he knew he had been given a message from God. Yet foolishly, he allowed himself to be sidetracked. "He rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord." Take Lot, for example. Lot lost everything for forsaking God. The way of transgressors is hard.

Jonah knew better than that, but his disobedience so twisted his judgment and blinded his eyes that he imagined he could get away with it. In all likelihood Jonah was familiar with the words of David in Psalm

139. [Quote this] What fools God's children can become when they live in disobedience to God's will and Word. Consider Elijah and David. Backsliding is a common disease in the church today.

Notice where Jonah went - "He went down to Joppa." The path of disobedience is always down. Jonah first went down to Joppa. He went down into the ship, then down into the sea. He went down into the gullet of a great fish and then down into Sheol itself. There is no standing still in the path of disobedience. The backslider either stops and returns to God or keeps going further and further down.

Even though Jonah was trying to forget the Lord, God's eye was on him all the time. In Jonah 1:4, the statement, "But the Lord..." is majestic. Jonah refused to admit that God's command was an absolute. God's will is going to be accomplished, no matter what the cost, either by willing submission or by painful constraint.

Jonah ultimately went to Nineveh, in obedience to God's command, but only after a terrifying, dreadful, and appalling experience. What trouble Jonah could have saved himself had he obeyed and said, "Lord, here I am, send me." Note that Jonah's disobedience brought disaster not only on himself, but upon others as well. Another example can be seen through Abraham's sin. The ship's crew and the ship were in danger (see Jonah 1:4-5a).

Now comes the shocker: "Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and was fast asleep" (see Jonah 1:5b). Sin is a narcotic, a spiritual anesthetic, which beclouds reason, stifles conviction, twists character, and perverts our will. The storm was raging, the winds howling, the

waves dashing, and the ship creaking. "Jonah was asleep," oblivious to the danger, and unconcerned that men were perishing. The captain of the ship woke him up (quote Jonah 1:6), "What meanest thou, O sleeper?"

Some of us here profess to believe the Word of God. We say we believe that men and women are lost without Christ and on the road to hell. We believe this to be a place of eternal darkness and suffering for Christ rejecters. We say we believe (see 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, Revelation 21:8). The tragedy is that we say we believe these truths and inviolate, but at the same time we make little or no effort to warn people. Like Jonah we are asleep, though the signs of the last days are shouting at us from every direction. The storm is raging, the winds howling, the ship is creaking. "Awake thou that sleepest." It is high time to awake out of sleep.

Backsliding Illustrations:

- Moving a red-hot coal from the fire - it becomes black.
- Peter... tears.
- Going out from the presence of God, (the sinner as a type).
- Cain in Genesis 4:16.
- The prodigal son.
- Judas - "He went out immediately...and it was night." (John 13:30)
- Revelation 20 and the Great White Throne.
- Jerusalem rejected the Lord (see the consequences).
- Going into the presence of God (see 2 Timothy 4).

Jonah: Lesson 3

The Casting of Lots (Jonah 1:7)

The sailors were at their wits end. They did not know what to do. They recognized that this storm was supernatural. They recognized that it was a judgment from God for some crime. The only way they could think of how to identify the culprit was to cast lots among themselves.

In the Old Testament, many people frequently resorted to the casting of lots in order to ascertain the will of God. Examples can be seen in the following: Achan, David as king, the way Joshua divided the land by lot, the duties of the priests and how they were determined by lot, and the way singers were chosen by lot. God gave Israel a method of determining His will since they had incomplete revelation. It was called the Urim and Thummin. These were two stones that were kept in the pocket of the High Priest's breastplate.

It is generally agreed that these two stones were colored black and white. When the will of God was to be sought, the High Priest would reach into this pouch to ascertain God's will by picking out one of these stones, either the Urim or the Thummin. It is thought that the white meant "Yes," and the black, "No." Is this how we have to ascertain God's will today? The answer is, emphatically, NO! We have the full revelation of the will of God. Because that which is perfect has come, we have no more need for additional revelation, like signs and wonders, miracles and dreams, and visions and tongues.

We have no need for Urim and Thummin. We now have the will of God from the Word of God.

Gambling is strictly forbidden in the Scriptures. Games of chance should have no place in the life of a believer. This also applies to other forms of seeking the unknown, such as astrology, soothsaying, witchcraft, spiritism, palmistry, and future telling. The child of God should live by faith in the written Word of God, and guide his life entirely by it.

There are only two instances of casting lots in the N.T. and in both cases they were wrong. The first example is when the soldiers drew lots for the robe of the Lord Jesus. The second is when the believers gave forth their lots to determine who was to take the place of Judas in Acts 1:26. This was a grave mistake; we never read of Mathias again. Some years later the Holy Spirit made His choice of the apostle Paul, and he became the twelfth apostle.

Jonah's Dilemma

Consider Jonah's predicament for a moment. Read Jonah 1:8-10. What a mess the prophet was in, due to his backslidden condition. He was out of the will of God. My dear Christian friend, are you living in the will of God? Are you in the place of blessing? Or is your life miserable because you are out of the will of God? What is it that is in your life that stifles your joy and testimony and makes you miserable, sour, unfruitful, cantankerous?

I've never met a happy backslider. [Describe how "the way of transgressors is hard." An example can be seen through Israel.] We may find the answers to the previous

questions in the story of Jonah. Three things contributed to Jonah's condition:

- Jonah neglected the Word of God.
- Jonah neglected his prayer life.
- Jonah neglected his testimony.

This is the story of every backslider. Some examples are Elimelech, Samson, and Peter. [Describe these] Quote Jonah 1:2.

Notice how the type changes. Jonah goes from being a type of a guilty sinner to being a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, who took the sinner's place. If the storm is to be stilled and the sailors are to be saved, the sinner must be dealt with. Jonah realized this. He said, "Take me up, cast me forth into the sea" (see Jonah 1:12).

This was God's only way of saving the sailors from their doom; it was a substitutionary death. This is also true of the human race. We have sinned and God's judgment is resting on us because of Adam's sin. "He that believeth on the Son... He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The sinner must die (the soul that sins must die), but instead, God wants to save you and that is why He sent the Lord Jesus into the world to take the sinner's place. 2 Peter 2:9 says that God is "longsuffering, not willing that any should perish." God made Christ to be sin for us and take the sinner's place. The following verses illustrate this truth:

2 Corinthians 5:21 "For He hath made Him to be sin for us [...]"

Isaiah 53:6 "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

1 Peter 2:24 "Who his own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree."

This clearly sets out the great doctrine of the substitution atonement of the Bible. Caiaphas the High Priest clearly stated the matter in John 11:45-52. He said, "It is expedient that one man die for the nation, that it perish not." He prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, "and not for that nation only, but that He should gather together in one the children of God."

Because of Adam's sin, the world lies under judgment. Now comes the second Man, the last Adam, the Lord of glory to take our place and our sin upon Himself. Like Jonah, He was cast into the sea of God's judgment to die and to rise again for our redemption. Jonah 1:12 says, "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you." There was no other way to save the lives of the sailors. There is no other way for sinners to be saved. The Lord Jesus Christ must die. Acts 4:12 says, "Neither is there salvation...no other name... whereby we must be saved."

God's wrath must be appeased. On the cross the Lord paid for every sin. He cried with a loud voice, "It is finished." God's wrath was appeased and salvation procured. God vindicated His approval by raising Him from the dead. Have you ever seen God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal substitute?

You cannot, by works, accomplish your own salvation. The sailors tried every device they knew to save themselves. They cast the cargo overboard even after Jonah told them that their only hope of salvation was to

cast him overboard. They insisted on rowing harder than ever before in the hope that by their own efforts and works they would reach safety and make the death of a substitute unnecessary, but it all failed. They had to come to the place where they were willing to accept the death of another if they were to be saved.

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, not of works [...]"

Isaiah 64:6 "our righteousness acts are as filthy rags [...]"

Titus 3:5 "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us."

Jonah: Lesson 4

The Futility of Works

Jonah 1:12-18

In a previous message we learned that the only way the storm that threatened the sailors could be calmed was for Jonah to be cast overboard. There was no other way, no other alternative. In the same way, there is no salvation apart from the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, but proud and stubborn humanity is slow to believe God's Word. Instead they seek to save themselves through their own efforts and works. Most men and women will exhaust their own devices until they are utterly lost, and then will accept God's remedy for sin.

"When you have tried everything, read the instructions."

This principle is illustrated in our narrative. There were at least two things the sailors tried before they would submit to God's command to throw Jonah overboard. The first attempt to save themselves is found in Jonah 1:5, "They cast forth their wares." They thought that by getting rid of their cargo they could survive the storm. Their efforts were of no avail.

Similarly, many people today try to reform. They stop lying, stealing, swearing, killing, and lusting. This is the way of religion - live a decent life, join the church, etc. [Describe at this point, reformation - Use the example that can be seen through the evil spirit cast out, who later returns and brings six others (Matthew 12:43-45).]

The second attempt of the sailors to save themselves is found in Jonah 1:13. “Nevertheless” - this word could be rendered “in spite of.” In spite of Jonah’s message they still tried to save themselves. They rowed hard, but it was of no avail. Their labors and efforts were entirely in vain. Had they persisted in their efforts, they would have perished. If anyone insists on a course like this, then they should have the proper standard.

God’s standard is the Law. [Quote Exodus 20:1-17] The Law is a perfect expression of God’s requirements for holiness and perfection. It was a good law but sinners could not keep it. It was a holy law, but unholy sinners could not live up to it. It was a perfect law, but imperfect man fell far short of its demands.

For 1,600 years Israel tried to be saved by keeping that law. Instead, they were condemned by it. Romans 3:23 says that “All have sinned.” This then is the lesson that is graphically illustrated in the story of Jonah. The sailors tried everything in their power to save themselves by their own efforts, but there was only one way they could be saved – and it was not by their works. Jonah had to die.

The Doctrine of Substitution - The Lamb

So they took up Jonah and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from her raging. There was peace at last. Immediately after they obeyed God’s word, they were saved (see Jonah 1:15). In a moment of time they were saved. When they ceased their struggling and “believed” God’s Word, salvation came in an instant. (Examples: the jailor, Saul, Matthew, the leper, and the dying thief to name a few) This is still God’s plan of salvation.

Titus 3:5 - "Not by works of righteousness [...]"

Isaiah 64:6 - "All our righteousness acts are as filthy rags."

Our virtues or good works are no substitute for the blood of Christ.

[Present the plan of salvation]

Now notice an interesting thing: Jonah 1:16 says that the sailors proved their faith by their good works. After they had been saved and the sea had been made calm, they "feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows." Compare this with Jonah 1:5, which says "Every man cried to his god." Works must accompany genuine conversion.

Now we come to the heart of our story. In Jonah 1:15, "they took up Jonah and cast him forth into the sea." The first miracle here is that "the sea ceased from its raging." Jonah 1:17 reveals the second miracle, which is that "the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah."

When a dog bites a man, it is not news, but when a man bites a dog, it is news. In the same way when a man catches a fish, it is not news, but when a fish catches a man, it is news. Most fish stories are exaggerated, notorious prevaricators. Here is a story recorded by God, who cannot lie. [Describe its swallowing] Jonah, the prophet of God, spent three days and nights in the stomach of a fish and came forth alive and well, and preached effectively to the wicked city of Nineveh. Jesus Himself vouches for the truthfulness and historicity of it in Matthew 12.

Well-meaning, but misguided, champions of the Bible have searched to find a fish with a throat large enough

to swallow a man without crushing him and a stomach so spacious it could contain sufficient air to furnish oxygen to sustain a man for several days and so devoid of gastric juices that it could not digest such a tender morsel as a fleeing prophet. Complete digestion takes place within 18 hours. Some have taken the words of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 12 and say without fear that it was a whale. The word here is “ketos,” which means a huge fish. A whale is a mammal which has lungs and breathes through its nostrils. It was not a whale. It was a specially prepared fish, prepared by God.

Would it be presumption to say that God made it for this special occasion?

If we take the miraculous out of this story, we literally deny the death and resurrection of Christ. Jonah 1:17 says, “Now the Lord had prepared...” Before Jonah was thrown overboard, God had prepared a great fish. He even had a room prepared, awaiting his occupancy. If the fish had not been there, Jonah would have drowned. Jonah could not get away from God. He tried to run away, but God followed him. He said to the sailors, “Cast me overboard and destroy me.” But God brought him back from death into His service. You can flee from God, but you cannot hide from him (see Psalm 139).

Jonah was given a commission, which he refused and paid dearly for it. We too have been given a commission. It can be found in Mark 16:15, which says, “Go ye unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” Have we accepted this commission?

What would you think of me if I were a doctor, and lived in a city where thousands were dying from a dreaded disease, and I had the remedy which had never been

know to fail? Suppose I had an unlimited supply of that remedy, but instead of offering it to the dying, I just rejoiced it had cured me and kept it to myself. What would you think of me?

Beloved in Christ, multitudes are dying around you. You have the remedy - the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is it possible you have never offered this to a friend who is dying in sin? Oh, that the Lord may grip your heart and show you your personal responsibility.

“Rescue the perishing, care for the dying;

Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave.

Weep o’er the erring one, lift up the fallen,

Tell them of Jesus the mighty to save.”

Jonah: Lesson 5

Read Jonah 2

Jonah 2:1 - "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God."

Jonah did not pray when the storm was raging. He slept. From the fish's belly, however, he prayed. He prayed to the Lord. Jonah 2:2 says that Jonah cried to the Lord from "the belly of hell." Are the fish's belly and the belly of hell (or Sheol) the same place? If they are the same, would not the Holy Spirit have used the same word in both instances?

There are two different words translated "belly" in these two verses. In the first instance, it is the word "me-ah," which means "an abdomen." In the second instance, it is the word "betan," which means "a hollow place." The idea given is that immediately after Jonah was swallowed and was still alive and conscious, he prayed.

He did not survive long; for, soon after, he cried from Sheol. Jonah prayed from the fish's abdomen and cried to God from "the hollow place of Sheol." If this is so, the miracle is not that Jonah remained alive for three days, but that he died and after three days and nights arose from his grave in the belly of the fish. This would be very much in keeping with what our Lord said in Matthew 12, "As Jonah was...so shall the Son of man be three days and nights in the heart of the earth." This makes Jonah the perfect type.

Jonah had an appalling experience. Jonah also knew that he was being punished. Jonah 2:3 says, "Thou hast cast me into the deep." Jonah's prayer:

Jonah 2:3 - "All Thy waves and billows passed over me."

Jonah 2:4 - "I am cast out of Thy sight."

Jonah 2:5 - "Weeds were wrapped about my head."

Jonah 2:6 - "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains."

Jonah 2:7 - "The earth with its bars was about me forever."

In the midst of this distressing situation, "His soul fainted...He remembered the Lord... and he prayed." This moment parallels the moment that occurs within the story of prodigal son.

Then Jonah said, "I will pay my vows." In other words, he said, "I will yield to your desires."

[Describe the awful cost of Naomi]

Some examples of salvation:

"If I am to be saved, then You must do it for salvation is of the Lord."

Exodus 14:13 - "Stand still and see the salvation of God."

Acts 4:12 - "Neither is there salvation in any other."

Immediately Jonah acknowledged this and so "the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited him upon the dry land."

I want to go back to a word in Jonah 2:2, "Hell...Sheol." The Old Testament word "Sheol" equates with the New Testament word "Hades." It is the place of departed spirits. It was a compartment that was divided into two. One was for the believers who died in faith and the other was for unbelievers who died in their sin. Luke 16 gives us a glimpse of both.

[Describe the place of the damned and how there exists both memory and remorse]

[Describe the place of the blessed and how they have been carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, a place of peace, safety, contentment, and security]

Before Calvary and the resurrection, everyone who died, both saved and lost, went to this place called Sheol or Hades.

Why did the souls of the Old Testament believers go to Sheol rather than directly into the presence of God in heaven?

The answer lies in the nature of God and the fact of sin. God is so holy and sin is so terribly repugnant to Him that He could not allow anyone with un-atoned sin to come into His presence. Until the precious blood of Christ was shed, there could be no absolute payment for sin. Before Calvary, God forgave sin. By the blood of the animal sacrifice, sin was covered; it was never put away. So these people went to a temporary abode at death and remained there until the resurrection of Christ.

Hebrews 1:3 - "When He had purged our sin."

Hebrews 10:12 - "But this man after He had offered one [...]"

Hebrews 9:26 - "Once in the end of the age... to put away sin."

When a believer dies today, he does not go to Hades, but into the presence of God. Sin has been dealt with, it is put away. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:8, "We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Philippians 1:23 says,

“For I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.”

Jonah: Lesson 6

Read Jonah 1:17, Jonah 2:1-10 and Matthew 12:38-41

Three Days and Three Nights

The principle question before us this morning is: Was Jesus in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights? According to tradition, the Lord was crucified on Friday; this has become known throughout the Christian world as "Good Friday." If this theory is correct, then the statements of our Lord are incorrect.

Mark 8:31 "and after three days rise again."

Matthew 27:63 "this deceiver said while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again."

1 Corinthians 15:4 "And that He was buried, and that He rose again according to the Scriptures on the third day."

Jonah 1:17 "And Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish."

In the face of such clear statements, the "Good Friday" theory is impossible. There is not a shred of biblical evidence to support it. The assumption that a part of a day counts for a whole day is taken from the Talmud and is not found in the Bible. If Jesus died on Friday, at 3 pm, He was dead for three hours on Friday, all day Saturday, and a few hours on Sunday. This is supposed to be three days and three nights? In actuality it was one day and two nights.

How can we believe this when Jesus Himself said, "three days and three nights?"

The Jewish day began at sundown and ended at sundown. This rule was laid down in Genesis 1:5, which says, "The evening and the morning were the first day." The weekly Jewish Sabbath began at sundown, at 6 pm Friday evening, and closed on Saturday evening at 6 pm.

This brings us to another startling thought: If Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, He rose on our Saturday night. When the women came to the tomb very early in the morning, it was yet dark, the sun had not risen, but Jesus was already resurrected, and the tomb was empty. We learn from this that Jesus was not resurrected at sunrise, but arose early on the first day, which is our Saturday night. It began at 6 pm.

In order for the words of Jesus to be correct, He must have been crucified on Wednesday. He died on Wednesday at 3 pm and was buried about sundown that same evening and remained in the tomb until Saturday evening and arose at the conclusion of the Sabbath, which ended at 6 pm Saturday. Only in this way can we understand the Words of the Lord Jesus, that like Jonah, He would be in the heart of the earth for "three days and three nights."

There yet remains the important question: Where did the tradition of Good Friday originate? It all started with a misunderstanding of the statement that the day following the crucifixion was to be the Sabbath (see Luke 23:54 and Mark 15:42). It does not say which Sabbath. Leviticus 23 shows that Israel kept seven Sabbaths during their ceremonial year.

The question now is: Which Sabbath was it that followed the crucifixion? John 19:14 tells us that it was the preparation of the Passover. John 19:31 tells us that

“Sabbath was a high day.” It was not the common weekly Sabbath, but it was the Passover Sabbath, which was the greatest day in the calendar of Israel.

During the week in which Christ died, there were at least three Sabbaths. One was Thursday, the fourteenth of the month, the Passover Sabbath. The second was Friday, the fifteenth of the month, which was the Unleavened bread. The third was Saturday, the sixteenth of the month, the weekly Sabbath. Jesus was in the grave during these three Sabbaths. See Matthew 28:1. “In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week.” “As it was getting dark.” It is suggested by some that the word translated “Sabbath” is plural and should read “In the end of the Sabbath days.” In the end of the three successive Sabbath days, Jesus arose. This was the Resurrection.

“Salvation is of the Lord.” Immediately, when Jonah recognized and conferred this, he was saved. This is where salvation begins. Man must lay aside all his own efforts and works and come as a poor sinner and confess that salvation is of the Lord. When Jonah confessed, God immediately spoke to the fish and he was deposited, safe and sound, on dry land. When a sinner makes his confessions and abandons all hope of saving himself, God steps in and places us in Christ, a place of perfect safety.

Exodus 14:13 - “Salvation is of the Lord.” See also Psalm 40.

Psalm 3:8 - “Salvation belongeth to the Lord.”

Luke 19:9 - “This day is salvation come to thy house.”

Acts 4:12 - “Neither is there salvation in any other.”

2 Corinthians 6:2 - "Behold, now is the day of salvation,"

Jonah: Lesson 7

Further Studies in Jonah

Read Jonah 2:10 and Jonah 3:1. Picture Jonah sitting on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, surprised, stunned, and confused. He had just been resurrected and disgorged by the great fish. What would he do now? Where would he go? He was soon to know.

“And the Word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time,” (Jonah 3:1). The great central theme of Jonah is the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Compare the experiences of Jonah and Christ:

After Jonah had died and been resurrected, he became the great preacher to the Gentile city of Nineveh, which resulted in their repentance and conversion. So too, the Lord Jesus Christ, by His death and resurrection became the Savior of men and women everywhere. Today, every creature knows the Gospel - Before Jonah's experience, God dealt only with Israel. After his resurrection, Jonah took the message to the Gentiles. Before Christ died, the message was distinctly to the nation of Israel. (Matthew 10:5-6, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into the cities of the Samaritans enter not. But rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”) After the Cross, the middle wall of partition was broken down between Jews and Gentiles, and the message of “whosoever will” is preached universally throughout the world. (Consider Saul, the jailor, the Eunuch, and Nicodemus as examples)

Jonah as a Type of Israel

Jonah is not only a clear type of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the backslider running away from God, but he is also an unmistakable picture of the nation of Israel. Jonah's experience was a remarkable affirmation of the words of God concerning the indestructibility of Israel (take for example, the burning bush). Jonah's preservation was a miracle. Far more miraculous is the supernatural preservation of Israel for the last 2,000 years in the sea of the nations. (Consider Hitler, Stalin, and the Six-Day war) God chose this nation. He committed to them the oracles of God. He elected them. To Abraham, he said, "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (see Genesis 12:3).

Israel, like Jonah, failed. She turned from God; the Israelites fell into disobedience, idolatry and sin. He visited them in the same way He visited Jonah. He cast them overboard into the seething sea of the nations (in A.D 70). Like Jonah, the monsters of race, hatred, persecution, and suffering swallowed them up (see Deuteronomy 28:64-65).

The great miracle of Jonah was his supernatural preservation from corruption. The Jews, though they were in the place of death and were spiritually dead, have been preserved through all these centuries and not destroyed. This is the greatest miracle in human history. They have been persecuted and threatened, but never destroyed. Under the circumstances, any other nation would have been assimilated or destroyed in a few generations. This is not so with Israel; they are back in the land. God in His Word prophesied that this would be so. [Describe some of their achievements] In the future

they will possess the land. They will be revived spiritually and will evangelize the world. The fig tree has budded. It is flowering profusely. Soon, fruit will appear.

Jonah then is a picture of Israel, disobedient at first, cast among the nation and swallowed, but never digested.

When Jesus comes, she will be resurrected, as a nation placed in her land and, like Jonah, become God's messenger to the Gentiles. Her presence in the world today is the greatest testimony to the truthfulness of the Word of God. They cannot be destroyed. Pharaoh could not drown them. Nebuchadnezzar could not burn them. Haman could not exterminate them. The lions would not eat them. The whale could not digest them. It was the greatest miracle of all times.

Jonah: Lesson 8

Studies in Jonah: Lesson 8

Jonah 3:9-10 and Jonah 4

Does God ever change His mind? What does it mean when the Scripture says that God repented of what He would do to the Ninevites? (see Jonah 3:9-10; Jonah 4:2) Is it possible to harmonize the many statements in God's Word concerning His unchangeableness and immutability with the statement in Jonah that, "God repented and changed His mind?" There is also another similar passage in Genesis 6:5-6:

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart."

First of all, let me clearly and emphatically state that I believe what the Bible teaches about the absolute sovereignty and immutability of God, and that these attributes are essential to His deity. So then, God is never sorry for anything He does. Neither does He change His mind or plans; they are eternal.

Nineveh was not saved, because God changed His mind. They were saved, because they changed their minds and repented. It was God's desire that Nineveh should repent and be saved. He loved them so much. He sent His message to them, and praise God, they responded and were saved.

After Jonah preached his message, he sat around for the 40 days to see what would happen. Jonah was a prophet with a message from God, but he had no love in his heart. He hated the Ninevites for their cruelty and he would have rather seen them destroyed, than saved. When they repented, their annihilation was prevented. Jonah was displeased and very angry. (See Jonah 4:1) He complained to God saying, "That's just what I figured would happen in the first place. That's why I refused to go. That's why I fled to Tarshish." (See Jonah 4:2)

Although Jonah was disobedient, he had a deep insight into the character of God. Jonah 4:2 says, "I know that Thou art a gracious God, merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and when sinners turn to Thee and meet Thy conditions, Thou dost revoke the sentence of evil against them."

God is gracious: He had the welfare of man at heart and passionately desired to lift him out of his sin. God is merciful, pointing us to the love of God poured out on a sinner who repents of his sin. God is slow to anger. It is not God's first wish to punish the sinner. He endures much at the hands of man before His anger breaks loose. God's heart shows that He is a God of great kindness. God's love follows after the sinner seeking to draw Him back. These divine attributes are fully explained in Jonah 4:3 through Jonah's statements, "Take my life" and "Let me die." One is surprised that God did not answer Jonah's prayer on the spot.

The conclusion of the story is very interesting. Jonah left the city and built himself a booth in which to sit and await its destruction. In Jonah 4:6, God prepared a gourd; this gave added protection from the sun. In Jonah

4:7, God prepared a worm, which struck the roots and destroyed the plant. Both the preparation and the destruction were acts of God. Next, in Jonah 4:8, God prepared a vehement east wind. This wind carried a searing hot temperature and caused Jonah to wish for death.

What is the meaning of all this?

One of the lessons that Jonah must be taught deals with the value of the human soul. Jonah must learn the relative value of the temporal and the eternal, along with the material and the spiritual. Jonah was so pre-occupied with his own comfort, the booth and the gourd, that he forgot the plight of poor lost souls in Nineveh. Jonah was more concerned about the gourd than the souls in Nineveh. The value of a human soul: Jonah had pity on the gourd. God said to him, "Should I not have pity and save Nineveh?" Matthew 16:26 says, "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" A man's soul is more valuable to him than the wealth of the whole world.

Anyone who has witnessed a deathbed scene understands that man has a physical body and also a soul and spirit. At one moment the person is alive, the next he is gone. While his body is still there, the life principle has departed. The Bible teaches in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 that man is a tri-partite being. Animals have a body and a soul, but no spirit. The soul distinguishes a living person from a dead one. The spirit is what distinguishes a man from an animal.

[Explain the difference between the body, the soul, and the spirit] The spirit makes it possible for man to commune or have fellowship with God. The soul is the

seat of the emotions and passions. The body is the vehicle through which a person expresses himself. Man's body dies, but man's soul lives forever. It lives in one of two places, Heaven or Hell. [Lord Roseburry said to Prime Minister Gladstone, "Take care of your soul."]

Genesis 2:7 "God breathed into man, and man became a living soul."

Matthew 11:28-29 "Come unto Me, and you shall find rest to your soul."

Matthew 16:26 "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Luke 12:20 says, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee."

The sequel to the repentance of Nineveh is very distressing. The prophet Nahum covers the events in his book. The descendants of the repentant Ninevites forgot God, and returned to their cruel ways. They afflicted Israel. 100 years later the averted judgment of God fell on them. They were totally destroyed. Proverbs 29:1 says, "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck."

Luke 13:1-5 reveals this through the Galileans whose blood Pilate mixed with their sacrifices. This is also shown in the eighteen who were killed when the tower in Siloam fell on them. The Lord said to those who stood around Him, "You think that these were sinners above all sinners. I tell you, that except you repent, you shall all likewise perish. Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." Proverbs 27:1 tell us to, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow."

The Repentance of Nineveh

Studies in Jonah - Chapter 3

The Greatest Revival in History: “The Repentance of Nineveh”

This chapter talks about Jonah and his message. Jonah was a prophet, the messenger of God. He had a strange story to tell with regards to his personal experiences. His actual survival gave power to the message he preached, which was a message of grace and mercy and a call to repentance. It was also a message of judgment, as he said, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.”

Hearing this message and believing the sign was from God, the king’s heart was touched, and so he proclaimed a fast and called the people to repentance. Jonah 3:5 says, “So the people of Nineveh believed god, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them to the least of them.” They literally, “sat in ashes.”

The king, with his subjects, gave himself full-time to supplicate God and plead for mercy. This is the fourth miracle in the book. The four miracles consist of the following:

The sea ceased from raging.

The Lord prepared a great fish.

The resurrection of Jonah took place, “The fish vomited Jonah upon dry land.”

The repentance of Nineveh took place.

The repentance of Nineveh was a miracle. The land was a total of 60 miles around. [Describe Nineveh] It was a place filled with strong, cruel, and sinful people. Its surrounding wall was 100 feet high. It was so large that two chariots could run abreast. The city had 120,000 children and a total of 1 million people.

God's love is eternal, but the threat of God's judgment caused them to repent. [Describe human repentance and talk about the parable of the two sons in Matthew 21:29] Repentance implies a radical change of mind. It is a turning away from sin to God. This is illustrated in Nineveh's repentance. They changed their minds and hearts, and proved their repentance by their works (see Jonah 3:8).

Note that there are two kinds of human repentance: true repentance and false repentance. False repentance is sorrow over the result of sin. See Matthew 27:3, which shows such an example through Judas. True repentance is sorrow over sin itself. Some examples of true repentance can be seen through the publican who said, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (and he smote his breast). Another example is the prodigal son who said, "Father I have sinned," and he arose and went to him. Jonah is also an example of true repentance. He ran away saying, "Salvation is of the Lord." Each of these men experienced the love, grace, mercy and peace of God.

Some examples of those who did not repent can be seen in the following:

The nation of Israel during A.D. 70. (See Romans 9, 10, and 11) The City of Sodom The people of Noah's day.

God set a deadline upon this generation saying, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man: for that he is also flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.” When the end of the 120 years came, and they had not repented, God’s foreknown judgment fell on that wicked world and destroyed them all.

In the case of Nineveh, God’s message through Jonah was, “Repent of your sin within 40 days and you shall be saved.” God set a deadline of 40 days, “Yet 40 days and Nineveh [...]” They repented and God saved them.

[Introduce the solemn thought that God sets a limit on man’s opportunity] As with Nineveh, you, too, must come within your forty days. Once that time is up, it will be forever too late.

Hebrews 9:27 says, “It is appointed unto man once to die.” There is a time to be born, and a time to die (see Ecclesiastes 3:2). [Give the example of the ice tragedy] When God’s time comes for your departure, all the medical skill in the world and all the life-saving apparatus will not prevent it. As sure as you were born, so surely you must die. The question is, “When is that moment for you?” For some it will be today, for others this week. “I know not the day of my death.” Perhaps for you it is 39 days, 23 hours, and 59 seconds from right now. God’s deadline may be very near. “23 hours and 59 seconds and I’m not saved.”

Will you, like the Ninevites, repent, believe, and be saved? Or will you be like Noah’s generation, cross the deadline, and perish in the judgment of God? (Example: Belshazzar) You may cross the deadline anytime; this may not necessarily be death. Then it will be too late. Felix, said “Go.” Festus said, “Mad.” Agrippa said,

“Almost.” Will you then stop right now, before another minute passes, and repent of your sins, confess your sins, and receive Christ as your Savior?

“O sinner, God’s patience may weary some day, and leave thy sad soul in the blast. By willful resistance you’ve drifted away over the deadline at last. O turn while the Savior in mercy is waiting, and steer for the harbor safe; for how do you know but your soul may be drifting over the deadline at last.”

“Behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of acceptance.”

“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Before and After Calvary

Jonah 1:2 "Arise, and go to Nineveh, and cry against it."

Jonah 3:2 "Arise, and go to Nineveh, and preach unto it."

Jonah received two calls from God. He disobeyed the first, but the second he fulfilled. Between the two calls, Jonah had a most gruesome experience. He died in the belly of the fish, was miraculously resurrected, and then deposited on dry land. [Note the difference in the two words in the two calls from God: (1) Cry against it, and (2) Preach unto it.]

The first message was a message of judgment, while the second message was a message of grace and mercy. It was also a call to repentance. Between the two calls there lies the death and resurrection of Jonah. The message of grace and mercy was after Jonah's resurrection.

The same conditions prevailed before and after Calvary. The era preceding the cross was one of judgment. The dispensation following the cross was one of grace. What would it have been like if Christ had not come?

[Describe the Jews under the law, and how the character of the law was displayed in the way it was given. Describe the stupendous happenings and depict the feelings of Moses.]

The revelation of the Law was awesome; it demanded perfection (see Exodus 20). It cursed and condemned delinquents, the sinner. It banished men. Galatians 3:16 says, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the Law." The Jew, before the cross, had the judgment of God hanging

over his head at all times. Moreover, he was banished from God's presence on account of his sin.

Quote a few examples:

The golden calf.

The judgment of the sons of Korah, where 250 men were burned with fire (see Numbers 16).

The two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (see Leviticus 10).

The judgment of Achan and his family (see Joshua 6).

The man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath (see Numbers 15).

The sin of Miriam - Moses.

The sin of murmuring - punished by sending fiery serpents (see Numbers 21).

[Describe the Jew as he sought to atone for his sin. He came over and over again with his sacrifice. There was no respite, no rest, no peace, and no assurance.]

All the time the law kept thundering at him, "The soul that sins shall die, without the shedding of blood no remission." His sin, however, was never removed, it was only covered. Between the judgment of God and themselves there was the thin film of animal blood. There was no security. Jonah 1 says, "Cry against it."

How would you like to have lived before the Cross?
[Note and quote at this point Jonah 3:2 which says, "Preach unto it..." Quote also Galatians 3:13, which says, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."] This introduces us to the grace of God, "The grace of God which brings the

salvation hath appeared." John 1:17 says, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." We find in John 1:14, the words, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory... full of grace and truth."

Grace is unmerited favor. Romans 5:20 says, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." We were rebel sinners and enemies. We walked according to the course of this world. We were sons of disobedience, held captive by the devil, without God, without Christ, and without hope. We were helpless, useless, hopeless; we were the children of wrath.

It was at this time, when we were dead in trespasses and sins that the richness of God's mercy and the greatness of God's love flowed towards us in Christ. We who were dead in trespasses and sins were made alive in Christ and now sit with Him in heavenly places. Paul adds, "For by grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast" (see Ephesians 2:8-9). [Note the hymn Amazing Grace and its author, John Newton. Note also Jerry McCauly.]

I'm glad I live after the Cross. In Christ I have forgiveness, peace, rest, assurance, and security. My sin is gone, never to be remembered again. Judgment is gone. I am justified and clothed with the righteousness of Christ. I am His masterpiece.

Dear unbelieving friend, aren't you glad you live on this side of the Cross? Wouldn't you like to be a beneficiary of the grace, mercy, and love of God? Come now as a repentant sinner and receive Christ as your savior and you shall be saved.