

JONAH 3:1-10
Jonah's Preaching and Nineveh's Repentance

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Jonah refused to go to Nineveh to preach against it and fled from doing the Lord's will. While Jonah thought he was fleeing from God, God did not leave His servant alone. God disciplined Jonah by having him thrown into the sea and swallowed by a huge fish.
- B. Jonah ran from God but God had a work for Jonah to do and so the fish vomited Jonah up on the dry land, for God's plan was for Jonah to preach to the Ninevites. NOTE: When God wants something of His servant, He will have it, and He will break the disobedient servant to accomplish His purpose.

II. THE COMMISSION REPEATED 3:1-2

A. "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying"

1. God spoke to Jonah a "second time" which is a pure act of grace. Jonah had fallen and fumbled in doing God's will but he was given a second command and a second chance. God took his prodigal son and restored him to fellowship and gave him another opportunity to do the will of God. NOTE: God forgives the wayward servant and forgets, indicating that Jonah again can be a vessel for the master's use. NOTE: Sin keeps the believer from doing God's will but once that sin is confessed and forsaken (I John 1:9), God will again use that servant.
2. No sin is too great for God to forgive a true believer, and God does give him second chances. Jacob failed many times but God did not let him go. At Peniel God broke Jacob and he was a different man. David committed adultery and was disciplined severely by God for it, but after confession he was still used by God. Peter denied his Lord but his Lord never failed him and he was restored to fellowship. John Mark failed on his first missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas, but God used him after confession of his wrong.

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

1. Jonah was to preach against this great Gentile city to bring it to repentance before God. This city was great in sin, power, and size. Critics a few years ago mocked the whole idea that Nineveh was a big city, for ancient cities were not known for their breadth and size, but for compactness to provide protection behind a city wall. Archeology has since proved differently, and shown that Nineveh was a complex of cities like modern day New York.

Layard, the Frenchman, was the first to examine the ruins in 1845; he and George Smith excavated the ancient city of Nineveh. Nineveh proper was across the Tigris from the modern city of Mosul and was built in the shape of a trapezium which was about two and one-half miles in length and a mile and one-third in breadth. As you can deduce, this does not meet the demands of the book of Jonah. But Nineveh which lies in a plain was almost entirely surrounded by rivers and was easily fortified. There were several prominent cities in this natural enclosure: Khorsabad was northeast of Nineveh proper about twelve miles; Calah, or ancient Nimrud, was over eighteen miles southeast of Nineveh proper, near the juncture of River Zab with the Tigris. Calah seems to have been the first city of importance, chronologically, then Khorsabad, and finally Nineveh proper. The entire group of cities and the intervening territory are implied in the name "Nineveh" given in the book of Jonah. An ancient writer by the

name of Ctesias describes Nineveh as a city whose circuit is four hundred and eighty stadia. This would mean that it was over twenty-seven miles around the city.

2. What would have happened if Jonah had not obeyed the Lord this second time? This is a hypothetical question but there is an answer. God would have disciplined Jonah more; God's purposes cannot be frustrated. God desired to show mercy on Nineveh and He would see to it that Nineveh heard the message. If Jonah refused to go, then another messenger would have been sent in his place. However, it was also God's purpose to use Jonah and no one else, so God would finally break him until he was willing to do God's will.

III. THE PREACHING OF JONAH 3:3-4

- A. **"So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey."** — Jonah obeyed the Lord. The words "of three days journey" does not refer to how long it took to go around the circumference of the city, but the length of time it took Jonah to preach to the entire city.
- B. **"And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown,"** — Jonah preached a negative message of judgment upon Nineveh. As soon as he hit the city limits, he began to preach the message. NOTE: Perhaps Jonah gained a hearing because somehow the message got back to Nineveh of Jonah being swallowed by a fish. Perhaps Jonah's personal appearance gave him an immediate audience, for the gastric juices of the fish may have colored his skin and caused him to lose much of his hair. These human factors are all secondary to the fact that the people of Nineveh had been prepared by God to receive the message. NOTE: At first Jonah probably spoke to small groups but as the message spread like wildfire he soon found himself preaching to large crowds. NOTE: God did not change the message of judgment for Nineveh or for Jonah. God's Word is an unalterable thing, and He will not change it for preacher or audience.

IV. THE REPENTANCE OF NINEVEH 3:5-10

- A. **"So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them."** — The people "believed God" (Gen. 15:6), being saved by His grace, and they demonstrated their belief by clothing themselves in sackcloth and sitting in ashes and declaring a fast. They turned from their wicked ways to the living God and this is called repentance according to Christ (Luke 11:32). These Ninevites were brought under great conviction of sin and they turned to God. NOTE: This was probably the greatest revival in history, for a city of probably one-half million trusted God. Revival is brought by God, putting men under great conviction of sin and sinners repent of their sins, turning to the true God. NOTE: This shows that salvation was not just confined to the Jews in the Old Testament but God at times showed His mercy on Gentiles.
- B. **"For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands."**
 1. The impact of this revival was felt even by the King of Nineveh. The king was not satisfied with mere external expression of sorrow; he demanded a change of life, a turning away from the evil way of violence and oppression.