

JONAH: The Disobedient Prophet:

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Jonah

Lesson #1 - Introduction , Outline & Jonah 1: 1-7;

(1) - Very little is said of the prophet Jonah outside of the book of Jonah itself. In II Kings 14:25, Jonah is said to have prophesied that the Northern kingdom of Israel would expand its borders during the reign of Jeroboam, a wicked king. It appears that this "Jonah" is the same person as the "Jonah" who is the subject of the book of Jonah since both are identified as "the son of Amittai." (II Kings 14:25, and Jonah 1:1).

The prophecy of Jonah about Jeroboam conveys some very important background material to enhance our understanding of the book of Jonah. II Kings 14:23-27, "In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, became king of Samaria, and reigned forty-one years. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of Arabah, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He had spoken through HIS SERVANT JONAH THE SON OF AMITTAI, the prophet who was from Gath-hepher. For the Lord saw that the affliction of Israel was very bitter; and whether bond or free, there was no helper for Israel. And the Lord did not say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam, the son of Joash." It says in verse 25, that Jonah was from the town of Gath-hepher. Gath-hepher means "the winepress of digging." It is a town in the northern part of the land of the tribe of Zebulun, in lower Galilee, about three miles from Nazareth. In Joshua 19:13 this town is called Gittah-hepher.

(2) - Jonah was a prophet of the Northern Kingdom. He came after Elijah and Elisha; Hosea and Amos were probably his contemporaries. The date of Jonah would be somewhere between 880 - 780 BC. The incidents in the book of Jonah are estimated to have occurred in and around 860 BC.

(3) - At the time of Jonah, Assyria, whose capital city was Nineveh, had already begun to exercise its dominance in the Middle East.

(4) - In the passage of II Kings 14:23-27, it is clearly stated that Israel's prosperity during this period was because of the grace of God and His compassion on His people. Therefore, it was not godliness on the part of the nation or its leadership which was the basis for God's blessings. Just as Jonah's ministry in Nineveh would result in an outpouring of God's grace, so his ministry in Israel would result in God's grace. But there was a very important difference. Israel did not repent of her evil and wickedness, but God blessed that nation anyway. The Ninevites repented of their evil and wickedness and also received God's grace. In this sense God's grace was even greater to the Israelites than it was to the Ninevites.

(5) - Some Bible teachers find it more difficult to "swallow" the miraculous accounts of this little book than the fish found it to swallow the prophet Jonah. I am not going to spend much time or effort in an attempt to prove the events that transpired in the book of Jonah. These are ultimately a matter of faith. But what I do say is this: the God who is the Creator of all things and sustains all that He has created would have no difficulty in accomplishing the events recorded in this book. In fact, those who waste their time and make in-depth studies proving that certain fish can swallow a man are actually destroying the message of Jonah in a very subtle way. Anyone who attempts to prove a miracle of God through a natural way is destroying or distorting the truth presented in that miracle, whether it be an underwater ledge in the Red Sea that provided for the Jews an escape from Egypt; or an earthquake that brought down the walls of Jericho, or an everyday fish that can swallow a man whole. If God's miracles can be explained naturally, they really aren't miracles at all. The fish that swallowed Jonah was a one-of-a-kind fish that God created for a very special purpose: to swallow one of His prophets, and to make him feel "very down in the mouth."

(6) - The central theme of the book of Jonah is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, His death, burial and resurrection. Jesus Himself establishes this fact in Matthew 12:40 when He said, "For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Therefore, Jonah preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ 800 years before Jesus Christ was born.

(7) - The name "Jonah" means "Dove." The dove is a symbol of peace, mildness, and harmlessness. Doves are meek, mournful and harmless as described in Scripture. The first mention of a dove is found in Genesis 8:8. Here the dove was released from the ark by Noah, and it returned with an olive branch in its beak bringing the "good news" of deliverance from the great flood. The dove therefore, becomes the bringer of "good news." The "good news" is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which the ark of Noah and the flood typified.

In the Bible, the dove also had another significance. In the offerings of Israel, a dove could be substituted for an animal if the one providing the offering could not afford a lamb or bull or goat or heifer. The dove was the most common and cheapest of birds. The Lord Jesus Christ was the personification of meekness and mourning. He came to preach deliverance to the captives and the Gospel (the good news) to the poor. He was born in poverty. When His mother Mary brought her sacrifice for Him she brought the poor man's offering, a dove. (Luke 2:23-24).

(8) - Therefore, the very name of the book, "Jonah," gives us the key to the book. "A dove" which is the picture of the Lord Jesus Christ who for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich. (II Corinthians 8:9).

But there is also something else that is very important. Jonah's father's name is "Amittai," and means "truth." Jonah was the son of truth. And the one concerning whom Jonah prophesied was himself the embodiment of truth. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, THE TRUTH, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me." I never cease to be amazed how the Word of God keeps on revealing to me its consistent and amazing continuity.

As we study this book, we are going to see how Jonah, a frail, temperamental, lazy, bigoted and disobedient man, is used as a type or illustration of the perfect Son of God. But all of that only exalts the matchless grace of God.

First of all I would like you to consider the types and illustrations of our Lord throughout the Bible. David was an adulterer, murderer and liar, and yet he is used as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Or the Levitical priests, when many of them weren't even believers. Or the kings of Israel, among whom many were wicked and evil and even many of them weren't believers. But all of this points us to the miracle of God's grace and the infinite perfection and precision of His plan. He can use the fallible, stumbling, failing and the sinfulness of man to actually exalt His amazing grace and to bring His message to mankind. Psalm 76:10 tells us that "The wrath of man shall praise thee."

(9) - The book of Jonah is listed among the Minor Prophets, and is unique in that it is not a collection of Jonah's prophecies, but a biographical account of Jonah's ministry to Nineveh and in Nineveh. The basic teaching of the book of Jonah is to teach that God's grace went beyond the boundaries of Israel to embrace other nations. The book of Jonah was placed among the Minor Prophets because the life, experiences, and career of Jonah are pictures, or types, or patterns, or illustrations of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ in not only being the Messiah to Israel, but by providing salvation for all.

(10) - Most serious Bible teachers believe that Jonah wrote the book himself. But you will always find critics who disagree, and will find fault with any argument presented. But what really matters is that the book of Jonah does not in any way contradict or conflict with any other portion of the Word of God. This is one characteristic that is necessary for a book to be accepted as a part of the Canon of Scripture.

(11) - There are many so-called Bible students who say that the book of Jonah is a legend based on myth. But when you simply read the Old Testament, the book of Jonah fits right in with all the other miracles that God performed. From the breath of life given to man in the Garden of Eden, the miraculous taking of Enoch from off the earth without dying, the flood that destroyed the entire world except for eight people who were in the ark, the miraculous changing of the human race into various races and languages at the tower of Babel, the supernatural plagues that struck Egypt to cause the Pharaoh to release the Jews from slavery; the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea for the Jews to escape, with

the sea returning to its normal position at the right time to destroy the Egyptian army; the miracle of the victory at Jericho when the walls simply fell down, the supernatural strength of Samson, the young David killing a giant with only a sling and a stone. Many, many other miracles are recorded in the Old Testament. But the point is this: the experiences of Jonah and the great fish fits as naturally as a tailor made suit. And to try to dismiss it, or call it a myth or a legend, or a simple illustration would not only be dishonest, but would be a rejection of divine revelation.

(12) - In Matthew 12:38-40, Jesus answered the demands of the unbelieving scribes and Pharisees for a sign from heaven to authenticate His ministry. In other words, they refused to believe His Word, and they demanded a sign. Vs 38, "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.'" Jesus answered them in verses 39-40. "But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; (40) for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.'" With this one statement Jesus authenticates the historical accuracy of the book of Jonah. So, if anyone wants to claim that the book of Jonah is only a myth, then they are calling Jesus a liar.

(13) - Paul said in I Corinthians 15:3-4, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (4) and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

(14) - Therefore, it becomes a matter of tremendous significance, that our Lord, when He wanted to select from the Old Testament types and shadows that pointed to Him and His great miracle of resurrection, He made a deliberate choice of the book of Jonah. The experience of a prophet in the belly of a great fish. By choosing this incident in the book of Jonah from among many other Old Testament types of His death and resurrection, He raised the book of Jonah out of the realm of doubt and speculation, above all question of fiction or parable, and established the book as infallibly inspired (God-breathed, as per II Tim 3:16), and the events in the book as being actual, literal accounts of great historical significance.

(15) - To deny Jonah's experience is to deny the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, for He Himself said in Matthew 12:40, "For as Jonah was.....so shall the Son of Man be." As Jonah - so Christ. If the story of Jonah is fiction, then so is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If the story of Jonah is not true, then neither are the Gospel records of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Jonah: Chapter One

VS 1 - Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying.

The book of Jonah opens with a reminder that we are dealing with the Word of the Lord, and not the word of man. Jonah received a divine commission, "The word of the Lord came to Jonah." Today the "Word " of the Lord is coming to you. In a little different form, but it

is still coming to you. In fact, every time you turn on a Bible tape and place yourself under the ministry of the Word of God, "the Word of the Lord" is coming to you. I just pray that your response will not be like that of Jonah's, but that you would willingly accept it, and accept what it says.

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

The first word in vs 2 is "Arise." Evidently Jonah was sitting or lying down at the time. Jonah appears to be an easy-going lackadaisical sort of person, He was not only lying or sitting down when God called him, but later we find him sleeping in the middle of a great storm.

Go to Nineveh - The command of God is very clear. Jonah was to "go to Nineveh." God didn't say, "Jonah, I want you to think about going to Nineveh." Neither did God say, "Jonah, I want you to consider going to Nineveh." No! God plainly and simply said, "GO TO NINEVEH."

Nineveh was a great city that was founded by a man named Nimrod. (Gen 10:11). Nineveh was called "a great city," which means that it was great in size, and great in influence in the world at that time.

Jonah was commanded to denounce the sins of the city for they were so great that they were said to have "gone up" before God, and the time of judgment was near.

I want you to notice that the message God gave Jonah for Nineveh was not a wish-washy message of telling sinners that God was a God of love and that He will not punish the wicked. Oh, no! His message from God was a very straight forward and to the point message. It was the message of judgment and destruction. Jonah 3:4b says, "Yet forty day, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

God had been patient and long suffering with the wickedness of Nineveh for a long, long time, and now He sets a dead line. In 40 days Nineveh shall be destroyed, unless she repents or changes her mind. The number 40 in Scripture is the number of testing or probation.

Israel was tested 40 years in the desert.

Israel was also tested 40 days while Moses was on the mountain. Of course Moses was also tested during those same 40 days.

Jesus was tested and proven 40 days in the desert.

Nineveh was given 40 days. Then at the end of that time came the deadline. This was the message of Jonah.

God is very patient and compassionate with men, but His patience will not go on forever. It does have its limits.

God has given us all deadlines. All of us, as believers in Jesus Christ have a certain number of days on this earth, no more and no less. And that number is known only to the Lord. He is admonishing each one of us to use our days wisely. We will only pass this way once. We will never have another chance to learn and grow and develop the spiritual life God has given to us.

Only one life will soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

The only thing that will survive your physical death and will survive the destruction of the universe is the Bible doctrine in your soul. Therefore, I encourage you to take advantage of the time God has given you and become consistent in your learning and application of the Word of God in the filling of the Holy Spirit on a daily basis.

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

Here we see Jonah's disobedience. Jonah went in the opposite direction from what God told him. Nineveh was located on the Tigrus River, over 500 miles northeast of Israel. But Jonah went west toward Tarshish, which was located in Spain.

Jonah is not only a type and illustration of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, but he is also a type and illustration of a negative self-centered person. Negative volition to God's Word blinds the eyes of God's servants and twists their reasoning.

Twice in verse three it says that Jonah "fled from the presence of the Lord." This does not mean that he actually thought he could get away from God, but it does refer to his attempted resignation as a prophet. In other words, he was turning in his mantle. No more prophet ministry for him.

The path of the negative self-centered believer is always down, down, down. Notice the downward path of Jonah:

He went DOWN to Joppa.

He went DOWN into the ship.

He went DOWN into the sea.

He went DOWN into the belly of the fish.

He went DOWN into sheol, the dwelling place of the dead.

There is no standing still in the path of disobedience. You either stop and return to the Lord, or you will go down, down and down.

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

But the Lord - This is a very interesting phrase. I want you to look back at the beginning of verse three, "But Jonah rose up to flee," to run away. That was Jonah's "but" in answer to God's call. However, God has a "but" which completely rules out and negates Jonah's "but."

PRINCIPLE: when God calls His children to do something, there are no "ifs" or "buts" about it. Today God's command for His children is to "Study to show yourself approved....." (II Tim 2:15). "But grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ....." (II Peter 3:18). ".....be filled with the Spirit....." (Ephesians 5:18). There are no exception to the Lord's commands, and He deals with us just as sternly as He dealt with Jonah. He sends us warning discipline (a great wind that brings havoc in the sea of life, just as the great wind that was sent to bring havoc in Jonah's life) Then God brings intensive

discipline (a mighty tempest and storms in the sea of life so that we will almost be broken to pieces, just like the mighty tempest was sent upon the sea to create a crisis on the ship Jonah was aboard). And if we still don't get with His program, He gives us the sin unto death, (just as Jonah experienced death in the belly of the great fish) (vs 17). So God answered Jonah's "but" with His own "but."

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

When you stop and think about this for a moment, you will realize that Jonah could have spared a whole lot of trouble for himself and for others if he had only immediately obeyed and said, "Lord, here I am, send me." In the end he had to go anyway, but he went the hard way.

I don't know what excuses Jonah gave for going west to Tarshish instead of east to Nineveh. I'm sure he had some excuse, probably many of them. Even though he may have had some excuse, he did not have one good reason.

When we are unwilling to do God's will, we can always find an excuse. Excuses are cheap because there are so many of them. They are a dime a dozen, as the old saying goes. And even though you have an excuse or excuses for not taking in Bible doctrine everyday, you have no valid reason to not do so. You may say, "I don't have the time." Or, "I'm too tired after a day's work," or "I don't have a reliable tape player," or "Bible classes are too far away," etc., etc., ad nauseum. When you are looking for excuses to disobey the Lord, the devil's pawns are always right there to make it easy for you to find excuses. When Jonah turned his face from God toward Tashish, the devil had a ship all ready and waiting for him. He even saw to it that Jonah had the money to pay for the price of the ticket. Satan and his pawns will make sure that it is easy for you to go in the opposite direction from where the Lord is calling you to go.

But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

Because of his sin, others were in danger of death and yet he lay quietly sleeping. Asleep while judgment was impending, while death threatened not only himself, but others as well. **PRINCIPLE:** Negative volition toward the Word of God has a paralyzing effect. Sometimes it is called "hardness of heart," or "scar tissue of the soul." People do not realize how dangerous it is to neglect the spiritual truths they so desperately need. Everytime you put off your consistent intake of the Word of Truth, you give yourself a shot of scar tissue in your soul. If you do it consistently many times, you will come to the point of no return, and you will eventually suffer the sin unto death. (I John 5:16).

God caused a great storm to get Jonah's attention. The storm was so great that it terrified the veteran sailors. In fact, the ship was on the verge of breaking up. Verse five tells us that they began throwing the cargo overboard in an effort to save the ship and their lives. As they were doing this, it says that each sailor was praying to his god for deliverance. These sailors probably worshiped gods which were thought to have influence over the seas on which they traveled.

The cargo they were throwing overboard was stored below deck. That was where the captain of the ship found Jonah sleeping. The captain was obviously irritated to find Jonah sleeping, while his crew was desperately praying and working to save themselves and the ship.

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

Notice that the captain did not ask Jonah to help with the cargo, but he did command him to pray. The world is quick to recognize the inconsistency of a sleeping believer, and quick to condemn that inconsistency. So a heathen sea captain commands a prophet of the true God to pray. But I want you to notice that there isn't any record of Jonay praying here. Well, if you were Jonah and you were stubbornly refusing to repent, what would you have to say to God?

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

These sailors saw the storm as a religious matter. They first prayed to their gods for deliverance. When deliverance did not come, they told Jonah to ask his God. When things continued to deteriorate, they concluded that their predicament was because of some unidentified sin which offended one of the gods.

And they said every one to his fellow (they said to each other), Come, let us cast lots, so that we may determine which one of us is the cause of this evil. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

The Bible contains many records of lottery. Casting lots seems to have been a well-known and common practice in situations which involved difficult decisions. In many cases it appears that God approved of, and was even pleased to reveal His will through the method of casting the lot. But we also have to keep in mind that many things that God approved of in the past, He does not approve of today since we have His completed Word in written form.

Jonah

Lesson #2 - Jonah 1:8-17;

The casting of lots in the book of Jonah was used by God to reveal to the sailors that Jonah was the reason for their problem. What type of system of casting lots is not mentioned here. It may have been by the throwing of stones (dice), or by placing names in a receptacle, or by some other method. Whatever the system they used, the lot fell upon the guilty person with his resultant confession.

The Old Testament contains many examples of the use of the "lot" to determine the will of the Lord. I want to give you seven references.

(1) - Leviticus 16:7-10. Aaron was to cast lots upon the two goats to determine which one was to be slain and which one was to be sent away into the desert bearing the sins of Israel.

(2) - Joshua 7:14. Achan, the man who stole the spoils of the Battle of Jericho and brought defeat upon the Israelites in their attack upon the city of Ai, was found to be the guilty one by the casting of lots. The NASB is the only translation that brings in the word "lot." The word "lot" is not found in the Hebrew text, but it is implied and properly inserted.

(3) - Joshua 18:10. Joshua divided the land of Canaan among the twelve tribes of Israel by lot.

(4) - I Chronicles 6:54. The sons of Aaron received their cities by the casting of lots.

(5) - I Chronicles 23:5. The duties of the individual Levitical priests were decided by the casting of lots.

(6) - I Chronicles 26:13 and Nehemiah 10:34. The porters (servants) for the house of the Lord (the Tabernacle) were chosen by lot.

(7) - I Chronicles 28:8-31. The singers among Israel to be used in the Tabernacle worship were chosen by lot.

From these and other passages we see that God often made His will known by the casting of lots, and men frequently resorted to this particular method of finding God's will.

The method of casting lots appears to have been by the use of stones or "dice" of different colors. One of these stones or "dice" was taken blindly from a pouch, or was cast in the lap, and the color or the figure on the stone which turned up would give the answer to the problem sought.

The word for "lot" in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word GOWAL (go-rawl), which means "a small stone or a pebble."

The word for "lot" in the New Testament is the Greek word KLEROS meaning "a small pebble made of wood or bone or a stone." Today we have the word "die" which in the plural is "dice." Most of us know that dice are square pieces of ivory or plastic with different numbers of spots on the six sides and used as gambling devices. From all this, we may deduce that "lots," or "dice" was one way of seeking an answer to a problem.

The principles of casting lots or dice is also brought out in Revelation 2:17. In the letter to the Church in Pergamos, the Lord says, "I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no one knows except the one who receives it."

I have read in some books that there are those who claim that the Urim and Thummin stones carried at all times in the pocket of the breastplate of the Levitical high priest were a system of lots God used in conveying His will to Israel. They say that one was white and

one was black. It should also be noted that there is no way to be dogmatic about this since the Bible is silent on this issue, and history is very unclear.

It should also be noted that the casting of lots only applied to the nation of Israel. Today we have the perfect will of God revealed to us in written form in the Bible. Also, Paul said in Romans 8:14, "That those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God." Not, "those who follow the results of casting lots or dice."

Therefore, in our study of Jonah, God used the casting of lots (dice) to reveal to the sailors that Jonah was the guilty party.

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

Now all the attention is focused on Jonah. Because one man sinned, a whole boatload of sailors was under the sentence of death. Because Jonah the prophet was trying to shirk his duty, the lives of the men on board the ship on which he fled were in jeopardy. All of this becomes a picture of the world and the human race. Because one man sinned the world lies under the judgment and the curse of sin. Because Adam, our first father, disobeyed God, the Lord cursed all of his offspring as well as the rest of creation.

When the sailors discovered that it was Jonah who was the reason for their dilemma, they immediately bombarded him with questions. "What is your occupation?" "Where do you come from?" "What country are you from?" "Of what nationality are you?" I can picture all the sailors standing around Jonah, all asking their questions at the same time. But when it comes time to answer them, Jonah only gives a bare minimum response. He is very tight-lipped.

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

With this statement, everything now comes into focus for the sailors. Jonah was a Hebrew prophet who is attempting to run away from his God. It is Jonah who is responsible for their predicament. Jonah's sin had endangered the entire ship and crew.

VS 10 - Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. With Jonah's confession, the sailors now become more fearful than before.

VS 11 - Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. It appeared that the sea became even more tempestuous. Time was running out. The sailors could only ask Jonah what they could do to appease the wrath of his God. After all, he was a prophet. So they asked him, "What should we do to you so that the sea may become calm for us?"

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

In this verse, the typology of Jonah changes suddenly. Up to this point Jonah is a type of and represents the guilty rebellious sinner. But now the picture changes dramatically. From verse 12 through most of the rest of the book, Jonah and his experiences become a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. If the storm is to be stilled, sin must be dealt with, and since the wages of sin is death, the sinner must die. Therefore, Jonah's death is the only thing which can save the sailors from their doom.

The guilty one must die, sin must be judged. This is true of the human race. We are all sinners and totally depraved. God's judgment rests upon the human race. The sinner must die, but instead, God wants to save sinners, not destroy them. So He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to take the sinner's place. And by His substitutionary death and resurrection, He brought peace to the sinner for whom He died. Therefore, Jonah is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through his death the sailors would live.

So here is a very clear lesson of the prophet Jonah. One must die, so that many others might live. This is the great doctrine of substitutionary atonement in the Bible.

The story of Jonah was a shadow or illustration of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus said in Matthew 12:40, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." The only way the storm which threatened the sailors could be calmed, was for Jonah to be cast overboard and to die. There was no other way, there was no alternative. Just as there is no salvation apart from the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. But proud and stubborn humanity is very slow to believe God's Word. Instead, men seek to save themselves through their own efforts and their own toil and their own works. We see this attempt at self deliverance in verse 13.

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

In spite of Jonah's message of exactly what they had to do, they still tried to save themselves, and it says they "rowed hard," but all of it was of no avail. Their labors were entirely in vain and useless. What unnecessary toil and sweat and tears and pain are wasted in man's efforts to save himself by his own works when the remedy is so simple. Jonah was probably sitting by and watching them try to save themselves, knowing that their only hope was to throw him into the sea. Jonah jumping overboard was not a solution, just as Jesus committing suicide would not have provided salvation. Those who would benefit from the death of Jonah must be the ones to throw him overboard. Just as the ones who would benefit from the death of Jesus Christ must be the ones to put Him to death.

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

Does this sound familiar? If you recall, Pilate washed his hands after sentencing Jesus to death and said in Matthew 27:24, ".....I am innocent of the blood of this just person....." The only difference is that Jesus was just and righteous, but Jonah was not.

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

Until the storm threatened to destroy them and the ship the sailors counted Jonah as a man of no consequence. They paid no attention to him as he slept in the hold of the ship. He was of no particular importance to them. So also, when the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth and took on humanity, few recognized the significance of His presence among them, and they gave little attention to Him.

The sailors considered Jonah only another passenger, and mainly ignored him until the storm broke, and then they became aware of his importance, and that only by Jonah's death would they be saved. So also, when the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth and took on humanity, the people only considered Him another man, the son of a carpenter and the child of a woman named Mary. It made no great stir among them. But those of us who know and understand Biblical truth are very much aware of His importance, and that only through His death and resurrection do we have any hope.

What a wonderful mystery! The death of the victim becomes the means of salvation for the guilty ones who put the victim to death. God was able to permit wicked men to put the Savior to death, and then make that act of murder the means of saving those who were responsible for His death.

The death of Jonah meant life for the sailors in the ship. The story of the death and resurrection of Jonah is the story of the Gospel. Remember, Jesus Himself said in Matthew 12:40, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

"As Jonah was.....so shall the Son of man be....." The picture of the plan of God's salvation has never changed. As long as man seeks to save himself, he remains lost. God will not accept any help from man in His work of redemption. He will not share the glory of salvation with any other creature, for "salvation is of the Lord." Jonah also discovered this in Jonah 2:9.

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

As the sailors watched Jonah sink beneath the waves, and they feel the winds cease and also watch the waves disappear; they immediately realized that what Jonah had said was all true. Jonah's God was the only God. He had brought the storm because of Jonah's rebellion. And just as Jonah has said, throwing him into the sea did calm the storm. These men now "feared the Lord greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows." These pagans became believers, while the prophet of the Lord is still in rebellion. In an attempt to avoid preaching to the Ninevites, Jonah has now preached to the sailors, and they have come to believe in his God.

PRINCIPLE - Jonah is a soul winner, and he never planned to be one. I want you notice how God used the rebellion and disobedience of a man of God to lead others to a saving knowledge and faith in the Lord. After being saved and serving in Baptist circles for a number of years and being being trained in Baptist seminary, I have never heard any Baptist preacher who preaches about soul winning ever use Jonah as an example. But he should. All of this tells us that many times God leads people to a saving knowledge of His salvation in spite of us, not because of us. As in the case of Jonah.

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

When a dog bites a man, that is not news; but when a man bites a dog, that is news. In the same way, when a man catches a fish, that is not news; but when a fish catches a man that is news.

The most amazing thing about Jonah's experience is that it is true. This record is told not by man, but by God, so that it would be absolute truth without any exaggeration. God cannot lie, and the Holy Spirit who inspired the writer of Jonah to write the account cannot lie. Plus, Jesus Himself adds His stamp of approval to the truthfulness and accuracy to the book of Johah in Matthew 12:40, "As Jonah was.....so shall the Son of man be....."

The fish that swallowed Jonah was a specially prepared fish, which means that God made it just for this occasion, because there was no other existing fish which could serve the purpose. The Hebrew word found in Jonah 1:17 for fish is DAG (dawg), meaning "fish." The Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament uses the word KATOS, meaning "a sea monster, a sea creature." This same word is also used in Matthew 12:40.

In closing out lesson #2, I want to give you the list of miracles in the book of Jonah. This will give you a preview of coming attractions in our study.

The Miracles In The Book Of Jonah

- (1) - The terrible storm which God sent upon the sea was a miracle. (Chapter one).
- (2) - The fact that the storm was stilled the moment Jonah was thrown into the sea was a miracle. (Chapter one).
- (3) - The fact that God prepared a great fish just for this occasion was miracle. (Chapter one).
- (4) - The fact that the fish was right where Jonah fell in was also a miracle. (Chapter one).
- (5) - The fact that the fish vomited up Jonah on dry land was a miracle. (Chapter two).
- (6) - The fact that Jonah suffered no ill was a miracle. He may have smelled pretty bad, but he was not harmed. (Chapter two).
- (7) - The growing of the gourd overnight was a miracle. (Chapter three).
- (8) - The coming of the worm to destroy the gourd was a miracle. (Chapter three).
- (9) - The east wind that followed the destruction of the gourd was a miracle. (Chapter three).

PRINCIPLE - Jonah could not get beyond the care of God. His life became very uncomfortable at times, and Jonah made things miserable for himself and others around him. He always seemed to need an attitude adjustment. But through it all God was always there, protecting and providing. THAT IS GRACE!!!

Jonah

Lesson #3 - Jonah 2:1-10;

Chapter Two Outline

(1) - Jonah overboard and the great fish. 1:17-2:1.

(2) - Jonah's prayer, or Jonah's Psalm. 2:2-2:9.

(3) - Jonah's deliverance and return to life after three days and three nights. 2:10.

Some have called the second chapter of Jonah, the Psalm of Jonah, and as we study this chapter I hope you will be able to see why.

Can you imagine what Jonah must have thought as he sank below the surface of the sea? He knew he would certainly drown. After all, dying was much better than going and preaching to the evil and wicked Ninevites.

I want you to concentrate for a moment as to what Jonah experienced. I can imagine Jonah losing his breath, and perhaps swallowing a lot of water. Before becoming unconscious he may have sensed a motion in the water around him and himself being drawn into a dark hole as he passed through the mouth and the throat of a great fish. He was possibly squeezed through a very small opening as he passed through the narrow esophagus and on into the stomach of the fish. The squeezing could have been used by God to extract any water from his lungs, something similar to artificial respiration.

As Jonah regained consciousness in the close confines of the stomach of the fish, I can imagine him feeling the stomach lining pressing all around him. Possibly the acidic stomach juices of the fish began to irritate the skin over his entire body. I can imagine the offensive smell. Fish smell bad enough when you are on the outside of them and there is fresh air available, but can you imagine being inside one? I also want you to imagine the darkness that Jonah experienced as his body moved through the digestive track of this great fish.

We are not told how long of a time Jonah was allowed to experience this offensive, extremely uncomfortable and possibly painful ordeal before God allowed him to die. And that is exactly what happened to Jonah. He literally died.

Therefore, all of the efforts of theologians or scientists in trying to prove the possibility of a man surviving in the belly of a fish are all a waste of valuable time and effort. There is not one single bit of evidence that tells us that Jonah remained alive in the belly of the fish. That story has been carried down by tradition and not by the teaching of the Scriptures. In fact, the Bible in the original languages clearly teaches that Jonah actually, literally died

and was brought back to life. That is the only way in which he could become a type or an illustration of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Notice chapter one verse 17 again, "Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." Jonah's body remained in the fish, but his soul and spirit had gone to Paradise in SHEOL in the center of the earth. Just as the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was in the earth for three days and three nights, but His soul was in Paradise, in SHEOL (HADES in the Greek), in the heart of the earth.

VS 1 - Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly.

Jonah prayed - There is nothing that motivates a believer to petition the Lord in prayer than a life and death crisis.

The Lord his God - This confirms the fact that Jonah was a believer, and that the Lord Jesus Christ, the God of Israel was his God.

Out of the fish's belly - Jonah's prayer began in the belly of the great fish, but it was continued and concluded in Paradise (SHEOL).

VS 2 - And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.

And said - Next we have the content of Jonah's prayer.

I cried by reason of mine affliction - This tells us that this experience was not painless and was not fun. Remember, Jonah is in rebellion against the Lord, and he is experiencing divine discipline. Discipline that is designed to cause pain. It is designed to make one uncomfortable and to get one's attention. Well, I guess nothing will get your attention like being thrown into a raging sea, then being swallowed by a large fish.

It says that Jonah "cried.....unto the Lord, and he heard me....." Jonah knew that the Lord heard him because one minute he was "in the belly of the fish" and the next moment he was in Paradise.

Out of the belly of hell cried I - The word "hell" is from the Hebrew word SHEOL, which is equivalent to the Greek word HADES, which simply means "the dwelling place of the dead, or the unseen world." The word SHEOL is found 164 times in the Old Testament.

In verse 1 the Hebrew word for "belly" is MEAH (may-aw) meaning "intestine, the abdomen, the stomach." But in verse 2 the second use of the word "belly" is from the Hebrew word BETEN (beh-ten) meaning "a hollow place."

These two verses could be translated "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's abdomen (stomach), and said, I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the hollow place of sheol (the dwelling place of the dead), I cried, and thou heardest my voice." The Holy Spirit's choice of words here clearly teaches us that Jonah literally, physically died. His soul went to SHEOL (HADES), while his body remained in the fish for three days and three nights.

It should be noted here that before the work of Jesus Christ on the cross all believers went to Paradise which was located in the center of the earth at that time. It was a part of SHEOL (HADES). Actually, SHEOL was divided into three compartments: Paradise for believers, Torments for unbelievers, and Tartarus for the fallen angels who were involved in the sin of Genesis chapter six. Luke 16:19-31 describes the layout of SHEOL at that time. Jesus tells the story of Lazarus and the rich man. Lazarus died and was taken by the angels to Paradise and the rich man died and found himself in Torment. What is unique about all this is that they could see each other and talk to each other, even though Lazarus was comforted in Paradise and the rich man was being tortured in Torments. But, after our Lord's work on the cross where all sins, past, present and future were judged, the door of heaven was opened for all believers. At the time of our Lord's resurrection all the believers who were in Paradise in the center of the earth were taken to heaven. Today everyone who believes in Jesus Christ, goes to heaven immediately upon his physical death. But, at the time of Jonah, all believers went to SHEOL in the center of the earth.

Jonah 2:2-9 is called by many, the Psalm of Jonah. For example, in Jonah 2:9 it says, "Salvation is of the Lord." And in Psalm 3:8 it says, "Salvation belongs to the Lord."

VS 2 - And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. Look at verse 7, When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

Compare this with Psalm 18:4-6, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell (SHEOL) compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of the temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears."

VS 3 - For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the sea; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

Compare this with Psalm 42:5-8, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill of Mizar. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life."

VS 4 - Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. Look again toward thy holy temple - The Temple represents God's revelation to man. Therefore Jonah is referring to looking toward the revelation of God, or looking toward the Word of God, or looking toward Bible doctrine.

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

The waters compassed me about - In other words, they surrounded me completely.

Even to the soul - The Hebrew word for the soul is NEPHESH (neh-fesh) meaning "life, breath." In other words, the water covered him completely even to the point of taking his life, or taking his breath away.

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

I went down to the bottoms of the mountains - This refers to going down to the bottom of the sea. I'm sure you all know that there are mountains under the seas.

The earth with her bars was about me for ever - In other words, the earth closed in on him. Jonah eventually found himself in the dwelling place of the dead in the center of the earth. It appears at this point he considered himself dead permanently.

Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God - In other words, God did not allow him to remain dead, nor did He allow his body to decay. Again we see another analogy to Jesus Christ. Peter, in quoting the writer of Psalm 16:8-11 said in Acts 2:27 with reference to our Lord Jesus Christ, "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (HADES or SHEOL), neither wilt thou allow thine Holy One to see corruption."

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

When my soul fainted within me - In other words, when Jonah's physical life fainted.

I remembered the Lord - In the time of great crisis those of us who are believers and know Bible doctrine remember the Lord.

And my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple - This refers to the temple in heaven, God's throne.

VS 8 - They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

After recognizing the greatness of God and the importance of Bible doctrine and prayer, in his next breath he criticizes the Gentiles for their wickedness and his hatred for them. VS 9 - But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.

In this verse we see Jonah telling the Lord how righteous he is in comparison to those decadant Gentiles in Nineveh. Notice that verse 9 starts out with a conjunction of contrast. "But I will sacrifice unto thee (referring to the true God) with the voice of thanksgiving. I will pay that that I have vowed (I will not break my vow). Salvation is of the Lord."

VS 10 - And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry ground. There is nothing that makes anyone or anything sicker than a negative reversionistic believer. This great fish was probably very relieved to get rid of this complaining prophet.

Whatever Jonah smelled like, and whatever he looked like didn't matter to God. Like or not, Jonah was on his way to Nineveh. God had gotten his attention in a most dramatic way. And at the same time God gave us an incident that illustrates the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Which Jesus commented on in Matthew 12:40.

Jonah

Lesson #4 - Jonah 3: 1-10;

Chapter Outline

(1) - The Lord gives the second commission to Jonah to go to Nineveh and proclaim the Word of God to the people there (Jonah 3:3).

(2) - Jonah's obedience to the Word of the Lord becomes a reality (Jonah 3:3).

(3) - Jonah's message of doom is given to the people of Nineveh (Jonah 3:4).

(4) - The common people were the first to accept the message of the Lord through Jonah, and they repented (they changed their minds) (Jonah 3:5).

(5) - The king of Nineveh also accepted the message of the Lord through Jonah and repented (he changed his mind) (Jonah 3:6).

(6) - The king gave a proclamation to all the citizens of Nineveh to fast and pray, to cover themselves with sackcloth and ashes and to turn away from their current evil lifestyle in order to turn the Lord's anger and judgment away from them (Jonah 3:7-9).

(7) - Because of the positive response of the people of Nineveh God withheld His judgment of destruction. In fact, because this generation of Ninevites accepted the message of the Lord, Nineveh remained a prosperous and flourishing city for another 150 years.

In chapter three we will see the second commission the Lord gave to Jonah and the response to it.

In chapters three and four all appearances of Jonah's humility which we saw in chapter two have completely disappeared. Jonah's arrogance and bigotry appear to be worse than ever.

Vs 1 - And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, This is almost the same wording that is found in Jonah 1:1, except it says, "the second time." Also, in Jonah 1:1 it gives the name of Jonah's father.

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

Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city - This is the same wording found in Jonah 1:2.

And preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee - This phrase is a little different in the Hebrew. It literally says, "And proclaim to them the proclamation I give to you."

After all that Jonah had gone through in the first two chapters of this book, he finally does what he is told. I might add, he did not do it joyfully and he did not do it with the proper attitude as we will see as we proceed with the story. But at least Jonah went to Nineveh. Therefore, he was in the geographical location where God wanted him. He was what we say, "In the geographical will of God." But he was not in the "spiritual will" of God as a believer and as a prophet of the God of Israel.

Vs 3 - So Jonah arose, and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey. This means that it took three days to walk from one end of the city to the other.

The main deity of Nineveh at this time was Dagon, known as the fish-god. Dagon was represented by a stature constructed as half-fish and half-man. Everywhere Jonah would go in Nineveh he would be standing under or close to one of these half-fish and half-man statures of Dagon. After his experience with the "great fish," I wonder what Jonah thought of when he saw the statues of Dagon. Well, we can only imagine, because the Scripture does not tell us how that affected Jonah. But I would imagine it greatly influenced the passion of his message.

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

This tells us that even before he completed his first day's journey through the city many of the inhabitants of Nineveh began to accept the message of the Lord and to repent.

We are not given the content of Jonah's message. Only one phrase is revealed from his dynamic message. I've often wondered if Jonah made any reference to his experience in the belly of the fish in any of his messages. He could have said, "Why, I was swallowed by a 'fish-god,' and died because I disobeyed the God of heaven, the Lord Jehovah and at that time the Lord Jehovah spoke to me concerning you. Just as I was swallowed by a fish and died, your fish-god will destroy you! Because you have turned your backs on the only true God and Savior, He is the One who is going to destroy this city. Your wickedness has come up to Him. Therefore, if you do not repent (change your minds) and believe in the Lord Jehovah (Jesus Christ), if you do not trust in Him, this city will be 'swallowed up' in destruction." But all that is only a possibility of what was included in the one phrase, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown - The number forty is the number of probation, testing and/or judgment. Israel wandered in the desert forty years. Moses was on the mountain forty days. Jesus was tempted and tested by the devil in the desert forty days.

Jonah predicted the overthrow and destruction of the city of Nineveh, but it was "conditioned" upon their acceptance or rejection of the message of the Lord through Jonah within the space of forty days.

There is a great principle here: grace always precedes judgment. God would give them forty days.

If God really wanted to destroy them and was not interested in saving Nineveh and its inhabitants, all He would have had to do was to say the word and they would have been history. But what did He do? he sent them a prophet who had a unique testimony. A prophet who had been swallowed by a great fish, taken to the depths of the sea, died, and was brought back to life with the great fish vomiting him out on dry land. His testimony deals with the fact that the God of Israel, the Lord Jehovah (Jesus Christ) not only delivered him from the sea, and from death, but actually had absolute control over the fish that had swallowed him. Of course, to the people of Nineveh, who worshiped Dagon, the fish-god, this story was not only amazing and unique, but it hit home. If the Lord Jehovah in His matchless grace could deliver Jonah from death, He could also deliver the people of Nineveh from their bondage to sin, as well as from their idolatrous slavery to Dagon.

Vs 5 - So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. Verse five simply gives a brief summary of these events, then beginning in verse six and going to the end of the chapter, the writer goes back and gives more details of these events. This is a typical Hebrew style of writing.

The people of Nineveh believed God - This refers to a great number of its citizens. Everyone in the city of Nineveh did not accept the message of the Lord, but a lot of them did.

Proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth - This was a common practice in the ancient world for mourning or for repenting.

From the greatest of them to the least of them - This means from the king in the palace to the beggar in the street. The message of the Lord through the mouth of Jonah penetrated the hearts and attitudes of all who heard it. The rich and the poor, the rulers and the ruled, the men and the women, the young and the old, the slaves and the free. The salvation message of the Lord has always been for all people everywhere regardless of race or culture, social standing or gender. It has also always been by faith.

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

For word came unto the king of Nineveh - The leader of all the Ninevites also received the word of the Lord through the message of Jonah. There is no indication that Jonah preached to the king directly, but the king received it indirectly from those under him.

He arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes - This is emphasizing the true humility of the king of Nineveh. He responded to the message of the Lord in true humility and honesty.

This is a sign of great leadership and a great concern for the people he ruled over. The spiritual condition of the leader can many times make or break a nation. But this king set a very good example to his subjects by subjecting himself to the God of all creation. "God

makes war against the arrogant, but He gives grace to the humble." (Proverbs 3:34 & I Peter 5:5).

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

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

Because the king believed Jonah's message, he did everything he could to cause everyone in the city to see the seriousness of the situation. He issued a proclamation which required everyone in Nineveh to fast and to abstain from drinking water. Both people and animals were to be covered with sackcloth and the people were to call upon God and to abstain from their evil and violence.

It appears that the people of Nineveh did not need to be told what their wicked ways were, otherwise Jonah would have been more than happy to fill in the details of their sins. But it seems that everyone was aware of the sinful things they were involved in. The issue then was not that of "information," but that of "motivation." The news of God's impending judgment and destruction was all the motivation necessary to get the attention of the people and the leaders of Nineveh.

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

In many cases when people are told of impending judgment, they would "eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." But here in the case of Nineveh, they hoped that their change of attitude and change of lifestyle would change God's mind.

Those of us who have been studying the Bible for years know and understand that God does not change His mind. When the Bible talks about God changing His mind or repenting, it is called an "anthropopathism." This is ascribing to God an attitude He does not possess in order for human beings to understand a certain point of doctrine. In other words, if God were a man He would change His mind about destroying the city of Nineveh because of their change of mind and their change of lifestyle.

Because of God's omniscience and His foreknowledge, He knew billions of years ago that Nineveh would accept His message if they heard it. He also knew that at the same time in human history His prophet would be Jonah, a man who hated the Assyrians and was a very narrow-minded bigoted religious zealot. And because God knew all of this and much more, His plan was to accomplish much through a stubborn self-centered prophet named Jonah. He would not only have His message proclaimed in one of the greatest cities in the ancient world, but He would also save a group of sailors who would return home and share with others their miraculous experience and possibly even lead many others to a salvation knowledge of the God of Israel. Therefore, we need to at least consider the Doctrine of Divine Decrees as we pass over this verse in Jonah 3:9.

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

It is very important to note here that verse ten does not tell us that God took into account the prayers of the Ninevites, or even that He took into account their sackcloth and ashes. But it does say that He took into account their deeds and their lifestyles, that "they had turned from their wicked ways."

The point is this: God is not interested in any of man's religious genuflecting, or man's observance of so-called religious holy days and religious rituals, or any of man's emotional appeals for God's mercy. God is only interested in man's change of attitude and his repentance, changing his mind from relying upon himself or religion to relying upon God and trusting in Him completely through faith.

The repentance of the people of Nineveh is fantastic and at the same time puzzling. What would cause such a large, prosperous and important Gentile city to accept God's plan of salvation so quickly and so thoroughly?

Some have suggested that possibly the sailors who threw Jonah overboard were from Nineveh and their return to Nineveh had preceded Jonah's coming and preaching. If that were true, just the appearance of Jonah would have been nothing short of a miracle. But whatever the background may be to the universal and speedy repentance of the Ninevites, only God knows. And this is the way it will stay until God sees fit to reveal it to us in the eternal future.

Jesus sheds some light on this incident in Matthew 12:38-41, "Then certain of the scribes and the Pharisees answered, saying, 'Master, we would see a sign from thee.' But he answered and said unto them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, except the sign of the prophet Jonah: For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here.'"

The request of the Jewish religious leaders to see a sign caused Jesus to go to the book of Jonah. In His answer to the Jewish religious leaders, Jesus said that the final sign would be similar to that of the prophet Jonah. Just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, He (Jesus) would be in the belly of the earth for the same period of time. In other words, the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a "sign" to Israel. One final sign. The "sign of the prophet Jonah" which represents the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the irrefutable proof that He (Jesus) is the Messiah to Israel.

Jesus was also telling these religious leaders of His day that the Ninevites immediately repented at the preaching of Jonah, even though there was far less evidence than that which the Jews had witnessed at the time of Jesus. And compared to Jesus, Jonah was not nearly as important.

The principle here is very simple, yet very profound. The Ninevites believed in the Lord in spite of very little evidence. Hearts that are positive and are open to the truth will be quick to recognize it and respond to it and embrace it. While hearts that are negative and are

inclined to question the truth (as was the case of Jonah and the Jewish religious leaders in Jesus' day) will not get the message, regardless of how clear it may be and regardless of who proclaims it.

Jonah

Lesson #5 - Jonah 4:1-11;

Chapter outline

(1) - Jonah's anger, prayer of protest and God's response: (4:1-4).

(2) - The Prophet, the Worm and the Gourd: (4:5-9).

(3) - God's final response: (4:10-11).

Vs 1 - But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

If Jonah had been any other prophet in the history of Israel, he would have been overjoyed with the Lord's blessing on his ministry. The repentance and salvation of many thousands of people in Nineveh would have been a wonderful thing to witness. But not for Jonah. So here is a prophet of God who is not satisfied with the results of his ministry. Thousands of converts didn't mean a thing to him because he hated the Ninevites! He despised them so much that he actually got angry with God for saving these people.

Many of us have been angry with God at one time or another. It is blasphemous, but it is true. Believers get angry with God, and immediately blame God for their troubles. In doing so they may say, "Why did God let this happen to me? It's all God's fault." Or, "Why has God allowed this situation to occur?" Or, "Why has God forsaken me?" Jonah was loaded with this "God's doesn't treat me right" attitude.

Throughout the history of Israel her prophets consistently failed to turn their nation back to God. They were rejected and even killed by their own people. In Acts, Stephen, the first martyr of the church said in Acts 7:52, "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?"

But instead of having joy at the repentance and salvation of so many thousands of people, Jonah was very angry with God.

VS 2 And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. And he prayed unto the Lord -This is only the second time Jonah has prayed. If you remember, the captain of the ship commanded Jonah to pray to his God for deliverance from the storm they were in (Jonah 1:6). But there is no record of Jonah praying at that time.

After he was swallowed by the great fish, he prayed. In chapter two he actually prayed because of his affliction and the suffering he was experiencing. He prayed for deliverance. His prayer was a prayer of faith, thanksgiving and victory. It was a prayer which demonstrated the grace of God and the power of the faith-rest life of a believer. For, no matter how low a believer goes, God will always hear, even at the bottom of the sea, or in sheol, the dwelling place of the dead.

But in chapter 4, Jonah now prays to God and explains why he is angry at the salvation of thousands of Ninevites. Notice this prayer: "And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, O Lord, was this not my saying, when I was yet in my country?" In other words, "Isn't this what I said would happen while I was still back in my country of Israel?"

Therefore I fled before to tarshish -Literally, "Therefore, I ran away from you to Tarshish." Do you know why he ran away to Tarshish? Because he was afraid that God would spare Nineveh if he gave them the Word of the Lord. This tells us that Jonah knew and understood the power of the Word of the Lord, as well as understanding the grace of God. Jonah knew that if he ever reached Nineveh and opened his mouth and gave them the Scripture, they would be falling all over themselves to accept the Lord and His salvation. He hated the Ninevites so much that he just could not stand to see that happen, so he ran in the other direction.

For I knew -Jonah now reveals his knowledge to God. In fact, he knew and understood God so well, that he actually condemns himself by what he is about to say. By what he knew of God, it condemns his bigotry, racism and his self-centered arrogance. Jonah now gives four things that he knows about God.

That thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of this evil -

(1) - Thou art a gracious God, and merciful - Mercy is grace in action. To respond in a gracious manner when you are wronged rather than to strike back is to show mercy. Grace or mercy may not be deserved, but so what? Neither did we deserve anything from God. So, knowing very well what God was like, he said, "Thou art gracious, and merciful."

(2) -Slow to anger -This means to be "longsuffering, or to have great patience."

(3) -And of great kindness -This refers to "gentleness and goodness expressed in love and understanding."

(4) -And repentest Thee of this evil -This refers to God changing his mind concerning the destruction of Nineveh.

Jonah was not a new believer; he was a man who knew God. Jonah was a man who understood the Word of God. Jonah knew the Lord well, and he understood the grace of God because he has experienced it. But even though Jonah appreciated God's grace for himself, he could not bear to see others benefit from this same mercy and grace, especially the Ninevites.

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

It appears that Jonah felt betrayed by God. God told him to tell the people of Nineveh that their city would be destroyed in 40 days. That was his message to them. But when they repented and accepted God's salvation, God chose not to destroy the city. It appears that Jonah thought that the people of Nineveh would brand him a liar and false prophet. So therefore, he thought he would be better off dead rather than to face the Nineveites after his prophecy of destruction was not fulfilled. Again we see the self-centeredness of Jonah. He considered his reputation as being more important than the deliverance of an entire city and the eternal salvation of literally thousands of people. He also considered his own feeling and reputation as being more important than the perfect will of God.

I am sure that all of us are ready to condemn this attitude of Jonah and condemn his narrow-mindedness. But let us not be too hasty in our condemnation, for in so doing, we might condemn ourselves. We call Jonah a "bigot," but what about "sectarianism" among us, as Christians. After all, "sectarianism" is nothing but bigotry. We may think that our own church and our own method of conducting church services is the right way of doing things. That is all fine and good, but there are many who are involved in tape groups who actually refuse to fellowship with other believers of slightly different methods of conducting church services. I wonder how many times we have been condemned by other Christians because we don't conduct the "traditional" church service of singing a number of songs, of passing the offering plate, of allowing members to give personal testimonies, of having an organized visitation program, or sponsoring youth programs and special events to bring in more people?

But, on the other hand, how many times have some of us condemned other churches for their method of conducting services? I can remember when I was a young taper I was very critical of almost every pastor and church that did not operate like Berachah Church. Sometimes I can't believe how critical I used to be. But as I continued to learn the Word and grow in grace I have become a lot more tolerant and flexible and understanding in my thinking. The real turning point came in my studying and teaching of Romans chapter 14, the chapter regarding the weak and the strong believer. The chapter that dealt with the flexibility and the toleration of the strong believer who understood the Word and was relaxed toward the weak believer, who was a spiritual baby, or who was growing more slowly because of a lack of good consistent teaching in his geographical area. Bigotry is just as pronounced today in the Christian realm as it was in the days of Jonah. But today it is more subtle. So we had all better stop and think and reflect for a moment before we condemn Jonah too quickly.

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

The Lord is actually saying, "Jonah, are you being benefited by your anger?" Or "Jonah, is your anger doing you any good?" Or it could be translated, "Jonah, do you have the right to be angry with me?" Even the Lord's question is a matter of grace. God is still speaking to his prophet who is again out of fellowship. The prophet who whines, "I wish I were dead!" A prophet who is filled with self-pity.

Why did God ask this question? Why did God say, "Do you have the right to be angry?" Or "Are you benefited in being angry?" He asked it for several reasons:

- (1) - In the first place God had given Jonah eternal salvation. This was grace.
- (2) - God had delivered Jonah from the storm, and the belly of the great fish, and from sheol itself. That was grace.
- (3) - God had provided Jonah with a place of service so his spiritual gift of prophet could function. That was grace.

Therefore, God was saying, "Jonah, do you realize that you have eternal life?"
"Do you realize that I credited to your account the perfect righteousness of God?"
"Do you realize that I have blessed you exceedingly abundantly above all that you could ever ask or think?"
"Do you realize that you are alive today because of my grace?"
"Do you realize that you have had a tremendous testimony?"
"Do you realize that you are the only one in the history of mankind to be swallowed by a great fish and then be vomited out on dry ground?"
"My grace has been extended to you without measure. You are on dry land, you are alive, you are here and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you have proclaimed the gospel with the result that thousands of people have believed on the Lord."
But it appears that Jonah misunderstood this gracious question. Hoping that God was just delaying His judgment and that He would destroy the city after all, Jonah decided that he had better get out of the city before God made it an ash-heap.

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

The word "booth" refers to some temporary shelter. The words "till he might see," is potential, indicating that Jonah had a hunch that God would still destroy the city. Therefore, he provided for himself a box seat for this glorious event and he was going to wait and see what he always wanted see, the destruction of Nineveh.

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

And the Lord prepared a gourd -Evidently Jonah's little make shift shack didn't work, so the Lord "Caused a large plant to grow over him." It appears that Jonah's little shelter wasn't constructed very well and it exposed him to the desert heat. Jonah could have been a victim of sunstroke, or overexposure to the sun. But he wouldn't leave and go to a shady area, because he wanted to see the destruction of Nineveh. And being very similar to a "bull dog," he is a very stubborn and vindictive person. He was going to sit there until God destroyed Nineveh.

Do you know why the make shift shack collapsed and God didn't keep Jonah in it? Because Jonah built it himself through his own work, but God wanted to prepare the shelter for His prophet Himself. Again we see grace in operation. But what God prepared was a large plant. This plant actually represents the Mosaic Law.

The Hebrew word for "gourd" is QIYQAYOWN (kee-kaw-yone). It means "a gourd, a plant." It also has the connotation of being nauseous. The root of this word is QAYAH (kaw-yaw)

which means "to vomit." The Hebrew word is very similar to the Graeco-Egyptian word KIKI designating the "castor oil" plant. This is sometimes called "Palma Christi," that is, Christ's palm. This plant attains a height from eight to ten feet, sometimes growing very rapidly. If this was the plant that shaded Jonah, its rapid growth was still miraculous.

But whatever this plant was it was large enough to provide a soothing shade over Jonah, for it says at the end of vs 6, "So Jonah was exceeding glad because of the gourd." This is the first time in the entire book that we see Jonah happy. It is strange what it takes to make some people happy.

The first thing we need to understand is that God did not prepare this plant to make Jonah happy, but to teach him a lesson. The gourd by analogy actually represents the Mosaic Law. God was going to rebuke Jonah's self-centeredness because no sooner had Jonah settled down comfortably under the shade of the large plant than God prepared a worm to destroy it. At a time when the Jews were very comfortable with their religious system under the Mosaic Law, God prepared "a worm," the sinless Son of God to die on the cross to nullify that law and set up the law of the Spirit, grace and truth.

VS 7 -God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd(the large plant)that it withered.

God prepared a worm -Just as God had "prepared" a great fish or great sea creature to swallow Jonah (Jonah 1:17), and as He "prepared" a gourd (a plant to shade Jonah), so God also "prepared" a worm. This was a special worm. Its job was to eat the special plant that was shading Jonah.

The Hebrew word for "worm" is TOWLA (to-law), meaning "a crimson grub, a scarlet worm." This is a "red" worm which was crushed to provide a precious deep red dye that was used to color the veils or curtains of the tabernacle, as well as the clothing of the high priest. We have studied in the past that the "red" color of the tabernacle represented the "blood" of Christ.

In Psalm 22 the psalmist David writes prophetically concerning the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It opens with the prophecy of the very words that Jesus would use on the cross. Psalm 22:1-8, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. O my God, I cry by day, but Thou dost not answer; and by night, but I have no rest. Yet Thou art holy, O Thou who art enthroned upon the praises of Israel. In Thee our fathers trusted; they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. To Thee they cried out, and were delivered; in Thee they trusted, and were not disappointed. **BUT I AM A WORM**(the Hebrew word for "worm" is the same one that is used in Jonah 4:7, TOWLA), and not a man, a reproach to men, and despised by the people. All who see me sneer at me; they separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, Commit yourself to the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, because he delights in him."

As the worm destroyed the gourd, so the work of Jesus Christ destroyed the Mosaic Law from having any authority over us. The work of Jesus Christ is death to all efforts to be saved or be spiritual by the works of the law.

When the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered -The plant withered and there was absolutely nothing Jonah could do to stop it. No bird could have eaten that worm and Jonah could not have crushed it. Why? Because it was a worm "prepared by God" to perform a special function. To eat the special plant.

VS 8 -

Notice the mood swings in Jonah: one moment he is "exceeding glad,"and the next moment "he wants to die."

And it came to pass, when the sun did arise that God prepared a vehement east wind(a sultry hot wind): and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah. Jonah was probably bald, which made the effect of the sun and the hot wind much more intense.

The great patience and longsuffering of God is seen in this record. The Lord continues to bear with Jonah, His servant. How gracious the Lord had been with him. Jonah had tried to run away (or resign) from his duty and His God; then he had reluctantly gone to Nineveh to preach. He was very happy in telling the Ninevites that they would be destroyed in forty days; then he took issue with God when He withheld the destruction; He even accused God of not keeping His Word. Jonah had failed and blundered at every turn. He deserved nothing from God except discipline and punishment, but God in His infinite mercy still cared for him. All of this was to prepare Jonah for the lesson he needed to learn.

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

And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? -This time God adds something to the question. In verse four God said,"Do you have the right to be angry?"But this time He asks, "Do you have the right to be angry because of the gourd?"And what do you think Jonah said to that?

And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death -Jonah is defying God without any hesitation whatsoever. His heart is hardened against the Lord.

VS 10 - Then said the Lord, Thou had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perish in a night.

VS 11 -And should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore(120,000) thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

The Lord is teaching Jonah the relative value of the temporal and absolute value of the eternal, the material and the spiritual. Jonah was so occupied with his own comfort, the booth and the gourd, that he had no compassion for the plight of the people of Nineveh. The book of Jonah comes to an abrupt end. But little needs to be added to this brief account. The lesson is so evident that it cannot be missed. God seems to say, "Listen, Jonah, you have pity for the gourd because you were deprived of its shade. Why then be angry when I have pity on a great city of a million people destined for eternity and am willing to save them from destruction?"

Jonah

Lesson #6:

Lessons and Analogies from the Book of Jonah

1 - The central theme of the book of Jonah is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, His death, burial and resurrection. Jesus Himself establishes this fact in Matthew 12:40, "For as Jonah was three days and three night in the belly of the great fish, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

2 - The name "Jonah" means "dove." The dove is the symbol of peace, mildness and harmlessness. The first mention of a dove in the Scripture is Genesis 8:8, when the dove was released from the ark by Noah, it returned with an olive branch in its beak bringing the "good news" of deliverance from the flood. The dove, therefore, becomes the bringer of "good news." The "good news" is the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is the message of redemption and salvation through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Therefore, the Gospel represents the important things concerning our Lord's work in our salvation: His death, His burial and His resurrection. And through the work of Jesus Christ God established peace between Himself and mankind on a global basis.

A - The Gospel is specifically called "the gospel of peace" in Ephesians 6:15.

B - The work of Jesus Christ, which is the Gospel message, is what establishes "peace" between God and man. This refers to salvation, which involves personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the only way anyone can establish peace with God. Romans 5:1, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have PEACE WITH GOD through our Lord Jesus Christ."

C - After receiving the Gospel message and placing your faith in Jesus Christ, you now have the potential to have "peace" in your earthly life. This refers to inner peace and tranquility and peace of mind. Romans 8:6 says, "...to be spiritually minded is life and peace." This refers to a supernatural life and a supernatural peace.

Ephesians 2:14, "For he (Jesus Christ) is our peace, because he has made both one (Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ)."

Philippians 4:7, "And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Colossians 1:20, ".....having made peace by the blood of His cross....."

D - Jesus Christ is known as the "Prince of peace" because He will establish true peace on the earth. This title is given to Him in Isaiah 9:6. The only reason that our Lord Jesus Christ has the authority to establish true peace on the earth is because of His work on the cross for all mankind. Through His work He not only provided eternal salvation for all mankind, but He also broke the back of Satan. Also, because of His perfect work, God has appointed Him the heir of all things. Hebrews 1:2 tells us, "In these last days He (God the

Father) has spoken to us through His Son, whom He had appointed the heir of all things....."

3 - Jonah's father's name was Amittai, which means "truth." Jonah was the "son of truth." And the Gospel that is represented in the book of Jonah represents the embodiment of truth in Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, THE TRUTH, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me."

4 - Jonah was to preach to the people of Nineveh and tell them they had forty days to repent, or to change their minds concerning the plan of God for their lives. forty is the number of probation and of testing.

A - Moses lived in the court of Pharaoh 40 years. (Acts 7:23).

B - Moses lived in the desert 40 years after he left Egypt. (Acts 7:30).

C - Moses led the children of Israel 40 years. (Hebrews 3:17).

D - Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Law 40 days. (Exodus 24:18).

E - Moses sent 12 men to spy out the promised land and they did so for 40 days. (Numbers 13:25).

F - The Jews wandered 40 years in the desert because of their unbelief.

G - The number of stripes given to a wrong doer was limited to 40. (Deuteronomy 25:3).

H - Jesus was 40 days in the mountains being tested by the devil. (Luke 4:2).

I - After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to many believers for 40 days. This testing was for the purpose of testing the believers rather than the Lord. (Acts 1:3).

J - The 40 day probation period the Lord gave Nineveh through His prophet Jonah. (Jonah 3:4).

5 - Jonah was the reason for the storm on the sea in Jonah chapter one. It was because of his rebellion against the Lord. Through his disobedience the lives of the sailors on the ship were placed in jeopardy. By analogy, because of the disobedience of Adam in the Garden of Eden, the lives of all members of the human race have been placed in jeopardy.

6 - In verse 12 of chapter one the typology of Jonah changes from that of a disobedient sinner, to that of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was only the death of Jonah that could deliver the sailors from their certain doom. It is only the death of Jesus Christ on the cross that can deliver us from a certain eternal doom to the Lake of Fire.

7 - The guilty one must die, and Jonah was guilty. All members of the human race are guilty before God. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." One must die so others might live. Here we see a picture of the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. The experience of Jonah was a shadow, illustration or type of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew 12:40, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." The only way the storm could be calmed, was for Jonah to be thrown overboard and to die.

8 - The human race will do everything possible to avoid having to do what God demands. Even after Jonah told the sailors that the storm could only be calmed by them throwing him overboard, they still continued to row, work, sweat and wear themselves out. It is very difficult for man to understand the plan of God, and very difficult for him to accept the fact

that he must believe the truth or he will die. Jonah 1:13 tells us that the sailors "rowed hard to bring the ship in, but they could not." The remedy was so simple. Throw Jonah overboard and they would be saved from death. In the spiritual analogy, believe in Jesus Christ and you will be saved from hell and judgment.

9 - Jonah could not have delivered the sailors by jumping overboard, just as Jesus could not have provided eternal salvation by committing suicide. The principle of substitutionary death is taught throughout the Bible. In all of the illustrations of substitutionary death, there had to be precisely correct procedure. In the Old Testament, it was the altar, the animal and the priest.

PRINCIPLE: the death of a victim becomes the means of salvation for the guilty one who put the victim to death. The sailors were benefited by putting Jonah to death. God permitted wicked men to put Jesus Christ to death and then made that act of murder the means of saving those who were responsible for His death. The only difference in our story of Jonah is that Jesus was just and righteous and still put to death, while Jonah was not just and righteous.

10 - Until the storm threatened to destroy them and the ship, the sailors counted Jonah as a man of no consequence. They paid no attention to him as he slept in the hold of the ship. He was of no particular importance to them. So also, when the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth and took on human form, few recognized the significance of His presence among them and they gave little attention to Him.

11 - The sailors considered Jonah only another passenger and mainly ignored him until the storm broke, then they became aware of his importance, and realized that it was only by Jonah's death could they be saved. So also, when the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth and took on human form, the people only considered Him just another man, the son of a carpenter and the child of a woman named Mary. It made no great stir among them. But to those who knew and understood Biblical truth, they were very much aware of His importance, and that only through His death and resurrection did they have any hope of eternal life. So also, in the future, just after the Rapture of the Church, there will be a number of people who have been left behind who will suddenly realize the importance of Jesus Christ and will believe and be saved. So also, toward the end of the Tribulation, and as the War of Armageddon takes on a frightful twist with the use of nuclear weapons, and as Jesus Christ begins His return, there will be many at that time who will suddenly realize the importance of Jesus Christ. But instead of turning to Him and being saved, they will pray to the rocks and the mountains to fall on them so that they may be hidden from Him who is coming to judge. (Rev 6:15-17).

12 - The death of Jonah meant life for the sailors in the ship. The account of Jonah foretells the account of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which means life to all who believe in Him as their personal Savior.

13- Jonah was a soul winner, even though he never set out to be one. God can use anyone or anything to get His message to the lost and dying world. If you recall, God used a donkey to get His message to the rebellious prophet Balaam in Numbers 22:21-35.

When the religious leaders rebuked the people for praising Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, they told Him to tell the people to stop! But He answered and said, "If they stop shouting, then the stones would immediately shout it out." (Luke 19:40). Psalm 76:10 tells us "That he even makes the wrath of man to praise him." So God used a lazy, rebellious and self-centered prophet to get His message to those unsaved sailors. The principle is this: God's will is going to be accomplished. His plan will march right on through time. Now, you can either be a part of that plan and be blessed by being in a position to be used by God, or you can neglect or reject Bible truth and get run over by the plan of God. But don't you ever forget that there is nothing that can stop the plan of God.

14 - Before the sailors threw Jonah overboard, they asked God not to hold them responsible for the death of "innocent blood." (Jonah 1:14). After Pilate sentenced Jesus to be crucified, he washed his hands and said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just man....." (Matt 27:24).

15 - Jonah actually died and his soul went into Sheol (the dwelling place of the dead), while his body remained in the great fish. When Jesus died, His soul went into Sheol (Hebrew), Hades (Greek). Ephesians 4:9-10, "(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things)." The word "fill" in verse 10 is the aorist active subjunctive of the Greek verb PLEROO meaning "to fill up a deficiency."

16 - The people of Nineveh believed the message of God even though the messenger was a bigoted, self-centered, arrogant and rebellious prophet of God. PRINCIPLE: it is not the man, it is the message that is important.

17 - The king of Nineveh was a good leader who cared for his people. He encouraged them to accept the message of Jonah and even set aside special days of prayer and fasting in sackcloth and ashes.

18 - Jonah had a great understanding of God and His character. But in spite of his knowledge, he still remained occupied with himself, his reputation and his desires, even though they were contrary to the will of God.

19 - God caused a gourd (large plant) to grow up over Jonah and protect him from the sun and elements of the desert. The gourd represented the Mosaic Law, which God provided to protect the Jews for a period of time before the first advent of the Messiah.

20 - God then caused a special worm to destroy the gourd. The Hebrew word for worm is TOLAW. This word refers to a "crimson grub or a red worm" that was crushed to provide the dye for the curtains in the Tabernacle. The worm represents Jesus Christ and His work. Therefore, the worm destroyed the gourd (the large plant) just as the work of Jesus Christ cancelled out the Mosaic Law.

21 - Jonah was also a type of the nation Israel, of which he was a member. Israel was constantly disobedient and rebellious.

Just as Jonah disobeyed God's order, Israel disobeyed God's law.
Just as Jonah refused to take the message to the Gentiles, so did the nation of Israel.
Just as Jonah called on God for deliverance, so did Israel.
Just as Jonah had the outward look of righteousness, the right terms and the correct information, but lacked the inner desire to follow God's plan, so did Israel.

22 - The "east wind" represents divine discipline upon Jonah. The words "east wind" are found 20 times in the Old Testament. Most of the time this is used to represent God's judgment or God's discipline, either directly or indirectly. For example: Gen 41:27, "....with the EAST WIND came seven years of famine."

Psalms 48:7, "....you break the ships of Tarshish with the EAST WIND."

Ezekiel 19:12, "But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the EAST WIND dried up her fruit....."

So the "east wind" came upon Jonah and it caused him to "faint." In other words, it made him weak. In this condition God taught him his last lesson in the book. God reminded Jonah that the "gourd (large plant)" was physical and therefore, only temporary. While the souls of the people of Nineveh were eternal. Therefore, we should always remind ourselves that whatever we have in this life, it is only temporary, but what we receive from God is eternal and will never pass away.

Only one life and soon will pass,
Only what is learned from the Word will last.

So ends the book of Jonah, just as abruptly as it began. We know practically nothing about Jonah's early life and the Bible is completely silent concerning his last years. What happened to Jonah? Did he learn his lesson? How long after this did he live? To all these questions the Bible gives no answer, but the application of what is written is for us. We are not to be concerned about Jonah, but we are to apply his lessons to our lives and ask ourselves the questions: "Have we learned our lesson?" "Will we avoid self-righteousness and indifference?" How much time is left for us and what will we do with it?" I pray that God will use these lessons from the book of Jonah to make us more aware than ever of the importance of learning and applying the Word of God on a consistent basis.

Therefore, I challenge you to go from here with a commitment and a seriousness in your attitude to decide to place the Word of God as the #1 priority in your life. If you do, the Lord will make sure that everything else will fall into place. But you must make the decision to place the Word of God first.

Ephesians 5:14-17, "For this reason it says (in Isaiah 60:1) 'Arise, sleeper, and arise from the dead (referring to temporal death meaning not being in fellowship with the Lord) and Christ will shine on you.' Therefore be careful how you walk (how you live your life), not as unwise men, but as wise (the wise learn and grow in the Word of God consistently), making the most of your time, because the days are evil. (It is more so today than when this was written) so then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." In the next verse, Paul emphasizes the principle of the filling of the Holy Spirit as a necessity to being in the will of the Lord.

The End

Jonah: Endnotes:

The books and tapes from the following Bible teachers have been an invaluable resource for my studies in the Book of Jonah. These men have contributed greatly to my ministry. Therefore, their contribution to my studies is noted here.

R. B. Thieme, Jr., pastor of Berachah Church in Houston, Texas for over 50 years. His Bible lessons, "The Assyrian Crisis," were very beneficial in obtaining information about Jonah and the time in which he lived.

Martin R. DeHaan: (1891 - 1965). A former medical doctor who became a pastor, evangelist and Bible conference speaker. He organized and managed the Radio Bible Class out of Grand Rapids, Michigan in the early 1940's. In less than twenty years his radio ministry had grown to hundreds of selected stations around the world. He edited and published a monthly devotional guide, Our Daily Bread, which has a present circulation of over 800,000. He also published over twenty-five books, one of which is the book of Jonah. His analysis of the book of Jonah was a great source of valuable information concerning the personality and character of Jonah.

Robert L. Deffinbaugh: A graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary with his Th.M. in 1971. Bob is a teacher and elder at Community Bible Chapel in Richardson, Texas, and has contributed many of his Bible study series for use by the Foundation of Biblical Studies. His email address is deffinbaugh@bible.org

His 1998 notes on the book of Jonah on the Bible Study Foundation's web site were an excellent source of information.