

The Floral Heights Informer

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The Book of Jonah

Introduction:

Some have considered the book of Jonah as a myth due to its fanciful story of a prophet being swallowed by a great fish and surviving. Jesus' use of Jonah's experience at Matthew 12:39-41 stamps a factual approach to the book. Jonah was a prophet of Israel during the days of Jeroboam II (II Kings 14:23-25). The II Kings passage leaves us with the impression that Jonah's work was at the beginning of Jeroboam's reign and the middle of Amaziah's (i.e., the 15th plus year). The date of the book was thereby around the year 790 to 780 BC. Historical evidences point out that Joash, the father of Jeroboam, had been paying tribute to the Assyrians (see ISBE V. 1, pp. 335). During the days of Jeroboam, Assyria was having internal problems yet continued, under king Adadnirai III, to conquer lands to the West and Southwest (i.e., Damascus, Tyre, and Sidon). The weakening of Syria, ruled by Ben-hadad, gave Israel a chance to recover much of its lost land (cf. II Kings 13:22-25). The historical facts regarding Assyria, a ruthless nation that was bent on conquest, forms the background for this study. Assyria worshipped a multitude of deities. The father of all Assyrian deities was known as Anu. Latter, Ashur became the national God of the Assyrians. Ashur came to be believed in as the creator and god of Assyrian war that gave them victory (ISBE, vol. 4, pp. 86-87).

Jonah

Jonah was God's prophet. The Lord had given His prophet a command to speak to the people of Nineveh; however, Jonah disobeyed (Jonah 1:1ff). Jonah tells God that he did not want to preach to Nineveh because he knew that God is "*merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness*" (Jonah 4:2). Jonah clearly had feelings of animosity toward the Assyrians. Jonah's anger against the Assyrians likely stemmed from their Gentile pagan practices, control over Israel, and threats of world conquest by ruthless means (see intro.). The prophet wanted no part of Nineveh's repentance and God's favor bestowed upon them. Jonah's disobedience brought immediate trouble to not only himself but others. The prophet experienced troubles at sea and troubles on land. The book ends with Jonah still angry that God would save thousands of people from destruction. Jonah was to learn that God is the Lord of all flesh (Jer. 32:27).

Local News:

Welcome to all our visitors. We pray that you will be edified by our service and that you will ask questions if things are not as you are accustomed to seeing. Please come back at your every opportunity.

Mandy Suttle came forward this past Sunday evening confessing her sins and desire to be reconciled to God. We rejoice with Mandy over this decision and pray God that she continues onward in life in the spirit of truth.

Rita York will have a routine procedure Monday. Remember her in your prayers.

Continue to pray for our shut-ins:

Stella Davidson
696-1030 (Home)

Calvin York
692-0489 (Home).

Bessie Murphy
4600 Taft Blvd, Apt. 538

The Mariners in the Book of Jonah

The Gentile heathen mariners of Jonah 1 were men who shared only in flesh and blood with Jonah (see Heb. 2:14). A peculiar difference between the mariners and Jonah was their value of life. While the seas churned by God's wrath for Jonah's sake they feared for their life yet Jonah slept (cf. Jonah 1:5-6). When Jonah told the mariners that God was responsible for the agitated sea the men grew further fearful. Jonah instructs the men to throw him into the sea that they may be saved; however, the mariners' value of human life would not allow them to do so. The mariners display great qualities of character. They valued human life (1:5-6), were compassionate (1:13), and came to believe in the power of Jehovah (Jonah 1:14). Jonah proves to be just the opposite in character even though he is a prophet of God.

The People of Nineveh

The people of Nineveh were "*evil and violent*" (Jonah 3:8). When Jonah preached to the great city the people repented of their evil and violent ways. They displayed the character traits of the mariners in that they valued their lives (3:9), feared Jehovah God (3:9), and developed faith through Jonah's preaching (3:5). God saw the "*works*" of Nineveh's repentance as they humbly mourned in shame for their sin and thereby the Lord determined not to destroy them (3:10).

Practical Applications

Sometimes God's people are actually worse in behavior and character than those they condemn. Jonah cared nothing for the people of Nineveh because they were heathens, wicked, violent, and worshiped other deities. That which distinguished the people of Nineveh (and the mariners) from Jonah was their concern for human life and spirit of humility. Jonah would have rather died than submit to God's will for the people of Nineveh (cf. Jonah 4:3, 9). Jonah prayed to God saying, "*They that regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy;*" however, he did not follow through with his own conviction. Jonah put his will before the will of God. God's will only anger in the prophet (cf. Jonah 4:1, 4, 9). Furthermore, the prophet displayed a spirit of coldness toward the thousands of inhabitants of Nineveh in that his desire was their destruction (Jonah 4:11). He was also selfish in that he was only concerned about things that would cause him discomfort or threaten his own life (cf. 4:8-9).

The book of Jonah causes us all to look deep within. Am I one who is only concerned about my personal well being yet cold toward others who have needs? Am I one who would harden my heart against God's will because it does not fit my desires? Do I value human life and the souls of even those who mistreat me? Am I compassionate toward others? Am I the type of person who would rather follow my own or another man's will than God's? The book of Jonah ends abruptly without telling us if Jonah changed his heart. We can only hope that he did. If there are spiritual deficiencies that you or I need to change why not take care of it now rather than remaining hardened in sin?

