

"I did not come with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).

The SIGN: The Book of Jonah, the Book of God

Who is our God? How great is our God? What is His plan? How will He accomplish it? What has He done?

"And there shall be no sign given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah."

The Book of Jonah is a real-life, classical, prophetic allegory of the sovereignty of God. It is a magnificent testimony declaring the existence of God, His nature, His power, His will, and His ways. It addresses decisively the doctrine of "free will" and prophetically declares that God will save all humankind and that He has, in fact, already done it. Indeed, as it is written:

"And through Him having made peace through the blood of His cross, it pleased the Father to reconcile all things to Himself through Him, whether the things on earth or the things in Heaven" (Colossians 1:20).

Jesus referred to Jonah in a very special way:

"Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we want to see a sign from you. But He answered and said to them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. And there shall be no sign given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the huge fish, so the Son of Man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:38-40).

When we speak of the great events and characters of the Old Testament, these... Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samson, David, Solomon, Job, Elijah and others are as much or more remembered and mentioned than is Jonah. Let us briefly discuss each of these.

Why, for example, would Adam not be considered "the one and only sign"? Of him it is written that he was a figure of Him (Jesus) Who was to come (Romans 5:14).

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Why would Noah not be "the sign" to represent the Christ? After all, he was the one man finding grace of God in the day of destruction of the world by water. He came from the old world to the new. Noah, with his household, passed through a form of death, so to speak, while all else perished. Could he not be "the sign"?

Why would not Abraham, the father of those of the faith, including us, be accounted "the sign," or one of several signs? He offered as a sacrifice his son Isaac, which sacrifice was a figure of that which was to be manifest thousands of years later, the Father giving His Son. Why would his life not be "the sign"?

Isaac was the son sacrificed by the father. Surely, if any should be an example of the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord to come, it was he. The Bible says that Isaac, in a figure, was raised from the dead.

Why not Jacob, whose name was changed to "Israel" (Ruling with God)? The one nation chosen by God on earth to bring forth the Law, the Covenants and the Bible we use today was named after Jacob, or "Israel." The Messiah, God incarnate, came by way of Israel (Jacob).

Why would Joseph not be "the one sign"? His "brethren" (his own household) committed him to "death," as Jesus was slain by His own people. Joseph subsequently rose up in victory and saved his people, Egypt, and the surrounding nations from the severe drought.

Why would Moses not be "the sign"? He delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage, performed great miracles such as no other prophet would equal, delivered the Law directly from God to the Israelites, built the Tabernacle according to what was shown him in the mount of God, established the Levitical priesthood, and wrote the first five books of the Bible.

While all these others were signs, none were mentioned as was Jonah.

Why not Joshua? Joshua was the one who brought the children of Israel into the Promised Land. He was the prophet and commander in chief of the Israelites, leading them to victory over all their enemies. His name was the same as that of the coming Messiah (Yahoshua). Surely, Joshua should be referred to as "the sign."

What about Samson? No stronger man ever lived, by the anointing of God. At, and by, his death after suffering, he delivered Israel from the Philistines. Could not he be "the sign"?

Why would not David, king of Israel, a "man after God's heart" not be accounted as the "one sign" of the accomplishment of the Son of Man a thousand years later? After all, he was the one who slew the giant, became the first righteous king of Israel and mightily established its status as a nation among nations. He received desire and the revelation for the building of the Temple, though not building it, yet his chosen son Solomon, as successor to his throne, would have that privilege. The Messiah would come to be known as "the Son of David." Why would the Son of David (Jesus) not refer to His "father" (David) as "the sign"?

Why not Solomon, in all his wisdom and glory? No greater or wiser king lived on earth, aside from Jesus Christ. No nation had a greater glory than Israel during Solomon's reign. Solomon built the Temple of God. Why not Solomon as "the sign"?

We know how Job was stripped of everything he had, even hope of life, in the end having all restored to him twofold. If any man descended into death and rose up again in victory, was it not Job? Is he not the "sign of the coming of the Son of Man"?

What about Elijah? He was taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot, one of the two men recorded in Scripture as having never died. Could his life not serve as "the sign"?

Truly, all these were signs or allegories, in one way or another, all pointing to the Messiah and His will for mankind. However, to Jonah was given this mention of the glory of the most momentous occasion in all of history, that of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of all. While all these others were signs, none were specifically mentioned as was Jonah.

Why so? One of the key differences between all others and Jonah is that Jonah was literally swallowed up and taken into the deep, as was the Lord. Another significant difference is that Jonah was in that deep precisely three days and three nights, even as the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, Yahoshua HaMashiach, would be in the deep, the heart of the earth, for three days and three nights, just as He foretold and depicted by Jonah centuries earlier. There is yet a third major difference, one of great import to us, which I have already mentioned and will bring up again later. Truly, I like to call the Book of Jonah, the Book of God.

God is sovereign, and He is personal with those who are His.

Now I shall make comments on the Book of Jonah as we read from beginning to end, identifying three great truths, which, to those who believe, will bring peace and rest experienced by very few. These are:

1. God is sovereign, in full control of all things.
2. While man has had choice, he has not had a free will to do.
3. God will save all mankind in the end.

CHAPTER ONE

One day the LORD spoke to Jonah son of Amittai. (Jonah 1:1 GNB)

God speaks to certain chosen of mankind. Now there are many who teach that if we strive to hear the voice of God, He can be heard, because He is speaking all the time, or He desires to speak at all times. That is foolish nonsense, taught by self-righteous people who like to portray themselves as spiritually superior people, yet they themselves have never heard a word from Him. God speaks when He pleases and only when He pleases.

There are also those foolish who think that God spoke only to people in "Biblical times," but now He has given us the Bible so that He no longer speaks to us directly and personally. A sillier notion could not possibly be concocted.

First of all, people who say such things have never heard God's voice, otherwise they would not deny the possibility and reality.

Secondly, imagine your earthly father giving you a book he has prepared of his speeches and dealings in the world before you came along, then, when you reach the age of say, twelve, he hands you this book and says, "Son [daughter], I will no longer be speaking to you. You will be fulfilled reading this book, which records things I have said to other people and things I have done in their lives. You will know me by this book. Any communication you need or will ever have from me will be only in this book, and that is final."

Can any notion be more perverse? Very reality, reason, and nature, the creation and expression of God in manifold ways, cries out against such ludicrous and atheistic folly!

In effect, those who look to the Scriptures as God truly do not believe He is. "The fool has said in his heart there is no God"... just a very special Book. God speaks today, and nowhere does the Bible, which Bibliolaters worship as God, say otherwise! What contradiction! "My sheep hear (not read), My Voice," said Jesus. "Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me!" said Jesus. He is not limited by anything at anytime.

He spoke to Jonah and He speaks to all His sons and daughters, directly and personally. **God is sovereign**, and He is personal with those who are His.

He said, "Go to Nineveh, that great city, and speak out against it; I am aware of how wicked its people are." (Jonah 1:2 GNB)

God instructs His servants to speak out **against**. How many there are today that cannot stand to have someone speak against them! They think they are already righteous and need nobody to do so. Or they prefer their wickedness. God also sees how wicked men are, and what does He do? Does He destroy them? Not without warning them first. How does He warn them? One way is by sending prophets to speak warnings to them. However, many will not listen, and so they perish... for now.

Jonah was not different from us, nor we from him.

Now some may say, "If God wants to speak to me, He will speak to me directly. I don't need a go-between. Who are you to talk to me for God?" But that is not what happened with Nineveh. That is not what happened to Israelites countless times. That is not what happened in the day of Christ. That is not what happens today. God speaks to a chosen few, and then sends them to initially speak to most others.

Jonah, however, set out in the opposite direction in order to get away from the LORD. He went to Joppa, where he found a ship about to go to Spain. He paid his fare and went

aboard with the crew to sail to Spain, where he would be away from the LORD. (Jonah 1:3 GNB)

Jonah disobeyed. Now there are many today who teach another lie, that being that unless believers "love" people to faith, with "Christlike love," people will not be won to God. Jonah did not have love for Nineveh or for God. Jesus says that those that have His commandments and keep them, they are the ones who love Him. Jonah did not keep His commandment; he headed in the opposite direction. He did not love God and he did not love his fellow man.

One may scoff at the foolishness of someone trying to run away from God, Who is everywhere. Yet every time we disobey in any matter, is that not running from God? Is that not a manifestation of foolishly thinking we can somehow run or hide from Him? Of course, it is! Jonah was not different from us, nor we from him.

Do you, religious worker, think to have a passion for souls? Liar! It is your righteousness and not God's. You walk in your man of sin, that abomination of desolation sitting on the throne within, mocking God, not praying, but preying, for souls. You really have passion for yourself and nobody else. God knows your heart. He is neither mocked nor deceived. Better to be honest and admit that when it comes right down to it, you do not love anyone, not even, and especially not God, not in your own right, you don't.

Many professing faith in God today conceive love to be of passion, emotion and feelings, but that is not the true love. True love is a matter of the will, one of giving rather than receiving. Nor is love of the emotional or passionate variety the decisive element in bringing faith. God (Who is Love) is "the decisive element," as we shall see. **God is sovereign.**

But the LORD sent a strong wind on the sea, and the storm was so violent that the ship was in danger of breaking up. (Jonah 1:4 GNB)

So we see that **God is sovereign** over strength, wind, sea, storm, and sailing vessel. Moreover, He does not necessarily send gentle breezes, but violent storms. Some say that God would never do such nasty things. They do not know God or His power, nor understand His disposition or His ways.

When the sailors cried out for help to their gods, the storm continued.

Does Jonah have a "free will"? Did the sailors on that ship, who had nothing to do with Jonah's decision to flee from God's presence and duty assigned him, have a "free will"? Let us see.

The sailors were terrified and cried out for help, each one to his own god. Then, in order to lessen the danger, they threw the cargo overboard. Meanwhile, Jonah had gone below and was lying in the ship's hold, sound asleep. (Jonah 1:5 GNB)

God is sovereign over sailors who sail the vessels at sea. When the sailors cried out for help to their gods, the storm continued. Was it because their gods were not listening? Was it because their gods were sadistic? Was it because they had no power to do anything? Or was it because they did not exist?

How marvelous a thing that at such time as their ship is tossed to and fro on the sea, and the men are throwing everything overboard in desperation, Jonah (his name means "dove") is fast asleep! Does this not remind you of how when there was a storm on the Sea of Galilee, and the disciples feared for their lives, Jesus was asleep (Matthew 8:24)? When His disciples awakened Him, He rebuked them for their unbelief, spoke the word, and immediately calmed the storm.

God is sovereign over unbelievers. Where could Jonah run and hide?

The captain found him there and said to him, "What are you doing asleep? Get up and pray to your god for help. Maybe he will feel sorry for us and spare our lives." (Jonah 1:6 GNB)

Unbelievers are not concerned about what gods men pray to. They are "open-minded"; they are "inclusive," even ecumenical! "Let's pool our gods," says the one who has nothing much to contribute to the pool anyway, but perhaps something to gain. That is what ecumenism is all about, uniting one another to each other rather than uniting with the One God.

Their gods are not jealous gods as is the Lord God, Creator of all things, to Whom alone all worship belongs. "Pray to your god if perchance we can get out of this mess!" The heathen seek their gods for their own sakes; the true believer seeks God for God's sake. That is the difference between true, Christian worshippers and all others, including those many who define themselves as Christians in various ways.

The sailors said to each other, "Let's draw lots and find out who is to blame for getting us into this danger." They did so, and Jonah's name was drawn. (Jonah 1:7 GNB)

God is sovereign over lots and over unbelievers. Where could Jonah run and hide? Silly man!

So they said to him, "Now, then, tell us! Who is to blame for this? What are you doing here? What country do you come from? What is your nationality?" (Jonah 1:8 GNB)

Now it appears that faith is beginning to work with these unbelievers! They are beginning to consider that there is more to their sphere of existence than the false gods they thought to be true.

Was Jonah able to escape? Did he have a free will?

"I am a Hebrew," Jonah answered. "I worship the LORD, the God of Heaven, Who made land and sea." (Jonah 1:9 GNB)

Jonah did not expect to be preaching the True God to some sailors, but with the help of the raging sea, by the help of the One Who made and governs it, he did so. He was a Hebrew. But what is this? In his disobedience to God, he says, "I worship the Lord"?

Jonah went on to tell them that he was running away from the LORD. The sailors were terrified, and said to him, "That was an awful thing to do!" (Jonah 1:10 GNB)

The sailors believed him! The heathen rebuked the Hebrew! The preached scolded the preacher! What a wonder! Shame on Jonah!

Was Jonah able to escape? Did he have a free will? Did these sailors have a free will? Obviously, these men were **free to choose**, but were they **free to do**? While they were permitted to cast Jonah overboard, they were also compelled to do so.

They could not stop the storm and they could not keep Jonah (which they tried). Jonah needed to be cast into the sea according to God's will. God was developing an allegory for the future. Could it be that they learn that they have no free will by having free choice? Does free choice teach them that they have no free will, as they like to think they have?

The storm was getting worse all the time, so the sailors asked him, "What should we do to you to stop the storm?" (Jonah 1:11 GNB)

The sailors believe they have discovered the cause of their crisis, tying it in with Jonah's God.

Jonah answered, "Throw me into the sea, and it will calm down. I know it is my fault that you are caught in this violent storm." (Jonah 1:12 GNB)

Jonah knew why the sea raged, and he seemed to know that God would spare these men their lives if he were sacrificed. Remarkable. Another facet of "the sign" Jonah represented. Furthermore, as Christ was killed by men, so Jonah expected that they throw him into the sea. He was not prepared to jump into the sea on his own. Yet as a man, he would rather die than obey God!

Instead, the sailors tried to get the ship to shore, rowing with all their might. But the storm was becoming worse and worse, and they got nowhere. (Jonah 1:13 GNB)

Let not the righteous get overly righteous. Here are those unrighteous who now toil to save the life of a guilty, though righteous, party! (Contrary to most judgments of Pilate, he tried, for political advantage, to spare Jesus.) Those worshipping other gods seeking to save the life of the one who is worshipping the True God! Those who begin to fear the True God try to save the life of one who has been a Hebrew from birth, confessing to worship the True God. Is this not a remarkable book?

Into the deep goes Jonah, and his surrendered life spares theirs.

So they cried out to the LORD, "O LORD, we pray, don't punish us with death for taking this man's life! You, O LORD, are responsible for all this; it is Your doing." (Jonah 1:14 GNB)

Now the heathen confess the True God, His might, His sovereignty, and pray to Him. They beg Him to forgive them for trying to save themselves by taking the life of another, in hopes that the wrath of God might be assuaged; they did not see that their plight was their fault, but neither did they wish to risk His wrath. God has reigned over Jonah, the sailors, and both their circumstances.

Then they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea, and it calmed down at once. (Jonah 1:15 GNB)

Into the deep goes Jonah, at the hands of perishing men, and as he prophesied, his surrendered life spares theirs.

This made the sailors so afraid of the LORD that they offered a sacrifice and promised to serve Him. (Jonah 1:16 GNB)

How awesome a God that the winds and the sea should obey Him, and that His prophet's words should come to pass! "The Lord, He is God, the Lord, He is God" above all gods who are not gods!

At the LORD's command a large fish swallowed Jonah, and he was inside the fish for three days and three nights. (Jonah 1:17 GNB)

Men do not believe that fish understand, not even big fish, but God can make anything understand at any time, be they lions, asses, milk cows, ravens, worms, small fish or large. The fish did not just taste Jonah, or keep him in his mouth. He did not bite Jonah. He swallowed him. He can even make a fish count three days and three nights, which is more than most scholastic, authoritative "Christians" can do, who count three days and three nights from "Good" Friday evening to early Sunday morning.

If Jonah had a free will, why did he cry out for salvation?

What is the "sign of the coming of the Son of Man"? It is that selfsame sign as that represented by Jonah...gone into the deep, not for one day and two nights, or one day and one night, but for three days and three nights.

CHAPTER TWO

From deep inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God: (Jonah 2:1 GNB)

Seldom do men pray when they are comfortable, doing that which pleases them. Indeed, we can be thankful for trials and tribulations.

"In my distress, O LORD, I called to You, and You answered me. From deep in the world of the dead I cried for help, and You heard me." (Jonah 2:2 GNB)

There is nowhere that God is not present or cannot hear, even in the "world of the dead," or "Hell" (the place of darkness). If Jonah had a free will, why did he not do as he pleased? If he had a free will, why did he cry out for salvation?

"You threw me down into the depths, to the very bottom of the sea, where the waters were all around me, and all Your mighty waves rolled over me." (Jonah 2:3 GNB)

This reminds us not only of the Lord's death and burial, but of water baptism, of course. Why did not God have Jonah simply sprinkled, say by a spouting whale, or poured on, say by a spewing whale? Instead, he was totally enveloped and taken to the bottom.

"I thought I had been banished from Your Presence and would never see Your holy Temple again." (Jonah 2:4 GNB)

That is the most terrible feeling of all. There is nothing worse.

"The water came over me and choked me; the sea covered me completely, and seaweed wrapped around my head." (Jonah 2:5 GNB)

God causes our circumstances to be hopeless, with no remedy available but Him.

"I went down to the very roots of the mountains, into the land whose gates lock shut forever. But You, O LORD my God, brought me back from the depths alive." (Jonah 2:6 GNB)

He was heard in God's holy Temple.

The roots of the mountains? Where are those roots? They are at the very bottom of the ocean. There is no place that God is not. Jonah did not need pressurizing to survive. God is sovereign over all natural laws. Even death is no barrier between Him and us. Thus we see that the death of Christ was not the end, but the beginning of victory. So it is with all those who follow Him, forsaking their lives.

"When I felt my life slipping away, then, O LORD, I prayed to You, and in Your holy Temple You heard me." (Jonah 2:7 GNB)

Men have devised many buildings to "house" God, calling them "holy temples," or synagogues, or mosques, or churches, or tabernacles, or lodges, or even "meeting halls." They have assumed that in these, God will hear them best, and He never does. Jonah was in quite a structure, was he not, not one made with hands, but created by God?

However, though Jonah was in a mere fish, and not an ornate building of worship, his prayer was heard nevertheless. He was heard in God's holy Temple, which is no fish. God hears the heart cry of His own. It has nothing whatsoever to do with location, external circumstances, or presentation of men's devices. God is not contained or impressed by men's structures. On the contrary, He is offended that men should think to impress Him with the works of their hands, as though there was value in them. There is none. These are idols at best.

"Those who worship worthless idols have abandoned their loyalty to you." (Jonah 2:8 GNB)

"But I will sing praises to you; I will offer you a sacrifice and do what I have promised. Salvation comes from the LORD!" (Jonah 2:9 GNB)

Salvation comes, not from the works of our hands, not from our sacrifices or obedience, not from any goodness of ours, but from the Lord.

There are those who believe that one day, all tongues will confess Jesus Christ as Lord, and all knees will bend to Him, if not willingly, then by force, and those who must be forced to do so will be cast, with imperishable bodies, into an everlasting fire to burn forever and ever. My, my, my, how perverse is man's imagination! How despicably cruel and heartless his will and desire! How blasphemous his assessment or conception of God, Who, he says, and the Bible says, is love.

"Are we all 'puppets?'" asks clay. "What if you are?" asks God.

Yes, Jonah was "brought to his knees" to cry out to God for mercy and salvation. But he was not sent to a burning Hell forever. He was saved, and instead of skin-peeling, ear-piercing screams, we hear songs of praise! Is that because Jonah had a complete change of heart and attitude toward God, that God should be so good to him? We shall see; indeed, we shall see as we read on.

Then the LORD ordered the fish to spit Jonah up on the beach, and it did. (Jonah 2:10 GNB)

Do fish have a free will? Are beastly creatures "righteous" that they should obey God? Or does God do His will with all? We read:

"For the scripture says to the king of Egypt, 'I made you king in order to use you to show My power and to spread My fame over the whole world.' So then, God has mercy on anyone He wishes, and He makes stubborn anyone He wishes. But one of you will say to me, 'If this is so, how can God find fault with anyone? Who can resist God's will?' But who are you, my friend, to talk back to God? A clay pot does not ask the man who made it, 'Why did you make me like this?' After all, the man who makes the pots has the right to use the clay as he wishes, and to make two pots from the same lump of clay, one for special occasions and the other for ordinary use (Romans 9:17-21 GNB).

"Are we all 'puppets?'" asks clay. "What if you are?" asks God.

CHAPTER THREE

Once again the LORD spoke to Jonah. (Jonah 3:1 GNB)

"God wants to speak to us a thousand times every day"? We have discussed this already, and I have denounced such a notion. Here we now have a testimony wherein while Jonah was on the ship, God did not speak to him. While he was in the fish's belly, for three days and three nights, God did not speak to him. Some would argue that we must be listening to hear. In the meantime, He had spoken to the fish. Was the fish listening? Now God speaks again.

He said, "Go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to the people the message I have given you." (Jonah 3:2 GNB)

There are many who go to Bible schools and seminaries, chomping at the bit to be great preachers. They study and strive, practise and connive (perhaps in a "nice" way) to fulfill their ambitions. Here we have God calling a reluctant man to go preach. God is not interested in our studies, skills, knowledge, preferences, or anything else. There are no qualifications that we can meet to serve Him in any capacity, preaching included, perhaps especially so. One cannot choose, prepare or train to be a man of God.

Jonah did not choose the job, the place, the audience, or the timing.

Most preachers today preach only to their own. They have a friendly audience, in most cases an indoctrinated one, and all the preacher has to do to earn his pay is to regurgitate over and over again that which his hearers tell him or wish him to preach. Most are salaried by their hearers (the Lord calls them "hirelings"). Hired preachers preach an acceptable, established doctrine. They are not sent of God but sent and appointed of men. Church buildings are the safest places to be preaching, and sympathetic crowds ever learn, yet never come to a knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 3:7). How boring! How dead! How fruitless! How deceptive!

Jonah did not choose the job, the place, the audience, the pay, the time or timing, the way, the message, or the Initiator. It was God's work, and God's alone. Many in our correspondences have said to us, "You have no right to send us unsolicited e-mails! How rude of you to invade our privacy and impose your opinions on us! How dare you criticize our religion! Who do you think you are?"

So Jonah obeyed the LORD and went to Nineveh, a city so large that it took three days to walk through it. (Jonah 3:3 GNB)

Jonah did not go by free will or even by choice. He went by compulsion, in grudging obedience to the Sovereign One, Who compels and does as He wills.

Jonah started through the city, and after walking a whole day, he proclaimed, "In forty days Nineveh will be destroyed!" (Jonah 3:4 GNB)

The number forty signifies the end of all flesh. So Jonah wished. Jonah hated iniquity. But he also knew that while God hated iniquity, He was a merciful God, ready to turn hearts.

Is this how the Benny Hinns come across? No. Sin is not an issue to him. He dare not bring it up in the way that offends. Benny Hinn has a whole crew of pickpockets and beggars, liars and thieves, salesmen and hucksters, of which he is chief. He comes with flatteries, fantastic promises (none of which are fulfilled), fine suits, fanfare, lights, music and choirs. He comes with manipulation and mesmerization, with false pretense, signs and wonders, which are empty and artificial. Benny Hinn comes on his own prowling volition, in all-predatorial evil. All those "ministers" deceived by him are also false workers.

If He is able to turn an entire city, He is able to turn an entire world.

On the other hand, Jonah is sent of God, preaching grudgingly, "without love," with apparent hate, promising destruction. He comes alone; he asks the Ninevites for nothing. A man of God comes, sent of God, with God's intended good. He does not say to them, "Pull out your checkbooks. The more you give, the more you will receive!" Woe to the parasitic, bloodthirsty bastards who plunder and defraud the people so, and that in the Name of Jesus Christ! Damn them to Hell! Osama Bin Laden is a far more honorable man.

The people of Nineveh believed God's message. So they decided that everyone should fast, and all the people, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth to show that they had repented. (Jonah 3:5 GNB)

At Jonah's preaching, every person repented. The whole city fasted and humbled itself. What a wonderful happening! There is no other record anywhere in the Bible or in history wherein an entire, great city repented. That is because this event is a divine illustration or allegory of what God plans to do with mankind. Think about it: If He is able to turn an entire city when He chooses, He is able to turn an entire world, as He chooses, generations of all epochs or eons.

When the king of Nineveh heard about it, he got up from his throne, took off his robe, put on sackcloth, and sat down in ashes. (Jonah 3:6 GNB)

Jonah had no television or radio, no newspapers or reporters announcing his coming or his message. He had no evangelistic team, no loudspeakers or personally directed messengers. There were no leaflets or tracts handed out, no books sold, no telephones or fax machines. There was only Jonah. His message spread like wildfire. The news reached the lowest and it reached the highest. Not only did all receive the news, they believed the news, from the least to the greatest. The highest ruler humbled himself and repented.

This was a divinely designed event, prophesying of great things to come.

He sent out a proclamation to the people of Nineveh: "This is an order from the king and his officials: No one is to eat anything; all persons, cattle, and sheep are forbidden to eat or drink." (Jonah 3:7 GNB)

Very few people will fast in repentance voluntarily. But of those that do, will they require their whole household to do so? Will they require their precious pet poodles and kittens to do so? The solemn edict here, brought on by none other than the Spirit of God, was that all fast, young and old, man and beast. Truly, this was an unusual event. It was not something man did, or could ever do. This was not Jonah's doing. This was a divinely designed event, a parable if you will, established to prophesy of great things to come. What else could it possibly be?

"All persons and animals must wear sackcloth. Everyone must pray earnestly to God and must give up their wicked behavior and their evil actions." (Jonah 3:8 GNB)

The king was diligent and very specific. He called for fasting, humbling in sackcloth, earnest prayer and repentance of all evil. These are the hallmarks of genuine repentance. Today we have people praying, some fasting, and some declaring themselves as sinners in a wishy-washy or insincere way, but how many confess their sins, repent of them, and make things right by apology and restitution to their neighbor wherever possible? How many will cease their wicked ways? It does not happen with most individuals, much less an entire, large city.

There are notions that the financially poor and downtrodden people are more likely to believe and repent. God is no respecter of persons. Genuine, godly repentance has nothing to do with wealth, sex, age, race, color, religion, language, social status, intelligence, physical ability, lineage, education, hunger, fulness, or any other earthly or fleshly thing, including the age or geographical location in which one lives. Repentance is an unmerited act of grace, a miracle.

Jonah was believed, even though he was alone!

"Perhaps God will change His mind; perhaps He will stop being angry, and we will not die!" (Jonah 3:9 GNB)

A Gentile king places his hopes in a merciful God. He believed the word of Jonah, but he also believed in the possibility of mercy. Jonah was not treated as some foreign crackpot. He was not arrested or stoned or imprisoned. Jonah was believed, even though he was

alone! The Bible counsels to establish everything by the mouths of two or three witnesses. The Ninevites did not require proof or explanation. They did not require a sign, as did the religious rulers of Jesus' day and as many demand today. There was only Jonah, the man back from the dead, the sign.

God saw what they did; He saw that they had given up their wicked behavior. So He changed His mind and did not punish them as He had said He would. (Jonah 3:10 GNB)

Sinners, God is faithful to warn, and merciful to those who genuinely repent. He is also sure to destroy those who do not repent. If the Ninevites had not repented, they would have perished. But another truth must be known and emphasized here again. Let it be known that repentance can only come as a gift. What are the chances of an entire city repenting? The lessons of human nature, in teeming abundance, declare unequivocally that the chances are nil. That is why God does not leave it to chance. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. That is His will, and He will accomplish it. Who can prevent it?

CHAPTER FOUR

Jonah was very unhappy about this and became angry. (Jonah 4:1 GNB)

How peculiar! If today's evangelists found everyone believing them, would they not be absolutely tickled and boastful about it? Would they not publish it as far and wide as possible? I think so. They boast of far less! But here is a man sent of God, whose preaching saves an entire city from destruction, and he is angry!

Satan's signal strength is "Christian love."

Today there is an insidious, religious, killer disease stalking the earth, in the Name of Jesus Christ. It is called "love." There are Christians who are taught, and teach, that unless they "love," they will not win people to Christ. They believe that unless they are "Christlike," they will never have the power to win souls. They believe and teach that unless they smile, speak sweet things, and conduct themselves gently and kindly (as they understand gentleness and kindness), unless they leave off any form of criticism and speaking of sin, they will not serve the Kingdom of God well at all.

How many of you readers know that such is the gospel of Satan? Surprised? Don't be. Satan's forte is not hate, or anger, or criticism, or temptation into obvious sin. No, his signal strength is "Christian love." There is a litmus test one can perform to know the difference between true love and false. Those who speak of love and loving are the ones who are most easily provoked to anger and outburst. They are very unforgiving. Just tell them they are wrong. Touch their righteousness in effective manner, and you will know the true from the false.

So he prayed, "LORD, didn't I say before I left home that this is just what You would do?"

That's why I did my best to run away to Spain! I knew that You are a loving and merciful God, always patient, always kind, and always ready to change Your mind and not punish." (Jonah 4:2 GNB)

God is not only sovereign; He is merciful. I must say that there will come a time that God will also have mercy on the false religious. Those who think that they alone will be saved must hope that all will be saved because if not, these religious will be the first to be excluded from the Kingdom. That is what Jesus said. Here it is:

"Then those who grew up 'in the faith' but had no faith will find themselves out in the cold, outsiders to grace and wondering what happened" (Matthew 8:12 MSG).

Jonah represents every man.

Who are those who have no faith? Included among them are those who think that only they have favor with God, that only they deserve or will receive salvation, while all others will perish for all eternity. That is a doctrine of devils and those who promote it are anti-Christ.

There's a reason Jonah could have felt so strongly against saving Nineveh. Nineveh was founded by none other than the anti-Messiah, Nimrod:

Genesis 10:8-12 MKJV

(8) And Cush fathered Nimrod. He began to be a mighty one in the earth.

(9) He was a mighty hunter before the LORD. Therefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.

(10) And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

(11) Out of that land he went forth to Asshur. And he built Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah,

(12) and Resen between Nineveh and Calah, which is a great city.

History tells us that Nimrod presented himself as the savior of the people, uniting and gathering them into walled cities and doing battle against their enemies, yet turning them away from faith in God. Alexander Hislop relates in *Two Babylons* that, by the Word of the Lord, Noah's son, Shem, withstood Nimrod and rallied people against him, so that Nimrod was slain, his body cut in several pieces and sent throughout the world as a sign of his judgment.

Jonah would have been aware of these things. Why should God show mercy to a city founded by one presuming to be the Messiah of mankind? But we see that if God is willing to show mercy to the congregation of the anti-Christ, can we not have confidence that He will bring all to repentance and have mercy on all?

"Now then, LORD, let me die. I am better off dead than alive." (Jonah 4:3 GNB)

Jonah represents every man. "I am saved; I am righteous; I am deserving of the best; I am

innocent; guilty parties should pay, forever if necessary or possible. Forget mercy or forgiveness. Forget restitution or reconciliation. I have born the heat of the day. Why should others who have spent their lives sinning get the same reward? Why should the prodigals have benefits, after wasting their inheritance, when I have been faithful, without extra benefits? No, it is not fair; I won't have it! They don't deserve it."

Carnal man does not have so much as the desire for resurrection, much less the belief for it. It is as useless or foreign to him as is a diamond to a dog. Reversal from evil to good is not in man's nature. He is utterly incapable of such a conception. That is because he is utterly corrupt and in total darkness. He is dead. Only the Spirit of God moving upon the deep can bring him to life. If no man is able to save himself, and God is not willing that any should perish, and nothing can stop Him from doing His pleasure, and He is able to save, then the only logical conclusion we can arrive at is that He must, and will, have mercy on every man. As it says:

"For God has made all people prisoners of disobedience, so that He might show mercy to them all. How great are God's riches! How deep are His wisdom and knowledge! Who can explain His decisions? Who can understand His ways? As the scripture says, "Who knows the mind of the Lord? Who is able to give Him advice? Who has ever given Him anything, so that He had to pay it back?" For all things were created by Him, and all things exist through Him and for Him. To God be the glory forever! Amen" (Romans 11:32-36 GNB).

The LORD answered, "What right do you have to be angry?" (Jonah 4:4 GNB)

There is no man who can say he earned or deserves anything. How can it be otherwise? He was never able to control anything. All that he is, and has, is from his Creator. What rights does he have but those freely granted him? Those can be taken away as easily as given, and always are, sooner or later.

Do you know indeed that "in your flesh dwells no good thing"?

God, not man, is sovereign; God, not man has a "free will." The potter, not the clay, turns the wheel and forms what He wills. And if God is love (and He is), and if He goes so far as to give His Son to save the world (and He has), and it is not in man to direct his steps (and it isn't), then what other possible conclusion can we draw than that all men will be saved, as allegorized in a historical, real life demonstration, as recorded in the Book of Jonah?

Jonah went out east of the city and sat down. He made a shelter for himself and sat in its shade, waiting to see what would happen to Nineveh. (Jonah 4:5 GNB)

Man is implacable. Jonah saw the city repent. One should think that he would now concede and agree to see Nineveh spared. No. He holds out hope against hope that his neighbors will get what he thinks is coming to them. Religious Christian, be honest; is that not so? Do you know indeed that "in your flesh dwells no good thing"? Can you admit it?

How is it that Jonah deserves a shelter, or the freedom to construct one, to protect him from the elements, while wishing an entire city destroyed, without so much as an opportunity for warning, repentance, and mercy?

Then the LORD God made a plant grow up over Jonah to give him some shade, so that he would be more comfortable. Jonah was extremely pleased with the plant. (Jonah 4:6 GNB)

If man can be partial ruler over a potted plant, or ruler in a garden, greenhouse, or farm, should we think it strange that God is sovereign in His created plant world? Does He not govern all, including the life itself in these things?

Did Jonah choose this shade? Even with a "green thumb" and the finest fertilizer, could he produce a plant so quickly?

Man loves the benefits God bestows, as long as he is the personal recipient.

Did Jonah exercise his will with God or did God exercise His will with Jonah?

But at dawn the next day, at God's command, a worm attacked the plant, and it died. (Jonah 4:7 GNB)

God speaks and worms obey. God is over the invertebrate world. Did Jonah choose to lose the shade?

After the sun had risen, God sent a hot east wind, and Jonah was about to faint from the heat of the sun beating down on his head. So he wished he were dead. "I am better off dead than alive," he said. (Jonah 4:8 GNB)

With free will, as some say man has, why did not Jonah create shade for himself? Why did he warn Nineveh against his will? Why did he cry out to God from the deep, knowing God wanted him to go to Nineveh? Did Jonah exercise his will with God or did God exercise His will with Jonah?

But God said to him, "What right do you have to be angry about the plant?" Jonah replied, "I have every right to be angry---angry enough to die!" (Jonah 4:9 GNB)

How unreasonable! Why did not Jonah die? Is that not what he wanted? Is it not a wonder that God did not do to Jonah what He could have done to Nineveh, had that city not repented? God is merciful.

The LORD said to him, "This plant grew up in one night and disappeared the next; you didn't do anything for it and you didn't make it grow---yet you feel sorry for it!" (Jonah 4:10 GNB)

If Jonah had use of a simple plant for a short time, can we not consider that God has use for every man He has created?

"How much more, then, should I have pity on Nineveh, that great city. After all, it has more than 120,000 innocent children in it, as well as many animals!" (Jonah 4:11 GNB)

Numbers are significant. The numbers 12, 120, 10 and 1000 have special meaning. One will know that there were 12 tribes of Israel and 12 apostles. There were 120 people in the upper room awaiting the coming of the Lord. The Book of Revelation speaks of the 1000-year reign of peace in earth. Is it a mere, unmeaningful coincidence that the city had 120,000 inhabitants? If God is over all elements and creatures, is He not over their doings and developments? Is He not over time?

By Jonah, God demonstrated His method of salvation.

The three great truths of the Book of Jonah:

One - God reigns supreme over all things. "By Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:17). We can rest in Him.

Two - Only God has "free will." As God's creation, man is at His mercy. We can rest in Him.

Three - As God spared the entire city of Nineveh, both man and beast, rich and poor, mighty and weak, young and old, in spite of those who would choose and have it otherwise, so He will spare all that He has created in His image. His work is not in vain. What He has begun, He will accomplish. He will not be embarrassed. We can rest in Him.

Is it not a very good thing that men, who seek the destruction of those they deem to be less deserving, do not have a free will? Where would we all be in the end? And is it not the wisdom and mercy of God displayed that these were not granted the will to destroy forever? And are God's manifest wisdom and mercy not sure tokens of assurance that He will bring everything to a perfect conclusion?

By an unwilling man, Jonah, God saved Nineveh. By the instrumentality of once unwilling men, by the grace of His Son, Jesus Christ, God will save all men. By Jonah, God demonstrated His method of salvation, that just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights, so would the Son of Man be in the depths of the earth three days and three nights, only to rise to life, victorious over the last, inescapable, merciless enemy, death.

How does God bring victory over death? Does He prevent death? No. He demonstrates His power by bringing us through it, as He does with all our troubles and fears. There is no "rapture" from trouble without victory through trouble. Escapists will not escape. They will be disillusioned, and that is good. God will not allow them to live in their illusions forever. Those who submit to His will alone will escape, having not loved their lives to the death.

God is God, and He is in full control of everything, for good. Evil serves His purpose, and when His purpose is accomplished, there will be no more evil, no more suffering, tears, or sorrow, only peace and joy, in the victory He has reserved and will perform for all of us, guaranteed by the sign, both prophesied and fulfilled.

Thankful for Jonah, thankful to God,
Victor Hafichuk

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