



*... Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey...*

### *Part Seven – Jonah gets it – Finally!*

*1 And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, 2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. 3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. 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. 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. 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. 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 any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: 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. 9 Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? 10 And God 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. (Jonah 3:1-10)*

If we do not hear the voice of the Lord the first time, our ears may be sharper to hear after being vomited from the guts of a whale! So the Word of the LORD comes to Jonah a second time. It seems that the Narrow Way may be easier more convenient after all than the broad way that led DOWN to Joppa! Instead of arising to FLEE from the presence of the Lord, his disposition has been amended so that he arises and obeys. Jonah was intended to be like Peter - a fisher of men; but he turned out to be a victim of the whale that was a better fisher of men than Jonah was of fish. Jonah, like Christ, had literally sunk to the depths of hell. (Jonah 2:2-7) This was consistent with the prophecy uttered by the Lord Jesus Christ concerning His own ordeal in the tomb. (Matt 12:40)

As we read in our Bibles and in the first devotions on Jonah, the prophet has been called to go to Nineveh – that Great City – and cry AGAINST it. Jonah does not obey God's calling. His efforts to flee the Presence of the Lord have taken Jonah on a continuously downward spiral even to the depths of Hell, but all the more into the awesome Presence of the Lord. God meets Jonah on the stormy Sea and deals with His obstinate prophet with a fear-inspiring chastisement. One residual benefit of Jonah's

disobedience is the budding faith instilled in the hearts of the seaman aboard the vessel of Jonah's attempted escape. These men prayed to God while Jonah refused to pray at all. The prophet's heart was so tough that even the whale's belly could not digest him; so the whale, at God's command, vomited Jonah up on a beach head. Jonah paid good money for a segment of his travel aboard a vessel bound for Tarshish, but the Lord paid for the latter segment aboard a whale. Greater in distance was Jonah's spiritual journey to the gates of hell than his physical journey in the storm at Sea. Our flight from God always leads to greater and greater misery and despair.

It sometimes happens to God's elect that they hear less keenly with spiritual age than when they first came to know God. Personal arrogance and spiritual pride dull their ears. But Jonah's hearing the Voice of the Lord was fine – he simply chose to disregard that Call and flee from God. As we have learned so far in the narrative, that is NOT possible! Prompt obedience to the One who loves you will always lead to greater blessings than running off into a far country vacant of Godly love. Even in our rebellion, God does not give up on His own. In your own spiritual journey, it may be that you, like Jonah, are fleeing the will of God. You have purchased your ticket of escape through the means of procrastination and lack of fervor; but God is waiting just ahead in your path that you believe is taking you farther away from Him. It will be less painful for you if you simply surrender to God now rather than meeting with your own floundering in the tempest at sea.

God now has Jonah's undivided attention, at least for this immediate time following his ordeal with the fish. Jonah has had enough of not only traveling ON the sea, but IN it! Jonah should have known that the purposes and intentions of God never change as do those of fickle man. His memory is always current, and His plans do not change. *1 And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time.* At least the hearing of the Word of the Lord is becoming more familiar with Jonah for he heard it quite clearly, too, before his rebellion against it. If you do not heed that Voice when you first hear it, you will heed it the second time in a different state of mind. God comes to us in gentle whispers and a still, small voice; however, if we do not obey, He will come in the unrelenting storms and gales of the troubled seas. Why not obey at First Call, rather than putting the Lord to all of that trouble of preparing a Great Fish for you?

So what does God command of Jonah this second time? *2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.* The command remains the same, except God tells Jonah the second time to preach UNTO that great city – not AGAINST it! Perhaps seeing the travail of Jonah in the fish's belly has caused the Lord to take greater pity on the sinful souls of Nineveh. Those in Nineveh are truly sinful; however, they have not had the benefit of hearing the Word of the Lord as has Jonah. The furtive flight from God has delayed that blessing to these people.

*3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD.* If we began reading the book at this point, we would believe Jonah a commendable servant of the Lord since we would know nothing of his previous flight from the Lord. We know only in part, but God knows the whole scope of our lives. We judge on appearance and in part while God judges the whole of the heart. Now Jonah will obey *according to the Word of the Lord.* This time, instead of going DOWN from the Presence of the Lord, Jonah ARISES to obey that Lord. The direction we follow in life is always better if it is TOWARD the Lord.

Dr. Layard, the archaeologist who discovered and excavated the ruins of Nineveh, estimates the city to be approximately 60 miles in circumference. This would make it 15 miles of length to each side. So Nineveh was a great city in both power and in size. *Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.* It would take a

man quite a long time to go from one end of Nineveh to the next when walking and preaching at the same time.

**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 verse gives greater insight into the size of the city by Jonah's just beginning to enter by a day's journey. A day's travel was only a beginning. The number forty so often in scripture heralds a time of trial and tribulation. *In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.* (Gen 7:11-12) Also, note that the Children of Israel, for their lack of faith, were in the Wilderness for forty years. Likewise, our Lord began His earthly ministry in the Wilderness for forty days and forty nights. Jonah's words to Nineveh were the words of the Lord. Jonah was a prophet, not because he could tell the future, but because he KNEW the ways and nature of the Lord through His Word. The people of Nineveh were great sinners, and God had pronounced a coming judgment upon them. However, the judgment of God is never irreversible if the people will repent of their sins and call upon the Lord. *If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.* (2 Chron 7:14) Of course, the first requirement is that we BECOME the people of the Lord who are called by His name. Being called by His Name is more than a simple label. The Name we are called must be reflected in the character we evince. So Nineveh was on God's mind for destruction.

**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. 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.** The Spirit of God is grieved at our false fasts and days of so-called mourning. Do we really feel, as the King of Nineveh felt, a strong revulsion to our sins and such a deep repentance that we would fast as he fasted? Or do we believe that having a small dab of ash smeared on our foreheads, for all to see that we are so pious, at Lent will suffice? This King was over a sinful people and, was himself, sinful; yet, see what he does. He was very much unlike our modern politicians in Washington. He first of all 1) proclaimed a fast. He did not exempt himself or his court from that fast. 2) He humbled himself first of all his citizens by laying aside his robes of royalty and adorning himself with the rough and uncomfortable robes of sackcloth. He sat down in a pile of ashes – he did not merely smear a dab on his forehead and be done with it! He was SERIOUS! What great blessings could again flow into our benighted land if we had leaders who would only repent and humble themselves in prayer!

After first doing so himself, see what proclamation the King made to his entire realm: **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 any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: 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. 9 Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?** Who can tell, indeed! Jonah KNEW! He KNEW God well enough to know that God would forgive even sinful Nineveh if they only repented. Amazingly, this is what troubled the heart of Jonah. Even the King suspected that the mighty God whom Jonah preached would also be mighty in Heart.

America has, in time past, had such leaders who would deign to lead the nation

in prayer and repentance:

On 3 OCTOBER 1789, from the US Capitol in New York City, President George Washington issued the first Proclamation of a National Day of Thanksgiving and Prayer to Almighty God, as just one week earlier the first session of the U.S. Congress successfully approved the First Ten Amendments limiting the power of the Federal Government.

The First Amendment begins: Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

In his Proclamation, President Washington stated: Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the Providence of Almighty God....we may...unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations...

Washington continued: and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions, to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our...duties properly... to render our national government a blessing to all the People, by constantly being a government of wise, just and constitutional laws...and to bless them with...peace and concord... and the increase of science ...and...to grant unto all Mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as He alone knows to be best. (American Minute, Bill Federer)

So how did God respond to the prayers and fasting of the people of Nineveh? Perhaps you, like Jonah, have become prophet enough to know already? Well, let us check the Word of God to see: *10 And God 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.*

We are bewildered at the rampant sins of our own nation. We view the situation as helpless, but it is not. If we follow the lead of a great President, George Washington, God will restore our hearts to ones of flesh and not of stone.