

November 21, 1993

"Jonah"
Book of Jonah

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

[Conclusion of "Job" from 11-14-93]

V. The nature of God and of his creatures, mankind, is treated in the Book of Job. God is in complete control of his creation, Rom. 9:20, Satan himself is subject to God's will, and, although God does not tempt anyone to sin (Jam. 1:13), he is aware of Satan's rebellious activities among people and mankind's weaknesses. God's Son, Jesus Christ, was not immune to Satan's efforts, for Jesus was tempted as all people are, Heb. 4:15. Suffering is universal among all people, whether due to a given individual's own sin or the sin of all humanity's pair of physical parents, Adam and Eve, Rom. 5:12. But God's New Covenant which is sealed by the sacrifice of his only Son once and forever (Heb. 10:1-18), assures God's final triumph over the effect of Satan's power of temptation (I Cor. 10:13) and which ultimately eliminates all human suffering for those who trust in the righteousness of God in Christ, Rom. 9:24-10:3. Trust-ers in Jesus Christ even rejoice in suffering, Rom. 5:1-5. Tribula-tions breed patience with believers even as it did with Job, Jam. 5:11, and our reward will be the elimination of all suffering, Rev. 21:4. Mankind cannot understand God's complete nature and must rely on faith in his promise to please him, Heb. 11:6. The best knowledge we have of God's nature is the life of Jesus Christ, for God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, II Cor. 5:19.

I. To understand the attitude and actions of Jonah (dove) one must realize the religious and political situation at his time and place. David had captured all nations near enough to Israel to be an immediate threat to his nation, and following him Solomon had further secured the nation's position by marrying Egypt's royal-ty. The political climate of Israel was serene. However, the follo-wing period (c. 930-760 BC), about 170 years, Israel and Judah divid-ed, and both became targets for corruption from within and pillage, pilferage, and plundering from without. A new threat developed during this time, to Israel's east. The Egyptian Empire ruled the middle east area from c. 1600-1000 BC while the Hebrews grew prolifi-cally during Joseph's life and beyond. Afterwards, beginning in c. 900 BC, Assyria, along the Tigris River, began to prosper commer-cially and politically. The empire's name came from Asshur who was Shem's son, Gen. 10:11, and who in later times was worshiped by the Assyrians as their chief god. Asshur established the city of Nineveh just after the Flood.

II. When Jeroboam II became king of Israel in 793 BC, affairs of the nation (northern kingdom) became somewhat more prosperous. He reigned longer than any other king of Israel, 41 Years. At the start of his reign, Jonah became a prophet of Israel. Since Assyria was just beginning its period of strength, Jeroboam II was able to repel Syrian invaders and even captured their capital, Damascus, II Kings 14:28. A part of Jonah's first responsibility as a prophet was to Israel when some of the citizens began to have hopes that the Lord was about to restore Israel to its former glory under Solo-mon, even though signs of Assyria's strength were growing. (Assyria

finally captured Israel in 722 BC.) Assyria's religion was polytheistic and supported immoral and sensual practices along with gross violence. Needless to say, the Assyrians were hated and despised by the Hebrews, especially the prophet Jonah.

III. Jonah, the fifth of the minor prophets, was the son of Amittai and a native of Gath-hepher, II Kings 14:25-27. Jonah was having a rather easy time of his ministry, because things were fairly settled. At least Israel was not openly against God like the Assyrians were with their ancestor worship (Asshur). But the Lord assigned Jonah to become a missionary to that great, but evil, empire, Assyria. Not only was Assyria evil but now it had become Israel's dreaded enemy. The Assyrians flaunted their power before Israel's God and others through numerous acts of heartless cruelty. So when Jonah heard God's call to go to Assyria and call the people to repentance, his humanity shifted in the opposite direction, to Tarshish, Spain. The Book of Jonah relates his flight and how God miraculously stopped him and reversed his direction to God's original assignment. It is much profounder than an interesting story about a man of God and a fish of questionable abilities. It is a sequence of biographical facts which reveal a God of universal love, mercy, and grace. Perhaps no people at that time deserved God's favor less than the people of Assyria's capital, Nineveh. Jonah knew their moral degradation, but he inwardly believed that God would forgive and bless them if they turned from their sin and worshiped Jehovah. He was aware also of the power of God's message, and somehow he sensed that his weak, reluctant preaching would bring about a positive response. They would thereby be spared God's judgment. But, still, Jonah hated the Assyrians, and his basal humanity told him that he, representing God's people and will, would rather see vengeance than mercy. He ran westward to the sea at Joppa (Tel Aviv) rather than eastward to Nineveh. On the ship a storm threatened the crew and passengers, and Jonah asked to be thrown overboard after confessing that he was a Hebrew and that the God he worshiped, Jehovah, was punishing him for disobedience. The crew obliged and a large fish swallowed the disobedient prophet. God caused the fish to disgorge Jonah onto land after he had been fishborn for three days, Matt. 12:38-41; Lk 11:29-32. Jonah prayed while in the fishy dungeon and, on land safe again, he was ready and willing to do God's will. Therefore, when God the second time instructed him to go to Nineveh, he set out on God's missionary assignment. As he entered the city, he proclaimed a message of God's wrath, the people were to repent of their sins, turn to God, and change their evil ways in 40 days or be destroyed. The message was universally received, and even the king proclaimed a fast, disrobed, and sat in ashes. Their reaction to Jonah's message from God saved them from destruction which displeased Jonah immensely. Today we cannot understand the prophet's attitude concerning Nineveh's conversion. He was exceedingly irritated and angry, and told God, in effect, "I told you so." He, like Elijah before, told God to take his life. Jonah wanted to see whether his evangelistic message would be really carried out so he moved to the suburb, set up a tent, and waited. God made a gourd to grow over him to ward off the sun, but Jonah was still unhappy. The Scripture gives no hint that Jonah ever agreed with God's position. His last statement was, "It is better for me to die than to live." Probably his strong animosity was caused by either a strong feeling of narrow nationalism or he had earlier prophesied against Assyria at home and did not want his friends back home to know of his changed position.

W4

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*How long was Job defeated? 1 or 1 1/2 yrs.
Everything doubled - children? 1st 10 in heaven + therefore double/tee!*

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only place Job's name used in N.T.

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nation divided

had 13 major + many minor gods

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Life sake
in Feb
nearly - no
today home
today, 3
to hope, hope

to Jeremiah
to pain
to see people
know at that
time
and wanted
to go there for
a reason
Jeremiah
II Chron
20:36

I have
Peter
acts
acknowledged
but
accept of
wishes
Branney
not
to go
to
X

next life
Daniel
prophecy

God has always loved all people & his plan was that the Jews would follow his will & take his message to everyone. They refused &