Having A Basic Understanding of Some Old Testament Truths

Part 438 – Jonah Receives Instructions Through God's Change Of Mind (Jonah 3:1-10)

1. What did God tell Jonah in this second instruction?

   Pretty much the same thing Jonah originally disobeyed (cf. **Jonah 1:1-2**): *"(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"* (**Jonah 3:1-2**).

   - As we noted in chapter one, "The word of the LORD came" or very similar statements: **Genesis 15:1**, **Genesis 15:4**, **I Samuel 15:10**, **II Samuel 7:4**, **II Samuel 7:4**, **II Samuel 24:11**, **I Kings 6:11**, **I Kings 13:1**, **I Kings 13:20**, **I Kings 16:1**, **I Kings 17:2, I Kings 17:8**, **I Kings 18:1**, **I Kings 18:31**, II **Kings 20:4**, **II Chronicles 11:2**, **II Chronicles 12:7**, **Jeremiah 1:2**, **Jeremiah 1:13**, **Ezekiel 1:3**, **Daniel 9:2**, **Haggai 2:20**, **Zechariah 4:8**, etc.
   - It was time for Jonah to get up and get going to do the work of a prophet of God (**Jeremiah 1:17**).
   - Nineveh felt too comfortable in their state (**Zephaniah 2:13-15**).
   - God wanted His word preached His way (**II Samuel 23:2**, **I Kings 22:1-50**, **Jeremiah 50:1**, **Hosea 6:5**, **Zechariah 1:6**, **Romans 10:14-17**, **I Corinthians 2:1-13**, and **II Timothy 4:1-5**).
   - Remember, prophets had freewill (**I Corinthians 14:32**). The right man cannot but help to speak though (**Jeremiah 20:9**).

2. Was Nineveh a small city?

   No, it was a three day's journey wide: *"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"* (**Jonah 3:3**).

   - Jonah's second chance, and the fact that he went and did what God said, is what repentance is (**Ezekiel 18:24-32** and **Matthew 21:28-32**).
   - "Go" (vs. 2) means arise and go. This was the expectation the Apostles lived under in the first century (**Matthew 28:16-20**, **Mark 16:14-20**, **Acts 8:5**, etc.).
   - According to Easton's Bible Dictionary, a day's journey was twenty miles. So, if that is correct, this city was sixty miles wide. Regardless, it would take three days to cross the city.

3. How much time was Nineveh given before it was going to be overthrown?

   Forty days: *"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"* (**Jonah 3:4**).

   - So Jonah didn't cross the whole city. He entered in about twenty miles and gave the proclamation that the city would be overthrown in forty days. The wicked were promised to be overthrown under the law (**Proverbs 11:11**, **Proverbs 12:7**, and **Proverbs 14:11**).
   - If the wicked turn not… (**Psalms 7:11-13**).

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- The first time we see God overthrow cities in the Scriptures was the account of Sodom and Gomorrah (**Genesis 18:22-19:29**). Those two cities stood as an example (**Jeremiah 50:35-40** and **Zephaniah 2:9**), even until now, that man should not live ungodly (**II Peter 2:6** and **Jude 1:7**).

4. How did the people of Nineveh respond to Jonah's preaching?

With faith and indications of repentance: *"(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"* (**Jonah 3:5-8**).

- They heard and what Jonah said and believed (**Acts 4:4**, **Acts 18:8**, and **I Thessalonians 2:13**).
- Understand that their believing Jonah was stated as "believed God" (**Luke 10:13-16** and **John 12:44**).
- They proclaimed a fast (**Joel 1:1-15**).
- From the top of their society to the bottom, they put on sackcloth (**Jeremiah 4:5-8**).
- Their works testify to their belief (**James 2:14-26**).
- Their belief stood in the days of Jesus as an example (**Luke 11:29-32**).
- When people do not believe, sinful action often follows (**Psalms 78:32**).
- The king acted wisely (**Psalms 2:10-12**).
- The king proclaimed a law for a fast for man and beast (**II Chronicles 20:1-3**, **Ezra 8:21-23**, and **Jeremiah 36:5-10**).
- It would have been evil for the king to ignore the message of the prophet of God (**II Chronicles 36:11-12**).
- The king ordered repentance. That was a good call (**Isaiah 55:6-7** and **Jeremiah 25:5**).

5. Were they concerned that God might not change His mind?

Yes: *"Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not"* (**Jonah 3:9**)?

- They were right to be concerned (**Exodus 32:30**, **II Samuel 12:1-23**, **Joel 2:14**, **Zephaniah 2:3**, and **Acts 8:12-24**).
- They rightfully realized that God, in His anger, could have destroyed them and they would perish (**Deuteronomy 8:18-19**, **Joshua 23:16**, and **Luke 13:1-5**).

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6. Did God change His mind about judgment against them?

Yes: *"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 3:10**).

- God saw their works (**Proverbs 5:21**, **Proverbs 15:3**, and **Jeremiah 32:19**).
- He saw they turned from their evil way. They did so because they listened (**Jeremiah 23:22**) and believed (**Hebrews 3:7-4:7**).
- Remember, His ability to see goes beyond just outward actions (**I Chronicles 28:9**, **Proverbs 17:3**, and **Jeremiah 17:9-10**).
- God's warning to a nation included the option of repentance (**Jeremiah 18:7-10**).
- God doesn't like to see the wicked die (**Ezekiel 33:11**).
- God can have a change of heart in these matters (**Hosea 11:8**).

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