

Jonah

I cannot remember when I wrote in the headings to the four chapters of the Book of Jonah into my 50 year old Bible. Coming to them afresh it seems appropriate to use them as titles for these Bible studies! We could head this chapter “Jonah, the reluctant preacher”! A reluctance, not because he doubted the Word of the Lord, but because he knew that it was the truth, and he knew the innermost character of God. He realised that the enemies of his country Israel, were being given a chance to repent.

Jonah Chapter 3 “Preaching”: - Read Jonah, chapter 3

Verses 1 – 3 records the second call of Jonah. After receiving the consequences of refusing the first call, this time Jonah does not hesitate. The message was direct from the Lord.

We have already noted that the “*three days journey in breadth.*” most likely refers to the administrative district rather than the walled city itself. (See the first study)

Verses 4 – 5 The message was shockingly abrupt! The city would be destroyed in 40 days time. No ifs or buts, that was it! No call to repentance for these hated enemies of Israel! A real “fire and brimstone” preacher. “*AND THE PEOPLE BELIEVED GOD*”. I do ask “Why”? What was Jonah doing that we are not doing? (See footnote below *).

Many of you know that I am praying and longing for true revival to come to Chudleigh! This example of faithful preaching and its result emphasises the sovereignty of the Lord God. See 1 Corinthians 3, verse 6 – We can sow the seed and water it but it is God who gives the increase. In all true revivals a few faithful Christians pleading with the Lord in prayer is the seed needed.

Notice that it was people from all walks of life “*from the greatest to the least*” that came to repentance.

Verses 6 – 9 The witness of the first ones to respond to the message led to the repentance of the nation. The king himself believed the message and issued a general proclamation. The whole city began a fast (verse 7) and were united in prayer to the Lord God. This meant a turning from idolatry to the worship of the One True God. The outcome was still in doubt but the king himself – regarded as a ‘god’ in those days, recognised the sovereignty of the God of Heaven. Thoroughgoing turning away from sin by men and women is always pleasing to God, and in response He generously pours out His love.

Verse 10 The Lord’s promises of salvation take precedence over His threats. God’s love is eternal. In the case of Nineveh the Lord did not change in his essence; only His way of dealing with the women, men, children and animals of Nineveh changed.

We can only wonder again at His love and mercy for repentant sinners through the gift of His Son who carried all our guilt and shame “*up to and onto the tree.*” - 1 Peter 2 verse 24.

More work for you:-

Pray using Psalm 46, recognising that the Lord is sovereign and that He longs for everyone to come into a saving relationship with Him – 2 Peter 3, verse 9. He longs to be exalted here among us.

* Revival on the Isle of Lewis 1949 is worth reading! See:- <https://www.romans1015.com/lewis-revival/>

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| 1. Jesus, the Name high over all,
in hell or earth or sky;
angels and mortals prostrate fall,
and devils fear and fly. | 3. O that the world might taste and see
the riches of His grace!
The arms of love that compass me
would all the world embrace. |
| 2. Jesus, the Name to sinners dear,
the Name to sinners giv'n;
it scatters all their guilty fear,
it turns their hell to heav'n. | 4. His only righteousness I show,
His saving truth proclaim;
'tis all my business here below
to cry, "Behold the Lamb!" |

Charles Wesley 1749