

The Book of Jonah

Introduction

The question as to the reality of the person of Jonah is answered by 2 Kings 14:25. In this passage we find him mentioned as the prophet who prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II. His name means "dove," and his father's name Amittai means "the truth of the Lord." He was from "Gath-Hepher"--the winepress of the well is the meaning of these two words. Thus Jonah also belongs to the earlier prophets and the book bearing his name, written by himself, occupies the right place in the Old Testament. A Jewish tradition states that Jonah was the son of the widow at Zarephath, whom Elijah raised to life; but this is only an invention with no evidence whatever.

The Book and Experience of Jonah

The book of Jonah is of a different nature from the books of the other Minor Prophets and their personal experiences and activities as reported in the historical books. The book of Jonah has no direct prophecies in it, yet the experience it records is a great prophecy.

We do not give the contents of the book in this introduction, but shall follow all in the annotations. As is well known, the miraculous history of the book of Jonah has been widely attacked by infidelity. When the Old Testament was translated into the Greek (the Septuagint) heathen philosophers and other writers ridiculed it and made sport with the book. Their objections and ridicule are reproduced in the school of the destructive criticism. We hear that men who boast of great scholarship declare that Jonah never lived, that the story of the book of Jonah is an imagination of some great literary genius. Says that archcritic, Canon F.W. Farrar, in *The Expositor's Bible*: "Of Jonah we know nothing more. For it is impossible to see in the book of Jonah much more than a beautiful and edifying story, which may or may not rest on some surviving legends." But as some one has said, it requires less faith to credit this simple excerpt from Jonah's history than to believe the numerous hypotheses that have been invented to deprive it of its supernatural character. The great majority of these hypotheses are clumsy and far-fetched, doing violence to the language, and doing despite to the spirit of revelation. These infidel inventions are distinguished by tedious adjustment, laborious combinations, historical conjecture and critical jugglery.

Some critics who do not want to reject altogether the story of Jonah, suppose that it may have had some historical basis, though in the form we have it today is fanciful and mythical. Another critic regards it as a dream Jonah had in the ship. Still another critic views the book as an historical allegory, descriptive of the fate of Manasseh, and Josiah his grandson. What wild fancy this critic indulged in may be seen from the fact that he compared the ship to the Jewish monarchy, while the casting away of Jonah symbolized the temporary captivity of Manasseh!

Many critics treat it as an allegory based upon the Phoenician myth of Hercules and the sea-monster. To quote a few more, simply to show what foolish things the darkened mind of man, who thinks he has attained scholarship, can invent in order to disprove the truth of God, we mention the theory that when Jonah was thrown into the sea he was picked up by a ship having for a figurehead the head of a great fish. Another one says that probably Jonah took refuge in the interior of a dead whale which was floating about near the spot he was cast overboard.

The great majority of the critics today deny the historicity of the book of Jonah and claim that its material has been derived from popular legends, that it is fiction with a moral design. The moral lessons and its religious meaning have even a wider range than these hypotheses. The theories do not merit a special refutation.

Is it History or Myth?

There is nothing in the account which would justify any critic to charge it with being allegory. It is cast in the form of a narrative and has all the literary characteristics of a personal experience. The sole reason why the critics have classed it with myths and deny its authenticity is the miraculous element in the book. Any one who believes in an omnipotent God, a God who does wondrous things, will have no difficulty whatever in accepting this book as a true history. We might also add that all the earlier Jewish sources confirm the historicity and literalness of the book of Jonah. Furthermore, the book is very simple and pure Hebrew.

The Highest Evidence

The highest authority that Jonah lived, and had the experience recorded in this account is the Lord Jesus Christ. The words which He spoke, who is the Truth, are plain and unimpeachable. There can be no secondary meaning; "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, a greater than Jonah is here" (Matthew 12:40-41). Our Lord tells us that there was a prophet by the name of Jonah and that he had the experience related in the book which bears his name. To deny this is tantamount to denying the knowledge and the truthfulness of God. This is exactly what sneering critics do. They have even gone so far as to say that if our ever blessed Lord knew better than He spoke, He acted thus for expediency's sake, so as not to clash with the current opinions among His contemporaries. Others boldly say that He did not know, for He had not access to the sources which are at our command today. In other words the destructive critic claims to have more knowledge than the Lord Jesus Christ possessed in His days on earth.

Professor A. C. Zenos (in the Standard Bible Dictionary) says: "The New Testament does not commit Jesus Christ or its own authors to one or the other of the contending theories." This is a poor statement. The Lord Jesus did commit Himself fully to the historicity of Jonah. The New Century Bible, a destructive work, makes the following declaration: "We are not to conclude that the literal validity of the history of Jonah is established by this reference"--that is, the words of our Lord in Matthew 12:40. But the man who wrote this overlooked the fact that the Lord in all His allusions to the Old Testament events always speaks of them as actual, literal events, and, therefore, establishes their literal validity. For instance, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness" ... "As it was in the days of Noah ..." "As it was in the days of Lot." Then in the next verse in Matthew's Gospel, the Lord speaks of the queen of the south's visit to Solomon as a real, literal fact. Why then should He not have spoken of the history of Jonah as a literal fact?

The truth is that the Lord Jesus Christ placed such emphasis upon the book of Jonah because it foreshadowed His own experience as the Redeemer, and because He knew of what apostate Christendom would do with this book and its record. There is no middle ground possible; either this book of Jonah is true, relates the true and miraculous history of this prophet, or the Lord Jesus Christ is not the infallible Son of God. His person and His work stand and fall together with the authenticity of Jonah.

"Our Lord singled out this particular miracle about Jonah, which has been thought of great difficulty, and affixes to it His own almighty stamp of truth. Can you not receive the words of the Lord Jesus Christ against all men that ever were? The Lord Jesus has referred to the fact that Jonah was swallowed by a great fish, call it what you will--I am not going to enter into a contest with naturalists, whether it was a shark, or a sperm-whale or another. This is a matter of very small account. We will leave these men of science to settle the kind (if they can); but the fact itself, the only one of importance to us to affirm, is that it was a great fish that swallowed and afterwards yielded up the prophet alive. This is all one need to affirm the literal truth of the fact alleged. There is no need to imagine that a fish was created for that purpose. There are many fishes quite capable of swallowing a man whole. But the fact is not only affirmed in the Old Testament, but reaffirmed by our Lord Himself and applied to Himself. Any man who disputes this must give an account before

the judgment seat of Christ" (W. Kelly).

The Typical-Prophetic Meaning of Jonah

The typical-prophetic meaning of the story of Jonah is authorized by the words of the Son of God. His experience typifies the death, the burial and the resurrection of our Lord, as well as the gospel message which goes forth to the Gentiles. Furthermore, Jonah's experience is prophetic also of the entire nation. The annotations will enter more fully into these interesting and important foreshadowings.

The Division of the Book

The division of the book is very simple. We maintain the chapter division as made in the authorized version.

Chapter 1 gives the record of Jonah's commission, his disobedience and the consequences.

Chapter 2 contains his prayer and his deliverance.

Chapter 3 has the account of his obedience in preaching to Nineveh.

Chapter 4 contains the account of Jonah's discontent and correction.

Analysis and Annotations

CHAPTER 1 The Commission of the Prophet ,His Disobedience, and the Consequences

1. The commission (1:1-2)

2. The disobedience (1:3)

3. The consequences (1:4-17)

Verses 1-2. The record begins with the same word with which all historical books in the Bible begin, like Joshua, judges, Ruth, Samuel, etc. The commission given to Jonah was to go to Nineveh, that great city, and to cry against it on account of its wickedness.

Nineveh was the great capital of the Assyrian nation; it is mentioned for the first time in Genesis 10:11. Its great size is mentioned in chapter 3:3, where we read it was "three day's journey." Ancient Greek and Roman writers state that it was the largest city in the world in that day. All these statements of its enormous size have been verified by modern excavations. The word of the Lord came to Jonah to visit this city and deliver the message. Seven times the phrase "the word of the LORD came to Jonah" is used in this book.

Verse 3. Jonah rose up at once, but instead of going to the east towards Nineveh he fled in the other direction. Tarshish in Spain was his goal. It is also stated that he fled from the presence of the Lord. This cannot possibly mean that he fled from the presence of Him whom he knew as the omnipresent One. The Psalm of David which speaks of this expressly was then in the possession of Israel, and Jonah must have known it: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in sheol, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me" (Psalm 139:7-10). He did not flee from the presence of the Lord in the sense of escaping His knowledge and authority. It means that he left the land of Israel where Jehovah dwelt; he fled from the service-commission he had received.

If we look for a motive of this disobedient prophet we find it given in the book itself. In chapter 4:2 we read, "Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and

merciful, and slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of evil." But why should he fear that God might be merciful to Nineveh and save the city? It was undoubtedly a national spirit which possessed the prophet. It has been suggested that the prophet knew that the Assyrian would be used by the Lord as the instrument to punish Israel and that he thought if Nineveh would perish the people Israel might be saved. Inasmuch as God might show mercy to Assyria, Assyria would then be used as the rod upon Israel, and for this reason he was disobedient to the commission. But the direct prophecy that the Assyrian would be the staff in the hand of the Lord to bring judgment upon Israel was made through Isaiah (chapter 10), and that revelation had not yet been given, for Jonah lived before the prophet Isaiah. It was rather the fear Jonah had as a Jew that the conversion of the Gentiles might rob his nation of the distinction of being the nation of election, to whom Jehovah had revealed Himself exclusively. He therefore went to Joppa where he engaged passage on a ship which was to bring him to Tarshish, which he never reached. It was at Joppa where centuries later another Jew, who was also jealous for his nation, had a vision which made it clear that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles. That Jew was Peter (Acts 10).

Verses 4-17. No sooner had the ship set sail but a terrible tempest arose, sent by the Lord. The danger of shipwreck was imminent. The heathen mariners became terrified and besides crying each one to their gods, they threw the wares overboard to lighten the ship, so that it might weather the storm. But we do not read anything about Jonah calling on his God. Was it an evil conscience which led him to seek sleep in the sides of the ship? Or did he seek sleep because he was in despair? Or was his action produced by the calmness of faith, that he knew himself in the hands of the Lord? Perhaps his action shows more than anything indifference and an astonishing self security.

The shipmaster aroused him from his sleep, asking him why he slept and demanded that he call upon his God. The lot is cast and it fell upon Jonah. He might have confessed before but he waited as long as he could. The questions they asked him he answers readily. He confesses that he is a Hebrew, that he fears the Lord, the God of heaven, the creator of sea and land. His confession filled them with fear; they also knew that he had been disobedient for he told them about it. It was a noble confession and shows that though he had fled from the presence of the Lord his heart still clung to Him. He answered the question, what shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? by pronouncing his own sentence. "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." Again we must say these are noble words. He is ready to sacrifice himself and trusts the Lord and His mercy. After the mariners made an unsuccessful attempt to row the ship to land, and calling upon the Lord not to lay upon them innocent blood, they cast Jonah into the raging sea, and the sea became calm. As a result the heathen sailors feared Jehovah exceedingly, offering a sacrifice unto Him and making vows, while the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, in whose belly Jonah remained three days and three nights. Some have stated that the Lord created a special sea-monster for this purpose, but the Hebrew word does not mean "create", it means "appoint." It certainly was not a whale, for whales rarely ever are seen in the Mediterranean sea, nor can a whale swallow a human being on account of the narrowness of its throat. It was probably a species of sea-monster frequently found in that sea and known by the scientific name *squalus carcharias*, which can easily swallow a human being whole. But the miracle was not that such a fish came up from the depths of the sea and swallowed the prophet, but that Jonah was miraculously preserved in the fish.

The Typical Application

1. Jonah is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. As already pointed out in the introduction the words of our Lord sanction this application. But as He said when He spoke of Solomon "a greater than Solomon is here," so He also said "a greater than Jonah is here."

We point out a few of the applications and contrasts. Jonah was sent with a message of judgment; the Son of God came with the message of love and salvation. "For God sent not His Son

into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17).

Jonah was disobedient, acting in self-will, fleeing from the presence of the Lord. The Son of God was obedient; He never did His own will but the will of Him that sent Him. The words He spoke were not His own. "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me." He always had the Father set before Himself and was uninterruptedly in His presence.

Jonah, indifferent and self-secure, was fast asleep in the ship while the storm raged and the ship was in danger of going down. The Lord Jesus was asleep in the ship on Galilee, and though the ship was filling with water He was undisturbed, knowing that He was safe. He did what Jonah did not and could not do. He rebuked his fearful disciples and rebuked the wind and the waves; the storm was suddenly hushed.

Jonah bore a faithful witness; but how much greater is His witness. He is called "the faithful Witness" (Rev. 1).

Jonah sacrificed himself in order to save those who were about to perish. But how much greater His sacrifice! Jonah's fate came upon him on account of his sin and disobedience. The Lord Jesus Christ did not suffer for His sins, for He had none, being the Holy, the Sinless One. He died exclusively for others and died for the ungodly. But did Jonah actually die? Did death fasten upon him? Was his body miraculously preserved so that it did not see corruption? Was it a literal resurrection when the fish vomited him out? Jonah did not die physically. But his experience typifies the death and the burial of Christ, and also His physical resurrection. How could Jonah have prayed and cried to the Lord out of the belly of the fish if his physical life had ceased? It was a miracle, however, that Jonah was kept alive.

The three days and three nights have troubled a good many expositors. Not a few teach that in order to bring together the three days and three nights during which our Lord was in the grave, He must have died either on Wednesday or Thursday. The three days and three nights must be interpreted according to Hebrew usage. In Luke 24:21 we read that the two who met the risen Lord said, "And beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done." That was on the first day of the week. Reckoning back, Saturday would be the second day and Friday the first day, the day on which Christ died.

2. Jonah is a type of the Jewish Nation. In the Jewish synagogical ritual the book of Jonah is read on the Day of Atonement. The writer is indebted to an old orthodox Jew for the information why this story is read on their great day of fasting and prayer. He said, "We are the Jonah." Like Jonah the nation was called to bear witness to the Gentiles. And as Jonah did not want the knowledge of Jehovah to go to the Gentiles, so the Jews filled with national pride of being the elect nation opposed God's purposes. (See Acts 13:6-12, 44-52; 14:19-20; 17:5-9; 18:12, etc.)

Disobedient as Jonah, the nation left the presence of the Lord. Jonah engaged passage on a merchant-ship, and the Jew became a trafficker. Like as it was with Jonah, storm and disaster came upon the nation after their great act of disobedience, when they rejected Christ, and opposed His purposes. Like Jonah, in the midst of all their troubles they did not deny, nor deny now, their nationality, their faith in God; they also confess in some of their prayers, at least the orthodox Jews, why it is that they are in trouble, that they have sinned and turned away from the Lord.

Jonah was cast overboard into the sea. The sea represents the nations; that is where the Jews were cast. As a result of the casting away of Jonah the heathen sailors turned to the Lord and sacrificed unto Him. In Romans 11:11 we read, "through their fall (the Jews) salvation came to the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy." The belly of the fish represents the grave of the Jews among the nations. They became nationally and spiritually dead. But as the fish did not digest Jonah, so the nations have not digested the Jew. They remain unassimilated, just as Balaam predicted, "This nation shall dwell alone and not be reckoned among the nations." The national preservation of Israel is one of the great miracles in history, just as the preservation of Jonah in the belly of the fish

was a miracle.

CHAPTER 2 Jonah's Prayer and Deliverance

1. The prayer (2:1-9)

2. The deliverance (2:10)

Verses 1-9. Some expositors have called attention to the fact that the prayer is not one offered up for deliverance, but it is a thanksgiving for the accomplished deliverance. But this is answered by the opening verse of this chapter, in which we are told that he prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly. When he found that he had escaped the death he anticipated and that the power of God kept him alive, he realized that the Lord his God would also deliver him; in faith he praised Jehovah for the coming deliverance. His prayer is composed almost entirely of sentences found in Psalms. We give the references. Verse 2 reminds of Psalms 18:6, 7 and 120:1. The word "hell" is the Hebrew "sheol," the unknown region. See also Psalm 30:3. Verse 3 contains a quotation from Psalm 42:7, "All thy waves and billows passed over me." In connection with verse 4 consider Psalm 31:22. Verse 5 is found in Psalm 18:4, except the seaweed which crowned his head as he went into the deep; also Psalm 69:2. The thanksgiving in verse 6, "Yet hast Thou brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God" is closely allied to Psalm 30:5. The first part of verse 7 is from Psalm 142:3 (marginal reading) and 143:4. The second part is found in Psalm 5:7 and 18:6. The eighth verse reminds of Psalm 31:6 and the ninth verse is to be connected with Psalm 42:4.

The last utterance before the Lord commanded the fish is a triumphant shout, "Salvation is of the LORD," a truth which many preachers in Christendom do not know.

Verse 10. The God of creation manifested His power over His creation by impelling the fish to release its prisoner. The place at which the fish vomited out Jonah is not mentioned; it was probably not very far from the seaport Joppa where he embarked.

The Typical Application

1. As to the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord went into the jaws of death and died the sinner's death, the substitute of sinners. Most of the passages from the Psalms which Jonah embodied in his prayer are prophetic predictions of the sufferings of Christ. He cried to God for deliverance and was heard. (See Hebrews 5:7) The answer was His resurrection. Over His blessed head passed the waves and billows of a Holy God, when as the substitute He hung on the cross. He knew more than Jonah could ever know what it meant, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid." The Sixty-ninth Psalm is Messianic and the words Jonah used, "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters, where floods overthrow me," tell us of the deep sufferings through which He passed. While Jonah's head was wound about with the seaweeds of the deep, our Lord bore the crown of thorns, the emblem of the curse, upon His blessed head.

It was on the third day that the fish vomited out Jonah. The third day is marked in the Word of God as the day of resurrection. (See Genesis 1:11-13; Hosea 6:1-3.) On the third day our Lord left the grave behind and rose from among the dead. We quote a helpful paragraph on the question of the three days and nights:

"So our Lord Jesus, though by Jewish reckoning three days and nights in the grave, literally lay there but the whole of Saturday, the Sabbath, with the part of Friday not yet closed, and before the dawn of Sunday. For we must always remember in these questions the Jews' method of reckoning. Part of a day regularly counted for the twenty-four hours. The evening and the morning, or any part, counted as a whole day. But the Lord, as we know, was crucified in the afternoon on Friday; His body lay all the Sabbath day in the grave; and He arose early on the Sunday morning. That space was counted three days and three nights, according to sanctioned Biblical reckoning, which no man

who bows to Scripture would contest. This was asserted among the Jews, who, fertile as they have been in excuses for unbelief, have never, as far as I am aware, made difficulties on this score. The ignorance of Gentiles has exposed some of them when unfriendly to cavil at the phrase. The Jews found not a few stumbling blocks, but this is not one of them; they may know little of what is infinitely more momentous; but they know their own Bible too well to press an objection which would tell against the Hebrew Scriptures quite as much as the Greek." (Wm. Kelly, Jonah)

2. As to the Nation. The prayer for deliverance and Jonah's deliverance by the power of God foreshadows the coming experience of the remnant of Israel. There is coming the time of Jacob's trouble in the closing years of this age. Then a part of the nation will call upon the Lord. Their prayers are also pre-written in the book of Psalms, and when finally they acknowledge that "salvation is of the LORD," and He appears in His glory, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob, the Lord will bring them out of their spiritual and national death. He will speak to the fish, the nations, and they will give up the Jews. Then comes the third day of their restoration. (See Hosea 6:1-3.)

CHAPTER 3 Jonah Preaching in Nineveh

1. The repeated commission and Jonah's obedience (3:1-4)

2. The repentance and salvation of Nineveh (3:4-10)

Verses 1-4. And now after Jonah's death and life experience the Word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, telling him to arise and go to Nineveh to preach there what the Lord would command him. And now he is obedient. Jonah arrived in the great city of three days' journey, and advancing a day's journey into it he cried out his message, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Following is the objection of higher criticism as to this statement: "If we were reading a historical description the narrative would be full of difficulties. A strange prophet announced the impending destruction as he traveled through the vast city for one day, and the huge population immediately believed and repented. The king, who is not named, heard, put on sackcloth, sitting in ashes. If this were history, Jonah did what no prophet, no apostle, what Christ Himself never did. Never did a day's preaching bring a vast strange city to repentance. But we repeat, it is not history; it is a story with a meaning, an allegory; it is the great announcement that God cares for the heathen world, and calls it to repentance, and whenever men anywhere repent, His compassion is kindled towards them" (New Century Bible). We reserve the answer to the supposed difficulties in this historical account for the typical unfolding of this event.

Verses 4-10. The people of Nineveh believed God. The news that a strange prophet had appeared with the message of doom must have spread like wildfire and hundreds upon hundreds must have passed it on so that in a very short time it reached every nook and corner of the great city; it reached the palace of the king and the prisoners in the dungeon. That this is real history has been confirmed by archaeology. For just about that time Nineveh was in great trouble and facing a crisis, which made them eager to believe the message and return to God. They evidenced their faith by a universal fast and humiliation before God. The king laid aside his royal robe and humiliated himself as every one of his subjects did. He issued a proclamation to abstain from food and drink, in which the dumb creation was included. What a solemn time the great city had, when hundreds and thousands humbled themselves and when the lowing and groaning of the domestic animals was heard throughout the city. The people acknowledged all their wickedness and turned away from their evil ways and deeds of violence, expressing the hope of God's mercy. "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not." And God answered and was merciful to them.

The Typical Application

1. As to the Lord Jesus. Jonah who typifies in his experience the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord, preached the message as one who had been in a grave and came to life out of that

grave. In Luke 11:29-30, 32, our Lord makes the application: "For as Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of Man be to this generation ... The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here." Christ was not preached as a Saviour to the Gentile world till He had died and risen from the dead. The Greeks who inquired after Him (John 12) received no answer. But the Lord spoke of Himself at that time as the corn of wheat which was to die to bring forth the abundant fruit. Christ died for the sins of His people Israel, "for that nation," but He also died as a member of the nation, from which He came according to the flesh, so that He might rise and become the Saviour of the Gentiles. Christ preached as having died for our sins, buried and risen on the third day, is the true gospel and carries with it the power of God in the salvation of sinners.

2. As to the Nation. The third day is the day of Israel's spiritual and national resurrection. When that day comes converted Israel will be, according to God's gifts and calling, a holy nation, a nation of priestly functions, a kingdom of priests. They are then fit to show forth the Lord and His glory, and to bring the message, not of judgment, but of life and glory, to the nations of heathendom. The statement in the New Century Bible quoted above is quite correct in one particular-- that "Jonah did what no prophet, no apostle, what Christ Himself never did"--that never a day's preaching brought a vast strange city to repentance. And we might add that no preaching today, during this age, can ever bring such results. The case is unique; it never happened again, that a man who was disobedient, who turned against the divine commission, became a castaway, was miraculously preserved and delivered, led a great world city to God and to true repentance. But if we take into consideration the fact that this true history is a prophecy, all these invented higher critical difficulties vanish altogether. When the nation is reinstated in the land, filled with the Spirit, they will fulfill their calling and go forth in bringing the message to the nations of the world. Then Matthew 28:19 will be accomplished. Then and not before will the world be converted, and all the nations will be joined in the kingdom to Israel, His kingdom people.

And as for repenting Nineveh there came a day of joy and gladness, as animal creation in that city ceased its lowing and groaning, so will come the day of joy and gladness for this poor world, "in that day" when even groaning creation will be delivered of its groans and moans.

CHAPTER 4 Jonah's Discontent and Correction

1. Jonah's discontent (4:1-3)

2. The correction (4:4-11)

Verses 1-3. All that had happened displeased Jonah exceedingly and he was very angry. Did he feel that he had lost his prestige as a prophet, having announced the overthrow of Nineveh, when it did not happen? What he feared had come true; God had been merciful to this great city and they were now enjoying what he considered Israel's exclusive inheritance. Instead of rejoicing in the great exhibition of God's mercy towards such a wicked city, he was angry. Like Elijah, in the hour of despondency he requests to die. "Therefore, now, O LORD, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live." The trouble with Jonah was that he thought only of himself, and, as another has said, "the horrid selfishness of his heart hides from him the God of grace, faithful in His love for His helpless creatures."

Verses 4-11. The Lord God who had been so merciful to Nineveh is now merciful to His angry servant the Prophet. "Doest thou well to be angry?" How great is the patience and kindness of the Lord, even towards them who fail! Jonah leaves the saved city evidently in disgust, and finds on the east side a place where he constructed a booth and sat there waiting to see what would become of the city. He evidently expected still an act of judgment. Then comes the lesson. The Lord God who had prepared a fish to swallow the disobedient prophet now prepared a gourd to provide a shade for him. This gourd, a quipayon, is a very common plant in Palestine. The Creator whose creation is

so wonderful, manifested the Creator's power in raising up this plant, for the relief of His servant, in a sudden manner. And Jonah was exceedingly glad. Then God prepared a worm which destroyed the gourd. When the morning came and the sun beat upon the head of the prophet he fainted, and once more wished in himself to die. Alas! if the prophet had been in the right place before the Lord he would have accepted the gourd as evidence of His loving care, and when the worm destroyed the plant so that it withered he would have equally acknowledged his Creator-God and not have murmured. He might have said with Job, "The LORD gave, the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." Jonah in his selfish impatience found fault with God. It is still the common thing amongst professing Christians.

And when God asked him, "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" the poor finite creature of the dust answered the Creator, "I do well to be angry, even unto death." Then comes the lesson. Not God, Elohim, the name of Him as Creator, speaks, but it is Jehovah, the Lord: "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left; and also much cattle?" If Jonah felt pity and was angry because of a small vine he had not planted nor made to grow, should not God with greater right have mercy upon His creatures, whom He created and sustained? Jonah is silenced; he could not reply. The last word belongs to Jehovah, who thus demonstrated that in His infinite compassion He embraces not Israel alone, but all His creation, the Gentile world and even animal creation.

"Most touching and beautiful is the last verse of the book, in which God displays the force and supreme necessity of His love; which (although the threatenings of His justice are heard, and must needs be heard and even executed if man continues in rebellion) abides in the repose of that perfect goodness which nothing can alter, and which seizes the opportunity of displaying itself, whenever man allows Him, so to speak, to bless him--the repose of an affection that nothing can escape, that observes everything, in order to act according to its own undisturbed nature--the repose of God Himself, essential to His perfection, on which depends all our blessing and all our peace"