

corded in 2 Kings 25, for then it was that the kingdom of Judah was destroyed. *Became a stranger* means the inhabitants of Judah were carried away into a strange land (Babylonia). *Looked* is from *RAAH* and among the many words with which it is rendered in the King James version are approve, enjoy, gaze, regard, respect and think. These translations together with the preceding verse, suggest that Edom *looked* with delight upon the miseries of his brother. That alone would have him the object of God's wrath, but we shall see that he did not stop with the pleasure of his eyes at gazing at the misfortune of Israel.

Verse 13. *Not entered . . . day of calamity.* It is proper to show a friendly spirit for one in distress, but his home should not be invaded at such a time by morbid curiosity seekers. The context indicates that Edom entered and *looked* on the affliction of Israel with eyes of satisfaction. But he did not stop at that; instead, he took advantage of the distressed state of affairs to seize upon some of the valuables present.

Verse 14. Edom further opposed Israel by blocking the road by which he might have escaped from the invader. And there were some who were remaining in the home land, whom Edom helped in some way to be taken over by the enemy forces.

Verse 15. *All the heathen* implies that other people besides the Edomites were to feel the wrath of God. That was true in more than one sense, for in overthrowing that one nation, others were given an indication and warning of what was to be the fate of all kingdoms of the world that followed practices displeasing to God.

Verse 16. Drinking a cup figuratively means to partake of some experiences, either pleasant or unpleasant (Psalms 23: 5; 116: 13; Jeremiah 25: 15; Matthew 20: 23; 26: 39). Edom was destined to drink the cup of God's wrath because of his assaults upon His *holy mountain*, and also the other nations were to feel the wrath of the Lord.

Verse 17. This verse introduces the second of the main subjects mentioned with the comments on verse 1, the return of the people of Israel from captivity. Other verses following will continue to predict some of the returning fortunes of the nation, including its retaking of certain lost territory.

Verse 18. *Fire and flame* are used figuratively of the glowing recovery

of the people of God from their depressed state, and of the downfall of their old enemy, the *house of Esau* which means the Edomites. This nation was to be utterly overthrown as a separate ruling power as already predicted in this book.

Verse 19. The mention of *the south, mount of Esau, plain, the Philistines*, etc., is to indicate the various settlements that were to be observed when the Jews repossessed the land of Palestine after the return from exile.

Verse 20. This verse continues the subject started in the preceding one.

Verse 21. It is not a rare thing for the prophets to pass from a prediction of favor to come to fleshly Israel, and prophesy some good fortune to come upon spiritual Israel. (See Isaiah 1: 29 with 2: 1-4; 4: 2, 4; 40: 1-4; Ezekiel 21: 24-27.) This is very understandable, for even the New Testament system of religion was introduced into the world through the Jewish nation, and they were the first to accept the Gospel. So this verse is a prediction of the kingdom that was to be the Lord's and "stand for ever."

## JONAH 1

Verse 1. The book of Jonah is composed almost wholly of history. The only prophecy it contains is that of the threatened destruction of Nineveh (chapter 3: 4), which was to be only forty days in the future. But he is called a prophet in 2 Kings 14: 25 and Matthew 12: 39, hence we know that his work entitled him to that classification. We have no details of his work outside of this book except what is briefly mentioned in the first reference above and the allusion to his preaching by Jesus. And the Old Testament reference gives us the information as to the general date of his life and work, for he gave instructions to Jeroboam II who reigned in the 10-tribe kingdom of Israel about 800 B. C., which was a century before the Assyrian captivity of Israel. This verse says the word of the Lord came to Jonah, so we see that his work was by inspiration of God as far as his writing and teaching was concerned.

Verse 2. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, the power that God intended to use in the chastisement of the kingdom of Israel at a future date. This capital city was located on the east bank of the Tigris River. It had become so wicked that the Lord wished to have it improved

before using its forces in His campaign against the people of Israel. Jonah was therefore given the command to go and *cry against it*. The details of that "cry" are not stated here but they are given more attention later.

Verse 3. This is the only place in the Bible that says anything about the attempt of Jonah to flee from his duty, hence we see him as a faithful scribe since he makes no effort to "whitewash" his action, either in this particular verse or in his explanation to the mariners. Tarshish was a city on the coast of Spain and hence was about as far away in the opposite direction from Nineveh as Jonah could think of. He was merely showing a common weakness and foolishness of mankind in thinking he could escape from the presence of the Lord. He certainly believed that God is everywhere and that it is impossible to get out of His sight, but in his panicky frame of mind he gave way to the impulse of evading an unpleasant task. Joppa was a coast town of Palestine and a shipping port. Jonah learned of a boat that was scheduled for Tarshish and bought passage on the same.

Verse 4. Jonah was to learn "the hard way" that it is impossible to evade the hand of God by fleeing. Yet the Lord did not wish to injure him since He expected to use him after the present lesson had been taught and appreciated. Neither did God intend that any damage should come to the owners of the ship as we shall see. So He sent forth a wind that threatened to rend the vessel by the violence of the waves.

Verse 5. These mariners were idolaters and showed their faith in their gods by praying to them. But they did not depend wholly on them for help but co-operated by lightening the load for the ship, an example that could well be observed by Christians who seem to think that "God will take care of us" whether we do anything or not. The *sides of the ship* means the recesses or nooks of the vessel that were more or less secluded and suitable for repose. Jonah was sound asleep in one of these and unaware of the storm that was raging outside.

Verse 6. Up to now the mariners knew nothing of Jonah's connection with the situation, so the *shipmaster* or captain was surprised that he could be so unconcerned about it. *Sleeper* is from RADAM which Strong defines,

"A primitive root; to stun, i.e. stupefy (with sleep or death)." Nothing indicates that they had been at sea very long, and there was no apparent reason why anyone would be needing sleep, hence the captain thought that Jonah was stunned by some cause unknown to him. So he aroused the "sleeper" and told him to join in the general petition to their respective gods for help in their time of distress. The name of *God* is capitalized which is the work of the translator or editor of the A. V., but it should not be so for this heathen captain knew nothing of the God of Jonah. All he meant was that he was to do as all the rest had been doing, call upon his god for help, and perhaps the god would come to their aid.

Verse 7. Nothing is said in the text about whether Jonah made any response to the request of the captain or not, but the indication is that he did not. He knew that the very God to whom he would have "called" was the One from whom he was fleeing, and that it would be inconsistent for him to make such a call. The mariners were still ignorant of the true situation, but they concluded that some special reason must exist for the storm since it came up so unexpectedly and out of season. In their extremity they felt that some person present must be responsible for the disturbance. Had they been the people of Israel they might have expressed it by saying there was "sin in the camp" as it is usually said in the case of Achan in Joshua 7. Being heathen they did not have that view of the case, yet they were religiously inclined and thought that something was wrong. The casting of lots would ordinarily be only a chance decision, but Proverbs 16:33 shows that the Lord sometimes takes a hand in it and "disposes" the decision according to His will. Such will be done in the present case because God really wants these innocent mariners to know on whose account the distressful situation has come upon them. Accordingly, when they cast their lots the "lucky number" was drawn by Jonah because God directed the operation.

Verse 8. The captain was surprised when he found Jonah in profound sleep while a violent storm was raging, and now that feeling was doubtless increased by the outcome of the lot. It prompted him to make the inquiries stated in this verse, for Jonah must have belonged to a mysterious clan

to have had such a significant part to play in the affair that was overwhelming the whole crew with fear.

Verse 9. Jonah gave the captain and other mariners a brief but clear explanation of the case. All of the men on board professed to be religious and to be worshipers of some god, but Jonah claimed devotion to the God who had made the very sea that was threatening to destroy their ship with all its passengers and men. He told them further (as we may learn from the next verse) that he was fleeing from his own God when he went on board their ship.

Verse 10. *Then were the men exceedingly afraid.* This was the most logical result that could have come after the explanation of Jonah, for it harmonized with all the facts as they had seen them. Only the creator of the sea could throw it into the condition it then manifested as he willed, and hence such a being should be feared.

Verse 11. It was logical and fair for them to appeal to Jonah for instructions about the proper course to pursue. He would be the only person to know the spirit of the deity from whom he was fleeing, and what it would take to appease him.

Verse 12. Jonah was still the beloved servant of God, and He did not intend to let him be destroyed. God could have calmed the sea as completely just by speaking to it as Jesus did (Matthew 8: 23-27), but there was another object to be gained for future generations. I believe the Lord intended to use this occasion to establish a type of the great event when Jesus was to spend three days and three nights in the bowels of the earth (Matthew 12: 38-40). for He plainly declares in that passage that the event of Jonah was to be a sign. Hence, by casting the would-be escaper overboard the Lord would accomplish two purposes at the same time. The truth that it was *for his sake* the great tempest had come upon them did not make it necessary for him to be cast over as shown above, therefore the conclusion is unavoidable that God inspired him to give those instructions to the alarmed boatmen.

Verse 13. The men did not wish to use such severe means to save themselves as Jonah directed, but tried to avoid it by returning the boat to the shore. Had they been acquainted with the character of the Lord, they would have known better than try to over-

come His work by their physical strength. However, the fact of their attempt to avoid so drastic a treatment of Jonah showed they were humane in their disposition. They could not have known what was to be the actual outcome, but had every reason to think that it would mean the death of Jonah for them to do as he said. No wonder, then, that they *rowed hard* to bring the vessel to land.

Verse 14. All that these men knew of the Lord was what Jonah had just told them, for they were worshipers of false gods. However, the prayers they uttered came from the heart and all they said was the truth. In casting Jonah overboard they would be doing exactly what they were told to do by him, and now they were praying to whatever being it was who gave him the inspiration for such an order.

Verse 15. In casting Jonah into the sea the mariners unconsciously carried out the plan of the Lord. (See the comments on this point at verse 12.)

Verse 16. It was a part of the religious practice of all devoted men, whether worshipers of the true God or of the false, to offer sacrifices and make vows of reverence for the god to be honored. No doubt these men were sincerely sorry for having done what they believed would cause the death of Jonah. It was a very fitting time for deep humility and seriousness of mind. We have no information whether they ever afterward heard of the rescue of their supposed victim.

Verse 17. I almost hesitated at giving any serious attention to the foolish criticisms that carping infidels make on this verse. There is either a Supreme Being or there is not; and if there is, He would be able to do what he willed with the things of creation. If God is able to take a camel through the eye of a needle (Matthew 19: 26), He could confine a man in the body of a minnow if he so desired. But for the sake of some who might think the criticism is unanswerable, I will state that I have personally seen the skeleton of a fish whose throat was large enough to permit a very big man to creep through easily. And it should be remembered that what I saw was the dead bone, while the fish in the case of Jonah was alive and the framework of the throat would be capable of expanding to a much larger opening than the dead bony structure that was on ex-

hibition. This is all I care to say on this phase of the subject at this time. But we should observe that Jonah was in the fish *three days and three nights*.

## JONAH 2

Verse 1. Nothing that is right is impossible with God (Matthew 19: 26), therefore He could preserve Jonah alive and conscious in the bowels of the fish. Being a worshiper of the true God, it was not strange that he would engage in prayer in his unusual surroundings. Aside from being cut off from the normal kind and amount of air, he was unharmed by the act of the fish, and of course the Lord could take care of that situation by His great power.

Verse 2. *And said, I cried.* We know that Jonah did not do any writing while in the body of the fish, but wrote his account of the affair afterward as he was composing his book. He was being preserved miraculously but that did not prevent him from feeling the unpleasantness of the surroundings. That experience together with the remembrance of his error in trying to flee from the Lord, placed him in a frame of mind to offer a humble petition to God. The word *hell* is from *sheol* and Strong's definition of it is, "Hades or the world of the dead (as if a subterranean retreat) including its accessories and inmates." In the King James version the word is rendered grave 31 times, hell 31 and pit 3; it is the only word for "hell" in the Old Testament. It is evident that Jonah used the word only in the sense of its being a "subterranean retreat," since he was alive and in good health. The happy fact is stated that the Lord heard the prayer and took a favorable attitude toward Jonah (though we do not have all of his prayer).

Verse 3. Jonah had told the men to cast him into the sea, but here he says the Lord did it. This is a reason for the remarks on chapter 1: 12, showing that Jonah gave his instructions to the men on the authority of God.

Verse 4. Nothing is ever invisible to the eyes of God, so *out of thy sight* refers to Jonah's side of the matter. He was hidden from all the scenes of the earth, yet he had faith in the existence of God and now turned to Him in his distress.

Verse 5. The original word for *soul* generally means any living and breath-

ing creature. Jonah means he felt that his entire being was overwhelmed by the water. He not only was a prisoner on the inside of the fish, but that was a water creature and it was in its natural element which was not a suitable place for man. *Weeds* is from *cūwrh* which Strong defines, "A reed, especially the papyrus." It is the word for "flags" in Exodus 2: 3, and hence refers to the reedy plants growing in the water. Doubtless when Jonah was cast overboard he first felt these reeds about him as he sank beneath the water and the impression was still with him for a time.

Verse 6. Jonah is describing the way he felt when he was cast out of the boat, not that it is an inspired literal report of what actually happened. *Bottoms of the mountains.* The hilly land of the vicinity would extend on down into the water and Jonah felt as if he had sunk down to the bases of them. *Earth . . . bars . . . for ever.* Again Jonah is describing the way it seemed to him as he was shut off from the entire world. This conclusion is justified by his words immediately following that the Lord brought him out of the corruption that threatened his life.

Verse 7. This verse suggests an old and true saying, "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." When the conditions here described overcame Jonah, he was induced to look to God for help. Then he *prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly*.

Verse 8. The prayer of Jonah not only contained his appeal for help, but also was a recognition of some of the great principles which God has ever held out before mankind. *Lying vanities* evidently has reference to the devotion to idols which is constantly regarded as vain in the Bible. Whoever depends on such helpless objects are working against their own best interests.

Verse 9. The mention of *Sacrifice and vows* is a promise of continued devotion to God upon his deliverance from the helpless condition surrounding him; in other words, it is an indication of a truly penitent heart. Jonah is certain that if he is ever enabled to resume a life of religious services it will have to be through the help of God, for *Salvation is of the Lord*.

Verse 10. Strong says the original for *spake* is "used with great latitude." A fish is not an intelligent creature,



but God could induce it to perform any act suitable to His will. *Dry* does not necessarily mean absolutely without moisture, but ground not covered or saturated with water on which a man could stand with sure footing. The fish could float out to the brink of the sea and spue Jonah from his mouth onto the place where the ground was not covered with water.

### JONAH 3

Verse 1. Having "learned his lesson" and been restored to the land, Jonah was ready to receive renewed instructions from the Lord; accordingly the divine word came to him the second time. There is no mention in the text of the event just closed, and as far as the record is concerned the Lord delivered his command just as if nothing had happened to the prophet.

Verse 2. We are given the added detail that Jonah was to say whatever was stated to him when he arrived in the city of Nineveh. The report does not show any objections to his preaching hence we must conclude that the declaration Jonah made was what the Lord had bidden him to deliver.

Verse 3. This time Jonah went in the direction of his duty according to the word of the Lord. *Three days' journey* might have referred to the distance round the city or across it either, as far as the expression of the text goes. But the rule of consistency indicates that the latter is meant, for the same *days' journey* is used in the next verse in connection with Jonah's entry into the city and across it. As to what a day's journey is would depend upon the means of journeying that is being used at a given time. *Journey* is from MAHALAK which Strong defines, "A walk, i.e. a passage or a distance." It is the word for "walk" in Ezekiel 42:4 where we know it was a place in which men traveled on foot. So the conclusion is that a man would walk across the city of Nineveh in three days at the ordinary speed of such a mode of travel.

Verse 4. Jonah waited until he got to the more thickly populated portion of the city before he began his preaching. The only thing he said according to the text was the announcement that the city would be destroyed in forty days. Verse 2 says he was to preach what the Lord told him and all the reports of the event indicate that he was faithful to his commission.

Nothing said about why it was to be destroyed, and we know that no specific proviso such as repentance was stated by which the city could avoid destruction. We get this from the announcement of the king who had commanded his people to perform acts of penitence, and then expressed the hope that God would be thereby induced to change the decree of destruction. Had the condition of reformation been stated in connection with the threat made by Jonah, there would have been no occasion for the "wishful thinking" of the king.

Verse 5. Voluntary fasting and wearing of sackcloth was a custom in ancient times on occasions of grief or anxiety. The only reason this verse assigns for the acts of these people is that they *believed God*. This justifies us if we "read between the lines," for the preceding verse says nothing about God or of any reason why the city was to be overthrown; but some following verses report the acknowledgement of the *evil way* of the citizens. A mere prediction of some calamity to come upon a place would not have to mean that it was to be a punishment for sin, hence there was something said or done that informed these Ninevites what it was about.

Verse 6. This verse tells us that the foregoing actions of the people had been by the direction of the king. He also set the example of penitence by temporarily deposing himself and putting on the customary sackcloth and sitting in the ashes.

Verse 7. The king even went so far as to include their service beasts in the fasting. They were dumb creatures and could not be morally responsible for any wrong-doing, so why penalize them? It was not for that purpose, but as a further restriction upon the people. If the beasts were deprived of food it would render them unable for work, and hence the condition would actually be a sacrifice for the owners.

Verse 8. This verse is a direct confession that the people of Nineveh, *from the greatest of them even to the least of them* (including the king), were guilty of wrong-doing. Moreover, they were told what they had been doing that was wrong, else they could not know what "evil way" it was from which they were to turn.

Verse 9. See the comments on verse 4 for the explanation of this.

Verse 10. *God repented* means he

changed his mind or plan as at first threatened. However, even that was no change in His established principles of dealing with mankind. He has always given man the opportunity of repenting and "making his wrongs right," with the promise that if it was done, the punishment threatened would be remitted. The reader should see Jeremiah 18: 7-10 on this important subject.

### JONAH 4

Verse 1. Anger is not necessarily a sin (Ephesians 4: 26) unless one lets his feeling lead him into doing something that is wrong. Jonah did not do or say anything that was sinful in his anger, but was vexed over the turn of affairs. He seemed to think that the Ninevites should have been punished since he had gone through so much inconvenience and humiliation on their account.

Verse 2. We do not know to whom Jonah addressed this *saying*, for it is not recorded elsewhere. It really means that he thought the Lord would be too merciful to bring such a severe correction upon the city when it came to the actual test. Perhaps we should not conclude that he was angry at any particular person, but was displeased in a general way with the whole situation.

Verse 3. This verse expresses the frantic wail of a man in despair. The whole situation is so disappointing and confusing to Jonah that he lacks the courage to face the future. However, he does not manifest any of the spirit of a man who "threatens suicide," for he is not that kind of man. When a man in his right mind takes his own life, he is no less a murderer than the one who slays another. But Jonah was so willing to be released from the worries of the case that he turned to the Lord for relief. Since God is the giver of all life, if He should see fit to relieve the prophet of the distress of living it would be right in his sight, hence his fervent prayer to the Lord to be separated from life in this world.

Verse 4. When the Lord asks a question it is never for the purpose of obtaining information for himself. This one means as if He said, "Do you think you have reason to be angry?" The statement implies that Jonah was not justified in giving way thus to his feelings, and the implication is that the Lord gave him to understand that his prayer would not be granted.

Verse 5. Having been denied his request, and being given to understand that the Lord was determined to go through with His plan, Jonah wondered what the fate of Nineveh would be now that it had exhibited the signs of penitence and God had reversed his threat. So he went outside the city and took a position under a temporary shelter from the sun, there to maintain a season of "watchful waiting."

Verse 6. *Gourd* is from *qiryayown* which Strong defines, "The gourd (as nauseous)." He also says it is derived from another Hebrew word that means "To vomit." I shall quote from Smith's Bible Dictionary on the subject. "The plant which is intended by this word, and which afforded shade to the prophet Jonah before Nineveh, is the *Ricinus communis*, or castor-oil plant, which, a native of Asia, is now naturalized in America, Africa and the south of Europe. This plant varies considerably in size, being in India a tree, but in England seldom attaining a greater height than three or four feet. The leaves are large and palmate [shaped like a palm leaf], with serrated [notched] lobes, and would form an excellent shelter for the sun-stricken prophet. The seeds contain the oil so well known under the name of 'castor oil,' which has for ages been in high repute as a medicine. It is now thought by many that the plant meant is a vine of the cucumber family, a genuine gourd, which is much used for shade in the East." I have quoted the entire paragraph which presents the two opinions as to the plant meant by the gourd, in order to give the reader "the benefit of the doubt." The marginal rendering in the common Bible favors the first of the two descriptions, likewise the definition of Strong which refers to the feeling of nausea or act of vomiting, which would agree with one effect of the castor bean. However, in either case the plant would furnish additional protection from the strong rays of the sun which could penetrate through the booth that Jonah was enabled to make for the moment. The double arrangement for shade would provide the advantage of insulation between the booth and the plant somewhat like a tent under a tree. The situation accomplished the Lord's purpose, for it is stated that Jonah was exceeding glad of [because of] the gourd.

Verse 7. Physical experience is often

the most effective way of impressing a lesson on the mind of a man. It is the same principle as corporal punishment inflicted on the body of a child. He may not be capable of seeing the lesson with his reason alone, hence it is necessary to reach his mind through his body. It is the same in the case of an adult, except that a form of physical punishment may be used of such a character that the victim can understand as well as feel the force of the chastisement. In the present case God started the punishment by using a worm that destroyed the gourd.

Verse 8. After destroying the gourd the Lord left conditions as they had been by the normal heat of the sun. Next some additional distress was to be inflicted upon him by another miracle upon the elements. *Vehement* is from CHARYSHIR and Strong defines it, "In the sense of silence; quiet, i. e. sultry (as noun feminine, the sirocco or hot east wind)." The idea is that it was not a rushing current of air, for that motion itself would have somewhat counteracted the desired effect. Instead, it was a quiet but intensely hot and sultry wave of air that was terribly depressing. Jonah's request to die was from a different cause described in verse 3, but his attitude toward death should have the same comments as are offered in that verse.

Verse 9. The Lord's question calls for the same comments as the ones on verse 4. Jonah will be shown the reasons for which he had no valid cause for wishing death just because the gourd had withered and died.

Verse 10. The comparative unimportance of the gourd when considered with the importance of a city of people is the thought in this verse. *Pity on the gourd* means that Jonah would have spared it because of its usefulness to him. And all this in spite of the truth that he had put no time or effort into it to bring it into existence, while God was the maker of the city and all things therein. If the personal interest of Jonah in the plant would justify his regret at seeing it destroyed, he should have praised God for sparing a city that was destined in the near future to co-operate with Him in one of the great events concerning Israel.

Verse 11. The gourd was small even from the standpoint of material volume, while the city contained 120,000 human beings. *Cannot discern*

*between their right hand and their left hand* is a figure of speech used to describe the ignorance of the people as to what is right and wrong. This does not contradict the comments on chapter 3: 8 as to the people's knowledge of right and wrong, for it is shown there that they knew it only after the Lord had informed them through the prophet.

## MICAH 1

Verse 1. *The word of the Lord that came to Micah* shows that he was inspired to write his book. Moreover, in Jeremiah 26: 17, 18 we have his writing referred to favorably by some elders of the land and there is no indication that his predictions were called in question by anyone. His predictions pertained to the 10-tribe and the 2-tribe kingdom of the Jews, for Samaria was the capital of the first and Jerusalem that of the second. The date of his writing is identified with the reigns of some of the kings of the 2-tribe kingdom. A glance at the history of those times will show that Micah began writing about 40 years before the captivity of the 10-tribe kingdom and some 150 years before that of the 2-tribe kingdom. Since those revolutionary events were so near, we may expect the prophet to have a great deal to say on the subject. He will also say many things relative to the corruption that was the cause of God's wrath toward his people, namely, their worship of idols.

Verse 2. The Lord God was about to be a witness against the people. The significance of that is that since God knows everything, there could be no question as to the truth of the testimony about to be uttered. *From his holy temple* refers to the throne of the universe, which indicates the supreme headquarters from which the testimony was to be issued.

Verse 3. The holy temple in heaven is the Lord's personal dwelling place, but He is everywhere at all times in a spiritual sense. And He is spoken of as being in or coming to specific spots on the earth when some definite work is to be accomplished, such as inflicting a chastisement on His people for their sins.

Verse 4. The power of God is illustrated by the figurative melting of mountains and cleaving of the alleys. All of the material events mentioned in this verse are for the same purpose, to indicate that God can do as he wills with kingdoms of men.