

Jonah - Chapter 3 - Commentary By Mike Wells

Chapter 3 Overview:

God called the prophet a second time to go to Nineveh. This time Jonah listens and through his preaching the city repented.

Jonah 3 : 1 - *And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying.*

- God had called Jonah once already in Jonah 1:1.
- Jonah had run from God's calling and now God had gotten his attention.
- Remember, there is no place where a man can hide from the call of God.
- We serve an Omnipresent God – He is everywhere
- Now God spoke to him again.

Jonah 3 : 2 - *Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.*

- God's second call upon Jonah was the same as His first call.
- Go to this city and preach!!
- God still calls Men to particular cities and churches to preach!!
- Jonah had learned the hard way to listen when God's calls him to go.
- Lots of preachers today don't heed the call of God to go to where He calls them.
- They get comfortable where they are, and don't follow God's calling to go!!
- Also, not that Jonah had no cause to worry about what to preach.
- None of us need to worry about what to preach!!
- If we preach the Word it is all good!!
- God made clear that He would speak to Jonah about what to preach.
- God still today through His Holy Spirit gives the men of God messages to preach!!
- The word translated as **bid** (*dabar*) means to 'speak.'
- God promised Jonah that He would tell him what to preach.
- In Jonah 1:2, God also made clear that the wickedness of Nineveh was the problem.
- Preachers today are still called to preach against the wickedness of sin – “reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering”
- May, God help our modern day pastors to get back to preaching repentance, to preaching against sin, preaching the blood and the way and not just tickling itching ears.

Jonah 3 : 3 - *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 had learned obedience the hard way, and this time he was going as commanded.
- He arose and went according to the Word of the Lord.
- His call is very similar to the call and commission of all New Testament Christians to go and preach the gospel. “Go Ye Therefore!!” The emphasis is on Go!!
- Reminder – Nineveh was a great (large) city at the time.

- The reference of “**three days’ journey**” has been thought by some to be the distance across the city from one side to the other.
- If a man could walk twenty miles in a day (which certainly is reasonable), the breadth of the city would have been sixty miles.
- Others have suggested that this refers to the circumference of the city or the distance around its perimeter.
- Nineveh was situated along the banks of the Tigris River, so it certainly is conceivable that the city stretched in a fairly narrow strip for many miles along the river’s banks.
- Either way, it was a large city that was stuck in sin and needed someone to come in and preach Repentance!!

Jonah 3 : 4 - *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.*

- The prophet traveled toward the center of the city and began to preach that judgment would fall upon the city in forty days unless they repented.
- The first great city-wide revival crusade was under way.
- BTW - Forty is often a number related to judgment in the Bible.
- How Nineveh was going to be overthrown is not specified, but it was clear that God would so judge the city.
- It may have been by an unknown hostile military force.
- Or it may have been by God dealing directly with fire from heaven as He did to Sodom and Gomorrah.
- Either way destruction and judgment was coming unless the city repented of their sin
- Jonah was there to be that messenger!!
- It is the same message today that we must still preach to every individual, judgment is coming unless you repent and accept Jesus Christ as your Saviour.
- May God help us to never quit preaching and sounding the warning that Judgment is coming no matter how unpopular it is today!!

Jonah 3 : 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.*

- A remarkable revival swept through the great city of Nineveh.
- They (1) believed God and (2) repented of their sin as is evident in their fasting and humbling of themselves.
- The putting on of sackcloth was a middle-eastern custom of mourning and humility.
- It was an outward symbol of inner repentance.
- The *entire* city repented from the highest levels of their society to the lowest.
- What is remarkable is that this I believe is the first *gentile* city recorded in the Bible which repented at the preaching of the Word of God.
- Even more amazing is that the repentance was universal.
- The entire city did so.
- Now that is a camp meeting!!!
- I would have loved to been there to see God work in that mighty way!!
- I pray I get to see something like it in my lifetime!!

Jonah 3 : 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.

- Even the king of Nineveh, upon hearing the message of Jonah, repented and expressed it in outward humility.
- Wow – What a revival!!
- Could you imagine a revival so powerful that the Governor or the President even got in on it and repented!!
- That is the type of revival America needs!!!

Jonah 3 : 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.

- The king made an official proclamation, published throughout the city, that no one (and no domestic animal) should eat or drink even water.
- A total fast was ordered by the king to demonstrate public repentance and humbling before God.
- How long this fast was to last is not noted.
- It certainly lasted for at least one day.
- Many believe that it may have lasted 3 days since the journey across Nineveh was a three day's journey.
- It is clear that the king of Nineveh was sincere and serious in his repentance.

Jonah 3 : 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.

- The king of Nineveh also ordered that everyone must show public repentance by wearing sackcloth.
- As its name implies, sackcloth was the rough material used for grain bags.
- It was unattractive and uncomfortable.
- Even the domestic animals of Nineveh were to wear sackcloth.
- The king also ordered his entire kingdom to pray to God, no doubt, in confession of their sins and for mercy.
- He also ordered his entire kingdom to actually turn from their sin (Repentance).
- Crime and violence that was all over the city now stopped!!
- If you want to fix the problems of this world, just get people to God and He can change them overnight!!
- There was a true revival in this city from top to bottom.
- Repentance in every sense of the word was ordered from the king on down.

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

- Though a pagan gentile, the king of Nineveh hoped that God would see their open repentance and turn away from His fierce anger against them.
- He fully realized the power of Jehovah God and His ability to deal with them.
- This pagan gentile king and his realm *believed* the preaching of the Word of God by a man of God.

- They immediately repented in the best way they knew how.
- And though they were a sinful nation, they knew and understood the fear of the Lord.
- Thus, a powerful soul winning revival swept across Nineveh.

Jonah 3 : 10 - 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.

- It is also clear that the repentance of Nineveh was not superficial.
- This wasn't some movement based on emotionalism like the garbage we see today.
- This was a movement of true repentance!
- God knows the heart and He saw their change of heart and their change of living.
- In significant fashion, we read how that God repented.
- The word translated as **repented** here comes from the word (*nacham*) that in this context has the sense to be 'sorry.'
- The word translated as **evil** (*ra`*) in this context has the sense of 'trouble' or 'distress.'
- The greater thought is how that God regretted the judgment He had planned against Nineveh and put it on hold.
- In a greater perspective, it is apparent that the actions of men can change the mind of God.
- God fully intended to judge Nineveh.
- Yet, when they repented, prayed, and sought His mercy; God changed His mind and stopped the judgment He had planned.
- Likewise, God fully plans to judge sinful man, but we can change His mind!!
- He gave us the way to do it, by enrobing Himself in flesh and dying on that cross for our sins.
- If we would just confess we are sinners, repent of those sins, and believe by faith that Jesus Christ died on that cross as the payment for our sins and trust in Him for salvation, then we too can change God's mind on judging us and casting us into Hell.
- And the great part is that God doesn't want anyone to go there!!
- ***2 Peter 3 : 9 - The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.***
- He didn't want Nineveh to go there, so he sent them a preacher to warn them
- He also doesn't want you go either, and he sent me to warn you!!
- Repent and trust in Jesus and you will be saved just like Nineveh was.