

# JONAH: GOD'S REMINDER OF ISRAEL'S OUTREACH DUTY

## IV: The Amazing Effects Of Jonah's Ministry

(Jonah 3:4-10)

### I. Introduction

- A. Since the Abrahamic Covenant provided that God would bless the Gentiles through Abraham's seed (Genesis 12:1-3), Israel was responsible to proclaim God's truth to the Gentiles. (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1462)
- B. The book of Jonah was addressed to Israel to remind her of her duty to proclaim God's truths to the nations, and Jonah 3:4-10 records the amazing effects of Jonah's ministry when he simply obeyed the Lord's calling to evangelize Nineveh. We view the passage for our insight and application (as follows):

### II. The Amazing Effects Of Jonah's Ministry, Jonah 3:4-10.

- A. Jonah had been so reluctant to obey God's Word in going to evangelize Nineveh that he had actually fled from the presence of the Lord headed toward Tarshish in the opposite direction, Jonah 1:1-3.
- B. Consequently, God had intercepted Jonah, causing a large fish to swallow him until he repented, calling on the Lord for deliverance, and the Lord had thus caused the fish to vomit Jonah up onto dry land, Jonah 1:4-2:10.
- C. With a repentant Jonah once again on dry land, the word of the Lord came unto him a **second** time, renewing the divine call that he arise and go to Nineveh, and *this* time Jonah **fervently obeyed** the Lord, Jonah 3:1-3a.
- D. As the result of Jonah's *eventual* obedience to God, he experienced a huge ministry response, Jonah 3:4-10:
  1. The people of Nineveh believed the Lord's warning through Jonah's preaching that Nineveh would be overthrown in forty days, Jonah 3:4-5a. This response greatly contrasted with Lot's two sons-in-law who reacted to his warning of God's judgment on Sodom as if he were joking with them, Genesis 19:14 NIV. It is quite possible that solar eclipse in 763 B. C. and the plague of 759 B. C. that the people of Nineveh witnessed, signs that were viewed throughout the Ancient Near East as signals of "divine judgment," had greatly prepared them to receive Jonah's message. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1278, "Introduction to the Book of Jonah: The Times")
  2. The people of Nineveh also proclaimed a fast and they put on sackcloth, a "coarse, dark cloth unfit for normal wear," from the greatest to the least of them, Jonah 3:5b. (Ibid., fn. to Jonah 3:6)
  3. When Nineveh's king heard of Jonah's proclamation that Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days, he arose from his throne, laid aside his royal robe, covered himself with sackcloth and even sat in ashes, "a sign of helplessness and despair," Jonah 3:6; Ibid.
  4. Nineveh's king along with even his nobles then had a proclamation made and published throughout the city that neither man nor animal were to taste anything or even drink water, but men and animals were to be covered with sackcloth and to cry mightily unto God, turning from their evil way and the violence for which they were guilty, Jonah 3:7-8.
  5. The king added that God might relent from His plan to punish the city in having it overthrown, Jonah 3:9.
- E. Consequently, God saw their works of repentance and that they had turned from their evil ways of violence, so He relented of His original plan to destroy the city, Jonah 3:10.

***Lesson:*** *When Jonah obeyed God's will that he evangelize Nineveh, the positive response to his ministry was great: quite possibly, the lunar eclipse and a second plague may have left the city fearing divine punishment so that when Jonah arrived and pronounced Nineveh's overthrow in 40 days, the king, his nobles and the people were ripe for repentance. They put on sackcloth, from the king to his nobles to the people and even to the livestock, they fasted from food and even water and cried out unto the Lord, turning from their violently evil ways so that the Lord was convinced of their true repentance, and He relented from the calamity that He had intended to bring upon them.*

***Application:*** *(1) If God directs that we obey Him in ministry, it is always worth doing what He wills since He is the One Who has planned from eternity past the works we are to do (2 Timothy 1:9) and He wills that we succeed in them (John 15:8). (2) Just as God had likely utilized a solar eclipse and a plague to get the people of Nineveh concerned about possible divine punishment to prepare for the preaching of Jonah to be effective, God goes before us to prepare the way for our ministries to be effective, so we need to TRUST God's foreknowledge and working and simply FOLLOW His LEAD in our ministries. (3) The one sin that the king of Nineveh mentioned was that of violence, possibly a reference to a violation of the Noahic Covenant where capital punishment was required for murder, Genesis 9:5-6. The king may still have been influenced by the then ancient Noahic Covenant, so we must trust God's awareness of the beliefs of those He calls us to disciple to make our ministry effective with them.*