

The Book of Jonah

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(1993 Study)

The following notes on the Book of Jonah were compiled from a Bible study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1993. They should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. Each paragraph preceded by “**Comment**” or “**Q**” (an abbreviation for “**Question**”) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original study did not follow a prepared text but was extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the study, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

THE BOOK OF JONAH

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During the latter part of the reign of Jeroboam II, circa 800 BC, God spoke through the hand of His servant Jonah, the prophet of Gath-hepher (2 Kings 14:25). At the time, the Assyrians were the feared and despised enemy of Israel. The name Jonah means “dove.”

Chronologically, Jonah followed right after Obadiah’s prophecy, which was against Edom and showed God’s judgment against Gentile power. Jonah’s prophecy also came right after Obadiah’s prophecy in regard to its lesson. The Book of Jonah represents (1) some of Jesus’ experiences and (2) the thoughts of many Jews. The latter, whom God favored for so long, tended to overdraw the lesson of judgment and to feel self-righteous. The Jews did not want to think too kindly about the other powers, and they were nervous when they heard that God would help the Gentiles. Combined with Obadiah, the Book of Jonah is a balance of mercy against judgment. Incidentally, the nominal Church and even some of the true Church likewise need lessons on God’s mercy toward those not in covenant relationship with Him.

Jonah 1:1 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

Jonah 1:2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

The word of Jehovah came unto Jonah, commanding him to arise and go to the “great city” of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and cry against it because of its wickedness. Nineveh was a prosperous city on the east bank of the Tigris River.

Jonah 1:3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

But instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah rose up, intending to flee to Tarshish, Spain, away “from the presence of the LORD.” Jonah went west, the opposite direction, instead of east to Assyria. Accordingly, he went down to Joppa (Jaffa), paid the fare (which would have been significant), boarded a ship, and went down into the hold where he remained (as far as we know) for a long time. What about Jonah’s reaction? God had instructed him to go on a mission to Nineveh, where he would cry against the city’s wickedness. Why was Jonah reluctant and fearful to obey?

Comment: Nineveh was an enemy of Israel, and Jonah had a sense of righteous indignation. Since the wickedness of the city was great, Jonah apparently felt the inhabitants needed punishment. Therefore, he did not want them to have an opportunity to repent.

Reply: Yes, the implication seems to be along the following line. Jonah suspected that if he cried against Nineveh, the people would repent, and then God would be gracious and forgive them. Jonah did not want the judgment to be stopped because he felt the city was like Sodom and Gomorrah. Evidently, he felt the Ninevites were not worthy of repentance, and the idea was repugnant to him—he regarded the city almost like an unclean thing. Also, if the people repented and the judgment was averted, Nineveh would continue to be Israel’s enemy and would eventually encroach upon the boundaries of Israel. Thus Jonah’s feeling of *national* pride interfered with his giving the message. Moreover, it was almost unheard of at that time for God to make a special point of pronouncing judgment against Assyria, a *Gentile* power, with the promise to be merciful and forgiving if the people hearkened.

Comment: Jonah could have just stayed in Israel and refused to go to Nineveh. Instead he somehow thought he could flee from God's presence.

Reply: No doubt this type of ministry was very distasteful to Jonah. Apparently, other factors, which are not recorded, made this opportunity to minister to Nineveh particularly repugnant to him. The city was quite a distance to travel, but the miles were not the problem, for Spain was even farther away. Jonah hid down in the hold, almost as if he were in a tiff.

It is interesting to note that in spite of his reaction, Jonah was one of the true prophets of the Old Testament, for Jesus referred to him in the Gospels (Matt. 12:39-41; 16:4; Luke 11:29,30,32). God manifested displeasure at certain points, yet His dealings with Jonah indicate that the prophet was loyal to Him at heart. Jonah probably felt that his fleeing manifested loyalty to principle, but he was actually fleeing from carrying out God's commandment.

Obviously, as a prophet of God, Jonah was not of this disposition all of his life. As Christians, we have "moods" and make mistakes at times too, but if we repent and overcome, we can make our calling and election sure. What counts is the final picture and the weighing out of our actions. God sometimes capitalizes on an event in a person's life to teach a lesson, yet this event is not typical of the person's *whole* life. Jonah's peculiarities are not reflections of his overall life, but God used them to point out lessons. Like Jonah, sometimes we are afraid that certain responsibilities will be put on us, and we "hide"—turn our head.

Comment: Obadiah had thundered a judgment against Edom. Apparently, Jonah would have preferred to give that kind of message to Nineveh.

Comment: Jonah's thinking reminds us of Ananias, who was reluctant to go to Saul because Saul had persecuted Christians (Acts 9:13,14).

Reply: Yes, that incident brings out a similar principle. The fact God chose Ananias to be the one to instruct Saul shows that of all who were in Israel at that time, there must have been something very favorable about him, of which we have no knowledge. Likewise, we have no background information about Jonah until after the commission was given. One's background is usually a large factor in making decisions.

Q: Gath-hepher was in Galilee, yet in John 7:52, the scribes and Pharisees found fault with Jesus, saying that no prophet had come from Galilee. Does their statement mean they felt Jonah was a false prophet, or did they just overlook where he had come from?

A: In their prejudice, the scribes and Pharisees could have overlooked that fact, but it is also possible they regarded him as a false prophet. And there is a third possibility. At other times, Jesus criticized the scribes and Pharisees for being ignorant of the Scriptures, so that could have been the case here too. We cannot be definitive.

Jonah 1:4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

Jonah 1:5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

Jonah 1:6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

Jonah 1:7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

We can almost visualize the scene. God sent a “great wind,” which caused such a “mighty tempest” in the sea that the ship was in danger of being destroyed. Meanwhile, as this violent storm raged, Jonah was asleep down below in the hold. Knowing that destruction was imminent and fearing that they would be swallowed up by the sea, the mariners each called on his own god and prayed for help—but to no avail. As the fury of the storm continued, they threw cargo overboard to lighten the ship so that it would ride higher in the turbulent waves and less water would come over the bow and threaten to sink the vessel.

Then the shipmaster searched out Jonah and found him “fast asleep” in the midst of the storm. He addressed Jonah, “What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise and call on your God! Perhaps He will think of us so that we will not perish.”

Next the suggestion was made to cast lots to find out on whose account the evil had come upon them. Of course God caused the lot to fall upon Jonah, pointing him out as the troublemaker. Since the account does not specifically state, the lots were probably cast before Jonah had time to pray.

Jonah had been able to sleep in the midst of the turbulent storm because he was emotionally drained from his troubles. He was concerned about what the Lord wanted him to do. Therefore, when he got on the ship, he collapsed in a state of exhaustion. Incidentally, any strong emotion, even joy, can create this effect, but emotional tumult is especially draining when one who is trying to serve the Lord goes contrary to instruction.

Jonah is a type of Jesus, who slept in the stern of the boat while the storm raged on the Sea of Galilee. The Master calmed the waters by standing up and rebuking the wind and the waves. The chorus of a hymn is, “The winds and the waves shall obey thy will, Peace, be still.” We apply that hymn not only to ourselves and our need to develop more faith but also to the world of mankind, for Jesus will still the waves by stopping the great Time of Trouble yet future.

However, the real stilling of the waves by the antitypical Jonah was when Jesus died on the Cross and paid the price for man’s redemption from the curse of Adam. Thus Jesus stilled the waters in a practical and almost mathematical way in paying the ransom price to bring peace. Accordingly, God can be just and yet the Justifier not only of us but also of mankind in another fashion during the Kingdom Age.

In addition, with the name Jonah meaning “dove,” we think of the dove that brought an olive branch, signifying peace, when the Flood had “abated from off the earth” (Gen. 8:10,11). The regeneration of a new race following the coming “flood” of trouble will be based on Jesus’ mission at the First Advent.

From another standpoint, the world of mankind has been waiting for the Kingdom. The whole creation groans and travails in pain together, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19,22). Many realize that the Bible preaches a coming Kingdom, but because of the *long* delay, they have thought God was asleep, as it were. As the Prophet Isaiah wrote, “Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour” (Isa. 45:15). Thus the world of mankind’s going down into the grave with no hope seems to be in the Jonah picture as well. A question long asked and not understood is, Why does God permit evil?

Jonah 1:8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?

Jonah 1:9 And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.

Jonah 1:10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

Jonah was awakened but had not yet prayed. He came up on the deck as lots were being cast. Perhaps just as the lot stopped, up popped Jonah from the belly of the ship into the space where it pointed, so that the others on the ship realized Jonah was the problem. Immediately they started to ask him questions: "Why has this evil come upon us? What is your occupation? What country do you come from? Who are your people?" Jonah told the men the whole story at this moment. Evidently, there was a positiveness about him, for he said forthrightly, "I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land." This trait, plus the casting of the lots, brought fear to the others.

The fact that the men did not know Jonah's nationality or place of origin shows the boat had stopped at various ports, one of which was Joppa. The men were even more afraid when Jonah said that his God, Jehovah, had created the sea and the dry land, for the sea was raging violently. Since the heathen worshipped various gods, they logically concluded that the God of the sea was angry. Moreover, they remembered Jonah had told them he was fleeing from the wrath of his God.

Jonah 1:11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.

Jonah 1:12 And he said unto them, 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.

Jonah 1:13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

What a dramatic account! We can almost hear the wind howling and see the boat being tossed by the waves. When the men asked, "What shall we do so that the sea will be calm?" Jonah showed his good character by being willing to sacrifice his life for the lives of the others. He replied, "Cast me forth into the sea, for I know this great tempest has come upon you because of me." However, the men, being compassionate and apparently liking and respecting him, were reluctant to throw Jonah into the sea. They tried once more to get the boat to land by uniting their efforts and rowing "hard," with all their strength, but the storm was too strong.

Jonah 1:14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.

Jonah 1:15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

Jonah 1:16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

The men were in a dilemma, not knowing what to do. They were convinced Jonah was the problem, but their conscience was bothering them. They were afraid that if the God of the sea was angry at Jonah for fleeing, He would be even more wrathful if they killed an innocent man by throwing him into the sea. When there was no alternative but to cast Jonah into the sea, the crew *beseached* the Lord not to let them perish and not to lay innocent blood on them. The beseeching was an emotional, deep-felt, imploring prayer, with groaning of spirit. (We are reminded of Pilate's washing his hands prior to Jesus' crucifixion. Both Pilate and the crew were victims of circumstances.) The men then cast Jonah overboard, and "the sea ceased from her raging."

The calmed sea had a startling effect on the men. The obviously sudden supernatural cessation of the storm struck such a deep chord into their religious sense of responsibility that they exceedingly feared Jehovah, the Hebrew God; made vows; and offered a sacrifice to Him, feeling the responsibility. What a remarkable reaction when previously they had worshipped various heathen gods! Although Jonah is not an exact type of Jesus, the account creates a mood in which there are nuances.

Comment: Since the men had already lightened the load by casting items overboard in the storm, whatever they offered was a further sacrifice of something near and dear to them.

Jonah knew he was disobeying God, and the strain and stress went in on him deeply so that he was exhausted and fell asleep. Of course God, in His providence, created the peripheral activities, knowing how Jonah would respond under that circumstance, and because Jonah was a true prophet, God had mercy on him. Some extenuating details, which are not mentioned, were evidently significant enough that God dealt kindly with Jonah, whereas He might not have dealt kindly with another individual doing the same things. In other words, God made allowances for Jonah because of some unmentioned background experiences.

Comment: Jonah, who had a strong sense of righteous indignation, was determined that the Ninevites should be punished for their evil doings against God.

Reply: Yes. The quality of righteous indignation is admirable, generally speaking, so the Heavenly Father made allowances for Jonah.

We should study the Bible as *enthusiastic children*, learning the natural picture so that we will later remember the spiritual. If we sympathetically enter into Jonah's experience, the study will be emotional *as well as* analytical.

Jonah 1:17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Here is a direct tie-in with the New Testament. When the scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign, he said unto them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was [parts of] three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be [parts of] three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:39,40).

In baptism, the *earth* is pictured by the water (the *sea*), for being lowered into water is like being lowered into the grave, the earth. Then the candidate is lifted out of the water, symbolizing being raised alive to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. In other words, the person's being immersed in the water is symbolic of his being immersed into death, into the earth, and then being raised. Thus Jesus drew the comparison that as Jonah was in the belly of

the whale in the *sea*, so the Son of man must be in the heart of the *earth*.

While the whale is mammoth, the opening of its gullet and esophagus is relatively narrow, proportionately speaking. Therefore, skeptics question not so much Jonah's surviving in the whale's belly but his getting in there in the first place. However, two historical accounts testify to the veracity of this account.

Comment: *Reprint* No. 6430 states, "A great fish captured near Miami, Fla., a few years ago [that is, prior to 1919], had within its stomach another fish weighing 1500 pounds." *Reprint* No. 4785, dated April 30, 1911, reads, "One of the New York journals recently gave a detailed account, profusely illustrated, showing how a sailor, overboard, was swallowed by 'a great sulphur whale,' but after several hours escaped, his skin made purplish from the action of the digestive fluids of the whale's stomach.... True, the throats of the majority of whales seem too small to admit a man. We remember, however, that they are quite elastic. The great sulphur variety is of enormous size and is said to have a throat capable of swallowing a skiff (much larger than a man) and less flexible."

Aside from these two occurrences, all doubts should be erased by the wording of verse 17 that God specially "*prepared* a great fish to swallow" Jonah. The unusually large "fish" would have had a larger gullet than that of the normal whale and a sufficiency of oxygen in its stomach to sustain Jonah for parts of three days.

Comment: The word translated "whale" in Matthew 12:40 should more properly be rendered "great fish," which gives flexibility as to what kind of fish, even though there are whales that could swallow men.

Reply: It is true that we do not know exactly what kind of fish swallowed Jonah. The word "whale" is normally used because it is the largest of the marine animals. Even in Genesis 1:21, the word "whales" should be "great fish." "God created ... [great fish], and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind."

Comment: The fourth chapter of Jonah states that God prepared three other things: a worm, a gourd, and a vehement east wind. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that He also prepared a "great fish."

Comment: It is a miracle that the great fish *was there* when Jonah needed to be swallowed, that Jonah was kept alive in the belly just *parts* of three days and nights, that the digestive juices *did not harm* him, and that he was vomited forth upon *dry land*.

Reply: Just as God providentially prepared the great fish for Jonah, so with us too, a lot of providences are going on of which we are not aware because of our physical limitations to discern spiritual activities.

Comment: Parts of three days and three nights are a *long time* to be kept in this dark, moist cavern not knowing the outcome. In the antitype, Jesus was dead for 36 hours.

Since we do not fully know the internal organs of a whale, there are possible ways Jonah could have been protected from the digestive juices. For example, God may have kept him in a certain portion of the stomach that was a temporary storage area. As an illustration, a cow's stomach collects food to be assimilated later, at the cow's leisure. The food is regurgitated, masticated, and ruminated. Or the gullet could have been in the stomach itself. Also, whales generally eat plankton, not large fish.

At any rate, any criticism about the credibility of the account is scotched by Jesus' statement that Jonah's being in the whale's belly was a sign of his own death and resurrection. Other aspects and reasoning are just interesting sidelights that may or may not be helpful.

Q: Since Jesus was in the grave for 36 hours, he was dead for parts of only *two* nights. How would we explain that he was in the grave for parts of *three* nights?

A: The term "three days and three nights" is a Hebraism (Matt. 12:40). Esther 4:16 and 5:1 are proof texts, for Esther said, "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, *night or day*.... Now it came to pass *on the third day*, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house." Jesus died on Friday afternoon at 3 p.m. Therefore, he was in the tomb for 3 hours on Friday, for 24 hours on Saturday (from 6 p.m. to 6 p.m.), and for 6 hours or so on Sunday, being raised at midnight or shortly thereafter.

The ship and its crew represent the world of mankind, who were in danger of extinction until Jesus, the antitypical Jonah, was figuratively cast into the sea (grave). Jesus' death stilled, or satisfied, the cords of justice by offsetting the penalty that came on the human race through Adam's disobedience.

Jonah 2:1 Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,

Chapter 2 is Jonah's prayer and God's answer to that prayer. Jonah prayed "out of the [great] fish's belly." It was a miracle that, having been swallowed, he was alive and could pray.

Comment: Jonah maintained his senses sufficiently to pray amidst the darkness and horror of the traumatic experience.

Jonah 2:2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.

"I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD." Right away Jonah's words tell us that he was writing after the incident. He was reflecting back on what he had experienced while sinking in the water and being in the whale's belly. Probably the thought of his disobedience was a greater "affliction" to him than being tossed into the sea.

Verse 2 begins to tell the subject matter of Jonah's prayer. God heard Jonah "out of the belly of hell [Hebrew *sheol*]." Jonah likened the belly of the whale to a pit, or grave, in which one is buried.

Some use this verse in trying to prove there is a consciousness after death. They assume that Jonah died when he was swallowed but was still conscious, and they then quote Matthew 12:40 with that implication: "For as Jonas was [dead but conscious] three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be [dead but conscious] three days and three nights in the heart [bowels] of the earth." When this text is taken figuratively, we would use two alternative explanations. (1) An abundance of Scriptures tell about the condition of the dead. (2) This analogy is like Satan's being in the presence of God and reasoning about Job, as stated in Job 1:6, but that setting is an exception to the general tenor. To harmonize all Scripture, Job 1:6 has the connotation of an allegory rather than a reality.

Comment: Psalm 115:17 states, "The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence."

Reply: That text and similar Scriptures which show death to be a condition of unconsciousness and silence certainly refute the thought that verse 2 proves there is consciousness in death. The testimony of the Scriptures as a whole overrides and corrects any preconceived or prejudiced opinion so that one can properly evaluate and weigh the signification of a particular text.

Comment: The Companion Bible shows what some scholars have in mind. For verse 17 of the previous chapter, “Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah,” the comment is as follows: “Not therefore kept alive in the fish’s mouth as some imagine. When thus swallowed up, Jonah must have died and thus became a type of Christ. He would have been no type if he had been miraculously kept alive.”

Reply: The Bible scholars are in a dilemma.

Comment: Based on verse 1, some Bible scholars reason that the fact Jonah prayed implies he was alive and conscious.

Reply: The dilemma is still not resolved with the Bible scholars, for some reason that Jonah’s experience represents consciousness after death, as read in the Companion Bible.

To harmonize Jonah’s and Jesus’ experiences, we refer to Psalm 18. In applying Jonah as a type of Christ, rather than of the Church (which he also pictures in some respects), we need to consider Jesus’ swooning condition while on the Cross. When a person is weak and losing blood, he goes into a semicomatose state, and that is what happened to Jesus. He felt death encompassing him about. “The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.... He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters” (Psa. 18:4,5,16). Jesus was alive and conscious, but he was feeling death at the door. In this weakened condition, a lot of experiences came before his mind, causing him to cry out and groan to his Father in prayer. Psalm 22 gives details of his innermost thinking. In this semicomatose state, it was almost as if he were in the grave already, even though he was still alive and crying to the Father that his prayer would be answered.

In the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the rich man, who was in “hell,” cried from the tomb (Luke 16:22-24). The spiritual lesson for this figurative picture depicts the Diaspora, which has taken place down through the Gospel Age. Not wetting the tongue of the rich man, not giving even a drop of water to him, as he saw Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom is an allegory, or a picture, not a reality. The tomb was a picture of death. In the parable, both the rich man and Lazarus died, yet they were very much alive, one in Abraham’s bosom and the other where he was being tortured for want of water and moisture. From that standpoint, Jonah’s belly and the picture of parts of three days could have a double application—one pertaining to Jesus’ spirit and the other to the Church down through the Gospel Age.

Q: Does Jonah also prefigure the Jewish nation, which was disobedient? The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus shows the rich man, the Jew, in a condition of figurative hell, wanting a drop of water on his tongue. The Diaspora lasted for parts of three days—for parts of the fifth, sixth, and seventh thousand-year “days” of the Gospel Age.

A: Yes, that analogy can be drawn based on the parable. During the Diaspora, the Jews had a sensation that they must have done something wrong in order to incur the despoiling of their Temple and their being cast out into Gentile nations without a homeland.

We like to use the illustration of swooning, where one feels he is dying. Jesus’ being in a semicomatose state on the Cross was as though he were in the grave—the grave was

encroaching on him. He prayed to his Father, and his Father heard him, so that Jesus finished with a triumphant voice after having felt forsaken. The feeling of being forsaken was a new experience for him, but it was necessary as part of the ransom sacrifice. As Adam, who was naked, had a guilt complex after sinning and hid behind a tree with Eve, so Jesus had to experience that guilt feeling as part of the offset price for the curse, even though he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and sinless. Thus Jesus was alive on the Cross for a time, but the feeling of death encompassed him prior to his decease.

We will again consider Psalm 18, written by David as stated in the superscription. There is some similarity between parts of this Psalm and Jonah's sentiments in the belly of the whale. Psalm 18 is spiritual, yet David equated it with his own experience. He was involved as a person, expressing his emotions (as proven by verse 50, which mentions him by name), yet those emotions are also prophetic. They describe being in the grave but not really, or literally, being there. It is the thought of being surrounded by death, as Jonah said when in the belly of the great fish. In fact, in some ways, when the Hebrew is compared, Jonah's words are almost as though he was quoting parts of Psalm 18. For example, the "holy temple" is mentioned in Jonah 2:4 (see Psa. 18:6), and there was no Temple, just a Tabernacle, when David wrote the Psalm. Thus more is involved in Psalm 18 than just the expression of David's feelings.

We are tying in Jonah with Psalm 18 to show not merely that there is some relationship but that the relationship is favorable with regard to Jonah. For him to quote from the Psalms shows that he was familiar with and had studied the Old Testament and made it a part of his own expressions. Jesus, too, quoted parts of some Psalms as if they were his own feelings. Jonah's familiarity with Scripture is one reason why God recognized him as a prophet in spite of all his faults. When the Apostle Peter was praying on the roof and saw a vision of unclean animals being let down in a sheet, he said in effect, "All my life I have abstained from eating anything common or unclean" (Acts 10:9-14). This little statement speaks volumes about how devoted Peter was in trying to serve the Lord and obey the Law. Similarly, Jonah's familiarity with the Psalms and his quoting little phrases verbatim show that he was a godly man who thought on the Lord's Word. Therefore, with each fault Jonah had, we should try to find something good about him.

Another favorable indication for Jonah is that he was willing to give his life to calm the waters for the others on the ship. He told them to cast him into the sea, showing that he was willing to die to benefit others. We are reminded of Jesus and also of Moses and Paul. Considering favorable points about Jonah helps us to keep a proper perspective, for the negative qualities are so glaring that they becloud what the Lord liked about Jonah. In spite of the shortcomings, God continued to deal mercifully with Jonah.

No doubt Jonah had fled from obeying the Lord's command to give a judgment message to Nineveh because of his sense of justice and righteous indignation. He felt that the Ninevites deserved punishment as enemies of God and of Israel and for their great sins. As stated earlier, his righteous indignation reminds us of Ananias, who remonstrated when told by the Lord to go to Saul so "that he might receive his sight." "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name" (Acts 9:12-14). Nevertheless, the Lord told Ananias to go to Saul. Another instance of righteous indignation was when James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy Samaritans who were not amenable to the gospel.

Comment: Jonah's righteous indignation was good, but he went overboard.

Reply: Yes, he went beyond the Lord's parameters just as James and John did. Their motive was good—being so supportive of Jesus—but they went too far in wanting death for anyone

who acted against their beloved Master. Jesus rebuked them, saying, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of” (Luke 9:55). Thus God was dealing with Jonah, but He was also educating him and helping him develop his character in the proper direction.

Jonah 2:3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

Comment: Jonah got the point, namely, that *God* had cast him into the deep and that *God's* billows and waves had passed over him. The mariners were the agents, but Jonah recognized that this experience had come from the Lord.

Reply: Yes, Jonah recognized that he was responsible, and he was willing to pay the penalty by being cast into the sea.

Comment: Jonah's statement about the billows and the waves was another quote from the Psalms. “Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me” (Psa. 42:7).

Comment: Jonah prefigures Jesus, as shown in Psalm 69:1,15. “Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul.... Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.”

Reply: Yes, in the rivers of death that encompassed Jesus in connection with the Crucifixion, this sensation of the pit, darkness, and death pressed in on him, and he did not want to become forever extinct. Horrible as it was, the thought of dying and never having an awakening was a necessary part of his experience. The dying process was accelerated on Jesus, who was a perfect man, so that on the Cross he was crying out of *sheol*, as it were, even though he had not yet died. His sacrifice pacified justice, which was crying for satisfaction in regard to pulling the human family down into death.

Jonah 2:4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

Why did Jonah use the word “again” in his prayer? Originally, he had fled from God's presence. Now he was penitent and would turn again to God's holy temple, to God's presence and favor.

Jonah was writing after the fact and looking back upon his emotions and actions in the belly of the whale. First, he experienced the trauma of feeling like an outcast: “I am cast out of thy sight.” He felt ostracized for his disobedience. However, while in total darkness in the belly of the whale, he had a consciousness of the Temple and, therefore, prayed in that direction as best he could under the circumstances. In faith, he offered his prayer in harmony with Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple. Solomon had said in effect, “When people pray toward this edifice, they are helping God to answer their prayer.” A Jew in southern Israel prayed northward, and one in northern Israel prayed southward. And in Babylon, Daniel prayed toward Jerusalem. If done in the proper spirit, obeying the jot and tittle of the Law is commendable, for it prepares one to be in a receptive and acceptable mood for the Lord to favorably answer prayer.

Comment: For verses 3-9, there are many Psalm references in the King James margin, showing Jonah's familiarity with Scripture.

Reply: Some of the references are probably direct, and others are a little strained but illustrate

the principle. However, even with ourselves, if we carefully study the Old Testament, our vocabulary will reflect certain words and expressions. In other words, we indoctrinate ourselves by submitting to the reading.

Comment: Please explain once more the clause “yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.”

Reply: Jonah made this statement while in a down mood, while feeling cast out of God’s sight. He was praying for help—just as some grabbed the horns of the Brazen Altar in the Court of the Tabernacle as a last resort. Of course while in total darkness in the great fish, Jonah could not distinguish the direction of the Temple, so he probably prayed somewhat along the following lines. “Lord, you understand my situation and dilemma, but my desire is to pray toward your Temple. Please forgive me if I am facing in the wrong direction.” Jonah’s prayer attitude in this adverse circumstance was certainly favorable to his character. It is interesting how God humors and honors our sincere efforts, even with all of our imperfections.

Sometimes when we, as Christians, have a particular burden in prayer, we might try to face the north, that is, toward the Pleiades. Just as the Jew prayed toward the Temple, so the Christian can try to pray toward the Pleiades. God said to Job, “Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?” (Job 38:31). We might actually be facing the wrong direction, but God knows that our heart intention is to try to cooperate in the best manner possible for Him to hear our prayer when, for example, we are in a particular low. God takes special note of every little bit of devotion and reverence toward Him—with regard to habits, dress, mannerisms, words, or whatever. Promotion does not come from the east, south, or west but from the north (Psa. 75:6). Therefore, it can be very helpful for the Christian to pray in the direction of the north.

Jonah had the sensation of being cast out of God’s sight, and so did Jesus when (1) in the Garden of Gethsemane he said his soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death, and (2) he cried out on the Cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Each time a spasm of feeling like an outcast overwhelmed his soul. Not only was he impaled on a tree, but also he was placed between two thieves, making him feel like a malefactor. Moreover, his nakedness on the Cross corresponded to Adam’s feeling of guilt. The feeling of being cast off, brief as it was, was a necessary experience to help perfect Jesus as an understanding High Priest.

Jonah 2:5 **The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.**

When Jonah was cast into the sea by the mariners, the account suggests that he felt he may have been able to swim, normally speaking, but the seaweed kept entangling him, thwarting every effort he made to get to the surface for oxygen. As he was sinking in the sea and becoming increasingly entangled, the situation looked more and more hopeless, as though the wave of death was surely coming upon him. At this juncture, the whale opened its mouth and took Jonah in, supplying him with the oxygen he so desperately needed. Thus, as Jonah now realized, Providence had provided a temporary, though strange, restoration.

In any event, just as Jonah had an emotional experience, so Jesus had to feel separated from God, and both got a temporary restoration. Jesus’ strong cry on the Cross, “It is finished!” was a cry of *triumph and victory*. He now knew that all was not lost. He had done his best and then left the matter in the Father’s hands. Only for a brief time was it essential that he experience the feeling of guilt, for he had to bear the curse as part of the ransom price. No doubt he had seen several crucifixions before his own death took place, and crucifixion is a most cruel and inhumane type of death.

If we, like Jonah, had the sensation of being trapped in seaweed, with the seaweed wrapping around our neck, how frightening the experience would be! Even in a pond with an abundance of lily pads, people can drown when their feet get entangled in the roots, so to have seaweed around our head would be frightening.

Perhaps the great fish wanted to eat a morsel of seaweed, and Jonah providentially happened to be there when the fish opened its mouth. Jonah was thus ingested into its belly along with the seaweed.

Comment: Weeds wrapped around Jonah's head, and similarly a crown of thorns was placed on Jesus' head. The thorns came from indigenous weeds that were growing near Jerusalem.

Reply: Yes. The thorns were very sharp and uncomfortable, although they were more delicate and not the large, hard type we often see in this country. The thorns on certain types of weeds are sometimes even prone to be a little poisonous.

Q: Geographically, where did this incident occur?

A: Jonah had been fleeing from Joppa, Israel, to Tarshish, Spain. The boat was in transit, and we do not know how far he got before the whale swallowed him. Perhaps the whale was making the return trip. Let us say, then, that the parts of three days and three nights were the time (and distance) that Jonah had fled from Israel. In other words, the whale reversed direction from the route the boat was following, and it took that long for Jonah to be vomited out on dry land back where he had started.

Incidentally, while Jonah was *alive* in the whale's belly for parts of three days and nights and Jesus was *dead* for that length of time, there is no problem in trying to tie in their experiences, for emotions and certain experiences should not be technically analyzed. Jesus had the feeling of *sheol* and absence from God *before* he died. Jonah's praying in the whale's belly is comparable to Jesus' praying on the Cross, while waves of *sheol* were encompassing him and he feared *perpetual* darkness.

Jonah 2:6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

"I went down to the bottoms of the mountains." As Jonah was sinking in the water, he had the sensation, or consciousness, of going down, down, down, before the whale swallowed him. What an emotional trauma for the prophet! "The earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God." Jesus said the gates of hell would not prevail against the Apostle Peter's rock testimony that he was "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16,18).

Q: Did Jonah sink way down in the sea *before* the whale swallowed him?

A: Yes. We do not think that when Jonah was cast into the sea, the whale's mouth was already open and the prophet landed direct—like a dog catching in midair meat that is thrown to him. Rather, Jonah had these other sensations prior to actually being swallowed.

And another thought seems to be included here. The experience seemed to be like doomsday to Jonah. After he was swallowed by the whale, he sensed, from its belly, that it was going into a *deep* dive. Jonah felt this was the end of his life—he had the sensation that the experience was forever and that there was no exit from this prison.

“Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption [the pit], O LORD my God.” The King James margin, the RSV, and the NIV have “pit,” which is probably correct.

Jonah 2:7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

Verse 7 repeats the thought of the “holy temple.” “When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD.” Being in a down condition of heart, Jonah appealed to the real court of last resort, the heavenly throne, God’s “holy temple.” The down condition would have lasted a little while, but we do not know how long.

In a severe trauma of life, some people cry aloud in prayer. They may even cast themselves down on the floor or ground and be in a prostrate position as they tearfully cry out to the Lord for help.

Q: Is the thought that Jonah was referring not to the literal Temple but to God’s throne?

A: Solomon said, “The heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee [O God]; how much less this house [Temple] that I have builded?” (1 Kings 8:27). In other words, “Who can build a temple to contain thee, O God?” But nevertheless, God instructed Solomon to build a Temple. The physical structure is symbolic of God’s sanctuary in heaven, from which He can answer the petitions of those who call upon Him for mercy and help.

Comment: We do not have to go to Jerusalem to know that we are in favor with God, but there is something special about being there.

Reply: Yes, there are some benefits. If the Lord opens the door, we should take advantage of the opportunity to visit Israel and Jerusalem.

A peculiar phenomenon will be experienced by some at the end of this age; namely, a Christian may be guiltless of certain things, but circumstantial evidence can result in an innocent person’s feeling guilty of the accusation. Consider Jesus at the time of his crucifixion. Jehovah’s hand was heavy on Jesus, and although it did not crush him, it came very close to doing so. And the closer the trial gets to the crushing point, the greater the individual becomes who survives the experience. It is like a horse that is being trained. The wilder that horse is, the greater the end result can be. As the animal is being broken and broken, it becomes an obedient servant to the one who is riding and taming it. A bond develops between horse and rider. The same principle applied to Jehovah and His Son. The Son was always obedient, but obedience under such crucial pressure knit that bond even closer than it could have been otherwise. Thus the experience was necessary for a number of reasons.

The point is that a person can get the sensation of guilt without being guilty, and we would not be surprised if this is one of the trials at the end of the age because the whole Christian world will not understand the behavior of the Lord’s true saints. The stand of the feet members will be a complete enigma to others. Having a phalanx of the religious and civil world viewing and accusing them as a cult can produce the feeling in the innocent feet members that they indeed are members of a cult—when actually their lives are the furthest they could be from what the accusation states.

Jonah 2:8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

The wording of verse 8 is sort of puzzling in the King James Version. The NIV is better: “Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.” For one of the Lord’s

children in the Gospel Age to look elsewhere for help, or for a Jew to look to a heathen idol, instead of to the Lord, the *merciful* God, would mean a forfeiture of grace. Jonah was now pleading to Jehovah, Israel's God, *his* God, for help.

Jonah 2:9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.

“But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving.” What does the term “voice of thanksgiving” mean? Under the Law, an offering of thanksgiving was accompanied by sacrifice and the giving of thanks. As Christians, we should be thankful not only to the Lord but also for small courtesies shown to us. God appreciates such thanksgiving.

Comment: The Apostle James wrote, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” (James 1:2). In retrospect, the situation worked out for Jonah's good because he was rightly exercised. He was really renewing his consecration by saying, “I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.”

Reply: The temptations themselves are not the joy but the aftereffects when one is rightly exercised. Paul said, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:11). Now, *after the fact, after being in the whale*, Jonah renewed his consecration and was determined to mend his ways and to obey the Lord.

Comment: Verse 9 expresses Jonah's repentance. Perhaps parts of three days and nights were needed for him to get to that point, and now he would pay what he had vowed. His original vow was to do the Lord's will, but he had refused to go to Nineveh. Now his heart was saying, “I will do what you want, Lord.” At that point, God spoke to the fish.

“I will pay that that I have vowed.” What did Jonah vow? He had vowed to do the Lord's will. The Ancient Worthies gave their hearts to the Lord just as we do in the Gospel Age.

Jonah was now ready to obey the Lord and go to Nineveh. Why was the statement “Salvation is of the LORD” inserted here? We are all feeble and imperfect, and many Christians fall. God will save those whose repentance and contrition are sincere. He could have let Jonah drown, but He saved Jonah to serve as a type of Jesus and the thinking of Jewry.

Some Bible critics who have tried to show inconsistencies feel that verses 3-9 were an arbitrary later insertion into the narrative. That thought may be true, but if so, the Holy Spirit overruled the insertion. Certainly verses 3-9 give us an insight into Jonah; they are a window into his soul, revealing the inner man. Verses 1 and 2 say, “Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.” Verse 10 states, “And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.” In other words, God answered Jonah's prayer. We have no problem viewing the prayer as a later insertion—a very helpful one.

Sometimes in our Christian walk, we do not recognize until *years afterwards* that God has answered a particular prayer. When the realization comes to us, we feel guilty that we prayed for help and did not acknowledge and thank Him for the answer. Moreover, we should thank Him for the providences and/or trials that induced us to do His will.

Q: How can Jonah picture the Church, for he went in the opposite direction from doing God's will?

A: As we very carefully stated, in understanding the various representations of Jonah, we must keep in mind that only certain segments of the book apply to Jesus, the Church, or the Jewish nation. For example, Jesus is pictured as the Second Adam, but he is the Second Adam in the sense of being a Life-giver. Adam disobeyed God, he sinned, the curse came upon him, etc., but those facets of his life are not the representation of our Lord. Jesus is the Second Adam from the standpoint of being a Father of a regenerated human race. Jonah, too, was disobedient, but certain acts of his experience have a likeness to Jesus, some parts apply to the Church during the Gospel Age, and other parts have an application to the Jewish Diaspora.

The Book of Jonah is not like a type, in which every detail has an antitypical fulfillment. A parable is different. A parable is a very real, concrete truth that teaches a tangible lesson, but it does not have the details of a type. Also, there are figurative and allegorical statements. For example, the Book of Job starts out with an allegory about Satan's being in God's presence and murmuring about how much God was doing for Job. Of course Satan was not literally in God's presence. The purpose of the allegory is to give us a background of Satan's thinking in afflicting Job. God permitted the afflictions with the stipulation that Satan could not take Job's life. Therefore, depending on the context, we can be selective in drawing pictures. Some matters are very mathematical, and some are not.

Comment: However, in regard to Jonah's picturing the Church class, there are times when the Christian may not be as obedient as he should be. Following such times, he will, hopefully, come to his senses through providences, Scriptures, etc., and repent. Therefore, the principle of Jonah's repentance does seem to apply to the consecrated.

Jonah 2:10 And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

In considering verse 10, we will read verses 1 and 2 of the next chapter. "And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." If verse 10 becomes verse 1 of chapter 3, there is more definition. God had just commanded the great fish to vomit out Jonah, and the prophet had been deposited on dry land. God then spoke to Jonah the second time, telling him to arise and go to Nineveh. The suggestion is that Jonah was now back where he had started from. The boat must have gone parts of a three days' journey away from Joppa so that when the whale swallowed Jonah and turned around, the return trip also took parts of three days. Then the whale spewed out Jonah on the dry seashore at Joppa. For the second time, Jonah was given the same commission from the same starting point.

Comment: With the interpretation that Jonah represents the Jewish people or a segment of them, the fact that he was returned to where he had started from would fit well because not until after the Jews are back in their land following Jacob's Trouble will they be ready to be the instrument of blessing to the Gentiles. After the Diaspora, which was like being in "hell," as shown in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Jews returned to the land of Israel. Following Jacob's Trouble, the Kingdom will be inaugurated with the Ancient Worthies and the Holy Remnant.

Reply: Portions of the Book of Jonah can be presented three different ways in antitype: (1) Jonah pictures Jesus, (2) he represents The Christ class in the Gospel Age, and (3) he pictures the Jewish nation. Yes, with regard to the third representation, the Jewish nation will start over again. This theme with Israel and the Jewish people is also shown by the type of Noah, who, after the Flood, started over the second time with a new "heavens" and a new "earth."

Q: Is the fact that God "spoke" to the great fish significant? It sounds as if God was actually

communicating with the fish.

A: God's voice can *create* in itself. He speaks and the act is done. In some cases, it seems His will is accomplished in a natural way, and at other times, He sends someone or an agent to perform His will. However, God's *voice* itself is like an *invisible shaping power*. Thus His Spirit could speak to the fish, and the fish would obey. God commanded, and out came Jonah as the great fish vomited him forth. To repeat: God speaks and it is done. Even if there is no one to perform the command, it is done anyway, for God's voice has both a shaping and a creating influence of its own. For example, He said, "Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:3).

Q: Prior to the Fall, didn't Adam have some control over the animals?

A: Yes, and he even had control over the fish of the sea.

Comment: The NIV has the word "commanded" instead of "spake" for verse 10.

Reply: The word "spake" is a good rendering, for when Jehovah speaks, it is a commandment.

Comment: If we had a sufficiency of faith, we could probably do some unusual things according to God's will. For instance, Jesus said, "If ye have faith, and doubt not, ... ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done" (Matt. 21:21).

Reply: Faith has a tremendous power, but since we are an imperfect vessel, we cannot have a sufficiency of the kind of faith that would literally remove a mountain. However, a divine being could do this. Evidently, God will share some of His power with Jesus and the Bride class.

Comment: Moses prayed for the earth to open up and swallow the disobedient, and it did (Num. 16:28-33).

Reply: Moses prayed in effect, "Let happen what has not happened since creation. Let the earth open its mouth and quickly swallow up these rebellious people." And the account says, "And it came to pass, as he [Moses] had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground [immediately] clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation" (Num. 16:31-33).

Just as Adam had control over the beasts of the field, the fish of the sea, and so forth, so God exercised that same power just by speaking. When His verbal command "Let it be done" goes forth, the matter is immediately operational. The whale vomiting Jonah forth on dry land was all prefigured because later, when those in Nineveh heard what had happened to him, they thought their "great one," their god, had come, especially since *nin* meant "fish" in their religion. Similarly, Dagon, the fish god, was the deity of the Philistines. Just as the Jews have a prophecy that Messiah is coming, so the Ninevites believed that their fish god would come at some time in the future and visit them. Thus they regarded Jonah as the visitation of their great prophet to them as a people. Now we can understand why they repented, going to extreme measures. The experience had a favorable influence on Nineveh.

By extension, we can appreciate the depth of anguish that the nation of Israel will experience when they realize in the near future that they put their own Messiah to death. Becoming aware of what they, as a people, did in their blindness will bring about a repentance so thorough and so visual that Gentiles will be only too willing to follow such a Jew (Zech. 8:23). The same is true with Christians. If others see a person—no matter how he lived previously—now truly

converted to God and in the role of humiliation, the right-hearted individual will want to have that same experience in his own life. The Holy Remnant, who will accept Jesus at the time of Jacob's Trouble, will be so exemplary and contrite that all the Gentile prejudice which has been cultivated and cultured over thousands of years will evaporate. Seeing this sincere change, the Gentiles will say, "Who are we to have such a feeling of prejudice?" The desire of the Gentile nations to gravitate to Jerusalem for instruction will be just as natural as the desire for water in the desert.

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

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

Jonah 2:10, the last verse of chapter 2, should really start chapter 3. Immediately after the great fish vomited out Jonah back in Israel, the "word of the LORD" came to him. God said, "Arise, go to Nineveh, and preach what I will then instruct you to say." In other words, God would later give Jonah the message to deliver.

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.

This time Jonah *obeyed*, for he had learned the lesson well. The great city of Nineveh was a long way from Israel. Moreover, Nineveh was so large that it took a preacher three days to cover the whole city, that is, to go from one side to the other.

When we consider Jonah from the standpoint of representing The Christ, Head and body, the three days represent the fifth, sixth, and seventh "days" from Jesus' baptism at Jordan to the completion of the Church. In the type, the Ninevites became converted, but in the antitype, the destruction of the nominal system will precede the conversion of the people. The ministry of the Church will be successful eventually, in due time. Nineveh pictures Christendom, to whom the feet members, the Elijah class, the John the Baptist class, will give a smiting message of reproof.

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.

Jonah went a day's journey into Nineveh and began to preach, shouting like a town crier: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown [destroyed]." This is the message God wanted Jonah to deliver. It took the prophet a long time to get to Nineveh, and when he arrived, he was instructed what to say. The fact that Jonah shouted out of *conviction* and was very *positive* in his warning shows there was a worthwhile quality in him despite his prejudices. His strong voice of authority would have impressed the people as truth.

Because Nineveh repented, the city was not destroyed in the literal 40-day time frame. However, the "forty days" were important from another standpoint, for, using the principle of a day for a year, Nineveh was destroyed 40 years later (Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6). Thus the city got a *temporary* reprieve because of the repentance.

From the perspective of our interest in chronology and prophecy, the great cities of the Bible start with Babylon. Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, preceded Babylon, which was the next or succeeding empire. The point is that while only five universal empires were shown in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image, there were actually about eight universal empires. When Daniel prophesied, he started with, "Thou, O king [Nebuchadnezzar], art a king

of kings [the head of gold]: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom” (Dan. 2:37,38).

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.

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.

Q: Word of Jonah’s being vomited out of the great fish somehow reached Nineveh. Wouldn’t the fact that the Ninevites worshipped the fish help to emphasize that the message was coming from the true God?

A: Yes. As an illustration, when John the Baptist came from the wilderness clothed with camel’s skin and girt with a leather belt and preached, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” the Israelites associated him with Elijah because God had said, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Mal. 4:5,6; Matt. 3:1,2,4). In other words, when John the Baptist appeared from the desert with the clothing of one in the wilderness like Elijah, that association helped to create an impact on Israel. In fact, the impact was so great that when Jesus, later in his ministry, asked the chief priests and elders, “Did John the Baptist lie?” the religious leaders feared to answer (Matt. 21:23-27). If they said “yes,” the people would realize they did not recognize John the Baptist as a prophet. If they said “no,” they would have to accept Jesus.

With regard to the account here in Jonah, the basic meaning of the word *nin* is “fish.” The design of the hats of Roman Catholic bishops, which are conical in shape and split with a “mouth,” goes back to Babylonian days to represent the *fish*. And with the Philistines, Dagon was the *fish* god. Therefore, the wearing of a headdress in either the Catholic or the Philistine religion came from the thought of the word “fish.” Evidently, news of Jonah’s having been swallowed by a great fish and then being vomited out on land reached Nineveh prior to the prophet’s arrival.

We suggested that the fish vomited Jonah onto dry land at Joppa, the point of origin of his flight. Perhaps someone actually saw Jonah being deposited there, and the citizens of Joppa would have witnessed Jonah’s miraculous survival. From there, the startling news would have spread, eventually getting to Nineveh one way or another.

The king of Nineveh would have instituted the fast. He arose from his throne, laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. All of the people of the city fasted, “from the greatest of them [the king] even to the least of them [the common people].” They all believed God. In other words, verses 5 and 6 are not sequential, for the king did not follow the lead of the people but, rather, the reverse was true. *He* initiated the fast.

Q: Were any other factors involved in the success of Jonah’s message? For him to go into a strange city and utter the message “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” was most unusual.

A: As some writers have suggested, the Ninevites apparently had a tradition that their messiah would be a messenger from the fish god, which they worshipped. Hearing of Jonah’s experience with the great fish, they connected the two events. Also, the very fact that the account states, “So the people of Nineveh believed God,” indicates they had had a previous premonition based upon what they felt was a message from their god.

If we had been in Jonah's place, first being in the belly of the whale and then going, at the Lord's instruction the second time, to preach to Nineveh, we would speak with power and emphasis. Trying to exonerate ourselves from our earlier disobedience, we would now speak in earnest. Thus Jonah must have delivered the message *with great conviction*.

Comment: Like John the Baptist, Jonah would have attracted attention by saying, "Repent!"

Comment: Jonah may have used his previous experience as part of his message. For example, "I thought not to come to you with a judgment message from God, but I was providentially swallowed by a great fish and vomited forth so that I would deliver the message."

Reply: To present his message in that fashion would certainly have added conviction. When the people saw that John the Baptist had a simple, meager diet of locusts dipped in honey and that he wore rough clothing, they realized he was an ascetic—so devoted to God that he denied himself good clothing and rich food. John's lifestyle gave credence to his message. Evidently, Jonah spoke with great conviction, which added *power* to his message.

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:

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.

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

The Ninevites now believed in the supreme Deity, and the people, from the king on down, followed Jonah's advice. Imagine, even the animals were clothed in sackcloth! Neither man nor beast was to eat or drink anything for the length of the fast. What an example! No wonder Jesus said that the men of Nineveh, who repented at the preaching of Jonah, would condemn the generation of Jews at the First Advent for failing to accept Jesus, "a greater than Jonas" (Matt. 12:41). With heathen Nineveh proclaiming a fast to God, it is hard to understand why Israel today has not proclaimed a national day of fasting in connection with the Arab threat. Not doing so shows the irreligious condition of the majority of the people.

The king of Nineveh meant business—he did not just give lip service. Not providing food or drink to man or beast during the fast manifested sincerity. The people recognized they had done wrong and deserved judgment, but they hoped that God would change His mind and extend mercy if their repentance was sincere and thorough. "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?"

"Sackcloth" was like a burlap bag with holes cut out for the head and arms. The person was naked underneath so that the material would be scratchy. In addition, the people put dirt on their heads, making themselves unsightly, and sat in the dirt (ashes). There was much mourning in Nineveh. A counterpart for the Christian is a real prayer of supplication, strongly showing God the sincerity of the repentance.

Much commotion came from the hungry animals. The setting, with sights and sounds, has been photographically recorded for viewing in the Kingdom. The showing will be educational, inspiring, and TRUE. Incidentally, in the plague upon Egypt in which the firstborn of each family and the cattle died, the reason for involving the animals was so that every Egyptian

house would mourn, including those families who had no son. Because of bigotry and the pride of man, events in history are sometimes erased in order to hide the facts. For example, no record of the ten plagues appears on any of the monuments in Egypt.

Q: How long did the Ninevites and their animals fast?

A: As far as we know, there is nothing in history to indicate the length of the fast, but it probably lasted at least three days and perhaps a week.

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.

Jonah's observation was that "God repented of the evil, that he had said he would do unto them [the Ninevites]; and he did it not." Jonah showed his sense of righteous indignation in feeling that the Ninevites were worthy of judgment and that they should not be excused. In some respects, this type of antipathy is in the nominal Church systems or in those who possess the nominal Church perspective. There is vindictiveness in their not seeing that God can deal with someone else. And there is opposition to the thought that the people will have a future opportunity in the Kingdom.

God does not change (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17), so how is this verse explained? Verse 10 does not mean that God is fickle or emotional but that the judgment was based on the heart condition of the people of Nineveh. Because the people turned from their evil ways, God extended mercy.

Verse 10 also shows that God would rather save and forgive than destroy. The purpose of judgment is to effect repentance or teach a lesson. God always forewarns in some way prior to a judgment being rendered. This verse exposes the smallness of character of many Jews as manifested in the hardness of their hearts toward Gentiles. A side lesson is that it is our duty as consecrated Christians to warn the professed people of God about the coming judgments.

Comment: Jonah had proclaimed that Nineveh would be destroyed in 40 days and did not mention repentance (verse 4). There was a double test on (1) Nineveh and (2) Jonah.

Jonah said that God "did it [the judgment] not." We would counter by saying the Lord did bring judgment but not at that time. Thus the last half of verse 10 is Jonah's perspective, for he did not see the judgment occur at the end of the literal 40 days.

Jonah 4:1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

"But it [God's not carrying out the judgment] displeased Jonah exceedingly." One reason Jonah fled to Tarshish was that he felt God would repent and spare Nineveh, and to not destroy the city would make him appear foolish. Also, Jonah did not want God to deal with Israel's enemies. One lesson for us as we consider Jonah's actions is that we should question *our own* motives, not God's.

Of course we have to speculate because of limited information, but there are several possible reasons why Jonah had not wanted to preach to Nineveh. (1) He considered the forgiveness of an enemy to be a reflection on his role as a prophet. (2) He felt the Ninevites would return to their evil ways later and not stay repentant. If so, then in the long run, their repentance would do more harm than good. (3) Based on Deuteronomy 18:22, he might be perceived as a false prophet. "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."

And there was another possible motive for Jonah's fleeing. The prophet was conscious of Israel's own evil. Many in Christendom feel that without the fear of hellfire, people will not be converted. Thus they want a stern message for the sinner, with no "second chance." Jonah might have been thinking that Israel was getting reprobate, and for him to go to a foreign nation and give a judgment message and have the people repent would result in the Israelites' thinking there was no point in trying to improve their ways. After all, if God forgave the Ninevites of all their evil, wouldn't the Israelites be encouraged to continue in their sinful ways? However, God was justified in His mercy, for Nineveh truly repented.

Comment: Many times in Jewish history, a king delayed judgment on the nation by repenting. Jonah would have known this history, yet when mercy was extended to Gentiles, he was "very angry."

Reply: Even King Ahab got a temporary reprieve based on repentance, with the result that his children were not slain in his day. Nevertheless, the judgment had to come—it was merely postponed. The same was true of Nineveh, which was overthrown 40 years later. The judgment was merely held in abeyance.

Q: Does Jonah's exceeding displeasure over Nineveh's repentance reflect the sentiments of those Jews who could not understand the change in the Law Covenant dispensation at the First Advent and the gospel going to the Gentiles in AD 36?

A: Being schooled under the Law as a favored nation that was to be kept separate and distinct from other peoples, many Jews had difficulty seeing God's mercy. That prejudice was hard for them to overcome, and they needed a lot of convincing in one fashion or another. Those Jews who could accept the change were flexible enough to realize that God has this prerogative. The Apostle Paul gave a sermon on this subject, showing that it is God's prerogative to have mercy on whom He will have mercy (Rom. 9:15).

Jonah 4:2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

Jonah 4:3 Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

Jonah was willing to die. He was so schooled in thinking of the worthiness of the judgment to come upon Nineveh that he could not stand to see the judgment reversed. Probably he knew very acutely the degradation and cruelty of that people.

Without having a proper religious background, some individuals who have witnessed atrocious crimes have a hard time believing there is a God. They reason, "If He exists, why didn't He stop the crime?" But God will repay—in due time (Rom. 12:19). What a man sows he will reap (Gal. 6:7). In the Kingdom, what a victim has experienced of fear, pain, etc., will be transferred into the mind of the victimizer. Thus, as retribution, not only will the victimizer be in the exact same position his victim was in, experiencing all the attendant sights, sounds, pain, suffering, and fright, but he will feel like the victim and see himself perpetrating the crime. The scales of justice *will be balanced*. So that the peace and calm of a restored society will not be disturbed, the victimizer will get these sensations in his sleep. To obtain life after experiencing the trauma, the victimizer will have to go to the victim and ask for forgiveness—and mean it. The victimizer will be only too happy to do this *if he can survive the retribution aspect*.

To preach that God will forgive everything in the future without conditions is a wrong message. In fact, it is the false prophet message. To teach that everything will be forgiven and man will start fresh when he comes forth from the tomb contradicts scriptural principles.

Comment: It is hard to understand Jonah's attitude of wanting to die. His job as a prophet was to bring people to repentance, so he should have rejoiced over the Ninevites' reaction.

Reply: Sometimes Christians make rash statements too. Jonah felt hopeless and confused, for he did not understand what was happening. A lot of understanding was not yet due in his day. For example, the Jews did not know the significance behind the sacrificing of animals. Few Jews had the remarkable faith of Abraham, who was willing to kill his own son because he believed God must have had a good reason for giving the command. For that extraordinary level of faith and obedience, Abraham is the "father" of the faithful (Rom. 4:16).

Comment: Since Jonah can picture the Jewish people, an example in more recent times is the Holocaust. When Jews who were cruelly persecuted under Hitler's policies come forth from the grave, no doubt many will have trouble, at least temporarily, accepting the fact that their persecutors, who exterminated millions in the gas ovens of the concentration camps, will get an opportunity for life—especially if those Jews were righteously inclined and tried to keep the Law.

Reply: Yes, for they experienced real traumas.

Incidentally, brethren who oppose the thought of animal sacrifices in the Kingdom Age, when the Lord's Word says they will occur, do not have a proper attitude (Ezek. 40:41-43; 44:11; 46:24). Many can accept the concept of a literal Temple but not animal sacrifices. *God Himself* required animal sacrifices in Old Testament times, so there cannot be anything morally wrong with the performance. If sacrificing animals is wrong today or in the future, it was wrong back there as well. Brethren who argue against animal sacrifice in the Kingdom Age do not realize that their hearts are not attuned to God's Law in this area. If God thinks animal sacrifice will have some benefit in the future, so be it. When the Lord's Word says something will occur, we must adjust our thinking and trust there is a reason. As commanded by God, animal sacrifices are highly instructional and beneficial when properly considered.

Comment: Animals are slaughtered all the time for food, yet most people think nothing of it.

Before the Book of Jonah began, the prophet had evidently expressed his opinion that God was merciful. Perhaps we "argue" with the Lord at times too. And the Lord is tolerant because of our weaknesses. Things we do over and over, if exposed, would make us also appear mean and small. Only God can judge the heart. We need His mercy too!

Jonah 4:4 Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?

Jonah 4:5 So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

Jonah 4:6 And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.

Jonah 4:7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

Jonah 4:8 And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

Jonah went outside the city and sat under a temporary booth to wait out the 40 days. The booth was on the east side of Nineveh, which probably gave him the best view, or vantage point. When the fortieth day came, he watched intently, but nothing happened. Jonah experienced a conflict of emotions, for he appreciated the worthiness of the Ninevites to be punished and could not understand God's act of forgiveness.

Q: The NIV calls the "gourd" a "vine." Is that correct?

A: Yes, God prepared a vine with leaves to make a shadow over Jonah's head. The prophet was pleased with the arrangement, for the vine delivered him "from his grief"; that is, it eased his discomfort.

Q: What does the gourd represent?

A: We believe the gourd pictures the Law Covenant. God prepared the Law Covenant as a shade, a comfort, and a sense of security for the Israelites.

Comment: God prepared the great fish, the storm, the vine, the worm, and the vehement east wind. What a lot of care He expended to get the lesson across to Jonah! He does the same for us at times.

Reply: Yes. If it were not for His mercy, God would have thrown up His hands and had nothing more to do with us. In principle, therefore, we ourselves may be doing some of the very things Jonah did. With Jonah, the disobedience was dramatic and outstanding, whereas our personal judgments may be much less noticeable but very meaningful, nevertheless. We certainly need schooling along many lines.

The next morning God prepared a worm that caused the gourd to wither. Just as the gourd was a *temporary* arrangement, so Israel's Law Covenant was *temporary*. If the Jewish people were meek, they would be able to see their weaknesses and their need for the Lord's help. At the time of the Exodus, God provided the Law Covenant, a *temporary* means of helping them. In the Kingdom Age, the New (Law) Covenant will be established. God was dealing with the Jewish people through His grace, and not because of their beautiful characters, for "there is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10). The same danger exists among Christians, namely, to think "once saved, always saved." Moreover, no one should think he owns the ministry or deserves God's favor or is the only one who has a right to preach. We must stay *humble*.

When God took away the vine and the shadow and caused a strong east wind to blow, Jonah not only felt the heat of the sun but inhaled the heat. He fainted and wished he could die, uttering the same emotional response for the second time: "It is better for me to die than to live" (see verse 3). Jonah had the courage to stand up for God only when he could understand the reasoning. However, God did eventually destroy Nineveh—and He will requite the evils and atrocities that have been committed down through history, even though it looks as if He has winked the eye. Most of the wicked have lived, prospered, and died without receiving retribution, but the end of the matter is not yet. Not only will the Ransom be testified in due time but also God's method for balancing the scales of justice for the wicked.

In antitype, Jesus is the "worm" that God prepared to wither, or cut down, the gourd (the Law

Covenant). Jesus abolished the Law for those Jews who transfer over to him, nailing it to the Cross. The Grace Covenant is open to *all* people, not just to Jews.

Psalm 22:6 prophetically gives one of Jesus' thoughts while hanging on the Cross: "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." The human body God prepared for Jesus was humiliated on the Cross. Jesus was naked, without clothes (without scales like a worm), and his body was twisted out of shape (resembling a wriggling, twisted earthworm). The spectacle of Jesus' death was not appealing to the Jews, for they expected a noble, regal King. His whole life was one of *humility*, contrary to their expectations.

Jonah 4:9 And God said to Jonah, **Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.**

Jonah 4:10 Then said 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:**

Jonah 4:11 **And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?**

Q: If Jonah built a booth (or "shelter") to sit under (see verse 5 in the NIV), wasn't the shade sufficient? Why was a gourd, or a vine, also needed?

A: The heat of the sun was so intense that the booth was not adequate. The vine grew like a trellis and provided a shadow for which Jonah was very thankful. When the vine withered and died and the sun was still so hot, Jonah felt he had a right to be angry and wished he were dead. His words were, "I do well to be angry, even unto death."

Jonah needed direction, but he showed an honesty of heart. Subsequent to this experience, he no doubt was a completely reformed individual. The lesson can be transferred to us as Christians, for with those who are indoctrinated for many years with erroneous thinking, the Lord sometimes has to use rather drastic measures and providences to eradicate or soften the reasoning. For example, Paul was blinded (Acts 9:1-9), and illness can make a Christian think very soberly on his actions. God may be dealing with individuals and appreciating their character but permits experiences because their character needs a different perspective. In other words, trials may be judgmental not in the sense that the individuals are outcasts but in the sense that they need to get another perspective. They can still make the grade if they submit to the experience, being rightly exercised.

Jonah was used favorably of the Lord and is one of the creditable prophets, but we see him throughout this book at his most unfavorable moment. Similarly, we see David at some most unfavorable moments, but God saw in him commendable characteristics. As time went on, he was a changed man, as reflected in the Psalms. David was very reverential in his earlier days and very sober and reflective in his later days when he wrote the Psalms. Studying the Psalms gives us insight as to why he could be considered a man after God's own heart in spite of some of the sins he committed. He was a changed man through repentance and reform following the afflictions that came upon him for sins against the Holy Spirit that could not be forgiven. Sins against light cannot be forgiven but must be expiated through a judgment. If we read carefully about David's life and the things that happened to him, we can see that his experiences were very helpful in making his own calling and election sure as an Ancient Worthy in spite of his sins. Sometimes we view a person at his most unfavorable moment, but it is possible that the moment was the low of his career and that change followed. However, when a situation grows progressively worse, as with Saul, we can see that the person is proving himself worthy of

Second Death. There are cases where we cannot pray for a certain individual because he did not repent of gross sins (1 John 5:16).

The 120,000 Ninevites who could not discern between their right hand and their left hand were not accountable because they were *children*. (Nineveh had a population of almost 1 million people, and approximately 8 percent of them had not reached the age of moral responsibility.) The Lord tried to use *natural* reasoning with Jonah to get him to soberly reflect along the following lines. “For the sake of the infants and children, who have no moral responsibility for their actions but would perish in the coming judgment, shouldn’t Nineveh and the braying, hungry, thirsty cattle be spared? Your reasoning on this subject is wrong. You should have compassion for the animals, let alone for the people. Have faith in me that I know what I am doing. If I forgave the Ninevites, my reasons are quite sufficient.”

Q: Could the terminology that 120,000 Ninevites were not able to “discern between their right hand and their left hand” refer to their being so wicked and steeped in sin that they did not know right from wrong?

A: That wording can refer to adults depending on context, but we think that in this case, the reference was to the young. In trying to reason with Jonah, God pointed out that neither the cattle nor the children had moral responsibility. God condescended to reason with Jonah on the prophet’s own terms to show the fallacy of thinking.

Moses’ words in Deuteronomy 1:39 are a scriptural precedent for the 120,000 being children: “Moreover your little ones ... and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither [into the land], and ... they shall possess it.” The young Israelites in the wilderness—those under a certain age—could enter the Promised Land because they did not bear moral responsibility. The count ended up with 2 million Israelites leaving Egypt and 2 million entering the Promised Land. Of the 2 million who entered, only Joshua, Caleb, and two priests were spared of those over a certain age. Partly, then, for the sake of the 120,000 young ones, Nineveh’s judgment was delayed.

Q: The little ones and the animals were favored here because a God-fearing element was among the Ninevites. But what about other Old Testament cases where God ordered infants, children, and animals to be destroyed?

A: Not only did they have other gods, but the environment was so evil that those who grew up in it would have become incorrigible. With all dying, they will come forth in the resurrection with a less damaged character. The children were killed for their own eternal good.

As Bro. Oscar Magnuson used to reason, if the children were spared and thus continued to live under the tutelage of an environment that was so corrupt, they would become so reprobate as they developed into maturity that their eternal salvation would be jeopardized. Thus God took them away as He saw best for their eternal good. Stated another way, to terminate their lives in the midst of corruption was beneficial in the final analysis, for short-term gain would have meant everlasting damnation. Of course the Pastor called attention to the fact that there will be a resurrection and a future opportunity. Man has to die anyway, and most people die very unpleasant deaths. To die quickly in warfare is preferable to dying by degrees and inches as, for instance, on a life-support system. God knows what He is doing, and the long-range viewpoint will eventually vindicate His wisdom.

The question, then, is how we would harmonize the sparing of Nineveh with other instances where all (old, young, and animals) were killed. The divine attributes are revealed separately and in a certain order so that one’s faith in God can be tested. For instance, Justice was the first

attribute to play a prominent role. Consider the four attributes as follows.

1. When Adam sinned, the death penalty was imposed. However, that penalty was not severe from the standpoint of the advice God gave to Adam. “Of every tree of the garden, you may freely eat *except one*. In the day you eat of that tree, dying you shall die.” When Adam disobeyed, *Justice* was revealed in condemning him to death. As the human race went down into death, God’s *Justice* was prominently seen, and it was hard to see His Love.

In order to bring out the side of God’s character that He cannot be trifled with because of the nature of His office and that man cannot deal with Him disrespectfully (as many do with a human father), it was necessary to show that life and death hinge on obedience. *Justice* is the foundation of God’s throne. He cannot tolerate sin, nor does He intend to tolerate sin at all in the future in any shape, manner, or form. Therefore, the *temporary* permission of evil—as terrible as it appears at present—is necessary to teach an *everlasting* lesson. The *little time* of approximately 6,000 years is *nothing* compared to *eternity*.

2. *Power* was the next attribute to be revealed. God used *Power* to bring judgments such as the Flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. There is nothing God cannot do in exhibiting His *Power*.

3. How could God’s *Love* be manifested if conditions did not exist where He would have to exercise compassion and forgiveness? Evil had to happen so that God could show His *Love* for mankind in sending His only begotten Son. He thereby showed His concern and the soft side of His nature—that He is easily moved by the sinner’s repentance and contrite heart and that He is pitying to those who are in need of His mercy.

4. Each of God’s four attributes is shown separately in order to furnish a bold release of that particular characteristic. The separation exposes *Justice*, *Power*, *Love* (especially in the introduction of Jesus and his gospel message), and *Wisdom*, the last attribute, which is yet to be seen. When *Wisdom* is realized, then all four attributes will be seen in their true and balanced perspective. At the present time, the attributes are not seen as balanced except in proportion as one is consecrated and has the Holy Spirit of God, but even then, the consecrated only *glimpse* God’s *Wisdom* because they have only a *measure* of His Spirit. We cannot appreciate God’s character in its fullness—we try our best, but faith has to bridge the gap in the present life.

At a particular time (such as with Nineveh), God may choose to emphasize *one* of His attributes. Only if the picture ended there and nothing else followed in God’s plan would there be disharmony. Stated another way, God is always a God of Love, even if He chooses to exercise a certain quality on a certain occasion. Only in the future, at the end of the Kingdom Age, will mankind be able to see God’s attributes in the full and balanced sense, for then the people can look back at His plan fulfilled.

Some of God’s acts were done to furnish types, as shown in the following examples:

1. Sodom and Gomorrah were intended to be a type of God’s burning judgment against sin.

2. When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, their battles with the Canaanites pictured the Christian in the present life, who has to root out, as far as lies within his power, all the “Canaanites” in his heart. God used this drastic method to show that the Christian cannot reason or parley with sin but must slay and crucify it—whether that sin is a youth (a baby thought), a warrior, or an old adult. All sin has to be treated alike and killed. The harsh treatment that was meted out to the Canaanites was intended to show the battles of a Christian in the present life in order to attain the heavenly inheritance.

Paul enunciated the principle: “Now all these things happened unto them [the Israelites] for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [age] are come” (1 Cor. 10:11). For example, one lesson is purposed with the Canaanites, and another lesson is intended with the picture of Jonah. None of the pictures are contradictory, and each has its own peculiar lesson to convey. We must investigate the Scriptures and study the principles and be *practicing* lawyers and judges in a good sense in the present life.

3. Jonah is a type of Jesus. However, there are both differences and similarities between Jonah and Jesus. When Jonah started on his mission, he fled from the presence of God and boarded a ship at Joppa to go to Tarshish. In contrast, Jesus was willing to perform his mission. For the joy that was set before him, he left the presence of God to come down here at the First Advent, humbling himself and becoming a man to the extent that he died on the Cross (Heb. 12:2). Jonah’s sleeping while the great storm and turbulent waves raged in the sea pictures Jesus’ sleeping in a boat during a violent storm on the Sea of Galilee. Jonah’s being in the belly of the great fish for parts of three days and nights pictures Jesus’ being in the grave. Jonah’s being vomited out on dry land by the great fish represents the resurrection of Jesus. Jonah went to the great city of Nineveh and preached a judgment message, urging repentance, and in the final analysis, Jesus’ preaching will bring the repentance and salvation of the antitypical Ninevites, for the response of the people to Jonah’s message prefigures the salvation of the world of mankind in the Kingdom Age.

In addition, there is a partial application to the Gospel Age. The small number of mariners in the ship who gave their hearts to God and made vows corresponds to those who are converted to Christ in the present life and make consecration vows to serve God.