

JONAH has ended his experience in the whale, bleached white by the gastric juices of the whale he is commissioned again by God to go to Ninevah.

Jonah had repented. There are two elements to repentance:-

1. A change of mind, to think differently, about himself & God

2. A change of action to have as John the Baptist calls it 'fruit worthy of repentance'¹

Jonah had been forgiven, but not let off his responsibility to take God's message to Ninevah. God's forgiveness does not let us off the hook it deals with the past with a view to prepare us for the future.

So into a massive highly fortified city with a population of up to 2 million, built up on plundering & violence came a one man crusade.

God's message was one of Doom, death, & destruction in 6 weeks. 40 a common number for testing: Israel's 40 years, Jesus 40 days in wilderness.

It is unique for 1 man to be used to bring 2 million to their knees. People believed God (not Jonah) & the city fell to the fear of God. From the greatest to the least, all equal as sinners before God all put on sackcloth - all fasted

Jonah went last to the King. This oriental despot, this dictator heard about this preacher from as yet unconquered Israel - he recognised his corrupt leadership & responded by commanding a period of prayer & fasting.

He believed in a God that was **just** & that He would punish sin.

Many Christians today will not believe in the justice of God and the fearsome reality of eternal damnation. How can a good God send anyone to hell. How can a just God do otherwise? Did his son die in agony for nothing? We are each responsible for what we do with His offer of forgiveness & eternal paradise.

As well as believing in the justice of God, the Assyrian King also rightly believed that God was merciful and may change his mind, and relent of the punishment they deserved.

Do so few Christians fast because so few really fear God?

Jesus said when you pray (Matt 6:5) We pray

Jesus said when you give (Matt 6:3) We give

Jesus said when you fast (Matt 6:15) Do we fast ?

Fasting is a response to a healthy fear of the Lord

Healthy fears lead to right action

Unhealthy fears lead to paralysis

The Ninevites had a fear of god and faith in a possibility of hope - why else would God bother to warn them ? So they Fasted.

We have a healthy fear of traffic, Fire, Strangers, God? When we knowingly sin - where is the Fear of the Lord. Lost it!

WHY DID THEY RESPOND ?

For many years the people of Ninevah had a tradition that one day a messenger of the great God would come to them, from the sea.

Jonah's bleached skin (gastric juices of whale) would make him stand out in Tenby, let alone well tanned Assyria. He was Persil white in a land of sunshine. His accent would be instantly recognised and they would know that he should look like them! Without saying a word he drew attention to himself. When he told them his story of the time in a whale - they were ready to sit up and take notice. They listened to his message, and effectively God himself. How could the people refuse to believe?

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT ?

God responded - not to how the people felt.

not to what the people said

but to what the people did

Their repentance showed in changed behaviour, and like the father of the prodigal son, God was waiting with open arms to give the Ninevites a second chance. Just as he had to Jonah!

Could it happen again ?

Could a city in 1994 be converted so easily?

Are people today more wicked, more violent & less open to spiritual truth?

Can you date these quotes?

'Things are not what they used to be'. Every age has criticised its young people for their falling standards. From one of the earliest scraps of papyrus ever found, dating from around 2000 B.C. has only one readable sentence on it:

'I see no hope for the future of our people if they are dependent on the frivolous youth of today, for certainly all youth are reckless beyond words. When I was a boy, we were taught to be discreet and respectful to our elders, but the present youth are exceedingly wise and impatient of restraint.'

Hesiod the Greek poet wrote in the 8th century B.C.:

'Our youth love luxury. They have

bad manners, contempt for authority, disrespect for older people. Children nowadays are tyrants. They no longer rise when their elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble their food and tyrannise their teachers.'

Just three centuries later in the 5th century B.C. we find Socrates saying almost exactly the same thing:

Could then one man have such an effect today? In 1914 the communist party of China had 20 members, including, one Mao Tse Tung. Within 35 years the whole country of 800 million was converted. - And greater is He that is within us than he that is in the world. A fact we find hard to believe.

Jonah saw 2 million change in 40 days. In 35 years at that rate it's only 630 million.

When God says to us "Go ye" may we respond, 'Yes Lord' rather than "But" or 'Go him instead!' If we are obedient, even reluctantly it's amazing what God can do. Same principal in other areas of our life where we are called to obedience.

If God will go to such lengths to get back and use a man who went to great lengths to get away from God - How much more could he use me or you!