

5- JONAH – N.T. THEMES – JUN 1997

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These notes, composed from 2013 on, are based on taped lectures given between 1977 and 1997 by Dr. Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., formerly the Head of Theology for the Worldwide Church of God; he resigned in January 1974 because of his unresolved doctrinal issues with the administration. Sadly Dr. Martin died in January 2002, a great loss to the world and to those who seek Biblical truth

Written about 850 B.C., the Book of Jonah has New Testament relevance as well as historical importance.

Some scribes and Pharisees asked Christ for a sign, but Jesus knew that they had had many signs, the Law of Old Testament, the Sabbath, the Holy days, then John the Baptist, Jesus' many miracles and signs, but they were still asking for a sign of His authority and validity. Jesus also knew that they might have thought of themselves as law-keepers, but there was no evidence of true spiritual living in their lives. Far from it.

Jesus told them that no sign would He give to them except the sign of Jonah.

Matthew 12:38 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. 39 But he answered and 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: 40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

What Jesus was telling the Pharisees was that Christianity was for the Jews, yes, but by quoting the story of Jonah he was emphasizing that His message was also for the Gentiles and ultimately for the whole world. He was also telling them in no uncertain terms that they would be judged for their disbelief and rejection but the Ninevites when they both rose in the resurrection.

Jonah was from Gathpeper, about 3 miles from Nazareth and a mile or so from Cana of Galilee. All the disciples were from Galilee, except for Judas, so Jesus was talking about a local man!

While Jonah was literally dead in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights while he was being miraculously transported a couple of

thousand miles from the port of Joppa on the Mediterranean to Nineveh. Jonah was resurrected to human life after those three days and three nights, to fulfill the mission God had given him to perform.

God had told Jonah that it was not his place to decide the fate of Israel, or the Assyrians, but just to do what he had been told to do.

Jonah was willing to die for his people Israel. After his 'resurrection', Jonah preached to the most powerful nation in the world.

Nineveh at that time was the centre of worldwide power, and when Jonah preached to them, from the King, the Nobles, to the 120,000 inhabitants, they all repented in sackcloth and ashes.

Regardless of all the other miracles that Jesus performed, as far as He was concerned, this was the key sign of His Messiahship. He knew that He was to die, at the hands of the most powerful nation at the time, the Romans who were Assyrians and Edomites. He knew He was to be resurrected, not just to human life, but to immortality for ever more. After His resurrection, both He and the disciples and the apostles preached not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentile Roman power, and they repented too.

Matthew 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? 14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. 15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Here Jesus specifically refers to Peter by his full name, Peter, son of Jonah. Peter and his father Jonah were from Galilee, so was the prophet Jonah.

Peter had to be re-educated about the Gentiles. So in Acts 10 he has the vision which brought about his change of mind.

Acts 10:5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: 6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. 7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his

household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually. 8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa. 9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:

Jonah went to Joppa to get the boat to go in the opposite direction to that which God had sent him. Now Peter is living in Joppa, and is about to have his mind changed about the Gentiles.

Acts 10:10 And he (Peter) became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, 11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending upon him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:

12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. 14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. 16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

Jonah was sent to the Gentiles, and Peter was to also have the mission to go to the Gentiles after he had the vision that all men were to be considered 'clean' and to be taught salvation, and given the opportunity to repent.

Acts 10:17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, 18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

While Peter was still actually wondering what the vision was all about, here was a Gentile, with a message from an important high ranking Gentile man in the Roman occupying army asking for help!

So Jonah had to have a lesson about his attitude towards the Gentiles and Peter also had to have a similar lesson about his previous way of thinking.

Acts 10:19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. 20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. 21 Then Peter went

down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? 22 And they said, Cornelius (a gentile) the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. 23 Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. Acts 10:24 And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and he had called together his kinsmen and near friends. 25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

So Peter left Joppa, from where Jonah left to go to the Gentiles, and Peter, who was being given a similar role as Jonah, went to the Gentile Roman, to Caesarea forty miles North of Joppa, the main Roman city in the area as he was told!

Notice, he had the vision on one day, Peter lodged the visitors overnight. The next day, the second day he left to see Cornelius, Peter arrived in Caesarea. The next day, the third day he met Cornelius. Now Cornelius tells Peter four days ago... So as Jonah had a three day and night gap between being sent and actually arriving in Nineveh, so did Peter have a similar period between his vision and meeting Cornelius. Coincidence, or what!

Acts 10:30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, 31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

The lesson that Peter learned was that God is no respecter of persons, Jew, Gentile, black, white, polka dot, they are all His children,

Acts 11: 16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. 17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? 18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

This was a huge, a vast step forward in the plan of God, from the gospel only going to the God's chosen, the Jews now salvation was being offered

to all. Peter was being shown that he was to move with the times, and in harmony with the plan of God, not remain stuck in his old ideas and way of thinking.

This should be a clear lesson to those who still put themselves under the Law of Moses despite the fact that Christ's death and resurrection ushered in a completely new era of God's relationship with humankind.

From then on, the Gospel went out to the whole of the then known world by the Apostles, to Spain, to Rome, to Europe, but not yet, and still not yet in this era really to "Japheth" in India, China, Russia, etc., but their time is coming and they too will repent.