JONAH 3-4

REVIEW…

- Running from the Lord
  - The Word of the Lord came to Jonah to go to Nineveh (*Mosul – Iraq*)…
  - Nineveh was the capitol of the up and coming superpower – the Assyrian Empire…
  - Jonah got up - went to Joppa on the coast of the Mediterranean – and bought a ticket to Tarshish…
  - Nineveh is to the east of Israel – Tarshish was WAY to the west in modern day Spain…
  - Jonah was running from the presence of the Lord – apparently he never read **Psalm 139:7**
- No where to run…
  - The Lord caused a great wind on the sea - the ship was in danger of breaking apart…
  - The men began to throw their cargo overboard – and pray to their various gods…
  - But Jonah was in the belly of the ship – sound asleep – refusing to pray to the one true God!
  - The sailors decided to cast lots (*draw straws*) - the lot fell upon Jonah…
  - The men asked Jonah how to stop the storm – he told them to throw him over…
  - Jonah would rather die – than obey the Lord and go to Nineveh!
- The Lord prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah…
  - Jonah was in the belly – in pitch-blackness for 3 whole days – and THEN he prayed!
  - It shows you how hard the heart of Jonah was – it took 3 days in a fish to break him!
  - Then Lord spoke to the fish – and it vomited Jonah out onto land…
  - And Jonah was ejected right back where he began – though a bit worse for the wear!

THE RELUCTANT PROPHET… (*3 THINGS*)

- **1ST – THE JUDGEMENT OF NINEVEH… VS. 1-4**
  - 1st - The word of the Lord came to Jonah a 2nd time… vs. 1-2
    - Jonah had heard from the Lord the 'first time' – when he was told to go to Nineveh…
      - But the moment he chose to rebel against the Lord – he stopped hearing from the Lord…
      - And Jonah did not hear the Lord again – till he was humbled / willing to listen!
      - When David sinned with Bathsheba – for a whole year he did not hear from God…
      - It made him weak and miserable – he ached to his very bones – **Psalm 32:3**
      - Sin keeps us from hearing the Lord – not that He stops calling out to us…
      - We just do not like what He is saying – so we stop listening to Him!
      - The moment we repent – turn back to Jesus – our ears get unplugged!
      - Rather than go through he frustration of being separated from the Lord…
      - How much better to avoid sin – stay close to / living a life obedient to God!
      - **Psalm 119:11** - "Your word I have hidden in my heart... that I might not sin against You!"
    - The Lord told Jonah to arise – get up…
      - Jonah just got vomited out after spent 3 days in the belly of a fish…
      - I am sure there was a bit of shock – so he was just sitting on the beach where he landed…
      - But the Lord tells him there is no time for pity – its time to get busy!
      - Conviction is good - the work of the Spirit telling us not to sin – repent…
      - But condemnation is bad - focusing on our failures - dwelling on our mistakes...
      - Disappointed - frustrated - that we cannot keep ourselves from sin / that we sinned again...
      - Yet when we are focused on our mistakes - we are not looking to Jesus...
      - We condemn ourselves - but God has forgiven us – and He is greater than our failure!

- **I John 3:20** - "For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart."

- The Lord told Jonah give Nineveh the message that will I give to you!
  - Nineveh is over 700 miles from Israel (*it would have taken months*)…
  - Amazingly it would seem he went without knowing what he was going to say…
  - The Lord gave him the first step – but he had to obey before he got further instructions!
  - When I moved over to the Philippines – all God gave me was **Romans 15:20**…
  - I did not know where / when / or how God was going to work – I had to go first!
  - **Psalm 119:105** – "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."
  - Following Jesus rarely means we know everything that God wants us to do…
  - The Word of God is a lamp to our feet - it only shows the next step…
  - Only when we take that step - we can then see the next step to take!
  - If we knew exactly where we were going / what to do - it would not take faith!

o 2nd – THE message for Nineveh… vs. 3-4
- Jonah got up and went to Nineveh – the city was so large it took him 3 days to cross it!
  - As he entered the city on the first day he proclaimed a simple message…
  - '40 days and Nineveh will be destroyed' – blunt and to the point…
  - There was no theological debates - no concerts / or outreach - just the simple truth!
  - Jonah was sure of 2 things – the judgment was coming / people needed to be warned!
- Like Jonah we have been called to warn the world…
  - But we are not going to warn them unless we are convinced the judgment is coming…
  - As Paul tells us in **Romans 13:11** - time is running out - wake up!
  - For the day of our salvation (*or judgment*) is nearer now than when we first believed!
  - Do not buy into the lie of the world – tomorrow will not be just like today!
  - **II Peter 3:4** – "This will be their argument: "Jesus promised to come back, did he? Then where is he? Why, as far back as anyone can remember, everything has remained exactly the same since the world was first created."
- Like Jonah we need to give people a simple message…
  - People need the Gospel – but how will they believe unless we tell them – **Romans 10:13-15**
  - The message could not be simpler – repent and believe / confess – **Romans 10:9-10**
  - But we must also share the consequence of rejection – eternal separation – hell…
  - God did not make salvation hard – He wants everyone to be saved – **II Peter 3:9**
  - Yet God will not make anyone go to heaven – He gives us all the choice!

- **2ND – THE RESPONSE OF NINEVEH… VS. 5-10**

o 1st - The people of Nineveh believed God… vs. 5
- They proclaimed a fast – and put on sackcloth and ashes to SHOW their repentance…
  - Why did they believe – because of the sign of Jonah - **Luke 11:30**…
  - Jonah certainly understood the consequences of disobeying the Lord – 'BIG fish'…
  - He was not just giving them a warning – he was speaking from his own experience!
  - When people want proof that God is real – and that Jesus is the answer…
  - The best answer we can give them is our testimony of what God has done in us…
  - People can argue with our words – but they cannot argue with Jesus in our lives!
  - **II Corinthians 3:3** – "Clearly, you are a letter from Christ prepared by us. It is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God..."
- Also 3 days in the belly of a fish no doubt left a mark...
  - Jonah likely came out skin bleached by the stomach acids (*similar to hydrochloric acid*)…
  - The Assyrians worshiped a fish god - Dagon – half man half fish – no wonder they listened!

- It leaves one to wonder – would they have listened if Jonah had come at the beginning…
- God used his rebellion – his consequences – to make him more effective for God!
- I have made MANY poor choices in life – that brought a LOT of tough consequences…
- But I am convinced I would not be who I am today / where I am today apart from them!
- Not that God wanted / or caused me to make those decisions – they were my own…
- But God did what only He can – he took those poor choices – and turn them into blessings!
- **Isaiah 63:1** – "Beauty for ashes, joy instead of mourning…"

o 2nd – The King proclaimed a fast… vs. 6-9
- When the king of Assyria heard the message of Jonah – he also humbled himself…
  - The stepped down from his throne / set aside his royal clothes – put on sackcloth / ashes…
  - He then sent a decree to all of Nineveh – no man or animal was to eat food or drink water…
  - Everyone was required to wear sackcloth and sit in ashes / and pray to God (*Eloheem*)…
  - And everyone had to turn from their evil ways – and stop their violence…
  - Who knows perhaps God will show mercy – and not destroy the city!
  - Although it was a command – the king was ratifying what the people were already doing!
  - Revival does not start in the government – laws do not change the heart of a people…
  - A government is the reflection of the its people – it follows their lead…
  - If we desire to see a revival in our nation – it is not going to happen at the voting booths…
  - It is going to happen in our every day conversations with ordinary people…
  - As our friends and neighbors humbles themselves – turn to the Lord…
  - Then we will see our elected officials begin to create laws that reflect Godly people!
  - Who knows – perhaps God will have mercy on our nation – **II Chronicles 7:14**

o 3rd – The Lord saw the repentance of Nineveh – and had Mercy… vs. 10
- Not that God changed His mind – Jonah was a test for the people of Nineveh…
  - If they repented then there was hope – if they did not then there was judgment!
  - Because God does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked…
  - He desires that they turn from their evil ways and live!
  - * **Ezekiel 18:21-23** - "If a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live!"
- Nineveh became an example of repentance!
  - In **Luke 11:32** - Jesus said Nineveh will 'rise up' in THE judgment with THIS generation…
  - But they will condemn it for they repented at the preaching of Jonah!
  - Yet the people who heard Jesus – who was greater than Jonah – did not repent!
  - A reluctant prophet that cared little for the people – brought a great revival…
  - God incarnate – who was willing to die for the people – had His message ignored!
  - Because it is not about the messenger – the power is in the message…
  - We are not called to save people – we are called to share the Gospel of Salvation!
  - **Romans 1:16** – "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes."

- **3RD – THE LESSON FOR JONAH… VS. 1-11**

o 1st – Jonah complains… vs. 1-3
- Jonah trembled (*displeased*) at this 'great evil' (*exceedingly*) – and became furious…
  - Jonah wanted God to judge the people of Assyria – he wanted Nineveh destroyed!
  - Perhaps because of some wrong the Assyrians had committed against Israel…
  - They would be the nation God used to take the Northern Kingdom into captivity…
  - Or perhaps because Jonah pridefully did not want to have his prophecy to go unfulfilled!
  - Either way he prayed (*wined*) to the Lord – this was why he refused to go in the first place…

- This was why he fled to Tarshish – because He knew the character of God…
- Jonah had seen it with Israel – he prophesied about Jeroboam II - **II Kings 14:24-25**
- God was gracious and merciful / slow to anger / rich in loving-kindness – towards sinners!

▪ Jonah asked the Lord to just kill him – better to die than live if Assyria were shown Mercy!
- But the truth was Jonah was the beneficiary of that same Grace and Mercy…
- He was just as much of a sinner – and was just as deserving of destruction…
- Before Jonah went around pointing out the flaws of others – he needed to look at himself!
- **Luke 6:42** – "How can you think of saying, 'Friend, let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you cannot see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log from your own eye; then perhaps you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye."

▪ In **Matthew 18:23-35** - a servant who owed the Master 10,000 talents ($*150 million*)
- Which makes the next statement obvious – he was not able to pay...
- But the master wiped away the debt - he was completely forgiven...
- But the man went out and would not forgive a fellow servant who owed 100 dollars...
- The Master found out – you should you not have had mercy as I had mercy on you!
- How could you not forgive so little seeing how much you have been forgiven!
- If we focus on what others have done to us - then we want 'justice' / vengeance...
- But our problem is we are looking in the wrong direction...
- We are looking at what others have done to us - rather than what we have done!
- Yet when we consider all that Jesus has forgiven us – everything…
- How could we not forgive our brother what little debt they may owe us...
- When we really understand from our heart how much we are forgiven…
- How can we not from the heart gladly for give others!

o 2nd – God prepares… vs. 4-8

▪ God asked Jonah the first of 3 questions – is it right for you to be angry - Jonah says nothing…
- Instead He goes and sits in a little shelter he had made on the east side of the city (*hills*)…
- He was waiting to see what would happen when the 40th day came!
- The Lord prepared a plant to grow up overnight and give shade to Jonah…
- Thought perhaps to be the castor-oil plant - commonly called the *palma-christi*...
- It grows up to ten feet high - only one leaf on a branch - but that leaf can be a foot large!

▪ But in the morning the Lord prepared a worm to damage the plant – and it withered…
- Then the Lord prepared an east wind (*from the desert*) to blow…
- And the sun beat on the head of Jonah – causing him to feel faint!
- Think Palm Springs in the summer when the temperatures reach 125° in the shade!
- And Jonah wished he were dead – and again said it is better for me to die than to live!

▪ Note: 3 times we are told that God prepared – He was teaching Jonah a lesson…
- We often look at the circumstances in life as being random – things just happen…
- But the truth is God is the one who is orchestrating the details of our life!
- God is not controlled by circumstances - He uses circumstances to teach us a lesson!

o 3rd – God questions… vs. 10-11

▪ God asks Jonah a 2nd question - is it right for him to be angry about the plant…
- This time Jonah was quick to reply that he had a right to be angry – event unto death!
- Jonah was suffering from the modern day plague of entitlement – I have the right!
- Next thing you know he was going to start asking for a smart phone and healthcare!
- But the Lord pointed out – Jonah had pity on a plant that he did not work for…
- He did not help it to grow – and it came and was gone in a single day!

- God asks Jonah a 3rd and final question – should He not have pity on Nineveh…
  - Because in the city were 125,000 people who could not tell their left from their right hand…
  - The reference is thought to be to very young children – under the age of 2…
  - Should they be punished for the sins of their parents – destroyed along with the rest…
  - Jonah had pity on a plant that he did nothing to bring into this world…
  - A plant that was here today and gone tomorrow – with no lasting consequences…
  - How much more should God have pity on His little children – who are eternal!
  - Perspective – God was trying to give Jonah a right perspective on what is important…
  - Does it really matter where we live / what we eat / what others have done to us…
  - We tend to fill our days with things that in the end - mean absolutely nothing...
  - When there is a world full of people who do not know Jesus - a world going to hell...
  - Seize the moment - use every day - to tell people about Jesus Christ!
  - **Ephesians 5:16** - "Redeem the time, because the days are evil."
- A choice for every generation…
  - The book of Jonah ends abruptly – we do not know how the prophet responded…
  - But we do know the history of Nineveh – and the kingdom of Assyria…
  - The Ninevites did not continue in their repentance…
  - 150 years after Jonah the Prophet Nahum was sent to predict the fall of Assyria…
  - An event that took place under king Sennacherib about 612 B.C. to Babylon!
  - Just because America WAS a Christian nation – does not mean that we ARE today…
  - The work of the church is never done – because there is always a new generation to reach…
  - And every generation must make the choice of what to do with the Gospel Message!