



Lesson 13 May 29th, 2021

Jonah: Fiery Harbinger of Doom

Junior Lesson

Study Scripture – Jonah 3

Background Scripture – Jonah 1-2

Key Verse:

When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their evil way, then God relented of the disaster which He had declared He would bring on them. So He did not do it.

Jonah 3:10

INTRODUCTION

The Lesson today is about a prophet named Jonah. Jonah was a representative of God and God sent him with a most important warning to people who lived in a big city called Nineveh, the most important city in the empire of the Assyria nation. They were the most powerful people at the time. Since they love to fight and conquer other nations and take away their property, they had a difficult problem for they did not have enough soldiers to leave behind to make sure that the people did what they wanted. So to solve that problem they became even more wicked than normal. When they captured the city, they would bring the important people in the city before the population and then would kill them so that people would become frightened and would not resist them. In addition, to even frighten the people they captured more they would tear off the skin of some of the people and hang the skin on the city walls. When many people from different countries visited and saw what could happen to them, they never wanted to fight against the Assyrians and the people of Nineveh.

The people of Nineveh did even more dreadful things to the people they captured but we do not want to frighten you for you can't believe that people would do such extremely wicked things to others and torture them to that extent.

God was fed up with the wickedness that these people were doing and He decided to destroy them if they did not repent and stop doing this wickedness of torturing people. God therefore told His prophet Jonah to go to the people of Nineveh with a simple message, "**Yet forty days and Nineveh would be destroyed**". Jonah the prophet was therefore given the job to be a harbinger of doom for if the people of Nineveh did not repent and start to behave God would destroy them. They were doomed if they did not repent. A harbinger is a person that announces or signals that a big change is coming. In this case it was doom and destruction.

The prophet Jonah did not like the job that God had given him for he knew that if the people of Nineveh repented and started to behave themselves God would not destroy them. He wanted God to destroy them for he felt that the Assyrians and Nineveh were getting so powerful that they would eventually attack his nation, destroy their capital city, and take the people of Israel

into slavery. That he did not like. So he would prefer God would destroy the people of Nineveh right then and there.

That was crazy for a prophet should not disobey God. Nobody should disobey God. So instead of going to Nineveh which was 800 miles from his home to warn the people he took a ship and went into the opposite direction. But God would not allow Jonah to behave badly, and God sent a big storm on the Sea and the people on the ship who became terrified, when they learned that Jonah was running away from God threw him overboard and the sea became calm, and their lives were spared. A big fish was waiting for Jonah and swallowed him. It was so uncomfortable in the belly of the fish that Jonah repented and promised God that he would go and do what he was supposed to do.

So then God forgave Jonah for his bad behaviour and told the fish to vomit out Jonah right beside the city of Nineveh. The now humbled Jonah went to work right away and began warning the people of Nineveh to repent so that doom would not come on them.

Obviously, this was a tremendous task for the people listening to Jonah were Gentiles and they were wicked. They did not really know the true God. But when they looked at Jonah, they believed his message of warning and they repented and swore that they would never torture and badly ill-treat people again. They began to have a big fast, eating nothing and drinking no water for three days. They put on a rough kind of clothing called "sackcloth" made from the skin of camels or goats. It was very rough and would make your skin feel uncomfortable and itchy. But they did this to show that they were mourning for their sins and wanted to repent. Even their King did like the ordinary people and he sat down in ashes, put on sackcloth, ordered that nobody was to eat or drink and even said that animals should be covered in sackcloth to show that everybody, man and animal was in mourning for the sins that had been committed by the nation.

Jonah did not like it, but the people really repented. God saw that they had truly repented and changed their heart and minds and were going in a new direction. So instead of doom they got forgiveness from God.

This was the greatest revival that has ever happened on the face of the earth. People who did not believe in the true God now begun to believe in Him and they were saved from destruction. We therefore learn that no matter how bad things are with you and no matter what you have done if you only listen to the message from God calling you to repent of your sins, God will not destroy you. God is a loving and forgiving God and He does not want to destroy people.

Our Lesson last week said the same thing. So even though you might have made bad choices in the past just remember that God is always there for you. He will do everything to help you to repent and stop doing wicked things.

Jonah did not like that God had saved this terrible set of people. But God made it clear to Jonah that He would never destroy so many people and so many children and so many animals. God told Jonah:

"Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left-and much livestock?"

God did not like to kill people and He did not like to kill even animals but would save them if they repented. Since they repented God would forgive them and save them. People had to repent so that they and their animals would live.

So remember that our loving God is always looking after us and wants to correct us and save us.

