

Holy Spirit Advantage Prophetic Ministry

Sabbath Sermon

June 9, 2012

Reading The Book of Jonah Chapter 1

There are times when God calls upon us to do His work, for His glory, for our faith and for the sake of others. The Bible is filled with many instances when the children of God were charged with righteous tasks that proved to unhide multitudes of sins. In the first chapter of the Book of Jonah, God commands his servant Jonah to go forth and preach the Word of God in the city of Nineveh, so that they would know that their wickedness had come before the Lord.

1 Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,
2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city and cry against it; for their
wickedness is come up before me.

Jonah resembled a Prophet in the manner that God called upon Him to deliver a message - as all the other Prophets in the Bible that came before and after him. When Jonah received this word from the Lord, he did not obey it. Instead he took flight to Tarsish in an attempt to hide or take refuge from the presence of the Lord.

Why did Jonah refuse to go and preach against the people of Nineveh? Was it a matter of profound laziness on his part or was it simply fear? Let us take a look at the city of Nineveh to understand the nature of this city as it existed in the ancient world. Many historians have admitted that Nineveh was not only a crucial city in ancient Assyria, but that it was one of the dominating cities in antiquity (the ancient world) during its time. Nineveh became quite popular in between (705 - 681 BC) and served as the capital city of the Assyrian Empire. However, like most ancient cities in this region, Nineveh was privy and quite indulgent of the various mystery religions or occult practices. The most illustrious or perhaps infamous deity in its list of pagan gods and goddesses was Ishtar (Astarte). With the worship of Ishtar came many offensive sacraments that involved, sun, moon, and star worship. More grievous ceremonies such as blood rituals were also included in the Ishtar worship rites - not limited to idolatry, animal sacrifice, sex worship and human sacrifice.

Thus we can understand why the Lord of Hosts called the behaviour of the Ninevites "wickedness."

"...for their wickedness is come up before me."

Without doubt Jonah must have felt that this task was a heft burden for him to accomplish in a city which the prophet Nahum later called -

"a bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not."

It seems that throughout the generations, even during the captivity of Egypt, Assyria had stayed true to its roots and the ideologies of its founder Nimrod. This man dissuaded many to forsake the worship of Jehovah for that of idols, and to worship the creature rather than the Creator. However, Nimrod also inducted many abominations into ancient history. He eventually gained his notoriety and legend by marrying his mother Semiramis, to make her his queen. This abominable union became the centerpiece for many mystery religions that focuses in Nimrod, Semiramis and their supposed son Tammuz. Interestingly enough his illicit family mirrors the ancient Egyptian family that included Isis, Horus, and Seb. Here are just a few references to Nimrod in other bible passages.

Isaiah 10:12 - Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.

Genesis 10: 9-12

9 He was a mighty hunter before the Lord wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.

10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

11 Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah

12 And Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city.

"How can one man stand against such a place and prophesy against it alone?"

This might have been what went through Jonah's mind when he learned about the mission that God wanted him to undertake. It was obvious that Jonah fled from before the face of the Lord because he knew that his assignment to Nineveh had the potential for becoming one of great consequence; it would place him right in the middle of the occult. As some Christians do when they have been tasked with an important matter that will help further the Kingdom of God, Jonah fled to save his own life. He did not think about how the Lord God of Israel would come to his aid if he were to come upon some dire peril.

Jonah did not consider that God is omniscient and prepares the way for those that serve Him. Lastly, Jonah did not see that it was a great honour to be sent to a city such as Nineveh, to represent the Lord of Hosts. Moses was put in the same plight, when he was commissioned to go forth and preach the Word of God before a mighty Pharaoh in the ancient land of Kemet. Moses' obedience to God was one of the reasons that Israel became a nation as it was in Jonah's time. Yet, such thought may have eluded Jonah and he chose to give into the most carnal consideration which gave way to fear.

It is however very ironic that as he sought to save his own life by fleeing from his duty, he put himself and others around him in harms way, because he was in direct violation of God's commandment. As Jonah fled to Tarshish a great tempest arose in the midst of the sea and began to assault the ship that he was traveling on. The mariners that were with him in the boat became very afraid, and whilst the tempests tossed, Jonah lay fast asleep on the ship. The other men on the ship were fearful of the Lord and asked Jonah who and what he was. After Jonah confessed that -

"I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land."

The men decided to cast lots which fell upon Jonah and hence they cast him off the ship, after asking God for forgiveness ahead of time. The mariners did say among themselves and before God -

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.

It would seem that these men were indirectly doing God's will in casting Jonah off the boat and into the sea, seeing how shortly after Jonah was swallowed by a whale that would later deposit him on a coast near the city of Nineveh.

One could ask why God chose to make such an effort in compelling Jonah to perform his duty, instead of just assigning another Prophet. Well remember that Jonah confessed to his calling on the boat and in some way he had repented of what he had done. When the men asked Jonah who he was, Jonah said that he was a Hebrew and that he feared the Lord God of heaven. In essence he reaffirmed his calling and purpose. This was a profound answer and reflected his state of Jonah's mind at the time. He went on to recommend that they should take him up and cast him forth into the sea knowing that this would calm the sea, for the mariners.

It seemed that Jonah was snapped into his senses and once again reckoned that God is all powerful. This makes his rather childish attempt to flee from the face of the Lord appear rather laughable, to say the least. Through his confession and recommendation Jonah bore testament to the power of God. He knew that God had troubled the sea for his sake and his cause. A man who did not fear or have faith in God would never have admitted that there was a connection between his actions and the impending natural dangers.

How does one apply this lesson to life and impart it upon others? All one has to do is listen to the Lord

and watch for the times when He has paved the way for you to confess your faith to others and be his spokesperson in the world. Don't shy away from an opportunity to preach the word of God to those who would benefit from his saving Word and your testimony. Granted, the world has made it difficult for Christians to speak of God in the sundry places - even in the streets, without being subject to certain penalties. Now there are new laws which imply that preaching the Word of God is an act of violence. These are the signs of the times and such things certainly indicate that the kingdom of God is at hand. However, there are many ways that one can impart matters of faith while rendering unto Cesar that which is Cesar's and rendering unto God that which is God's. Yet keep in mind; that which belongs to God takes priority over that which belongs to Cesar, and that is how it should always be in the life of a Christian. One should not put the law of the land above the law of God in regards to how you obey, worship or follow His commandments.

For it is written in the

Book of Colossians Chapter 2:8

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ.

For example if a group of people wish for you to aid them in a clandestine form of theft, or otherwise suffer certain financial, social or physical consequences, you should consider that Christ died on the cross for your sins. The least we as Christians can do is honour his sacrifice and blood by being steadfast and not giving into sin during such temptations. How else can you prove that God is able to do all things if we will not even give Him the opportunity to show us how He can aid us in overcoming the sinful oppressors or enemies of Christ (antichrists)? Do not allow the laws, statues, sentiments or affections of mortal men to dissuade you from putting God first, in worship, life, work and friendship.

Amen

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