

The Preparations of God

Harmony M.B.C., Oct. 7, 2012 (Morning)

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Jonah 1:1 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

Jonah 1:2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

Jonah 1:3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

Most folks know what happens after this account about Jonah. He is headed for Tarshish when a great storm comes upon them. The ship is about to sink and all the crew members are calling on their gods. Jonah is down below asleep. They wake him up and ask him to call on his God. Then they cast lots to see who might be pointed to as the one causing this terrible threat. The lot falls on Jonah. He is questioned. He tells them that he is running from God...the God who made the sea and the land. He tells them that if they throw him overboard they will be delivered from the storm. They hear his story and try to bring the ship under control anyway, but when it looks like they are going to be destroyed, they pray to God for mercy for what they are going to do and then threw him overboard. This is the point where we want to begin our message. We note in v. 17, "Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."

Our message is about how God prepares things for His people. We will note at least 5 points about this.

I. **Ch. 1 v.17** - Even when the condition of our lives and attitudes are such that we are out of fellowship with God, He prepares for our protection

- God's accommodations for us in a backslidden condition are not always comfortable (Jonah probably never went to sea again! And I'm sure every time he saw a fish jump he remembered!)
 - ▶ I remember when my attitude was not very good and I was out of the will of the Lord - Illustrate: the old dodge truck breaks an axle on a 90 degree curve in Cal. Co. in 1967. Turned over and slid several feet. But God had prepared in advance for that, for me. That old truck cab was thick steel and instead of crushing in, it remained intact and I came away addled but without a scratch.
- But, although God's preservation process may not be smooth or comfortable for us, preserving us is still in God's heart, even if we are reckless (like Johah)
 - ▶ Notice, though, that He does not necessarily spare us from terror or a feeling of despair while preserving us - **Ch. 2:1-7**
- **Read Ch. 2, v.10 and narrate Ch. 3 - and first part of Ch. 4** - Jonah preaches, Ninevah repents, Jonah stays around to gripe (first part of Ch. 4) and see what happens. As we look at Jonah's behavior and attitude about what God has done (Ch. 4, vv. 1-5) we can notice that:

II. **Ch. 4, v.6** - God prepares things to comfort us even when our attitude is not in good spiritual order

- God does not want His people to be in an ill mood (**v.4**); but even if we are, the Lord does not leave us to misery.
 - ▶ Notice the extreme reaction by Jonah to God's mercy toward these wicked sinners (**vv. 1-3**).
 - ▶ Notice God's forbearance of Jonah's sulking (**v.4**)
- Why was Jonah so torn up?
 - ▶ There are things that the Lord does which may seem to us to be totally impossible to understand
 - One of those that may have occurred to a lot of people lately is His enormous forbearance and long-suffering of evil among leaders in America and the stealing of our constitutional liberties.
- Jonah's appreciation for the simple things teaches us that it is wise to really appreciate those simple things that God prepares to make us glad
 - ▶ **1Tim. 6:8** And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

III. **Ch. 4:7** - If we will not be satisfied with how the Lord does things, then God may prepare that which takes away our creature comforts and our source of gladness

- It may pay us to think about our attitude toward the things we had, and what a blessing they were, when we find them gone.
 - ▶ I know a man and woman who complained about the bad condition their car was in - it wasn't long until they didn't have one that ran at all.
 - ▶ The man who has to walk everywhere may gripe because he has no transportation...until he meets the man with no legs
 - ▶ The children of Israel griped about all that manna...the same food every day...then one day God gave them quail to eat and a bunch of them died from disease
 - ▶ People who only have beans and cornbread to eat may feel they have a reason to complain...until they see the starving children of Sudan

IV. **Ch. 4:8** - In addition to taking away the things that make us glad, God may prepare trials and afflictions for us

- There is a difference between losing things that make us happy and give us pleasure, and suddenly being in a place where there is pain, sorrow, great discomfort
 - ▶ Illustrate: It's like the man who was driving out across the desert enjoying the scenery one day when his car broke down just as he got to the top of a hill. The enjoyment of the trip and the sightseeing was interrupted, and when he checked his car out, he realized he was going to need to go get help. He saw a house far off in the distance to the right down in the valley below, but the road didn't seem to lead to it. He could see that if he cut across the hill he could walk in a straight line to the house, so he set out. The hillside he walked on was rocky and his feet soon got tired. When he was half way across that rocky hillside he knocked a rock loose which rolled down the hill and bounced into a little crevasse which had a yellow-jacket's nest in it. It wasn't but a few seconds later that the angry yellow-jackets began searching for the intruder and found him. He had to duck and run to get away from

them and got several stings before he got out of range. He had gone from enjoyment and ease to losing that which he was enjoying, to experiencing affliction in just a short time. This is what happened to Jonah. Sometimes it happens to us.

V. So, what is God's purpose in bringing us to this? When God prepares that which takes away our creature comforts and that which brings us affliction it may often be to help with an attitude adjustment (**vv. 9-11**).

- What is the contrast between Jonah's whining and the reality that God explains to him?
 - ▶ The Lord's people sometimes feel sorry for themselves and overlook the big picture (**v. 8**).
 - ▶ They sometimes value trivial things above important things (**vv. 10-11**)
 - ▶ Which means, they sometimes lose their perspective