

Washington
2/29/65 "A Month's Notice" Bible Study
March 1965
7/11

Scripture Lesson:- Jonah 3:

Text:- Jonah 3: 4-5.

Introduction:- Never before nor since has a single city experienced such a revival. Nineveh is a constant reminder that God's Spirit will not always strive with men. God draws the line on men and cities, on nations and civilizations. He gives notice of intention, and then so many years of grace, or perhaps just days of grace. God filed notice of intention is Noah's day.

"The earth was corrupt before God; and the earth was filled with violence, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth!"

God allowed Noah 120 years to preach righteousness, and then seven days after the Ark was loaded and God had closed the door, on the 17th day of the second month,

"The same day were all the fountains of deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened!"

That was a civilization! In this text an evangelist faces a city, one of the great cities of man's history, Nineveh, a proud metropolis, mistress of mighty Assyria. What kind of a city was it.

I.

It had been founded near the dawn of history by Asshur, the son of Shem. Jonah tells us that it had an expanse of 48 miles, or as he says, "an exceeding great city of three day's journey. It boasted a library of 25000 religious, scientific, and literary works that today form a part of the British Museum's collection of Assyrian archeological treasures. When Layard opened the remains of Sennacherib's palace some years ago, he records that in that magnificent edifice he opened,

" no less that 71 halls, chambers and pas-

sages, whose walls had been paneled with sculptured slabs of plaster". He also found, "nearly two miles of bas-reliefs, with 27 portals formed by colossal winged bulls and lion sphinxes".

The outer wall of the city bore a name which meant "the wall which terrifies the enemy". Its foundations were laid upon blocks of stone at the underground level in order to frustrate undermining by the enemy. The wall rose 100 feet in height. The top side was wide enough for the kings' chariots to race three abreast. On the walls were 1500 towers, each tower 200 feet in height. Seven hundred years before the birth of Christ the waters of the Tigris had slapped against the city's western suburb. The very word "Nineveh" means an "agreeable place" or a "pleasant dwelling".

Inside this tremendous wall, there lay a festering corruption of crime and wickedness. The prophet Nahum calls Nineveh the bloody city, full of lies and robbery. Nineveh reeked with wealth. When the Medes and Persians finally looted the city they fulfilled a prophesy of Nahum's, when he said, "Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold, for there is no end of the store, and all the pleasant furniture".

II.

The day that Jonah entered in, filth and rot and decadence had a strange hold on this the city of the ancients - the city that was Nineveh. It was a city of adultery, of unhappy marriages. Words like "chastity" and "honor" were foreign to the people of Nineveh. Nineveh was a moral plague. A wicked, haughty city, rolling in the lap of luxury, and God sent His evangelist here to give her 40 more days of grace. Here is the story as the Bible records it. "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went and he cried, Yet 40 days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

"So the people of Nineveh believed God, and pro-

claimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them."

"For the word came to the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man or beast, herd nor flock, taste anything: let them not feed, nor drink water. But let every man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands!" "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."

Something saved that city. For nearly two centuries the hand of the avenger was stayed. And it all happened within forty days. Well has Peter written, "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

God cannot let men get away with their sin. No one can destroy God's Standard. There is not a Nineveh standard of right and wrong, an American standard of right and wrong. There is only one standard of right and wrong, and that is God's standard. God will always send his Spirit to lift up his standard. That was Jonah's mission. God sent him to Nineveh to tell that city that time was running out, that unless they repented within 40 days, their city would be overthrown.

III.

God has not changed! There comes a time when it is repentance or else. The sinner can go too far. There comes a time when God closes in on you. He serves notice on you that he is determined on your

overthrow. Nineveh is a warning to you, to get right with God. Nineveh might have laughed at this strange Hebrew. They might have branded him as a sensationalist. They might have done any of a number of things. But they did not. That great city repented. They turned down the bright lights. The city straightened up and God in mercy withheld judgment.

Conclusion:- What would you do, if God warned you that you had only 40 days left to repent? Would you go on living those 40 days in the same reckless way that you have been living? "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap!"

The king of Nineveh preaches a pretty good sermon, good enough for every American to follow in this moment. He said, "cry mightily unto God; turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands!"

God saw that from the king down through the people, Nineveh meant it; and Nineveh was saved. How about you, are you saved?