

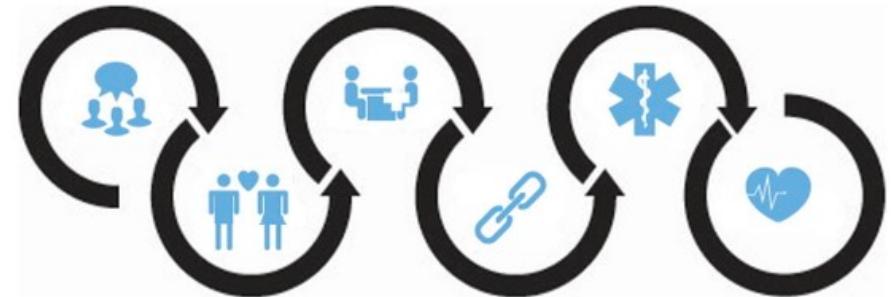
THE PROPHET IN A POUT *continued*

(c) THE EXPRESSION OF HIS REACTION; first in (i) A PETULANT PRAYER; **4:2**. This peevish prayer contains two basic elements: a. THE CONFESSION OF HIS BASIC ISSUE WITH GOD: **4:2** is not prayer, for Jonah is telling God that He had not done what was right. This is *so Iniquitous!* His main gripe with God was that these Gentiles should not receive the same mercy that Israelites had. However, we may judge Jonah too quickly. Maybe we have sometimes prayed/reacted as Jonah does here? *So Inconsistent* also, as Jonah, in insisting that God should have denied His grace to the Ninevites, either forgets – or does not know – that no one deserves God's grace (cf. **Romans 3:10-12**). It is true that God sometimes grants special favours to certain nations/peoples at different times. Exactly why, He does not need to explain, for He is sovereign! For our part, we should joyfully receive every grace He shows to us and our land with thanksgiving. The problem emerges when we try to seal up God's heart of compassion from others we are prejudiced against. This petulant prayer also contains b. A CALL FOR A BRUTAL INTERVENTION BY GOD. It revolves around (ii) A PERVERTED PROSPECT; **4:3-5** – a carnal hope that God would still blot out the Assyrians, or take Jonah out of this whole miserable mess. Jonah should have been a tool in the hands of God to establish these new converts: instead, he prefers to die than to see God's mercy – and in angry petulance he builds a little booth, still hoping that from this vantage point he will witness God burning up the whole bunch of them with His brimstone! Do we know what it is like to be out of synch with the Lord? We can sail along on our arrogance for a time, but, ultimately, we become miserable. Just like Jonah.



MEETINGS TODAY

- Morning Worship – 11.30am:
“*Jonah #8: The Prophet in a Pout.*”
- Evening Service – 7.00pm: “*Isaiah 55 #5: The Adoration in the Covenant.*”
- Supper – 8.30pm, in Jubilee Hall.



THE PROMOTION OF LINKAGE

Many scholarly articles have been written on the importance of creating linkages in the business world. Each recognises how vital it is to develop relationships and interactions between tasks, functions, departments, and organisations, so that the flow of information, ideas, and integration is promoted and shared objectives are achieved.

The development of linkages in “the Master’s business” is no less necessary. In **1 Corinthians 12** the apostle Paul addresses the reality of a wide variety of persons and gifts within the body of Christ, the Church – and in the **26th verse** he emphasises the vital linkage and interconnections between each part/person: “*And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it*” (**12:26**).

Ideally, we are all working to establish and maintain these linkages with the local ministry of Martyrs – connecting all our children’s endeavours, to youth ministries and ultimately into the morning and evening assemblies and prayer meetings. Some interesting linkages have been made in recent weeks (especially between Little Ones and Explore); please pray that these will be further developed, connections with the body of believers will be deepened and God will be glorified.



THE PROPHET IN A POUT

Jonah 3:10-4:5.

In the Bible, the number 40 often indicates probation or punishment: cf. **Acts 7:23, 30; Matthew 4:1-11** and **Genesis 7:4, 12; Numbers 32:13; Judges 13:1**. It could be argued that in the message carried by Jonah into Nineveh, it carried both meanings: “*Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown*” (**Jonah 3:4**) – if repentance does come within the allotted time span, the city will be consumed. But Nineveh *did* repent – meaning we begin with:

[1] THE RESPONSE OF GOD TO THE REPENTANCE OF THE NINEVITES; 3:10.

(a) THE SUMMARY OF GOD’S RESPONSE is contained in three phrases: He “*saw their works, repented of the evil, did it not.*”

(b) THE SUBSTANCE OF GOD’S RESPONSE.

(i) RECOGNITION. The first phrase, “*God saw their works,*” not only indicates that God had perfect knowledge of what happened (He is omniscient), but He felt these events in His heart (cf. New Testament parallel is **Luke 15**; in each case the owner of that which was lost overflows with joy when it is found).

(ii) REPENTANCE: This clause, “*and God repented of the evil,*” describes what happens in the realm of the visible interaction of God with men. The key text to explain this word is **Jeremiah 18:7-10**: Though God does not repent and does everything according to the counsel of His own will (**Numbers 23:19, Daniel 4:35, Ephesians 1:11**), the announcement of what God will do is directly related to the condition that then exists – sin is calling for judgment – but ... if the condition changes, then what God will do will change accordingly. So (notice carefully how it is put in the text), God turns from (notice carefully how it is put in the text) of the threatened punishment, but not of the secret counsels of His own will which included the repentance of the Ninevites and the conferral of mercy!

(iii) RELIEF: the city of Nineveh was *not* overthrown, a fact that

highlights 1. DELIGHT on God’s part for it underlines the truth of **Isaiah 28:21-22**, in which the prophet says judgment is the strange work of God and mercy is His delightful work; 2. Another principle deals with the allegation of DETACHMENT. In the administration of His sovereign and eternal decrees, the Lord is *not* a detached, distant, unfeeling God of fate, but a living, personal God. He does not behave like a computer in an engineering plant into which you key in a few codes – and this impersonal machine, feeding out this information, will trigger one response after another until you have the end product that perfectly corresponds to what was logged into the computer. The God of the Bible is a personal God. This is the glory of prayer: if God is not a personal God, a loving Father, who feels with me in my infirmities, who delights to hear my cries – why pray? If the outworking of eternal decrees does not somehow involve the validity of my groans and my cries – why groan? why plead? This passage emphasises that intimate, sensitive involvement of the living, personal God with His creatures.

[2] THE REACTION OF THE PROPHET TO GOD’S RESPONSE TO THE REPENTANCE OF THE NINEVITES; 4:1-5.

Consider God – and Jonah’s – reaction to the repentance of the Ninevites in terms of (a) EQUIVALENCE. Jonah’s reaction should have been a mirror image of God’s – but it was not! God saw, repented, and rejoiced, whereas Jonah became angry. To God, Nineveh’s sin was a very evil thing – but to Jonah, God’s compassion on a repentant Nineveh was the very evil thing!

(b) THE ESSENCE OF HIS REACTION: described in **4:1**, underlined once more in **4:4**, and again suggested in **4:9**. Sometimes, especially as young and inexperienced Christians, we can have more passion than compassion (cf. James and John requesting fire to fall in **Luke 9:54** – though John shows that he learned something valuable from his closeness with his Master, for in later life he writes more about the love of God than any of the other disciples. All doctrine is meant to lead us to holiness; therefore if our knowledge of doctrine makes us insensitive to people, we probably do not understand the teaching of Scripture or the heart of God correctly.