

Welcome friends to another broadcast of “Morsels for Zion’s Poor”

It would probably be hard to find a child who has been raised in a home where the scriptures are valued, honored, and taught, who has not heard the account of Jonah and the great fish which swallowed him. The unfortunate truth is that many have grown to adulthood with little consideration of the depths of truth which are hidden in this account, other than the usual moral lesson, that Jonah’s disobedience caused his uncomfortable situation.

Now it is surely true that Jonah did indeed seek to flee from the presence of the LORD and thought he could escape from the task which the LORD had sent him to do. Yet we can be certain that Jonah’s path from Joppa to Tarshish was as much ordained by the LORD, as was his path from the fish’s vomit on the sea shore to the city of Nineveh, since HE prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah at the exact place and moment when he was cast overboard by those men who were caused to fear as the ONE who rides upon the storm stirred the heavens and the sea to that end, in order that they might carry out the task HE ordained them to perform. This fish was no ordinary fish for it was prepared (i.e.; fitted ahead of time for a certain task) by the LORD; not only to be able to swallow Jonah but to preserve his life as it rescued him from drowning in the stormy sea. The timing of this occurrence is no less miraculous than Jonah’s preservation in a hopeless situation. This fish, nor Jonah could possibly have been anywhere else than the exact spot they both were, at this exact instant according to the predestined purpose of GOD.

We are certain that all of these events worked together for good to Jonah even though he did not enjoy them as they unfolded. The religious moralists of the world would opine that Jonah could have avoided this situation if only he had made better choices. Or they would see the main lesson found in the book to be about the Ninevites’ and their repentance. Yet even the repentance of the Ninevites was brought to pass in order to benefit Jonah and to teach him important truths which he either did not know or through hardness of heart could not see.

Jonah learned the high price of disobedience as he “*paid the fare*” for his supposed excursion to Tarshish. He never arrived at that place he desired to go and bought the ticket to; but he did arrive safely at that destination to which the LORD had sent him. Jonah learned that the LORD is in the dark and low places of the Earth as much as HE is in the great heights and glorious light. Yet he was exercised by deep despair at the hopelessness which he felt even as CHRIST HIMSELF was cast into the very depths of the grave as HE bore our sin and carried our sorrows. Jonah learned that there is no salvation except in the LORD. Jonah could not deliver himself but was totally dependent on the LORD’s SALVATION.

Jonah learned the glory of being set free from the fish’s belly, which was to him a sealed tomb. Thus he serves as an illustration of HIM who has triumphed over death. “*For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s (i.e.; great fish’s) belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*” The very basis of the hope of all of those who have fled for refuge to CHRIST, rests on the fact that HE has risen from the dead and ever lives and reigns as the GREAT HIGH PRIEST over the household of GOD.

Jonah learned that every man will perform the exact activity which GOD has ordained for HIM to do. Jonah learned that GOD will show mercy according to HIS sovereign prerogative and will call whom HE wills. The LORD testified of this very truth when HE said, “*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*” Jonah learned that the LORD is of tender mercy to all who shall call upon HIM. In his carnality he became angry as he judged the Ninevites to be unworthy of the LORD’s mercy. Yet the lesson which he had to learn was that he had no reason to expect that he should receive mercy either. A man cannot have a true understanding of mercy until he is made to see that the merit and activity of man is of no consideration in the LORD’s decision to grant mercy. “*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of GOD.*” The book of Jonah reveals the lengths to which the LORD will go to instruct those whom HE loves. HE will never forsake them. *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.* “*Thy free grace alone,*” #11 **If you would like a free transcript of this broadcast email us at forthepeer@windstream.net**