

Sabbath School Lesson #13 – Images of the End – 21-27 June 2025

Christ would have us to call upon all men to fear God and give Him glory. This, we need not wait to do in a strait as did the prophet Jonah. The reader may recall that Jonah was sent to Nineveh, but was not willing to carry the Lord's message to this perishing city and he set off to flee unto Tarshish. On the ship to Tarshish, Jonah was fast asleep in mighty tempest when the mariners were afraid and cried unto their gods. Jonah seems to have felt perfectly safe, although he knew he was disobeying God; so, do many people do today. After the mariners had cast lots, as to the cause of this natural disaster, they asked the sleeping Jonah to explain. "And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land" (Jonah 1:9). It is interesting to note that when the mariners threw Jonah off the ship, the tempest sea calmed; in the end-time natural disasters, men will legislate Sunday Law to appease their gods, when that shall fail to work, they will seek to throw the saints off this earth to calm the natural disasters.

Sunday: The Reluctant Prophet – What fear is lacking in those who fear to do mission? It is the fear of God. "Fear God" (Revelation 14:7). There is no room for any other fears where this great fear is; it disturbs not. The fear of God turns all other fears out of the mind. As the fear of God is greater, it brings as great peace as the other fears brings trouble in the mind. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165). Now, let us turn to the story of Jonah who was sent to Nineveh. The Lesson writer says, 'Today, we know Jonah as a reluctant prophet, unwilling to go to Nineveh. From a human perspective, it is easy to understand — the Assyrians ran a brutal regime. Assyrian murals are replete with scenes of unusual cruelty; conquered peoples were put to death by the most cruel methods imaginable. Who would want to face the prospect of preaching repentance in their capital city?' The implication here suggests that Jonah was fleeing because of fear of crime in Nineveh. This is not the first time the Lesson writers make such false suggestions, for they did the same on Sunday 29 October 2023. This is contrary to Jonah's testimony, for Jonah testified to the Lord the reason he fled: "I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil" (Jonah 4:2). It is not because of the Assyrian regime of brutality that Jonah feared to go to Nineveh. The truth is, Jonah had no fear of the wicked Assyrians, but he feared to lose his own reputation. After he had told the people that the city should be destroyed, and the Lord forgave Nineveh and was not going to do it, and he was therefore "very angry" and reminded the Lord what he had told Him before he left his own country; for now he says: "O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish" (verses 2-3). From this it appears that when the Lord first told Jonah to arise and go to Nineveh and cry against it, Jonah had said to Him, in substance, 'If I go up Nineveh and tell them the city shall be overthrown, they will stop sinning and turn to the Lord, and then thou wilt not overthrow it; and so if the city is not to be overthrown anyhow, I might as well stay in my own country, or anywhere else; therefore I will flee to Tarshish.' Jonah apparently cared more for his reputation than he did for all the souls in Nineveh, and thought that the Lord should turn a deaf ear to all the cries of the people, so that Jonah's word might be performed in spite of all. We also know, Ellen White tells us why Jonah fled: "When Jonah learned of God's purpose to spare the city that, notwithstanding its wickedness, had been led to repent in sackcloth and ashes, he should have been the first to rejoice because of God's amazing grace; but instead he allowed his mind to dwell upon the possibility of his being regarded as a false prophet. Jealous of his reputation, he lost sight of the infinitely greater value of the souls in that wretched city. The compassion shown by God toward the repentant Ninevites "displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." "Was not this my saying," he inquired of the Lord, "when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil." Jonah 4:1, 2." {PK 271.1}.

Monday: A Work of Repentance – In Nineveh, when Jonah preached to the wicked city, and "word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes" and "the king and his nobles"

led out in the work of corporate repentance of that city, “from the greatest of them even to the least of them” (Jonah 3:5-7). Here we see reformation starting with the leaders. The wicked king of Nineveh called for a reformation, calling the whole city, as a corporate body, to repent and be reconciled to God. In Jerusalem, when Christ, the Son of God, the one “greater than Jonas” (Luke 11:32), preached to the holy city of Jerusalem, calling upon the people to repent, the leadership rose up in rebellion against Him, and murdered Him. And by and large, the people followed their leaders into national ruin. We may never know what a blessing it would have been to the nation (and the world) if Caiaphas, their spiritual leader, had followed the example of “the king of Nineveh,” and had risen from his seat of leadership and led the nation into corporate repentance! In Matthew 12, Jesus appealed to the story of Jonah as an example of the kind of repentance He was calling for, but the Jews refused.

Tuesday: Belshazzar’s Feast – Belshazzar was king in ancient Babylon after his father king Nebuchadnezzar. Babylon is represented in Isaiah and Revelation as being opposed to God and His people, as a power professing to be above God. God says, “There is none beside Me” (Isaiah 45:6, 18, 21, 22; 46:9); and Babylon says, “I am, and none else beside me” (Isaiah 47:10). So, we see that she sets herself up as the rival of God, claiming to be all that He is. This was the position of ancient Babylon. In Daniel 4, we have an account of a test as to whether Nebuchadnezzar or God was supreme. Although Nebuchadnezzar had learned of the true God, he walked in pride, and God humbled him until he learned and confessed that the God of heaven was above all. But that did not settle the question with Babylon, for although Nebuchadnezzar doubtless went to his grave in the faith of this confession, Belshazzar, who knew all these things did not profit by them, but in his insolent impiety, during the heathen revel, “praised the gods of gold” (Daniel 5:2-4). Daniel recalled to Belshazzar the pride and humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar, and said, “And thou, his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this” (verse 22). In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8 we have a description of a power identical with this, which is to exist and work even till the coming of the Lord to Judgment. It is called the “man of sin,” “the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God.” Compare this with what we have read about Babylon, the cases are identical. Babylon was the rival of God, yet its greatest king acknowledged God at the last; but the lesson was not learned, and ancient Babylon perished in its proud boasting of supremacy over the God of all the earth.

Wednesday: The Drying of the Euphrates – Jeremiah foretold that the Medes would destroy Babylon (51:11, 28). Isaiah said that Elam should be joined with Media: “Go up, O Elam; besiege, O Media” (Isaiah 21:2,9). The armies of Media and Persia were united under Cyrus, and left Ecbatana, the capital of Media, in the spring of 539 BC, on the expedition against Babylon. Cyrus, on his way to Babylon, when he reached the stream, Gyndes, one of his ‘sacred’ horses drowned in the stream, and enraged at the insolence of the river, Cyrus put off for a time his attack on Babylon, spent the summer digging 180 trenches on each side of the Gyndes, so the Gyndes was reduced shallow waters. In the spring of BC 538 Cyrus proceeded to Babylon. When Cyrus attacked, Babylonian army escaped within the walls of the city, where Belshazzar was in command. But Cyrus had already made a success of turning the river Gyndes out of its banks, and he did the same for the Euphrates. The Euphrates ran directly through the city, under the walls, and Cyrus determined to turn the waters out of the channel, and then, under cover of darkness, follow the bed of the river into the city. This also was in fulfillment of prophecy: “A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up.” “And I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry” (Jeremiah 50:38; 51:36). Isaiah was shown in vision that Babylon would fall in a time of feasting: “Prepare the table, watch in the watch-tower, eat, drink;” and that in the midst of it she would be attacked: “Arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield” (Isaiah 21:5,9). Daniel 5 tells what happened there.

Thursday: Cyrus, the Anointed – The heathen king Cyrus was named more than 100 years before he was born, that he will let the people of Israel go from captivity, but Babylon was to fall before Israel could go free (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-5). The prophecy of Cyrus taking Babylon was uttered about 712 years BC and was fulfilled about 538 BC. God gives His people hope in advance and appoints those whom He uses as instruments of their welfare.