

SUBJECT: A TEST FOR SLEEPING CHRISTIANS

SCRIPTURE: Jonah 1:1-17

A Sermon Delivered by Dr. Doyce H. Nolan April 11, 1999 a.m.

Introduction:

God spoke to Jonah through a command for him to go to Nineveh and preach against the sins of the people. Nineveh was the center of idolatry and cruelty. Jonah did not want anything to do with these wicked people, so he attempts to out maneuver God (v.3) and boards a ship for Tarshish, a city known for its wealth, and located at the southern tip of Spain. This is as far away from the place God had commanded him to go.

- Lesson: The path of disobedience to God can only lead downward "from the presence of the Lord." (v. 3)

God sends a great storm upon the sea and the ship is about to go down. Verse 5 states that "every man was afraid and cried out to his god, and threw the cargo overboard to lighten the load." This one statement, "every man cried out to his god" lets us know that Jonah was the only true believer on board. He is responsible for representing God. Jonah isn't representing God! He is fast asleep in the midst of this storm! The unbelieving call out to their false gods to save them. They needed help from the one true God! Jonah is the only one who could have made a difference and he was sound asleep!

The captain of the ship knew that Jonah was a believer and begins to search for him, and finds him sleeping. He asks the first of a series of questions that Jonah had to face. From this account we can find that conditions in our world are no different from those on board that ship.

The world is engulfed in a great storm, people are perishing and looking for answers to life's questions. All of these 200,000 plus refugees, driven from their homes in Korsova, was asking for help long before NATO decided to do something. Several months ago a woman, laying across the murdered bodies of her husband and child cried out, "When is the United States going to do something to stop this killing of our families?" People the world over are looking for someone to point the way. And it seems as far as the loss people are concerned, the church and church people are sound asleep.

These sailors gave Jonah a little pop quiz that we would do well to observe. Let's consider these questions Jonah faced, and see that they are questions we face as believers also.

I want to preach on the subject of "A Pop Quiz For Sleeping Saints."

I. THEY QUESTIONED HIS PREOCCUPATION v. 5-6

1. Jonah was so caught up in his rebellion against God and in going his own way That he was totally oblivious to the conditions around him.
 - (III. The modern church - we sleep while the world around us fights for its very life.)
 - (III. The captain came and rebuked the prophet for his prayerlessness.)

- (Ill. The tragedy of a sleeping church in a dying world - Eze. 3:18.)
 - (Ill. The shame of the world's rebuke!)
2. They world may not say it, or act like it, but they want a living, praying, serving church.
 - (Ill. Who they come to when trouble comes.)
 - (Ill. It's time to wake up - Rom. 13:11-14)

II. THEY QUESTIONED HIS PROFESSION v. 7-8

- Ill. It must have been embarrassing for Jonah to declare himself to be a man of God.
 - (Ill. It is hard to stand when you've blown your testimony.)
1. As Christians, we must never allow ourselves to forget who we are and what we have been called to be.
 - (Ill. The Great Commission - Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8)
 - (Ill. The harvest is white - John 4:35-38)
 2. Christian, what is your occupation? Are you on the job for Jesus?

C. THEY QUESTIONED HIS PEDIGREE v.8

1. Jonah is asked about his origin, there is a threefold question.
2. Whence Comest Thou? How can a running, disobedient man say that he is God's man from God's country? He can't! Our disobedience and sin clouds our testimony and causes our lips to be silent.
3. What Is Thy Country?
 - Ill. Jonah was from the promised land. But, he didn't live like a worshipper of Jehovah God!
 - Ill. We are literally from Heaven - John 3:3; Phil. 3:20;
 - Ill. Eph. 2:6. However, sin and slackness make it difficult for a lost world to believe us!
4. Of What People Art Thou?
 - Ill. Jonah was one of the chosen people of God.
 - Ill. The church is the redeemed people of God! People saved by grace, Heaven bound, Hell proof, eternally saved and equipped with the truth and power of God Almighty.
 - Ill. Our activity ought to match our bloodline!
5. All these things are true of the Christian, but they are all hollow and empty to a lost world that sees the church as self-absorbed, out of touch and irrelevant to their world and problems.
6. The world has every right to question our reality when we do not live up to it!

D. THEY QUESTIONED HIS PURPOSE v.10

1. "Why have you done this?" - They seem amazed that anyone would act so foolishly and claim to know God at the same time.

2. In truth, the world would prefer that we left them alone. There will come a day, however, when they will point an accusing finger at us and demand to know why we slept while they perished.
 - Ill. We need to take the Lord's work very seriously, for a day is coming when we will not be able to work - John 9:4; Eccl. 9:10.
 - Ill. We all ought to question our purpose. Why am I here? What am I really doing for God? What do God want me to do? Why do I do what I do? What do I not do that I need to do? All are powerful questions that demand and deserve to be answered.

E. THEY QUESTIONED HIS PUNISHMENT v. 11-17

1. "What shall we do with thee?" The answer they receive is the only one that makes sense. "Cast away the disobedient saint."
 - (Ill. This is the modern world's reaction to the church. This is our punishment, they simply ignore us, or worse, they cast us off.)
 - (Ill. The modern world is asking, "Where does the church fit in?")
 - (Ill. This was not how it was during the life of Christ - Ill. Mark 2:12; John 7:46; Matt. 9:33. They might not have liked Him, but no one was able to ignore Him!
2. The reason? Everywhere Jesus went, He touched those around Him. His life, because of His holiness, was a challenge to the sinner, a light to the seeker, food to the hungry, forgiveness to the guilty, and life to the dead. Jesus made a difference! That was Jonah's responsibility to Nineveh and to the men on that ship. It is our responsibility to the world around us today!

Conc:

I didn't like this little pop quiz very much! But, it does serve as a wake up call to God's children who desire to make a difference in their world. We need to be awake, active and on deck letting our lights shine for the Glory of God. We can either be like Jonah or like Jesus. I know who we are called to be like, but who are we really closer to tonight?