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## Jonah, Part 15

Steve Walvatne

### The Moral

"Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd... and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city...?"

The Lord speaks first and last in this prophecy. His first words reveal a Mission; His last relate a Moral. That Moral ends the book abruptly. Even Jonah disappears. But that's the way with Scripture: curiosities are omitted and only what God deems vital remains, for its purpose is to manifest His mighty works.

The moral consists of a question. In fact, only Jonah and Nahum conclude with questions and both refer to Nineveh. "Nahum ends with a question about God's punishment of Nineveh (Nahum 3:19), while Jonah ends with a question about God's pity for Nineveh" (Warren Wiersbe: The Bible Exposition Commentary, The Prophets).

But turn a moment to earlier verses. It appears Jonah was already angry as he exited Nineveh and made his way to hill country on the city's eastern slope. There he constructed a booth or temporary shelter as protection from the sun. And there, like a sentinel, he watched for Nineveh's demise. But Jonah underestimated God's mercy and thus, unknown to him, the booth he built would become yet another classroom in God's school, where he would be taught the "way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26).

Earlier training occurred in a boat during a storm and in a beast under the sea. And later, while preaching in the boroughs of the sinful, he learned something of the authority and power of God's Word. Now, in a booth beneath the sun, the Creator again uses elements of nature as object lessons for divine truth.

We'll trace verses 5 through 8 as follows:

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JEHOVAH'S BUG:	v.7
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## Jonah's Booth

"So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city." "...The city...the city...the city"-- it dominated Jonah's thinking. How much better if God had dominated it! Sadly it seems, "God [was] not in all his thoughts" (Psalm 10:4). Heathen Ninevites had thought on God and humbled themselves, but Jonah wanted his own way. Man's fleshly nature is utterly corrupt; so much so, that saints can't even improve it (Romans 8:8; Gal. 5:17). It requires honest probing: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalms 139:23-24).

Jonah's way at present was "east"-- he "sat on the east side of the city" -- and as teachers among us confirm, "east" in Scripture is the direction away from God. Adam and Eve went "east" out of Eden after the Fall and mankind has followed their lead ever since. With the Saviour's incarnation, however, wise men came "from the east" to worship Him (Matthew 2:1-2). Christ made the difference and all that seek Him are "wise" indeed. W.W. Fereday adds an additional point, saying "our Lord's last approach to Jerusalem was from the east" and that "blessing tracked His footsteps" (Jonah). But alas! poor Jonah! His was a contrary course. His was a thruway to sorrow.

Nonetheless, Jonah "sat" adamantly in the shadow of his booth, "a miserable booth formed of green twigs which speedily withered" (James Peddie: A Practical Exposition of the Book). God had "prepared" many things for the prophet's benefit, but this wasn't one of them. Still, Jonah clung to it, while he "sat" idly. Why? Perhaps because: **1. Numbness** occurred. Like Lot who "pitched his tent" towards Sodom (Genesis 13:12), Jonah was losing the nudge

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of a tender conscience. **2. Stubbornness** prevailed. Uncontrolled tempers are fertile ground for obstinacy. “And he was angry, and would not go in...” (Luke 15:28). **3. Aimlessness** ruled. Away from God, he lost direction and received no new guidance. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psalm 66:18). **4. Weariness** triumphed. Running from God sapped his energy and enthusiasm, whereas “they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

“God might have said, It is his own choice, his own doing, a house of his own building, let him make the best of it; but He looked on him with compassion” (Matthew Henry: Commentary on the Whole Bible). Well might we praise God for that, else, where would we be? “The higher we are raised through the same grace into the apprehension of the grace itself, the more do we require to be purged: and how this is done, our own private histories, if faithfully recorded, would detail” (J.B. Stoney: Discipline in the School of God).

### Jehovah’s Bush

“And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.” Three things were miraculously “prepared” or “appointed” in this chapter. Here, it’s a bush-like shrub, generally considered the castor oil plant or “palm-christ” (palma-christi). With leaves, “often more than a foot large,” it provided excellent shelter from sunlight (Jamieson, Faussett, Brown Commentary on the Whole Bible). The Lord prepared it so Jonah’s “grief” might be eased, but that was not all. Like Moses’ “burning bush” (Exodus 3:2), the prophet’s “blighted bush” would soon bestow a vital lesson.

But first, Jonah was “exceeding glad of the gourd” and as James Montgomery Boice observes, it’s the first time “Jonah has been happy about anything” (The Minor Prophets). Earthly objects, however feeble, often captivate the erring heart, as occupation with Christ, the “Plant of Renown” (Ezekiel 34:29) wanes, and memories of sitting “under His shadow with great delight” (Song 2:3) gradually fade. Spiritual discernment also suffers. Jonah was “exceeding glad” at the prepared plant, but “exceedingly” displeased over a pardoned people (v.1). One can hardly conceive of a prophet becoming that insensitive and yet, for a time, that’s how foolish Jonah was.

### Jehovah’s Bug

“But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.” Any satisfaction the gourd brought Jonah was obliterated by the gnawing of a puny maggot (tolah or “crimson worm”). Previously, God appointed a monstrous creature of the sea to swallow Jonah (1:17), now he used a minute creature of

the soil to swallow Jonah’s plant. Arriving at daybreak, it quietly worked on the gourd’s root or stalk, eventually shriveling it. Jonah was crestfallen.

When the bush bloomed, the prophet may have felt God was blessing his movements, but that was not the case. “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecclesiastes 8:11). The Lord was actually preparing Jonah for a difficult, albeit valuable lesson, which would temporarily bring despair. Yet, it must be learned, for no servant, not even a prophet, can sin against God with impunity.

At the time, Jonah would have hated the worm, as would we. But as G.C. Willis states, “I suppose at the end of our journey...our hearts will rise up in gratitude...for all His tender care along the way, for the worms or what we now call ‘misfortunes,’ as well as for the gourds, or what we call ‘blessings’” (“Lessons from Jonah the Prophet”). One can imagine Jonah as he penned this prophecy later, lifting his eyes to heaven and thanking God for the worm and the lessons well taught.

### Jehovah’s Blast

“And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.” The sun rose high upon the ill-sheltered and ill-tempered prophet, when for the second time in this book, the wind went after him. Not the mighty tempest of chapter 1, but a “vehement east wind” – a silent, sultry blast that proved intense and unrelenting. If Jonah would nurse his heated passions, then God would give him heat in abundance. So much so, that he’d faint from heatstroke. It made Jonah want to die, but God wasn’t training him for that. The “vehement east wind” was meant to drive the eastbound traveler back to the Lord again. Recovery can be hard.

At this point Jehovah’s silence ceased and He asked Jonah, “Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?” The earlier question in verse 4 is more specific now. “By reducing the question to the particular issue of the gourd, God focused the question in a way that would cause Jonah to condemn himself by his own words” (Douglas Stuart: Word Biblical Commentary, vol.31). Jonah’s answer, that “I do well to be angry, even unto death,” illustrates the insolent nature of human hearts. The prophet still simmered inwardly against God, but the Scriptures as it were cut him off, for these were his final words.

The last two verses echo Jehovah and leave us a moral for all time. Verse 10 mentions Jonah’s Pity for the Plant, verse 11, Jehovah’s Pity for the People. >>>

**If God build His glory upon Christ, shall not we build on Him our hope of salvation?**

### Jonah's Pity for the Plant

"Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night..." The pronouns "Thou" and "I" are emphatic, giving added weight to the intended contrast. "Thou, thou Jonah," hast had pity on the gourd: Should not "I, I Jehovah," spare Nineveh?

Jonah pitied the gourd, but why? He hadn't toiled over the plant or aided its growth in any way. His infatuation was purely personal. He found pleasure in the shade it produced. And though its lifespan was brief – it came up one night and perished in the next – that didn't stop him from delighting in it. And so it goes when one is away from God. But when affections are set on things above (Colossians 3:2), everything is seen in its true light.

### Jehovah's Pity for the People

"And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" These final words fully expose the folly of Jonah's anger. The difference between one fleeting plant and thousands of immortal souls is incomprehensible. Even if Jonah couldn't overcome his revulsion for heathen Assyrians, how could he contemplate the death of one hundred and twenty thousand innocent children? Surely the prophet paused when he heard that number. Even the cattle, said Jehovah, were of greater account than a single gourd.

Writing on this verse, Alexander Raleigh stated:

Would you spare the one, and I must slay the many?...God goes into every house, looks into the cot where the infant lies asleep, counts the hands that play among the toys, and the feet that patter on the floor, and the sweet open faces where the light of innocence yet lingers, and where sin has set as yet no brand! Not the king, not the nobles, not the marching armies, not the heaving masses of the people, not the bleeding slaves – but the infants are nearest heaven, first and clearest in divine sight! They are in fact, the only persons named... 'What have they done?'... 'Would you bring a storm of judgment upon them?'

And here, the prophecy concludes. The servant that failed at the start has failed again at the end – "What is man!" We rejoice in God's perfect Servant who said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34). Truly, "a greater than Jonah is here!" (Matthew 12:41). Yet as we close, we have to believe from the very fact Jonah wrote this book, that he learned his lessons well and became a greater man for God. If our meditations of Jonah produce something similar in our own

lives, then we too will have to acknowledge that we've been wondrously blessed.

The very commandment of God—"Repent" — shows a dispensation above the law, and supposes a fountain of grace in the heart of God. Were there not forgiveness with God, there could have been no commandment to repent.

## The Gospel According to David, Psalm 22, pt. 4

*Robert Surgenor*

The shedding of His blood for sin was entirely accomplished before He died, not after He died. Let us be very clear on that. The spear wound only reveals that He was undeniably dead, and not in some sort of a swoon as some ignoramus claim.

So abused was His sacred body that our Lord exclaimed; "I may tell all My bones: they look and stare upon Me." "The skin and flesh were distended by the posture of the body on the cross, that the bones, as through a thin veil, became visible, and might be counted" (George Horne).

John Stevenson remarks, "'They look and stare upon Me.' Sensitively conscious of His condition upon the cross, the delicate feelings of the holy Saviour were sorely pained by the gaze of the multitude. With impudent faces they looked upon Him. To view Him better they halted as they walked. With deliberate insolence they collected in groups, and made their remarks to each other on His conduct and appearance. Mocking His naked, emaciated, and quivering body, they looked and stared upon Him." They mocked and rejoiced over His shame and suffering. They are described in Psalm 35:21, as saying, "Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it," namely, what they desired and wished for. Their heart of stone was not moved, they had no sympathy for Him and no compassion on Him. These brute beasts actually rejoiced at His misery as they stared at Him like dogs.

Our Lord was poor. His garments were very few. John records; "Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also His coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, 'Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be:' that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted My raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did" (John 19:23-24). Gambling at the foot of the cross of Jesus! What an insight to the callousness of the depraved human heart! Yet we also see the grace and lovingkindness of God. Prior to being lifted up the Lord

prayed for them; “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:24). That holy and fervent prayer was answered that same day, for after Jesus commended His spirit into His Father’s hands, we read in verse 47 that those four men glorified God, “And when the centurion, which stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39). Matthew records that the other three soldiers with him, confessed the same (Matthew 27:54).

### **His Final Cry for Help - vs. 19-21**

“But be not Thou far from Me, O LORD: O My strength, haste Thee to help Me. Deliver My soul from the sword; My darling from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion’s mouth: for Thou hast heard Me from the horns of the unicorns.”

The Lord never forgot His covenant relation to God and cries for help. He is crying that it be not refused. In verse 11, He cries that there was none to help. He confesses God as His strength. The sons of Korah sang, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1). One remembers the beloved apostle Paul when all forsook him when he stood on trial. He exclaimed, “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.” (2 Timothy 4:16-17). Millions of God’s saints from Paul’s day until now, can exclaim the same.

The Lord speaks of Himself as God’s Darling. “Darling” implies “the unique One,” or “My only One.” That truth is brought out in John 3:16, “He gave His only begotten Son;” or, “His only unique Son.” The word “dog” being in the singular indicates not the Gentiles as a whole, but rather one Gentile, namely Pilate. Remember his words to our Lord? “Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee? Jesus answered, “Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he [Caiaphas, Israel’s high priest] that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin” (John 19:11).

Upon hearing the Lord’s answer he sought to release Him, but the divine providence of God prohibited it, for it was foretold that He would be taken by wicked hands and crucified and slain. There could be no redemption for us apart from the crucifixion of Christ. He was the Passover Lamb, chosen before the foundation of the world, and now His hour had come; nothing could hinder the purposes of God – “the Son of man must be lifted up” (John 12:34).

Another enemy was the lion. His mouth devoured. Christ asks to be delivered from it. The apostle Peter speaks of our adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). From the very commencement of the human race, this evil one sought to destroy the godly line through whom our Lord would come

in human form. Cain, who was of that wicked one, slew his godly brother Abel (Genesis 4:8; 1 John 3:12). Athaliah sought to destroy all the seed royal of the house of Judah, through whom our Lord would come (2 Chronicles 22:10). Then when the Christ-child finally came, Herod slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, in hopes of destroying the Lord Jesus (Matthew 2:16). All these plots to destroy Christ were engineered by the devil. Finally, at the last supper, Satan put into the heart of Judas to betray the Lord, and then having accomplished that he entered him, and Judas having received the sop went immediately out to accomplish Satan’s fiendish plan.

Finally comes the unicorns. Basically, there is no such animal. However, the Jews often spoke of wild and fierce oxen as unicorns. To punish a criminal with a cruel death, the victim would be tied, arms and legs, to the two sharp-ended horns of the ox, and thus suspended over the disturbed head of the wild ox, the victim would endure horrible suffering until death occurred. The unicorns represented the wild and furious crowd that screamed for His death.

Now the change comes, and the Lord cries, “Thou hast heard Me.” From this point on the Psalm introduces us to the glories that should follow.

### **His Declaration in the Midst of the Congregation - Vs. 22**

“I will declare Thy name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.”

The Saviour now turns His eyes from His sufferings to the glory which followed. In Hebrews 2:12 Paul applies this whole verse to Christ in proof of His humanity. Notice also His expression, “My brethren.” The Lord indicated that those who keep His word are His true brethren (Luke 8:21), but not until after His resurrection did He address His disciples as brethren. The first one to hear those words from His lips was Mary Magdalene (Matthew 28:10; John 20:17). He said to her, “Go tell My brethren.”

The word “congregation” is translated “church” in Hebrews 2:12, and the question arises, what church is that? One can appreciate it two ways. As His own gather in local assemblies to worship and praise Him, He is in their midst, which makes the gathering exceedingly precious. From earth, with the Lord in the midst of His gathered out people, there arises much adoration and praise to God. He is our teacher and minister, enabling us and directing our praises to His Father. God’s name is declared, that is, the perfections seen in God are seen in Christ, and publicly made known in praise. When the Lord Jesus communes with our hearts concerning divine truth, joyful adoration and praise is the unfailing result.

However, there is another congregation and that is the Church of the firstborn which are enrolled in heaven, where we also find Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant

(Hebrews 12:23–24). He is in the midst, directing the heavenly praise to God.

### **A Three-Fold Description - Vs. 23**

“Ye that fear the LORD, praise Him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify Him; and fear Him, all ye the seed of Israel.”

The Saviour is now addressing the congregation of the saints. He exhorts the faithful of His own to unite with Him in praise to the Father. There is one stipulation, “Ye that fear the Lord.” The humble awe of God is absolutely necessary in one’s preparation to praise Him. Those who do not reverence His word are not fit, or qualified to sing praises to the Lord. How dare unholy lips sing praises to a holy God! Yet in the religious world we see this all the time. Most of it is for the entertainment of religiously inclined folk, and there is really nothing for God in it, but rather glory of self. Spiritual congregations are gathered together, not to entertain themselves, nor to promote their natural abilities, nor to glorify themselves; they are gathered together to proclaim the glories, attributes and virtues of God, and they do it with Christ as the unseen director of their praise. There is nothing of man in it, all is of God to His glory. Christendom often operates differently.

Take for instance the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. “Ah! The acoustics are wonderful! The singing is so thrilling!” Oh yes my friend, I have heard this unenlightened appraisal many times from many lips. However, let us examine this organization in the light of God’s Holy Word. First of all, its founder, Joe Smith was a polygamist with at least twenty seven wives (some say over 60 wives). Today his church is administrated by its “General Authorities.”

Mormons teach that man can become God, and that God was once a man. They deny the deity of Christ, the Trinity, and the existence of a burning hell. They believe that salvation is obtained through baptism and good works. Now then tell me, is Christ in the midst of such a congregation; in the midst of people that deny that He is God and that His work on the cross wasn’t sufficient for salvation? How could He be? So there they are, looking so pretty and singing so perfectly, but what does it all amount to? Absolutely nothing. To me it is sickening hypocrisy.

Contrast this worldly-impressive throng to a small company of humble believers with the Lord in their midst. There are not many, and there is nothing fancy about them. Some sing a little off tune, but every one, old and young, are praising the Lord with their whole heart. The Lord is in their midst directing the humble, yet joyful praise. Ah, the sweet savor of that offering rises to the courts above and permeates all of heaven with its sweet fragrance, thus God is glorified.

There are three notable words in this verse: “PRAISE, GLORIFY, FEAR.” The word “praise” means to “boast” or “to commend.” The first time it is found is in Genesis 12:15, “The princes also of Pharaoh saw her (Sara), and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman

was taken into Pharaoh’s house.” So beautiful was Abraham’s wife, that the Egyptians were stunned with her beauty, and praised her to Pharaoh. As the result of the overwhelming beauty of Christ seen with the spiritual eye, we can do nothing less than praise God, in whom Christ is the express image of His Person, and the brightness of God’s glory (Hebrews 1:3).

The next expression is “glorify”, which also means “honor or glorious.” The first occasion of this word is found in Genesis 13:2. “And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.” If holiness is resident in my soul, then my praise will enrich the throne of God. The godly soul’s praise to God makes God all the richer. He daily loads us with benefits, but we should daily load Him with our treasure of praise. “I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs” (Psalm 69:30-31). Such an animal is worth from \$3,000 to \$7,500 today, but the humble saint’s praise is worth far more to God.

The last word is “fear”, Genesis 22:12. “And He (God) said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me.” Abraham was put to the test and came forth as fine gold. He honored God above His only son whom he dearly loved. Do we love God above everyone else? Do we honor Him above our children? Who comes first in our lives? When parents are confronted with a choice of attending one of two places, the one being an event that involves their child, and the other a meeting of the assembly, which do they choose? The parents that fear God naturally attend the assembly gathering with their disappointed child.

Faithfulness to God is paramount in influencing our children to fear God and seek His salvation while young and tender in years. This was a godly trait seen in Abraham, for God said of him; “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment” (Genesis 18:19). “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10). “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7). “The fear of the LORD prolongeth days” (Proverbs 10:27). “The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life” (Proverbs 14:27).

### **God’s Approval of Him - Vs. 24**

“For He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath He hid His face from Him; but when He cried unto Him, He heard” (vs. 24).

There is a corresponding verse to this in Hebrews 5:7; “Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared.” The afflicted One is our blessed Lord.

In the garden His soul was exceeding heavy, even unto death. His prayer was that He might be delivered out of the realm of death, and He was heard, in that He feared.

In Psalm 102:23–27, we have a prophetic picture of this traumatic event. Christ speaks. “He weakened My strength in the way; He shortened My days. I said, O my God, take Me not away in the midst of My days.” Then God answers to assure His Son. “Thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed: But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end.” To the careless reader, there only appears to be one speaker in those verses, but to the diligent student, two speakers are revealed.

Not only did the Lord cry among the trees of Gethsemane, but He uttered a final cry on the tree at Calvary; “It is finished...Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit” (John 19:30; Luke 23:46).

*(continued)*

## **Jude, pt. 5** **Caution and Counsel**

*Joel Portman*

**A**t last, Jude turns away from warning the saints about the evils and dangers of those who would lead them away from the faith in Christ, which is the apostolic doctrine that was delivered to them with divine authority, to give words of encouragement to his readers. It is only fitting and appropriate that his short epistle should end on a positive note. He is writing to those who he recognizes to contrast with the apostates. These are not those who have professed the truth and then rejected it. His readers are those who are “beloved of God” and are exercised to remain faithful to the truth of His Word, the “faith once (for all) delivered to the saints,” (v. 3). Hebrews 6:1-10 makes the same distinction between those who “fall away” and those who have displayed better things that are associated with salvation. Saints of Christ who live in any day need the same order of teaching. Those who take heed to the warnings can appreciate and benefit from the encouragement!

Jude's last words can be summarized by seven exhortations:

- v.17-19 Remember the Words
- v. 20 Edify yourselves
- v. 20 Protect yourselves
- v. 21 Guard yourselves
- v. 21 Stir up yourselves
- v. 22-23 Exercise yourselves
- v. 24-25 Comfort yourselves

## **Remember the Words, v. 17-19**

Whether these readers had heard the oral teaching of the apostles (this could be true), or not, the written words of these men carry as much weight and should be received the same. Apostles such as Paul in Acts 20:28-31, 1 Timothy 4:1-6, 2 Timothy 3:1-14, and Peter in 2 Peter 2:1-3:4 had given the warning to the saints in their writings. Since these men had written those things, it is certain that similarly, the apostles had given warning verbally in their ministry to the saints.

Often such warnings are not appreciated and are poorly received. However, they are essential. No prophet of the former dispensation was received when he warned of God's coming judgment or when he spoke to the people about their sinful ways that were the cause. If warnings by godly men of a past or present day are not received and applied, then one can hardly blame others for the results. “Others may have forgotten the words spoken by God through Old Testament prophets and New Testament prophets; we cannot. We love to be reminded of them. Turning away from God's message is the mark of apostasy, but remembering and cherishing every word of God as pure and true (Proverbs 30:5) is a mark of sonship,” (Coder, “Jude, the Acts of the Apostates”). If we, in our day, determine to wear “rose-colored glasses” and think that all is well, then we are only following the pattern that the Lord reproved in Laodicea (Revelation 3). But if exercised saints receive and apply the truth so as to correct our lives and behaviors, preservation is always the result.

These men were the “apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ”. This hints that Jude wasn't an apostle, and thus substantiates his identity as a half-brother of the Lord Jesus by birth. He gives higher place of authority to those who spoke and wrote as direct representatives of the Lord Jesus and who rendered to us the faith that we have. As such, they were to be recognized and their word must be received.

They warned of such apostates as Jude describes. They would come in the last time, which is the present period that began with the first coming of Christ and will go on until His second. It is “man's day” (2 Corinthians 4:3 (JND)), and the condition of man's heart is increasingly being seen as this last time moves toward the coming of the Lord. Thus it is that saints can appreciate such warnings, realizing that these conditions were foreseen.

Jude describes these as mockers see 2 Peter 3:1-3. There the scoffers were contradicting the promise of the Lord's physical return, whereas these are scoffing at the teaching of the apostles. He describes these men in three ways: They “separate”, which could mean that they separate themselves or that they cause separations. The former is likely not true, since they were mingling among the saints and causing difficulties as a result. It is more likely that they were fomenting dissension and causing some to follow

them and their teaching, causing their adherents to separate from the other saints. Such men who hold wrong doctrines can always find some who will be swayed by their teaching and set themselves apart in association with the teachers.

They are also “sensual,” or natural, living for self and self-pleasing, directed by the senses and not the Spirit. He goes on to say that they do not have the Spirit, so that they are not saved, though masquerading as believers and teachers of the Word. He rightly described them as dangerous to the believers in v. 12.

### **Edify Yourselves, v. 20...** “Building up yourselves”

These are a contrast to the saints, who are “beloved” of the Lord. They are not to allow such men to tear down their faith nor to diminish their exercise. They, and we, were responsible to build themselves up on that truth that they had received, “your most holy faith”. That is always a personal responsibility that is essential. If a believer in Christ is not growing and making spiritual progress through studying the truth of God and applying it to his own life in practical living, that one will usually be regressing and is in danger of failure. The normal pattern of life is to grow and it is in this sense that Jude writes, though he uses the term that is usual for a building. Our lives are much like that, composed of elements that are added little by little, building on what we already know and through added spiritual growth, becoming more steady and settled over time. Peter ends his second epistle with the exhortation in 2 Peter 3:18, to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” May we have that exercise to apply ourselves to divine truth and to apply divine truth to ourselves!

### **Protect Yourselves, v. 20...** “praying in the Holy Spirit”

Prayer is always an essential element of a Christian’s life that accompanies spiritual growth. It is an expression of our dependence on the Spirit to enable us and to guard us from evil that would hinder such growth and who would give us help to learn Divine truth and practice it. This indicates to us that it is the Spirit indwelling a child of God who enables that believer to pray intelligently and spiritually, to seek for the things that will enhance the spiritual aspect of the person. Such prayer is a mark of true spirituality that was evidently absent from these false men who could speak well and persuasively, but who knew nothing of this essential spiritual activity.

### **Guard Yourselves, v. 21...**

“keep yourselves in the love of God”

When Jude exhorts these believers to “keep yourselves” he is indicating that the maintenance of continued enjoyment of that place of experiencing the love of God for them was a continual responsibility that each one had. It is not our

love for God that Jude refers to, but rather His love for us. It is not to say that He will cease to love us in any way, but rather that by wrong principles and practices, they would not be able to enjoy the blessings and the reality of that love experienced in their souls. It is as if to say that His love would continue to be shown and showered around each one, but one could hinder the blessed sense of that love personally. Perhaps it is directly linked with the preceding exhortations for them to edify themselves on their most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Such activity will serve to keep one’s soul fresh and warm in the blessedness of being in a condition to enjoy the full expression of that fact, that God truly loves me and I know it. The bride in Solomon's Song could say much about the love of the bridegroom for her, but when she put herself self first in 5:2-7, she lost the enjoyment of that love and missed the sweetness of His presence. However, following that denial of His claims, her heart is again turned with fresh expression of appreciation for his beauties and perfections, so she could say, “this is my beloved, and this is my friend.” The Lord said to the disciples in John 15:10, “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love.” May we determine to always abide in His love through seeking to enjoy that warm relationship with Him that He desires for us.

### **Stir up Yourselves, v. 21...** “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

“Looking for” indicates more than something that is casual and without care; it implies a looking away with interest and great desire. We look for His coming, knowing that it will be a mercy of God to deliver saints from this present ungodly scene that grieves their soul and which causes such conflict. This is a coming that should stir the saint to realize how short time is and how necessary it is to live each day expressing our faithfulness to our Lord as if it were the last. We presently have eternal life as a gift, having received it when we trusted Christ, but this will be the moment when every believer will come to possess and enjoy all that eternal life really involves. Not only is it a life that is eternal, but it is the sharing of the life of God that we will participate in when we are in His presence and see our blessed Lord as He truly is. This longing anticipation is linked with the enjoyment of His love for us, since if we are truly experiencing that in our lives, we will want to be with Him and to be delivered from every element that presently seeks to rob of us that knowledge.

We note the trinity here as well, for it is prayer in the Holy Spirit that enables us to enjoy the love of God, and this in turn quickens the desires for our Lord's return for His own. The divine work in our souls results in lives that are lived in fellowship with Him and in harmony with His will.

**Exercise Yourselves, v. 22-23**

“some have compassion, some save..”

Admitted by all who have studied the epistle, these verses seem to be the most difficult to properly interpret. Some see three groups in these verses, while some see only two. The first see those who need to be delivered with compassion, even when they dispute with the teacher (“contend with you,”) by presenting scriptural arguments that would recover them. Then there are those who need stronger methods since they have become more immersed in the evil doctrine and have embraced it, at least in part. As a result there is an immediacy in their need for deliverance, since they are in very real danger of having their lives and testimonies ruined. Then the last group would be those even more difficult, who are so involved in the apostate teaching that it may not be possible to see them delivered and any dealings with them must be with extreme caution lest the one seeking to be thus used would be contaminated and ruined as a result. That may be the proper way to see the verses and it is what brother McShane ably upholds in his commentary on Jude (“What the Bible Teaches”). Others see only two groups as we have it in the AV, or that which involves showing mercy on some and seeking to save others. This would indicate the need for intelligent discrimination between those who have become involved in error, not dealing with all in the same way, but using the truth according to their state. In either case, Jude is exhorting his readers not to ignore the sad plight of those who have been contaminated by error, but to be exercised to bring about their deliverance from it if possible.

**Comfort Yourselves, v. 24-25, “unto HIM”**

Jude ends his short epistle of warning on a strong note of confidence. He has made a sharp difference between those who he has been warning and those about whom he has warned, and now he says that the believer, seen as distinct from the rest, can rest assured that he is being kept, and will be kept by divine power so as to be ultimately presented in His presence with exceeding joy. He will complete the work begun in us and will do so in a manner through which every believer will be preserved without stumbling, perhaps indicating God’s power to preserve them from the ruin of apostate conditions as well as from all else that would cause failure. Then they will be presented “faultless,” or without any cause of blame, being seen in all the fulfilled purposes of God’s work on their behalf in the value of the person and work of Christ. So there is a present preservation and an ultimate presentation that every child of God will experience, and the result, as always, will be the ascription of praise to “God our Savior,” who is worthy of all worship and adoration.

The threatenings of God’s Word are designed to discourage men from their wickedness, and to drive them out of all refuges of lies to the Saviour. For the utterly self-condemned sinner there is nothing but encouragement in the whole compass of the Bible.

**A Royal Cemetery**

*W. Rodgers*

As you have walked through some ancient burial ground, and have looked on the various memorials of those whose bodies lie mouldering to dust in it, you have doubtless seen much that was of interest, and, it may be, have been not a little profited as well. Now I want you to walk with me through a cemetery more ancient than any you have thus far visited, in the hope that you will find it both interesting and profitable.

It is the burying place at Jerusalem of the royal house of Judah; and if you inquire, how are we to get to it, I answer, it is quite easy, we have but to open our Bibles at the 2nd book of Chronicles. There we find a series of particulars, which are not elsewhere recorded, as to the place and manner of the burial of the kings, of whose times it is the history; and unlike the records usually inscribed on tombstones, which tell only what is good of the person lying beneath, we shall find that these appraise each man at his actual worth, as estimated by those left behind him.

When a king of Judah died, his subjects appear to have had it in their power to decide where and how his burial should be; and however much they may have flattered him in his lifetime, having now nothing, either to fear, or to hope from him, they seem to have made their real opinion very manifest, in each case. They proved themselves shrewd judges too, and even where they had allowed their king to lead them into wickedness while alive, they showed that they still knew the difference between good and evil, when it came to be a question of his funeral.

Thus it may be also with ourselves. We may have been flattered and fawned upon, until we have been brought to hold much too high an opinion, both of our spirituality, and of our ability; but behind all this flattery, we have been scrutinized carefully, and it would perhaps surprise some of us very much, were we to see ourselves as others see us, and to learn how well our measure has been taken.

But let us go along to the cemetery, and see what is to be found there. Like every other place of the kind, there are in it some positions more honorable than others; and here in the very best of them, we find a well known name. It is the tomb of Hezekiah, concerning which the record is, “They buried him in THE CHIEFEST of the sepulchres of the sons of David, and all did him honor at his death,” 2 Chronicles 32: 33. Well they might do so, for since the *days*

of David himself, there had been no king like him, 2 Kings 18:5. There had been good men of course, but none of whom it could be said, as it was of him, "In every work that he began, in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart and prospered," 2 Chronicles 31:21. There had been those who sought to put down idolatry; yet the brasen serpent, which had been turned into an idol, was let alone until he destroyed it; and the high places where unauthorized worship of the Lord was carried on, (as distinct from those devoted to false gods), were not interfered with, until he put an end to them, 2 Chronicles 32:12.

Moving onward we notice another sepulchre, which is evidently that of someone held in high esteem. To our surprise we find when we draw near, that although in the royal cemetery, it is not the tomb of a king at all, but of the high priest Jehoiada. This man, while not himself a king, might, like a certain famous earl in English history, have been called a "kingmaker"; for to him king Joash owed his crown, and through his instrumentality God was pleased to preserve the line of the house of David, in a time of peril. Of him we read, "They buried him in the city of David, AMONG THE KINGS, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward His house," 2 Chronicles 24:16.

Passing by other honored tombs, such as that of Josiah, who, as we may see, lost his life prematurely, by meddling with strife that did not concern him, 2 Chronicles 35:21-25; and that of Asa, who seems to have outlived his usefulness, 2 Chronicles 16:13,14 with 1 Kings 15:23; we arrive at the boundary of the royal cemetery proper, though beyond it there lies an extension of the field in which it is situated. Away by itself in this portion, we see the sepulchre of Uzziah, the leper king, as lonely in his burial as he was during the last seven years of his life. His story is that of a good man, who allowed his testimony to be ruined beyond recovery, in a moment of pride. Concerning him it is said, "He was marvellously helped till he was strong; but when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, to his destruction." And when he died we read, "They buried him IN THE FIELD of the burial of the kings, for they said, He is a leper." 2 Chronicles 26:15,16,23.

Still further away from the resting places of Judah's great ones, we come upon quite a group of tombs, those of the men concerning whom it is written, "They buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings." Among them we find Joash, who got on well, so long as he allowed himself to be led by the good priest Jehoiada; but who showed himself in his true colors, as soon as the prop was removed, and evil associates got his ear, 2 Chronicles 24:25. Here too lies Ahaz, the man who sought to improve on the order of God's worship, 2 Chronicles 28:27 with 2 Kings 16:10-17. And here is the neglected tomb of Jehoram, of whom it is written, "The people made no burning for him,

like the burning of his fathers, and he departed WITHOUT BEING DESIRED," 2 Chronicles 21:19, 20. When he first ascended the throne, it might perhaps have been said of him, as it was of Saul, "On whom is all the DESIRE of Israel, is it not on thee," 1 Samuel 9:20; but if so, he speedily manifested himself as a troubler of the nation, until at his end, his people were glad to be rid of him.

Before bringing our walk to a close, I would like to take you to the grave of yet another king, but you will have some distance to travel to get there, for not only must we leave the royal cemetery, and its environs, but we must go outside the walls of Jerusalem itself. Moreover, you will have difficulty in discovering the exact spot, for there is no memorial stone, and the nearest indication I can give you, is that it lies in the place where the citizens bury their dead asses. It is the grave of Jehoiakim, and the record is to be found this time, not in 2 Chronicles, but in Jeremiah 22:18, 19, where we read, "They shall not lament for him, saying, 'Ah my brother; he shall be buried with THE BURIAL OF AN ASS, drawn and cast forth, beyond the gates of Jerusalem.'" This was the end of a man, who trampled upon everyone's rights (vs. 13-17), in order to gratify his own selfish whims. Small wonder that there was no one to say, "Ah, my brother," when he died.

Now, brethren, these things have been "written for our admonition," and it rests with ourselves to learn the lessons which they teach. If the Lord were to remove us, would it be in our case, as in that of Stephen, over whom "devout men made great lamentation," Acts 8:2; or as in that of Dorcas, in which "all the widows stood by, weeping, and showing," Acts. 9:39. Or would it, on the other hand, be with us as with Jehoram, that our departure would be "without being desired." We know that our record is being, day by day, set down, and that not by our fellowmen merely, but by God Himself. And ahead of us there lies, not alone the rough and ready justice, which those who knew us may mete out to us on the day of our funeral, but the judgment seat of Christ, where we shall all be made manifest as we really were, and where the Lord will honor us, according as we honored Him here.

## **This is not Your Rest**

Events of our time remind us of the solemn message God sent to Israel: "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction" (Micah 2:10). It is true that the words are not an exhortation to God's children to depart out of an ungodly world, but rather the announcement of His immutable purpose to cast them out of the land they had polluted by their iniquities, even as they had cast out others from their homes and possessions. Yet by way of application the language may be addressed to all Christians,

reminding them that this polluted world is not their rest.

We read of a Creation rest, which was soon disturbed by the introduction of sin (Genesis 2:2,3). We read of a Canaan rest, which was soon lost by the unbelief and idolatry of Israel (Joshua 1:13; 22:4). The former rest was never regained, for our Lord Jesus said to the Jews, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). The latter rest could never be recovered except by the coming of One, of whom Solomon "the peaceable" was a type, and of whom Jehovah said to David, "Behold, a son shall be born unto thee, who shall be a man of rest" (1 Chronicles 22:9). There is a rest He bestows, blessed be His name, even amid the wild distractions and tumults of earth; but it is still true that He says to His followers, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest."

First, There is a rest He gives. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). It is a rest given, not sold, and it must be received as a gift, or it cannot be received at all. God gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16); the Father gave us another Comforter (John 14:16); Christ gives us eternal life (John 17:8); He gives repentance and remission of sins (Acts 5:31) He gives us everlasting consolation (2 Thessalonians 2:16); He gives Himself (Titus 2:14). All is a gift, and the soul never gets rest until it accepts as true, and true as meeting its own need, the testimony that "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Second, There is a rest found. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:29, 30). The only way to find real and permanent rest is to walk in fellowship with Himself, yoked in loving service, and walking side by side with our Lord, even as He walked. When we can say with Paul, "The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Corinthians 5:14); "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21); "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14), our peace shall be like a river, and grow deeper and wider as it flows on to the boundless sea of God's love.

Third, Rest is the portion of Christ's followers in the midst of service. "He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile" (Mark 6:31). He did not send them away from Himself, but said, "Come," going before them and with them into a quiet retreat, where they were undisturbed by the confusions and strifes of men. Often the believer is ready to exclaim with the Psalmist, "Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest" (Psalm 4:6) but the Master ministers to him in his discouragement the consolations of the Holy Spirit so that he can truly say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee" (Psalm 116:7).

Fourth, There is to be a rest from labor soon.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13). Of the righteous, who are taken away from the evil to come, it is written, "They shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness," or as it is in the margin, "before Him" (Isaiah. 57:2); and to Daniel it was said, "Go thou thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days" (Daniel 12:13). Job too found comfort in the thought of the grave, for "there the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest" (Job 3:17).

Fifth, There is to be rest from trouble. "To you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels" (2 Thessalonians 1:7). "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7), and especially Christians in a polluted world; but the time is surely coming when it shall be said to the tempted and tried believers, "The Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage where-in thou wast made to serve" (Isaiah 14:3). Like the apostle we may be "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair" (2 Corinthians 4:8), because we hear the voice of our unfailing Friend saying to us, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Exodus 33:14); and again He says, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1).

Sixth, There is to be a glorious rest at His coming. "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious" (Isaiah 11:10). Then His people "shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwelling places, and in quiet resting places" (Isaiah 32:18). Then to the now downtrodden Jerusalem and oppressed Israel will be fulfilled the sweet promise, "The Lord thy God in the midst of these is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).

Seventh, There is an everlasting rest that awaits the redeemed. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His. Let us hasten therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Hebrews 4:9-11). Let us close the year remembering that "here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come," "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10; 13:14). It is a city where all is holy and happy and eternal, and where the ransomed sinner can say with Solomon, "Now the Lord my God hath given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent" (1 Kings 5:4).