

RUSSELL SANDERS
8-30-2020
JONAH PART 21
Ch. 3:8-9

The decree of the Assyrian King (of Nineveh) continued in verse 8 saying, ***“But let man and beast be covered in sackcloth (for repentance), and cry mightily unto God (Elohim). Yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.”***

The king and his nobles (v. 7) acknowledged the sins of his people and admonished them to turn away from (repent) and cease all their evil and wicked ways and to cease from all their violence.

The Hebrew word for “violence” here is “chamac” which means “wrong” and “unjust gain,” “damage,” “falseness,” “injustice”, “unrighteousness,” and “violent dealing.” This referred to individuals’ conduct in their home, in their personal business dealings, and in their interactions with other people.

It also carried the broader meaning of how Assyria dealt with other nations and people groups. They were the most violent and war-like of all the ancient empires. This violent empire dominated the “known world” for almost 300 years between 900 B.C. and 605 B.C.

In verse 9, the king says, ***“Who can tell if (perhaps) God will turn and repent (change course), and turn away from His fierce anger, (so) that we perish not?”*** He understood about the “wrath of the gods” from his pagan upbringing. He also knew there were ways that man could attempt to “appease the gods” to gain favor. Their forms of appeasement often included making offerings of food, gold, silver, and such material goods offered to their idols. It often meant making animal sacrifices, shedding their blood upon the altars. In some cases, it even included human sacrifices, especially with the blood of innocent children.

The King understood that their traditional methods of seeking the “favor of the gods” would not work with the God of whom Jonah was preaching. Only true repentance with humility and a “broken spirit” would be the acceptable sacrifice. He was hoping that God would see a change of heart in the people through their repentance of prayers in sackcloth (humility) and ashes (the “burning” of their works and deeds), and God would turn aside from the destruction that Jonah prophesied.

I would that America should show such repentance. Our nation is headed for destruction as was Nineveh, unless we as a nation turn from our wicked (national) ways and look to Jesus above. These pagan Ninevites understood more about repentance than does America.

Be praying with us that when the real chaos strikes that many people in their despair will actually turn to God.

