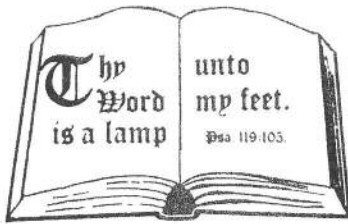

Covenant Answering Service



Produced by The Federation of the Covenant People,
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QUESTION: "I have a problem with the Book of Jonah – not with the story of the 'great fish', although I must admit that this part bothers me as well – but with the overall theme in the story. Jonah was told to go on a 'missionary journey' to Nineveh which to me is very strange because this type of activity was totally foreign and certainly unknown to Israel at that time. Why too was he sent to Nineveh which comprised non-Israel people, to 'cry out' against the wickedness of that city when Babylonia was the source from which the Assyrian way of life stemmed? To me, the most logical step – if the Lord wanted to stamp out the wickedness – would have been to send Jonah into Babylonia and destroy the wickedness at its source. We are told that Jonah entered the city of Nineveh and predicted its destruction within forty days and yet, so we are told, the people repented and Jonah's predictions were made to look very foolish and I can truly sympathise with his frustration at the turn of events. Despite the repentance of the city, it was destroyed in 606 B.C. which again supports my view that the most logical way to deal with the situation, was to tackle it at its source. Somehow or other, this story has a phoney ring to it and I say this despite the fact that our Lord pointed to Jonah as the only sign to be given to the scribes and the Pharisees. Can you throw some light on this?"

ANSWER: As this question is rather wide-ranging, it would serve to break it down and deal with the several points which are raised separately. Firstly, concerning the man Jonah, very little is known about him as he is the only Old Testament character to be called by this name which, in Hebrew, is written as *Yônâh*. Apart from the Book which bears his name, there is only one other reference to him in which he is called a prophet whose one recorded prediction was made in the context of the extension of the northern kingdom from the Orontes to the Dead Sea – a prophecy which was apparently fulfilled in the days of Jereboam the 2nd (2nd Kings 14:25). From the fact that he was said to be of "Gath-hepher", it is assumed that he was either born in or lived in the territory of Zebulun, although whether he was of that tribe or not, none can be sure.

Insofar as the Book of Jonah itself is concerned, it has the unique distinction of being the only Book placed in the prophetic canon which does not contain any predictions – limiting itself to the story of its hero and his reactions. Another feature about the Book itself is that, with the exception of Roman Catholic theologians, all, whether Jewish or Christian, are of the opinion that Jonah never wrote the work which has been attributed to him. The *Jewish Encyclopaedia* has this to say. "The book does not bear the least evidence of having been written by the prophet or even during his time; and its age must be gathered from different indications . . . The way in which Nineveh is referred to, shows that the city had long since vanished from the face of the earth and had faded into legend (3:6). The king of Nineveh also could have been referred to only in a late myth; and the legendary atmosphere of the whole story, from beginning to end, is in accord with the length of time that had elapsed since the events recounted in the book took place. This becomes evident both in the episode of the fish which swallows a man and then casts him up alive after three days, and in that of the plant which in one night grows high enough to overshadow Jonah. These

things might, it is true, be considered as divine miracles; but such an explanation cannot be offered for the three days time that it takes to pass through Nineveh, nor for the fasting, sackcloth, and penitent cries of animals, much less for the conception that an Israelitish prophet could preach penitence to the city of Nineveh, and that the king and the citizens would listen to him. Everything about the story is, and was intended to be, miraculous and legendary."

One could of course, consider the Book of Jonah as allegorical which naturally does not disparage the fact that our Lord used Jonah as the only sign to be given to the Pharisees. As has been stated earlier, Jonah is the only character in the Old Testament to be called by this name although the Hebrew *yōwnāh* is also associated with Ephraim — "Ephraim also is like a silly dove (*yōwnāh*) without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria" (Hos. 7:11). As has been stated previously, "Jonah" in Hebrew is written as *Yōnāh* which, in meaning is identical with *yōwnāh* — a "dove". In continuing in allegorical vein, Jonah refused to obey the Commands of the LORD — which is precisely what Israel did when they refused to obey His Law — and Jonah found himself in stormy waters with strange or foreign seamen which is certainly analogous of the situation in Israel just prior to its captivity (Isa. 1:1-7). Jonah is then thrown overboard and is swallowed by a great fish and is hidden from sight for three days — lost, but still living in the belly of the great fish. Israel was swallowed up in the captivities and notwithstanding the Jew's claim, Israel, like Jonah was not seen for three prophetic days which of course, is precisely what Hosea wrote about in his 6th chapter — "Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."

After he had been spewed up on land, Jonah went to Nineveh and preached repentance to a people who, as far as is known, had never received the Law of the LORD which is precisely what the true modern Israel nations did after the Reformation. Nineveh, so the story says, repented but as history clearly indicates, this was a farce for Nineveh was destroyed and all Jonah's efforts were in vain. Does this not have a

message to us in this day and age when we are more concerned about other people than our own?

In summing up, while Jonah was undoubtedly a historical character in Israel (2nd Kings 14:25), the story associated with him has so much about it that one can only conclude that it was indeed prophetic — a preview of Israel whose re-emergence from the "valley of dry bones" (Ezek. 37:1-14) may be likened to national resurrection — just as our Lord used the same story to indicate *His* Resurrection from the dead.

QUESTION: "Could you please explain why the priest from Samaria should have bothered to teach men from Cutha, Ava, Hamath and Sepharvaim (2nd Kings 17:24-28) when Psalms 78,55,105,44; Deuteronomy 32:8 and Amos 3:2 leave the heathen nations without inheritance?"

ANSWER: In considering the many problems which arise from researching the various scriptures which do not accord with the whole and which apparently contradict other statements, one should ascertain the source of the discordant note. For instance, the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple after it had been destroyed by the Babylonians has been projected as the express Will and Purpose of the LORD and yet when one considers the events which followed, it becomes patently obvious that the reconstruction of both city and Temple served no purpose at all. Not only was the Lord Jesus Christ not put to death in the Temple, He was taken outside the city of Jerusalem and murdered there — so one asks why would the LORD command the rebuilding of that which had been destroyed because of the transgression of the people? Now, none will doubt that Jerusalem and the Temple were rebuilt — but on whose authority was this done?

In the context of the question, it should be noted that while *the LORD* had decreed that Israel should be removed from the land because of its transgression of the Law (Lev. 26:32-39), it was the Assyrian king who decreed that the cities of Samaria should be repopulated by those listed in 2nd Kings 17:24. In passing to verse 25 in this chapter it reads: "And so it was at the

beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD . . .” and one naturally asks why they should fear Him – after all He was only known to Israel and only Israel was known to Him (Amos 3:2). It is ludicrous to suggest that the LORD would send lions among the people to convert them to Himself – His concern was for Israel in whose continuity the Honour and Integrity of His Holy Name was bound up.

It will be noted that it was the king of Assyria who commanded that a priest be sent to the cities of Samaria – the LORD was nowhere involved in this – and without realising that the LORD and His Way was not negotiable, the *Assyrian king* thought that an Israelite priest could convert the new Samaritans and all would be well.

In summary: It was not the LORD who sent the priest to Samaria, it was the king of Assyria and when this is realised, the problem of trying to equate this with what is stated in the Law will be seen as an unnecessary exercise.

QUESTION: “Is it possible to identify the people addressed in 1st Peter 1:1? Our local . . . preacher has said that this epistle was addressed to the ‘church’ and I was wondering if perhaps it had to do with the ‘mixed multitude’ that was with Israel in the exodus. Stephen, in his address to the Sanhedrin, spoke of the ‘church in the wilderness’ (Acts 7:38) which, says our preacher, could have included other people – please, I’m so confused, will you please explain it for me?”

ANSWER: The best starting point in answering this question is to go back to the time when the so-called “Church in the wilderness” received the “lively oracles” of the LORD. There was of course, no such thing as a “church” – this is a New Testament invention which was the second substitute for the nation Israel – the first being the Jews. When Israel came out of Egypt, there was undoubtedly a “mixed multitude” with them (Ex. 12:28) although they are not heard of again which would seem to suggest that after hearing the various restrictions concerning participation in Israel (Ex. 12:43-49) they decided to leave and go on their own. The “mixt multitude” referred to

in Numbers 11:4 did not exist and according to the Jewish Encyclopaedia, was merely a copyist’s inclusion. Thus, when one comes to the Sinai story, those gathered at the foot of the mount were Israelites and none other. How this *national assembly* comprising the descendants of one man, Jacob, could pre-figure a “church” as this is understood today, can only be explained by persons endowed by over-active imaginations.

Here at Sinai and before the “lively oracles” were given to the nation, the LORD said to Israel: “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Ex. 19:5,6). These words were spoken to the nation Israel and no one else. It is of course common knowledge that Israel violated the Covenant and as a result, the LORD said: “I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away – ye are not my people, and I will not be your God” (Hos. 1:6-9). However, because of His Oath-bound Covenant, the LORD continued to say: “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God” (Hos. 1:10). These people certainly became “not my people” when they went into captivity but the Promise of the LORD was that those same people had a future and it is because the Promises of the LORD are without repentance that any suggestion of substitutes for the nation is pure garbage.

In turning to 1st Peter 1:1 it will be noted that the epistle is addressed to “the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia” and while there may be a degree of ambiguity in this, the second chapter dispels any doubt as to their identity. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (1st Peter 2:9). All that is recorded in the

ninth and tenth verses is precisely what the LORD said Israel the nation would be and yet certain pastors are emphatic that this refers to the Christian church of all believers. On what authority do preachers presume to censor what the LORD has said and on what authority do they presume to teach that the LORD was in error when He committed a nation to His world purposes? Make no mistake here. The Promises which the LORD made to Israel remain the nation's prerogative and are not transferable. Israel is still the Israel nation which the LORD said it would be and nothing that anyone can do can alter that fact.

In summary: When the LORD speaks of the Israel nation, He means the Israel nation and nothing else — not the Jews and certainly not the church. Nowhere did the LORD nor His Son our Lord Jesus Christ ever provide theological teachers with the mandate to spiritualise His Plan and Purpose which was committed to the nation Israel.

QUESTION: "Just recently, we have been treated to an overdose of political propaganda from the pulpit in our church. Of course the preacher would be horrified at my definition of his sermons, but for the life of me I can't see it as anything else but politics in the sheerest of bad taste. I have every intention of bringing this into the open and I'm appealing to you for scriptural information to support my objection. The main theme which to me was the last straw was when it was said that Simon of Cyrene was a Black and his enlistment in carrying the Cross was a Divine sign of Black participation in the Ministry of Christ. Where, in Heaven's name is the authority for this?"

ANSWER: We should of course, remember that we are living at a time when the "social gospel" has superseded the Gospel of Christ and in which socio-political interpretations of His Advent have abolished what He said about the Purpose of His Coming. Because "one-worldism" is the objective of the "social gospel", it is inevitable that "White racism" would be attacked and "Black racism" intruded at every possible level and the contention concerning Simon of Cyrene should be seen in this category.

In providing information concerning

Simon of Cyrene, apart from the fact that he was said to have been "of Cyrene", no further information concerning his racial origin is to be found in the Bible. If he was a Black and if his intrusion in the story carried a Divine truth, surely the Gospels would have enlarged on this and very definitely stated that he was a Black from Africa? However, as this man flashes momentarily on the scene and then disappears again and as people wish to make political propaganda out of it, it would serve to look at the only two clues afforded us in the Gospel accounts.

In the first instance, we look at the name "Simon". This is a *Greek name* and if we consider the Septuagint — the Greek version of the Old Testament Hebrew scriptures — we see that it is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "Simeon". There are 10 "Simons" recorded in the New Testament and only one is described as being of "Cyrene" which was in Libya in north Africa. Does this fact make him Black? Cyrene or *Kurene* as it was originally written in Greek, was a Greek colony founded in Libya by Battus in 630 B.C. and was the home of Callimachus the poet, Carneacles the founder of the New Academy at Athens and Eratosthenes the mathematician. Does the fact that they were born and lived in Cyrene make them Black?

So important did this Greek colony become that according to Herodotus, Amasis the 2nd of Egypt married a Grecian noble lady from Cyrene while Ptolemy 3rd felt it necessary to incorporate Cyrene with Egypt in 231 B.C. According to Josephus, Ptolemy 1st had become perturbed at the number of refugees from Palestine who flocked into Egypt and large numbers of these refugees were re-located in Cyrene and other cities in Libya — did they suddenly become Black because they resided in Libya? Archaeological discoveries have shown the types of people living in Cyrene and none of these show any affinity with the Black or Negro type.

In summary: Simon of Cyrene who happened to be in Jerusalem at the time of Passover, was possibly a Greek, by race, a Jew by religion and a Cyrenian by domicile — none of which can contribute to the parsonical claim that a Black was enlisted to carry the Cross of Christ.
