

# Triennial Torah Study – 3<sup>rd</sup> Year 17/11/2012



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Num 28	Jonah 1-4	Eccl 5-7	1 Corin 8-9
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## Daily, Sabbath, Monthly and Festival Offerings (Numbers 28; Numbers 29)

Chapters 28 and 29 provide a review of laws regarding offerings to be made each day, on the Sabbath, on the new moon (the first day of the month), and during God's Feasts. Frequent repetition is a tool God uses often to emphasize important features of His laws.

In reading about the various offerings mentioned here, consider that we must demonstrate to God our devotion to Him every single day of our lives. But there are special occasions He has appointed for us to go beyond our normal devotion in spending more time reflecting on His will and more time honoring and serving Him.

## Jonah

### Introduction to Jonah (Jonah 1)

As we saw in our previous reading, 2 Kings 14:25 shows that Jonah preached during the reign of Jeroboam II (ca. 792-753 B.C.). He "was from Gath Hopher, a town in the territory of Zebulun (see Josh. 19:10, 13; 2 Kin. 14:25), several miles northeast of Nazareth. Nothing is known of his father Amittai. The name Jonah means 'Dove.' We associate the dove with peace and purity; however, this positive meaning is not the only possible association. A 'dove' could also be a symbol of silliness (see Hos. 7:11), a description that sadly applies to this tragi-comical prophet" (Nelson Study Bible, introduction to Jonah).

The story of Jonah and the big fish (or whale) is one of the best known from the Old Testament. Many skeptics have regarded the story's miracles as folklore or allegory. Yet the validity and importance of the story are made plain by Jesus' own reference to it and the use of it as proof that He was the Messiah (Matthew 12:38-41; Luke 11:29-32).

The book is unusual in that it only contains one prophecy (Jonah 3:4) and is actually a story about the prophet rather than details of his messages.

The book of Jonah reveals a great deal about God's mercy. With regard to Nineveh, the Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible makes this comment: "Is God's salvation available even to such people? For God to be so concerned about the positive future of nations such as Assyria was intolerable to some: How could God think of saving a nation that had so devastated God's own people? Jonah himself is a type representing certain pious Israelites who posed such a question regarding the extension of God's mercy to the wicked.... God's way with the world, not simply with Israel, is the way of mercy in the face of deserved judgment" ("Jonah," 2000, emphasis added). As God states through the apostle James, "Mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13).

### You Can't Run From God (Jonah 1)

The story begins with Jonah's call by God to go to Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, founded by Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah (Genesis 10:8-12). Like so many others, Jonah didn't want to go—but unlike any other recorded scriptural examples of God's true servants, Jonah not only refused to go, but he actually tried to run from God. Jonah later gives his reason as objection to God's inclination to show mercy (Jonah 4:2)—as this could result in Nineveh, Israel's enemy, being shown mercy if they repented at his preaching. But Jonah was to learn that when God gives His servants a job to do, He expects them to carry it out.

And, of course, you can't run from God. As King David wrote, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell [i.e., sheol, 'the grave'], You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me" (Psalm 139:7-10). Jonah surely knew these verses, as he was familiar with the Psalms (demonstrated in the next reading). And yet he tried to defy them by fleeing across the sea to Tarshish: "The name means 'to smelt,' and thus the city was associated with the metal trade. The furthest known metal producing port in the 8th century b.c. was Tartessus, in Spain. Most believe this port was Jonah's destination. The identification is not vital, however. What is key is that metal producing areas along the Mediterranean were in the opposite direction from Nineveh" (Bible Reader's Companion, note on 1:3). "In any case, it represents the farthest place known to the people of ancient Israel. It is similar to going 'to the ends of the earth'" ("INDepth: Jonah: A Reluctant Missionary," Nelson Study Bible, sidebar on Jonah 1). Obviously, it was not far enough—indeed, there's no place so far as to place us out of the reach of God. Ironically, it is this fact that will also save Jonah from death in the sea.

God can use all sorts of means to get His servants to do His will. In this case, He brought the real problem of Jonah's attitude and disobedience into the open. Not only did it force Jonah to carry out his task, but it had a profound impact on the sailors he sailed with (Jonah 1:16). The Bible Reader's Companion notes: "Even out of fellowship with God, Jonah had an evangelistic impact on the sailors. His admission that he was the reason why God brought the great storm; his demand the sailors throw him overboard; the sudden stilling of the storm as soon as Jonah left the ship; all these witnessed to God's greatness and led the crew to greatly fear 'the Lord' and to make 'vows' to Him." It's a mistake to assume just because God is using someone in

others' lives that that person must be godly. The Lord uses imperfect agents and even some who are actively disobeying Him at the very time they serve as channels of grace! So give God the glory. And do not hold His servants in awe, as though what God does is a testimony to some human being's holiness" (note on 1:6-16). Of course, recognizing a pattern of unrighteous conduct would be a reason to question or even reject someone as a spiritual leader. The point is that God can use anyone—righteous or not—to direct others to His truth. (This in no way removes the responsibility all of us have to make sure that the spiritual leaders we follow are godly and doctrinally on track.)

Returning to the account, we next come to the saga of the "great fish," as translated from the Hebrew. When Christ refers to this incident in the New Testament, it is interesting to note the Greek translation of what He said. Rather than the common Greek word for "fish," ichthus, another word, ketos, is used. This is the same word the Greek Septuagint uses in its translation of Jonah. The King James Version renders this word in the New Testament as "whale," but it literally denotes "a huge fish, a sea monster" (Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, 1985, New Testament Section, "Whale").

This does not necessarily rule out a whale, as the word may allow for that. Many people have said that a whale could not have swallowed a man and, even if it had, he wouldn't have survived. Yet the evidence against the whale story is far from conclusive. Note this section from The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: "While the throats of most whales are too narrow to swallow a man, the cachalot or sperm whale can.... Even other species of whales could preserve a man alive, were the man able to reach the great laryngeal pouch. This structure, with its thick, elastic walls, is large enough to contain a man and to supply him with air for breathing. A.J. Wilson (Princeton Theological Review, 25 {1941}, 636) records the case of a man swept overboard by a harpooned sperm whale in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands. The whale was eventually killed and cut apart. After three days, the missing sailor was found in the animal's stomach, unconscious. He was successfully revived, although the skin of his face, neck, and hands was bleached by the whale's gastric juices" ("Jonah, Book of," 1982).

Still, another source argues: "Until the Bible was translated into English, no one had ever heard the story of Jonah and the whale. For the great fish that's mentioned in Jonah 1:17 was considered by ancient and medieval scholars to be a sea monster and was designated accordingly in Greek and Latin Bibles.... [This] interpretation is faithful to Greek ketos, which designates a sea dragon or monster. Just what creature was in the mind of the original writer of Jonah's saga remains a matter of conjecture. Probability points to some semi-mythical sea serpent rather than to the shark or humpback whale.... Many twentieth-century versions and translations reject 'whale' and use 'sea monster' or 'dragon' in rendering the ancient account" (Webb Garrison, Strange Facts About the Bible, 1968, 2000, pp. 103-104). This is not out of the question. It may even be that God specially created this creature, as we are explicitly told that He "had prepared a great fish" (verse 17). Indeed, with other biblical references to Leviathan, a sea serpent and clear type of Satan, the great dragon (Revelation 12:9)—and considering the

idea of being in his clutches as a type of death for sin—this seems a very strong parallel with Christ's death.

In any event, The Expositor's Bible Commentary adds this important comment: "As the type of fish is not identified and the story is told in the most general terms, we should avoid making the incident, which in itself is physically possible, more difficult by our interpretations. Jesus placed it alongside the even greater miracle of his own resurrection. What we must do, however, is find an adequate spiritual reason for so great a miracle" (introductory notes on Jonah).

This is a reference to Matthew 12:39-40. The scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign to verify His claims. He responded: "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Many theologians, believing that Christ died Friday afternoon and rose Sunday morning, interpret the period to mean parts of three days and just two nights—a little bit of Friday afternoon, Friday night, all day Saturday, Saturday night and a little bit of Sunday morning. However, it is illogical to interpret the Hebrew of Jonah in the light of an unproven theory from New Testament times. Typical of mainstream Christian thinking is this statement from Adam Clarke's Commentary: "That days and nights do not, among the Hebrews, signify complete days and nights of twenty-four hours, see Esth. iv.16, compared with chap. v.1; Judg. xiv.17, 18. Our Lord lay in the grave one natural day, and part of two others; and it is most likely that this was the precise time that Jonah was in the fish's belly" (1967, note on Jonah 1:17).

Actually, the references he quotes do not prove his point.

Note this accurate explanation from The Companion Bible: "The fact that 'three days' is used by Hebrew idiom for any part of three days and three nights is not disputed; because that was the common way of reckoning, just as it was when used of years. Three or any number of years was used inclusively of any part of those years, as may be seen in the reckoning of the reigns of any of the kings of Israel and Judah. But when the number of 'nights' is stated as well as the number of 'days,' then the expression ceases to be an idiom, and becomes a literal statement of fact.

"Moreover, as the Hebrew day began at sunset the day was reckoned from one sunset to another, the 'twelve hours in the day' (John 11.9) being reckoned from sunrise, and the twelve hours of the night from sunset. An evening-morning was thus used for a whole day of twenty-four hours, as in the first chapter of Genesis. Hence the expression 'a night and a day' in 2 Cor[inthians] 11.25 denotes a complete day (Gr. nuchthemeron). When Esther says (Est. 4.16) 'fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days,' she defines her meaning as being three complete days, because she adds (being a Jewess) 'night or day.' And when it is written that the fast ended on 'the third day' (5.1), 'the third day' must have succeeded and included the third night.... Hence, when it says that 'Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights'

(Jonah 1.17) it means exactly what it says, and that this can be the only meaning of the expression in Matt[hew] 12.40; 16.4” (App. 144).

### **Jonah Saved (Jonah 2-4)**

As chapter 2 begins, we read of Jonah’s prayer from the belly of the sea creature. The prayer of chapter 2 tells us a great deal about Jonah—about his attitude toward God and especially his knowledge of God’s Word. The prayer is reminiscent of many passages from the Psalms.

It appears that Jonah was able to recall much Scripture and use it as the basis for his prayer and thanksgiving to God. This should be an example for all of God’s people today. We can never tell when we may find ourselves alone, with no Bible, and only our remembered knowledge of God’s Word to encourage us. Even though Jonah was still in the belly of this creature from the deep, he was thankful that he was still alive. The apostle Paul had a similar approach to life (Philippians 4:11).

In verse 2, Jonah prays, “Out of the belly of Sheol I cried for help.” The King James Version translates Sheol as “hell.” This is a confusing verse for many given the common misconception that Sheol is a place of the dead in the spirit realm. However, the Hebrew word literally means “grave” or “pit.” People become confused because they attach to death the pagan concept of going to heaven or hell, a teaching that the Bible never supports. Hence, the idea that Sheol can mean the netherworld. It must be noted that “nowhere in the O[ld] T[estament] is Sheol described as a place of torment or punishment for the wicked. At most it is a place of confinement away from the land of the living.... Not until the Hellenistic era (after 333 B.C.) was Sheol (Hades) conceived of as compartmentalized, with places of torment and comfort” (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, “Sheol”). Thus, the creature in which Jonah lay was, in essence, a tomb—a watery grave. Yet even though he was “as good as dead,” Jonah understood the power of God. Notice his reference to the “belly” of Sheol. Here “Jonah uses the Hebrews beten (=womb)... (2.2)” (Companion Bible, App. 144)—that is, something to be “born” from. Finally, then, God intervened. He spoke to the fish and it immediately responded, demonstrating His sovereign power over His creation. Recall that the entire universe came into being when God spoke (Psalm 33:6-9).

There are some important points to consider here. The disobedient Jonah being as good as dead in a watery grave was a type of Christ, bearing our sins (though without sin Himself), being put to death and buried in the earth. The miraculous vomiting up of Jonah to new life was a type of Jesus’ resurrection from the grave, having paid our sins. Moreover, Christ was “born” from the “womb” of the grave, being described as the “firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5). And this was accomplished by the same power that created the universe and preserved Jonah.

Consider further: Christian baptism in a “watery grave” is a figurative burial of the old, sinful self with Christ (Romans 6:4, 6). And our emergence from the waters of baptism represents

resurrection with Christ into newness of life—looking forward to our actual future resurrection (verses 4-5). In this way, our very own baptism is in a sense tied to what Jonah experienced!

God spoke to Jonah again and this time he obeyed, now walking in “newness of life.” In Jonah’s case it meant a full realization that he had to serve God just as all creation ultimately serves God. As forces of the natural world that brought him to this point had operated at the command of God, so he had to obey. Of course, God could have used someone else to go to Nineveh, but He was showing Jonah that he couldn’t shirk his responsibilities. No doubt, Jonah was also grateful for his miraculous deliverance—motivating him to be more devoted in his service to God. However, as we later see, he does not maintain a right attitude. It is the same with all Christians. God often humbles us and brings us to repentance—but we do not continue in that frame of mind indefinitely as we should (1 John 1:8). Still, God is patient with us—as He was with Jonah—as long as we continue to repent and overcome.

### **Nineveh Repents (Jonah 2-4)**

Arisen from the depths, Jonah takes God’s message to Nineveh. The reference to “a three-day journey in extent” is probably not the distance Jonah had to travel to get there, but rather the time it took to walk around Nineveh, demonstrating its vastness: “The city wall of Nineveh had a circumference of about eight miles, indicating that Nineveh was an exceedingly large city for the times. But the reference to ‘three days’ likely refers to the larger administrative district of Nineveh [i.e., the suburbs], made up of several cities, with a circumference of about 55 miles” (Nelson Study Bible, note on 3:3). The Expositor’s Bible Commentary expresses a similar view, stating that “Diodorus Siculus (first century B.C.) gave the circumference of the city as approximately sixty miles” (note on verse 3).

There is an important change in the name of God at this point. When the story talks about Jonah and his relationship with God, the writer uses the Hebrew name YHWH (Yahweh, “the Eternal”, usually substituted with “the LORD” in English Bible translations). In fact, it was distinctly Yahweh whom the sailors had come to fear (Jonah 1:16). But to the people of Nineveh, Jonah uses the name Elohim (“God,” the All-Powerful, i.e., the Creator). “The obvious purpose is to bring home that Jonah had not been proclaiming Yahweh to those that did not know him but that the supreme God, whatever his name, was about to show his power in judgment. Behind all polytheism with its many gods and many lords, there was always the concept of one god who could enforce his will on the others, if he chose. There is not the slightest indication that Jonah had mentioned the God of Israel or had said that he came in his name. The Ninevites, however, recognized the voice of the supreme God, whatever name they may have given him, and repented” (Expositor’s Bible Commentary, note on Jonah 3:5-10).

And God did not bring upon them the announced destruction.

Was Jonah, then, a false prophet? “If the test of a true prophet is that his words come true (Deut. 18:22), how do we explain the failure of Jonah’s message of judgment? The answer is that nearly every message of judgment is conditional, a truth that Jonah clearly understood (Jonah 4:2). The principle is illustrated in 2 Sam[uel] 12:14-23; 1 Kings 21:27-29; and 2 Kings

20:1-6” (Bible Reader’s Companion, note on Jonah 3:1). Indeed, God says in Jeremiah 18:7-8, “The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.” We see in the example of the Assyrians a primary reason why God reveals the future through His prophets—that human beings may see what is coming and repent. Prophecy isn’t simply a futile exercise, revealing the future as an end in itself. God reveals what is coming so we can understand and be motivated to change—to repent—so as to avoid His pronounced punishment! The example of the Assyrians should be an example for all humankind.

We might wonder why the inhabitants of the capital of the powerful Assyrian Empire, of all people, would respond to God’s call to repentance at this time. “Events had prepared the people of Nineveh for the prophet’s message. Assyria was led by weak rulers between 782 b.c. and 745 b.c., and was threatened by mountain tribes from the north who had driven their frontiers within a hundred miles of the capital. The danger of destruction was very real in Nineveh in this period” (note on 3:3).

Indeed, “Assyria, following the reign of Adad-nirari III (810-873), was in a dismal state of affairs. Internal upheavals and pressure from powerful enemies such as Urartu [Armenia] and the Aramaean states kept her in a defensive holding position until mighty Tiglath-pileser III came to power in 745. This is precisely the period in which Israel under Jeroboam II and Judah under Uzziah regained territories which had been forfeited earlier and a great measure of their international prestige. It is also the period in which Jonah was occupied in his prophetic ministry. Given these chronological limits, the most likely time for the mission of Jonah to Nineveh was in the reign of Assur-dan III (772-755). Though no royal inscriptions whatsoever have survived from his years in power, the Assyrian eponym list and other indirect witnesses attest to his tenure as a period of unparalleled turmoil. Assur, Arrapha, Gozan, and many other rival states and dependencies revolted. In addition, plague and famine struck repeatedly until the empire was left impoverished and in total disorder. This would have been an ideal time for Jonah to deliver his message of judgment and of the universal redemptive program of the God of Israel. Assyria’s own pantheon and cult had failed miserably. Surely now, if ever, the king and people were prepared to hear a word from the only living God” (Merrill, Kingdom of Priests, p. 388).

Jesus attested to the amazing repentance of the Ninevites—and sadly, to the fact that they set a better example than did the religious leaders of His day (Luke 11:32).

### **Jonah’s Reaction—and God’s Compassion (Jonah 2-4)**

Chapter 4 tells us that Jonah did not want the Ninevites to repent. Assyria had dominated the Israelites not long before in the days of Jehu, even collecting tribute from them. He wanted Assyria to be punished, not sustained and given further chance of destroying Israel. Incredibly, Jonah stated that he wanted to die rather than see God’s mercy on Nineveh! And yet, only a few days before, he had pleaded with God to keep him alive. Such thinking is clearly irrational. Sadly, though, the desire for retribution and revenge is commonplace. Even Christians are not

immune. Yet all of us need to learn to be as gracious and compassionate as God is. Our desire should be for those who have done wrong to change, not for them to be punished. Again, we must remember that “mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13).

Ironically, Jonah’s message would postpone the fall of Israel. Yet Jonah’s mission wasn’t obvious even to the prophet himself. As Halley’s Bible Handbook states in its introduction to the book, Jonah’s message “would prolong the life of the enemy nation that was already in the process of exterminating...his own nation. No wonder he fled in the opposite direction—he was in patriotic dread of the brutal and relentless military machine that was closing in on God’s people” (2000, p. 459). Possibly Jonah thought that if he didn’t go to Nineveh, God would simply destroy Assyria, thus freeing Israel of her enemy. Of course, this was faulty reasoning. Obviously God could still have used Assyria as a means of punishment for Israel anyway. And in actuality, rather than further threatening Israel, Assyria’s repentance spared Israel from conquest for a time, as the lust for violence and conquest was one thing of which Assyria repented (Jonah 3:8). So while God strengthened Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:26-27), He also prevented Assyria from conquering Israel until a later time—and this He accomplished through Jonah’s preaching.

After finally delivering his message, Jonah went away and waited for God to do something. It’s obvious from the context that this was the hot season and the temperature may well have been as high as 110 degrees Fahrenheit in the middle of the day. But God was to teach Jonah (and us) a further lesson about priorities. Jonah was concerned about the plant dying. God showed him that if the plant was important, how much more the people of Nineveh? The reference to 120,000 people “who cannot discern between their right hand and their left” has been the subject of debate. The Bible Reader’s Companion states: “The number either refers to the entire population, or to young children. Since the maximum estimated population at that era was about 175,000, the former is the better interpretation. The saying ‘not tell their right hand from their left’ refers to a lack of moral knowledge, stemming from the fact that Assyria had not been granted special revelation from God” (note on 4:11). In that sense, it would also seem that God here views all such human beings as little children in need of being taught.

Expositor’s makes a fitting concluding statement: “The declaration of God’s loving care was made, not to Nineveh, but to Jonah (4:11), and so to Israel. Taking the book as a whole, it is a revelation to God’s people of God’s all-sovereign power and care. It had a special relevance to Israel over which the shadow of Assyria was falling, and later to Judah, as it faced destruction at the hands of Babylon” (introductory notes on Jonah).

## **Ecclesiastes 5**

Solomon, in this chapter, discourses, I. Concerning the worship of God, prescribing that as a remedy against all those vanities which he had already observed to be in wisdom, learning, pleasure, honour, power, and business. That we may not be deceived by those things, nor have our spirits vexed with the disappointments we meet with in them, let us make conscience of our



duty to God and keep up our communion with him; but, withal, he gives a necessary caution against the vanities which are too often found in religious exercises, which deprive them of their excellency and render them unable to help against other vanities.

If our religion be a vain religion, how great is that vanity! Let us therefore take heed of vanity, 1. In hearing the word, and offering sacrifice, Ecclesiastes 5:1. 2. In prayer, Ecclesiastes 5:2,3. 3. In making vows, Ecclesiastes 5:4-6. 4. In pretending to divine dreams, Ecclesiastes 5:7. Now, (1.) For a remedy against those vanities, he prescribes the fear of God, Ecclesiastes 5:7. (2.) To prevent the offence that might arise from the present sufferings of good people, he directs us to look up to God, Ecclesiastes 5:8. II. Concerning the wealth of this world and the vanity and vexation that attend it. The fruits of the earth indeed are necessary to the support of life (Ecclesiastes 5:9), but as for silver, and gold, and riches, 1. They are unsatisfying, Ecclesiastes 5:10. 2. They are unprofitable, Ecclesiastes 5:11. 3. They are disquieting, Ecclesiastes 5:12. 4. They often prove hurtful and destroying, Ecclesiastes 5:13. 5. They are perishing, Ecclesiastes 5:14. 6. They must be left behind when we die, Ecclesiastes 5:15,16. 7.

If we have not a heart to make use of them, they occasion a great deal of uneasiness, Ecclesiastes 5:17. And therefore he recommends to us the comfortable use of that which God has given us, with an eye to him that is the giver, as the best way both to answer the end of our having it and to obviate the mischiefs that commonly attend great estates, Ecclesiastes 5:18-20. So that if we can but learn out of this chapter how to manage the business of religion, and the business of this world (which two take up most of our time), so that both may turn to a good account, and neither our sabbath days nor our week-days may be lost, we shall have reason to say, We have learned two good lessons.

## **Ecclesiastes 6**

In this chapter, I. The royal preacher goes on further to show the vanity of worldly wealth, when men place their happiness in it and are eager and inordinate in laying it up. Riches, in the hands of a man that is wise and generous, and good for something, but in the hands of a sordid, sneaking, covetous miser, they are good for nothing. 1. He takes an account of the possessions and enjoyments which such a man may have. He has wealth (Ecclesiastes 6:2), he has children to inherit it (Ecclesiastes 6:3), and lives long, Ecclesiastes 6:3,6. 2. He describes his folly in not taking the comfort of it; he has no power to eat of it, let's strangers devour it, is never filled with good, and at last has no burial, Ecclesiastes 6:2,3. 3. He condemns it as an evil, a common evil, vanity, and a disease, Ecclesiastes 6:1,2. 4.

He prefers the condition of a still-born child before the condition of such a one, Ecclesiastes 6:3. The still-born child's infelicity is only negative (Ecclesiastes 6:4,5), but that of the covetous worldling is positive; he lives a great while to see himself miserable, Ecclesiastes 6:6. 5. He shows the vanity of riches as pertaining only to the body, and giving no satisfaction to the mind (Ecclesiastes 6:7,8), and of those boundless desires with which covetous people vex themselves (Ecclesiastes 6:9), which, if they be gratified ever so fully, leave a man but a man still,

Ecclesiastes 6:10. II. He concludes this discourse of the vanity of the creature with this plain inference from the whole, That it is folly to think of making up a happiness for ourselves in the things of this world, Ecclesiastes 6:11,12. Our satisfaction must be in another life, not in this.

## **Ecclesiastes 7**

Solomon had given many proofs and instances of the vanity of this world and the things of it; now, in this chapter, I. He recommends to us some good means proper to be used for the redress of these grievances and the arming of ourselves against the mischief we are in danger of from them, that we may make the best of the bad, as 1. Care of our reputation, Ecclesiastes 7:1. 2. Seriousness, Ecclesiastes 7:2-6. 3. Calmness of spirit, Ecclesiastes 7:7-10. 4. Prudence in the management of all our affairs, Ecclesiastes 7:11,12. 5. Submission to the will of God in all events, accommodating ourselves to every condition, Ecclesiastes 7:13-15. 6. A conscientious avoiding of all dangerous extremes, Ecclesiastes 7:16-18. 7. Mildness and tenderness towards those that have been injurious to us, Ecclesiastes 7:19-22. In short, the best way to save ourselves from the vexation which the vanity of the world creates us is to keep our temper and to maintain a strict government of our passions. II. He laments his own iniquity, as that which was more vexatious than any of these vanities, that mystery of iniquity, the having of many wives, by which he was drawn away from God and his duty, Ecclesiastes 7:23-29.

## **1 Corinthians 8**

In Chapter 8, Paul is going to address an issue in the assembly concerning food that is offered to idols. Specifically it seems to be meat of course, because of the many of killing the animal for its meat. Is it proper to eat food offered to idols or is in a sin and wrong? This issue is one that is twisted a great deal in many teachings and is at the forefront of many discussions today because of Hallel meats and the expansion of Islam around the world and indeed into the western world. Believers everywhere are greatly stress about accidentally eating these Hallel foods.

Here are the facts (says Paul); There is one God/Elohim/Mighty One – the Father. There are idols all over the place in every culture and religion – other mighty ones. Mighty ones who are so called by people. But just because people call a statue or a man a mighty one does not make it so. All things, to include food and idols, came from Elohim and in Elohim only do we live and breathe and have our being. There is no rock, man, wood, statue, Budha, whatever that can make that truth... untrue.

So none of these idols have any power whatsoever. They are man-made and powerless. However, because mankind appropriates power to them, through ignorance, lies, and deception – to other ignorant people, they are “seen” to have power – although false power.

If a believer was to eat meat sacrificed to an idol, whether they knew it or not, would make no difference whatsoever as long as that meat was from a clean animal. Knowledgeable and mature believers already know that idols are man-made and have no power. It is the conscience of the person that makes it a sin or not a sin.

It is like the evangelist who goes into bars or bordellos to preach the Gospel. He enters to spread the message of salvation to the sinners and the alcohol or prostitutes have no power over him. Then, another person sees him go in and believe this evangelist to be courting a sinful life. Now, this person's faith is shaken or perhaps even begins to entertain the idea that it may be all right to engage in these activities as a believer. Thus a stumbling block has been set up for the believer who is looking on, but does not have the knowledge of the evangelist.

In summary, If eating meat sacrificed to idols is something that bothers your brother or sister in Faith, don't do it. Refrain from eating that meat all together – For their sake!!

## **1 Corinthians 9**

What a wonderful chapter this is. Topics Paul discusses here: His position and authority, defending his actions, re-imburement for his labors for the Good News, being capable of bringing the Gospel to ALL groups (this is love), and discipline and self-control to win the race and obtain the incorruptible crown.

He expresses the fact that the very realization that he has assemblies of believers he speaks in and to is the proof he is an emissary. Taking family and friends along on travels is appropriate for also the other emissaries did, Jacob and other did, and Peter also did. Having women along as helpers is good so that the teacher and preacher may focus on the preaching and teaching and not have all the time and energy taken up with obtaining sustenance to continue doing the good work.

We have to be able to eat and drink to continue on in work. He expresses that the Torah states this, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." If a man or woman is working for Messiah and you, allow him or her to be fed and restored for their work. This is right and appropriate. If we are receiving spiritual food from our brother or sister, we ought to help them with their basic necessities of material and physical nature.

Then, Paul expresses how although re-imburement is right and proper, he personally does not take any. He is a volunteer and receives his re-imburement from above. Whether or not he is being paid for his labors he has to do the work because of compulsion of conscience and not greed or gain for himself personally. We ought to be completely free to serve and always take care so as to be above reproach or condemnation.

Let us make ourselves as though to whom we are witnessing. If our brother is poor, let us be as poor. If our brother is weak, let us also be weak. If we are witnessing to a Jewish person, let us become as a Jew or to a Christian, let us become as a Christian. We do this for the Good News and for the sake of it. What good does it do to act haughty and different? The Good News is not about ourselves, but about life and Messiah.

Paul advises to get ourselves out of the way. We are running a race just as athletes do and they prepare their bodies for the competition, to run, and to win. We are also running a race and need

to prepare our bodies, our flesh, to get out of the way of the message. The crown and prize we reach for is so much better than the earthly temporary crown that is reached for by the athletes. Therefore we ought to be practicing all the MORE control of self and self-discipline than even the Olympic Athletes!