

Chapter 66: The Prophet Jonas

Commentary for Chapter 66

Jonas, the Fifteenth Figure of Jesus Christ. Jonas was a figure of the Divine Redeemer. Our Lord Himself teaches us this when He says: “An adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and a sign shall not be given it but the sign of Jonas the prophet, for as Jonas was in the whale’s belly three days and three nights, so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.” Jonas is also a figure of our Lord in other ways. He was sent not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles: our Lord came and died for both Jews and Gentiles. Jonas offered himself up to die of his own free-will, to appease God's anger, and save his fellow-passengers. Our Lord went willingly to death in order to satisfy the divine justice and save us, His brethren, from eternal death.

The Faith and Repentance of the Ninivites. In spite of the wonderful words and deeds of Elias, most of the Israelites had remained impenitent. Then God turned to the Gentiles, who showed more good-will and faith than the chosen people. The Ninivites believed the word of the Lord as soon as the prophet announced it to them; and they practiced penance with prayer and fasting when he quoted his own miraculous deliverance as a sign that God had sent him (Luke 11:30). Our Lord Himself held up the Ninivites as an example to the hard-hearted Israelites, when He said: “The men of Ninive shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it, because they did penance at the preaching of Jonas ; and behold a greater than Jonas is here.” How disgraceful would it be for Christians if they allowed themselves to be outdone in faith and penance by the Ninivites!

Fasting. As we can see by this story, fasting is a work of penance well pleasing to God. Therefore the Church, in order to kindle and increase our ardor for penance, has prescribed certain days of fast.

Falling Back into Sin. Two hundred years after the preaching of Jonas, the Ninivites turned to their former state of wickedness and, this time, remained impenitent. The punishment that God had threatened now fell on them. The abominable city was entirely destroyed and levelled to the ground in 606 B. C. This shows us how dangerous it is to fall back into sin.

Questions to be Answered Using the Bible History Book:

1. What mission did God give to the prophet Jonas?

2. Jonas embarked on board a ship to escape from God’s commandment to him. What was Jonas afraid of?

3. What did the sailors do to calm the storm?

4. (a) What swallowed Jonas after he was cast into the sea? (b) How long was Jonas in its belly?
- (a) _____
- (b) _____
5. Jonas became angry when he saw God pardoned the Ninivites. How did God show him how unreasonable his anger was?
- _____
- _____
- _____

Questions to be Answered Using the Commentary:

6. Give two ways in which Jonas is a figure of Our Lord.
- (1) _____
- (2) _____
7. How did the Ninevites show more good-will and faith than the Israelites?
- _____
- _____
8. Why did Our Lord say that the men of Ninive would “rise in judgment” with the Israelites and condemn them?
- _____
- _____
9. How does this story show us that fasting is pleasing to God?
- _____
- _____
10. (a) Why was the city of Ninive destroyed in 606 B.C.? (b) What lesson can we learn from this?
- (a) _____
- (b) _____
- _____