

Elder Vernon Johson

Numbers

The trial and judgment of Nineveh

In 2 Chronicles 7:14 we read of a remedy for God's people who are under the sentence of impending judgment because of their sins: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." Some have suggested that this only applies to the nation of Israel and under the Old Testament law economy. However, the example that is given to us in the scriptures was with a city of people other than Israel who were not under the Old Testament economy of worship. This city was Nineveh. Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria and was an enemy of Israel and Judah. Yet we see God's mercy manifest to the city of Nineveh.

In 2 Chr. 7:14 we notice that the remedy is only given to God's people. Since the remedy was manifest by the city of Nineveh, we must conclude that God had a people in the city of Nineveh who were not of the nation of Israel. The city, however, was under the impending judgment of God because of gross sins. This raises the question, "Do God's people commit sins?" The answer is a resounding yes. However, God also is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

God sent Jonah to Nineveh to deliver the following message: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The first thing that is necessary to bring about the remedy in 2 Chr. 7:14 is to believe God: Jonah 3:5 "So the people of Nineveh believed God." Had they not believed God, then they would have been destroyed without question in forty days.

Next, we see the inhabitants of Nineveh doing what is set forth in 2 Chr. 7:14. The first thing is that God's people must humble themselves: Jonah 3:5 "and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. 6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: 8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth."

The second thing that God's people must do is pray. We see the inhabitants of Nineveh praying: Jonah 3:8 "and cry mightily unto God." Through the King's commandment, the inhabitants of Nineveh cried mightily unto God.

The third thing is that God's people must turn from their wicked way. Again, the King of Nineveh commanded and the people complied: Jonah 3:8 "yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands."

The fourth thing is that God's people must seek God's face: Jonah 3:9 "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?"

When the inhabitants of Nineveh had done the four things set forth in 2 Chr. 7:14 we read of the conclusion: Jonah 3:10 "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."

The application is for us today. Whether it be for a whole nation, or for a city, or for a church, or for a group of churches, the remedy is there for us.

It is not difficult to see the wickedness that is becoming so prevalent in the United States and in especially certain cities of the United States. Also, it is easy to see the laxness of discipline in many of the churches and the lack of true discipleship in the lives of many members of the church. God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. How shall we escape the timely judgment of God because of these things? The answer is found in 2 Chr. 7:14. Do we believe it? Are we willing to do those things?