

Hebron Messenger

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REPENT AND TURN TO GOD

Do you know that the goodness of God is urging you to repentance? God wants you to be saved. He is not willing that you should perish. So He is leading, pleading and urging you to repent of your sins. You should not treat this matter lightly.

Firstly, God shows goodness to you in many ways, and through these dealings of goodness He leads you to repentance. Perhaps God has prospered you in your life. Perhaps He has saved you from certain dangers, like drowning or traffic accidents. Perhaps you were very sick and God has healed you wonderfully. Perhaps you were being tempted to neglect the way to God, so He sent His messengers to tell you how greatly you were in need of salvation. They told you of God's wonderful love by which He sent His only begotten Son the Lord Jesus Christ to die upon the cross, and shed His precious blood to atone for your sins. They told you how the Lord Jesus suffered and bore the punishment, which should have fallen upon you. Now if you repent of your sins and accept Christ Jesus as your own personal Saviour you will be forgiven and accepted by God at once. Your name will be written in the Book of life and your place will be reserved in the Kingdom of God. Through these loving messages and in these loving ways God has been calling you and urging you to repentance.

Some people refuse to see God's goodness and kindness towards them. They say it is all their good luck and good fortune. They assign everything to chance, or to natural causes, or to natural evolution. They harden their hearts and refuse to acknowledge the goodness of God towards them.

Some people raise a great hue and cry against corruption in others, and try to hide the fact that they are corrupt themselves. Dear friend, have you repented or are you finding fault with others without repenting yourself? Are you ignoring the goodness, which God is showing towards you without realising that God is using these loving ways to lead you to

repentance? "Therefore thou art inexcusable. O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things, But we are sure that the judgement of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgement of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:1-4).

It is reported that once a man tried to assassinate Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, out of personal hatred for him, His attempt was a failure, and he found himself in prison under sentence of death. The date for his execution was fixed, and was drawing near. In the meantime President Abraham Lincoln decided to show him mercy, and signed his pardon, the prison officers took the news to the prisoner. To their great surprise the man replied, "I don't believe it". Then higher officers came and explained to him that the pardon was genuine. He still replied with the same words. Finally the Governor of the prison, the highest officer, went to him personally, and yet the man stubbornly replied, "I don't believe it, I don't believe it", the news was conveyed to the President, and the reply came, "The pardon is cancelled". On the appointed day the man was executed. He had despised the goodness of the President. Will you despise the goodness of God Who is willing to pardon you if you only repent and ask His forgiveness?

Sometimes God sends us bitter experiences to urge us to repent. Yet He would rather have us to repent without them. "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee" (Psalm 32:9). When we neglect to turn

to God, bitter experiences like "the bit and the bridle" become necessary.

The children of Israel were so wayward that God had to bring many afflictions upon them to make them to repent. Then God sent the following message to them through the prophet Amos. "And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. And also I have withholden the rain from you,...yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have sent among you the pestilence...your young men have I slain with the sword...yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah...yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord" (Amos 4:6-11).

Perhaps you can remember how often God has sent trials upon you in order to urge you to repent. I have heard many giving testimony how they repented in a time of sorrow or sickness or their affliction. But as for you, your own conscience perhaps tells you that inspite of all these afflictions still you have not humbled yourself and still you have not turned to the Lord in true repentance.

Thirdly, God weeps over you if you still refuse to repent. I know many mothers have wept because of an ungrateful and wayward son or daughter.

The prophet Jeremiah tells us of God's sorrow over His unrepentant people. He describes it in a way that we can understand. "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" (Jer.9: 1). "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow" (Lam.1: 12).

God's sorrow becomes very real to us in the New Testament when we see the Lord Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luke 19:41). Your heart should melt when you hear His lamentation over Jerusalem, because it shows how the Lord Jesus laments over you also. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her

chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt.23: 37).

The curtain has been lifted, and God allows you to see things that others have never seen, that the loving God, your Creator and your Saviour, is weeping over you because you have not yet repented.

Once a mother was praying with her son for her son's conversion. The young man opened his eyes and looked at his praying mother's face and he saw tears in her eyes. He could not bear to see the sight and closed his eyes again. After his mother passed away to be with the Lord, one day her prayer was answered. The young man was converted and became a child of God. That young man's heart was touched when he saw his mother weeping. Is your heart so hard that it is not touched even when you see your Saviour weeping over you?

Our loving God is urging you to repentance by His dealings of goodness, by your afflictions, and by allowing you to see Him weeping over you. Will you not repent today and give your heart to Him?

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	28-7-2001

Dear Fellow-Believers in Christ,

Greetings in the precious Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Gal.1: 4). And not only so-praise be to Him - He hath also, "delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" - thus making us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col.1: 13,12). May the Holy Spirit Who hath sealed us until the day of redemption, as the earnest of our inheritance, so work in us in these last days to give us in an ever-increasing measure, the vision and the value of this our inheritance in Christ, incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away. Thus we may be found as His sons-as those who overcome to inherit all things of the new creation (Rev.21: 7).

Apostle Paul brings into view again and again this thought of heavenly inheritance for the saints first in the book of Acts 20:32, to the elders at Ephesus; then in his declaration of his call and ministry before king Agrippa (Acts 26: 18, 19); and then in his prison

Epistles, especially Ephesians and Colossians. So this inheritance is a precious thought in the mind of God for His people. But we can come short of it, as Israel failed to enter into their earthly inheritance to possess Canaan, through their sin and unbelief and disobedience. They were overthrown in the wilderness, a warning to us as Paul writes in 1 Cor.10: 11,12.

In Acts 20 the Apostle commends the elders to God and "the word of his grace", which is able to build them up and give them an inheritance amongst them that are sanctified by faith (v.32). So the "word of his grace" needs to be ministered prayer-fully and effectively through His anointed and appointed ministers - elders or servants, as God hath gifted them or placed them in the church. We have to admit; there is a dearth for such building up ministry although many are preachers or teachers of the Word. We read in 1 Peter 4: 10, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister...as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." So we need to pray that the Head of the Church may send His gifted men from time to time to various assemblies, and also for Special Gatherings, which are being held - Convocations. Anniversaries and Thanksgiving Meetings that they may become valuable occasions for such ministries to the profit of many. We must be burdened to pray and plan for such, and promote such meetings with our time, talent and treasure.

The visit of Bro.Neville to Jehovah-Shammah, and later to Hebron has been of such profit for His people, I believe, besides the other ministries being fulfilled by our brethren, who are able to go forth in an itinerant ministry to other assemblies. Let us pray that the Word of His grace may dwell in all such richly to minister to others. , The ministry of Bro.Neville at Hebron from July 18th to Sunday 22nd July drew large companies for every meeting at Hebron. The morning messages were based on the Epistle of James. In the evenings he was led to speak on Leviticus 11. He enjoyed great liberty, and the messages were challenging and convicting to inspire many to fresh commitment in their walk and service for the Lord. Let us continue to pray for him and the saints at the Christian Fellowship Center at Colombo, and their sister assemblies that the Lord may preserve them and promote His purposes in Christ through them, inspite of their severe fiery trials and distresses in the socio-political realm, in that island.

The following is a write up of the 19th North America Convocation hosted by the International Assembly at Syracuse.

"The 19th North America Holy Convocation is now a part of history. All together 275 people representing all the seven continents and twenty-four nations attended. Throughout the Holy Convocation we all enjoyed the presence of the Lord. In a small way this was indeed a foretaste of heaven (Rev.7:9).

"The Holy Convocation began with a special exhortation by Bro.T.E.Koshy, followed by an extended time of prayer, seeking the Lord's blessing upon the entire period. The Lord indeed answered the prayers of the saints both here and around the world. He used an array of anointed servants to minister the Word, for the edification of the Body of Christ and His Eternal glory, namely, Bro.John Richards of Dallas, Bro. WernerTietze of Germany, Bro.Paul Wolff of Strasbourg, France, Bro.Lazar Sen and Bro.G.T.Benjamin of India, Bro.Maqbool Gill of Pakistan and Bro.Ron Jarrett of Sydney, Australia. The theme of the Holy Convocation was " Arise, shine" (Isa.60: 1).

"Each day began with family prayer, a brief exhortation from Ephesians, led by Bro.George Lonen, Wales, Bro.Christopher of Hebron, India and Bro.John Hawes of Woolongong, Australia. It was followed by ministry of the Word, youth meetings and sisters meetings. It was an invigorating, inspiring fellowship, spoken of highly by the saints from various parts of the world - as an enjoyable and enriching time.

"In the sisters meetings several sisters shared their testimonies and the Lord used His handmaiden Sis.Chitra from Hebron, to challenge the saints to fresh commitment. In the brothers meetings they shared the reports from various assemblies for prayer and praise.

"Many testified to the fact that it was in many respects a unique Holy Convocation, and we want to thank you for standing with us in prayer. The Lord once again demonstrated His unchanging faithfulness, by answering the prayers of His people on our behalf and blessing all the participants".

Let us continue to pray for Bro.T.E.Koshy and elders and saints besides the few sister assemblies of North America.

Bro. Phinehas, one of the responsible and leading brothers of Carmel Assembly, Nellore, covets our prayers as he was hospitalised after an operation and radiation therapy at C.M.C. Hospital, Vellore.

Personally I would covet your prayers for myself, as I have been under treatment for urinary

infection, for some time through Eurology Dept. at C.M.C. Hospital, Vellore. They have advised me another fortnight of rest refraining from travels and such, and be under medication.

Please pray for the Special meetings to be held from August 12-15, at Horeb, Malakpet, Hyderabad, on the occasion of the dedication of the renovated Prayer Hall, Bro.Paul Sudhakar and other Lord's servants ministering the Word.

Praying that we all may continue to build ourselves in Our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, and minister one to another to possess our inheritance in Christ, Who is the same yesterday, today and forever,

Eph. 1: 17-20 I remain,
1 Pet. 1: 4 Yours in His grace,
Rev. 21 .7 K.PHILLIP

THE RUNAWAY SERVANT OF GOD –2

BAKHT SINGH

Jonah humbled himself and told the shipmaster that he was running away from God. Then he added, "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you". The men were afraid to do as he suggested. They redoubled their efforts to save the ship, all the more so because they were now anxious to save Jonah as well. But the wind became still more boisterous (Jonah 1:13). Finally, they cast him into the sea. The sea ceased from raging, and

became calm. But what about Jonah? What happened to him? Scripture says "...the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (Jonah 1: 17). We see how God has power over all creation. He can command, not only the sea and the waves but also, all the creatures whether they are in the sea, or on the land, or in the air; they all obey Him. The Lord Jesus during His stay upon the earth commanded the sea, and it became calm (Luke 8:24,25). He commanded the fishes and they obeyed Him (Matt. 17: 27; Luke 5:6).

God's love for Jonah was unchanged though he had disobeyed Him. God wanted to bring Jonah under His discipline, but He did not allow the whale to do him any harm. God commanded the fish saying: "I am not giving Jonah for you to eat. He is not for your breakfast or lunch. I am using you to protect him from being drowned, and to take him to the place where I want him to be". Jonah was in the fish's belly for three days and three nights. In some rare cases fishermen. Who have been swallowed by whales were brought out alive after some hours but their bodies were disfigured and discoloured because of the action of the gastric juices in the whale's stomach. Yet no harm came to Jonah even after three days. Thus we find that God's Word is true, "...he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye" (Zech.2:8).

(To be contd.)

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THE GOOD SAMARITAN

"A certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: ...and had compassion on him" (Luke 10:33).

Most Bible -lovers have a *special* love for this story, and, having ourselves traveled down the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, we can easily visualise the whole event told by our Lord.

It needs to be remembered that the story was originally told to a man who had enquired about "eternal life" (v.25), and, in these few sentences, the Lord revealed the very essence of His gospel. What a Master -Teacher He was, -and still is!

Leaving the details for a moment, we may say that the basic message *behind* the story is that if anyone of us would have "eternal life" we must see that it is *not* a matter of what we can do for *ourselves*, but rather of what Someone Else *has* graciously done *for* us the needy man in our story did nothing to save himself, but could only be grateful for what was being done *for him*. The Bible says that it is "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy *He* saved us" (Tit. 3:5). And that we would say, is the unique genius of the Christian gospel, -and it counters and condemns all those false "gospels" that are around us everywhere. Men love to do something to *earn* eternal life, but that makes proud men prouder, and if *those* are the people to populate heaven, then heaven itself would only be another hell (See 1 Cor.1: 29)! How much better it is to get low now, and just thank our Saviour for what *He* has done for *us!*

The story itself sets before us three important truths. First we see

THE PLIGHT OF THE SINNER

We note that the man in question had "fallen among thieves" who had "stripped" him, and "wounded" him, and left him "half dead" (v.30). Possibly he had brought all this upon himself, -not paying heed to solemn warnings, and traveling

unaccompanied along the dangerous road, -as most of *us* have done. We note that it says he "went *down*" to Jericho, and that, we know, is a *fast-descending road*, and exactly like the road of sin and self. And it says he "*fell*" among thieves, - and who of us has not done that? Our father Adam was the first to fall, and all of us have been dragged down with him in that "Fall"! But, apart from that, each one of us has also "fallen in the way", brought down by one vile sin after another. The "thieves of lust and lying and self-indulgence and many others have all done their work, and we have been left "half-dead"! Indeed, as Paul puts it, we are *totally* "dead (toward God!) in trespasses and sins" (Eph.2: 1). Great indeed is the plight of the sinner!

The next thing illustrated in our story, (and particularly emphasised!) is

THE IMPOTENCE OF MERE "RELIGION"

For the record goes on to tell of long-robed priests and Levites viewing the scene but "passing by on the other side" (vs.31, 32). And how many of *us* have had to learn that lesson, -or *are* learning it! "Religions of all kinds parade themselves everywhere, but we shall have to discover that even our diligent observance of prescribed tenets cannot lift us from the dust, or save a needy soul"

Hope may rise for a season, but the wounds and impotence will still be there, and the inner grief unchanged. Let us settle it, then, that once we have fallen among the thieves we need more than religions and philosophies to help us, for *all* such will only "pass us by on the other side". But now we have the *beautiful* pan of our story, for, in the person of the Samaritan, is depicted for us.

THE POWER OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

We cannot here spell out all the details, but we can mention a few of the ways in which He is portrayed to us, and His saving work declared.

First we read that "he came where he (the dying man) was" (v.33).

Thank God, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1Tim.1: 15). That, we know, is simple history and Christ Himself said, while He was here alongside us, "The Son of man IS COME to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Heavenly Samaritan indeed!

Next we are told, "he had compassion on him" (v .33). With Christ, that compassion began in heaven, but how His heart must have ached as well when, here at *our* "roadside", he saw the countless *evidences* of the plight into which humanity had fallen. That same divine compassion finally took Him to the Cross-where His own pure blood was willingly poured out as atonement for – *our sins* and our follies. Like that first Samaritan, His own garments were "stained indeed" while He worked on us and for us (See Isa.63: 1-2), but, thank God, He did not pass us by. Truly, "*His compassions fail not*" (See Lam.3:22).

We further read that the Samaritan "bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine" (v.34). This reminds us of three very precious verses:

1. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal.2:20).
2. "The Blood of Jesus Christ (wine indeed!) cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John1: 7).
3. "He (the Holy Spirit) shall be in you" (The real Oil of Heaven) (John 14:17).

There, we would say, is the real Christian message. Christ Himself cleanses our sins with His own blood, and then, as the Risen Lord, He comes in to indwell and transform us, -making us "whole" indeed!

Finally, we note the statement that "He set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him" (v.34). The first phrase depicts us as "raised up" and identified with Christ in His ascendancy (as taught in Eph.2: 6), whilst "brought to the inn" speaks of our entrance into His church to enjoy the care and fellowship of His people; -and what an "inn" that is! (See Acts 2:44; Psalm 133). We are told, moreover, that the Samaritan *then* made himself *personally responsible for the future* needs of his saved one, declaring "whatsoever thou spendest more, I will repay" (v.35). The message, here is that CHRIST HIMSELF is our new Sufficiency for all things, and, as John puts it, "We live through HIM" (1 John 4:9). We ask you, then, why not confess your need to *Him* this moment, - taking Him to be the complete answer to your fallen spiritual condition, and the Compassionate Healer of all your wounds?

He will not fail you. But you *must* have dealings with *Him, Himself*. The cry of faith will do it.

C.R.G.

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	16-8-2001

Dear Fellow-Believers in Christ,

Greetings in the mighty Name of our Lord '1 and Saviour Jesus Christ, King of kings, Lord of Lords, Who "hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his Kingdom ruleth over all" (Psa.103: 19). May we ascribe greatness and power, glory and majesty unto Him, like king David of old (2 Chron. 29:11,12) -affirming afresh in our hearts that His is the Kingdom, meaning the universal Kingdom, and He is the ruler over the entire universe. Everything that takes place does so either by His directive, or permissive will. Let us believe that our God is in control of every element, every event, and every form of government, by which the nations of this globe are being ruled, even that which pertains to our country, as it enters into another year of its independence.

Hence it should be a matter of earnest I prayer for us for our country as we are exhorted in I 1Tim.2: 1-3, for all who are at the helm of affairs that they safeguard the freedom enshrined in its constitution, from its inception more than five decades ago-especially the freedom of religion to worship God, and practice and promote our faith in (Him), Jesus Christ our Lord. In the Bible we have the reference to the term "Kingdom of God", an expression which means the "rule of God" -the rule of the sovereign God over all creatures and things (Psalm 103:19; Dan.4: 3). The Kingdom of God is also used to designate the sphere of salvation into which one enters only through new birth (John 3:5-7). The Bible differentiates between the present Universal I Kingdom of God and His future Mediatorial kingdom. This latter Kingdom will be established on Jesus Christ, of the seed of. David, as God covenanted with him, (2 Sam. 7:8-17), and confirmed to Mary by Angel Gabriel, (Luke 1: 30-33). The Lord Jesus will return in glory to earth to set up His Kingdom over regathered Israel at Jerusalem.

Both the Church and the Kingdom are mentioned in the epistles, but the Church is given the bulk of the attention. The word *ecclesia* translated Church, is used a total of 67 times in the Epistles, designating the redeemed, and the local assemblies. The word "Basileia" translated "Kingdom" occurs only 18 times in these letters. Though the uniqueness and the calling of the Church are mentioned in these letters, with the doctrines of salvation, meaning of the Cross and resurrection and implications of His imminent return, and such great themes are expounded therein, the Kingdom is not ignored. What is more, it is not once implied that the Church age fulfills the Old Testament, prophecies of Millennium on earth, as some seem to affirm.

We would like to consider four distinctives of the Church-four characteristics of the Church that distinguishes it from the Kingdom of Biblical prophecy. "

" FIRSTLY A DISTINCT MEMBERSHIP": -

The first way in which the Church is different from the Kingdom is that all distinctions between the Jew and Gentile are eliminated. This provision for removing the differences between Jew and Gentile was made by Jesus Christ on the Cross. "...He is our peace, who hath made both one, (Jew and Gentile) and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; and that he might reconcile both unto God in 'one body' by the cross having *slain* the enmity thereby" (Eph.2: 14, 16). The Lord's death brought an end to the entire Mosaic system, and opened the way for spiritual oneness of the Jew and the Gentile in the Church. The Church was formed on Pentecost as a distinctly Jewish Body. It soon broadened to include the Samaritans (Acts 8:25). Then the Gentiles came in (Acts 10). Many Jewish believers had trouble accepting this new equality, however it took the strong leadership by Paul to overcome the opposition. Paul had to rebuke Peter for compromising on this matter, as we read in Galatians 2 that even Barnabas was deceived by some who were putting the Jew first. However, little by little this new spiritual oneness and equality was accepted and became part of the Church belief and truth.

We demonstrate this in the testimony of the laying on of hands, in our assemblies, setting aside all that is Adamic barriers of class, caste, culture and community, or even regional and linguistic barriers, prevalent amongst us in this land. Let us remain true to this testimony, and conduct ourselves

worthily for the edification of the Body of Christ for the vision and mission of which late beloved Bro.Bakht Singh prayed and earnestly laboured, called us to be obedient to the heavenly vision and vocation.

This complete union of the Jews and Gentiles as spiritual equals takes place only in the Church. It will not be in effect during the Kingdom age. Isaiah 2:2-5 and other Scriptures, Zech.14:16-21 and such O.T. prophecies predict, that the nation of Israel will occupy a distinct and unique role in His service when the Messiah rules over the earth from Jerusalem. The Apostle Paul also indicated that this "no distinction" period would some day end. But not of course in the Church, which will be raptured as His holy bride to share His rule as co- heir and co-regent with the coming King, prior to His visible coming in Glory, when every eye shall see Him. "...blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom.11: 25). So national conversion of Israel will occur, and Israel again will be given the primary role in God's programme for mankind, restricted to earth. God willing, we shall seek to consider the other aspects of distinctiveness of the Church later.

Special gatherings were held at "Horeb House of Worship" Malakpet from August 12-15. The Lord has been using His servant Bro.Paul Sudhakar in a special way to enlarge upon the theme "Come let us build" (Nehemiah 2:17), effectively and profitably, touching various practical aspects of our life to function as His co-builders. The messages have been challenging and inspiring based on the prayer life of Nehemiah. On Tuesday August 14, remodeled Prayer Hall was dedicated by Bro.Habakkuk followed by love feast. Prior to that, Bro.David who is in oversight of the assembly testified how they have been led of the Lord to take up the construction. On an average about 900 were present. Bible studies were conducted in two or three sessions from 10 to 5 P.M. Evening Gospel meetings were held in a nearby college grounds. Please pray for Bro.David and his co- workers, for the follow-up work and the construction of the first floor.

Also please pray for the Youth Reunion at Hebron on 22nd of this month, when Bro.Paul Sudhakar will minister the word.

Please pray for God's servant Bro. Joseph of Kondapuram who fell down from the roof, of the Sunday School shed and fractured his leg and also

his hip joint and was admitted in NIMS hospital, Hyderabad.

Praying that we may be true followers of the Lamb, King of kings and Lord of lords, as His called, chosen and faithful ones to overcome the Satanic forces arrayed against Him, and His reign and glory (Rev.17:14).

Rom. 14 : 17 I remain,
Zech. 14 : 4,9, 16 Yours in His grace,
2 Pet. 1 : 4, 10, 11 K.PHILLIP

THE RUNAWAY SERVANT OF GOD -3

BAKHT SINGH

What a temptation it must have been to the whale to make a meal of Jonah when he was in it's belly! Suppose for three days and nights you sit at a table laden with all your favourite dishes, such as chicken, ice cream etc., but with clear instructions that you should not eat any of those things, how would you feel? The fact that there is no one to prevent you from eating would make things all the more difficult for you. But what a mystery! Jonah remained undigested in the whale's belly. How wonderful is God's love! He may chastise us, and send storms in our lives. He may take us through unpleasant situations, but no harm will come to us. In fact, you will find yourself in a better position after you are tested than before. The whale must have taken Jonah, here and there, to different parts of the sea during those three days and nights, but Jonah was safe and unharmed inside. Further, see how this experience of being in the fish's belly brought about true repentance in the heart of Jonah (ch.2). Jonah did not hide his sin from the people in the ship, then how could he hide it from God? When the work of repentance in Jonah

was deep and complete, God commanded the whale to throw him right on the spot where God wanted Jonah to be. In the same way, God allows storms in our lives to bring us to true repentance and real confession; Likewise, He lovingly brings us to the place where He wants us to be and where He can use us.

God was trying to teach many lessons to Jonah of which the wonderful meaning of the power of resurrection was one. That is why when the Pharisees and Sadducees asked our Lord for a sign, He replied, "...there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" {Matt.12: 39,40}.

We see an instance of God's provision for His servants in the way He commanded the fish to throw Jonah on dry land. When Jonah ran away he had to pay his fare (Jonah 1: 3). But when he repented, the whale took him to the shore free of charge! God became responsible: for all Jonah's expenses. How many God's servants weep and complain when they have no money! They do not realize that they are suffering because of their disobedience in some matter, and have to repent. All our needs will be met by God when there is true repentance and whole-hearted obedience.

Jonah arose and went into Nineveh and preached; "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be over thrown!" So the people repented and turned from their evil ways. God forgave them and Nineveh was not destroyed. Once again Jonah failed to understand God's ways and became angry with Him for not overthrowing Nineveh.

(To be contd.)