

The Storm that Wasn't

Our area recently received dire warnings from local meteorologists that an “extreme weather event” was on its way. The ominous-looking line of approaching thunder storms was expected to pummel us with high winds, damaging hail, and possibly even tornadoes! Like most people, we heeded the warnings, doing what we could to prepare (securing patio furniture, protecting vehicles, etc.). Then virtually nothing happened – no wind, no hail, and certainly no tornadoes. Thankfully, the storm passed harmlessly by.

I felt a little sorry for the weather forecasters, actually. Did they take a lot of heat for getting it wrong? Rather than being grateful that they were spared, did people grumble about the work they did to get ready for what turned out to be a non-event? Yet how much worse had forecasters known of imminent danger and failed to alert us? All of which reminded me of Jonah. After disobeying God's order at first (that little incident with the whale), he went to the great but wicked city of Nineveh and delivered God's warning:

“Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.” The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth... When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened. (Jonah 3:4-5,10)

God did a great thing! Through Jonah, He saved a city of more than 120,000 people from damnation and destruction. But was Jonah happy about it? No, he was angry with God for relenting, presumably for making him look foolish when the storm of destruction Jonah had foretold failed to materialize. I wish I knew the rest of the story. I should hope the Ninevites praised and worshipped God for sparing them. It seems reasonable, though, that they would also have treated Jonah as a hero for bringing the warning that saved them.

Through events, His Word, and His people, God continues to warn of the inevitable destruction to come. As in Jonah's day, He cares for those under threat of the same danger, *not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance* (2 Peter 3:9). And yet, just like Jonah, many of us are more worried about looking foolish than that people all around us are perishing. It's true that some will not listen, but for those who respond like the Ninevites – believing God and repenting – the one who brought the warning which saved them will always be a hero. Judgement Day will be a storm of truly epic destruction, but it will harmlessly pass by those protected by the blood of Jesus.

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