



PTB 29: Listen Over Sacrifice {“Their Own Righteousness...”}

INTRODUCTION:

If could be overwhelming as several southern Baptist preachers have suggested to Preach thru the Bible in one year, when we come to this topic #8 of

TO LISTEN AND OBEY is better than to sacrifice for the reason that it has 4 quotes from the historical books, also a few quotes from the early pre-Isaiah Prophets like Jonah, Joel, Amos, and Hosea, and Isaiah 1-39; except for the nature of the internal structure God the Holy Spirit has place in the Bible, in that we marvel that all this OT Scripture with NT quotes can so easily be topically outlines under the heading of LISTEN TO GOD (obedience). And now at the beginning, it would be cautioned as always in the Preaching thru the Bible that the topics come from exegesis, not at all the isogesis attempts of Scofield to read meaning into the Bible.

Introduction 1. While it is one topical theme of listen to God for this Top Topic #8 of the 12 topics complete outline of the Bible, which will be the subject of the next 4 sermons, in the nature of the structural and exegetical outline of the Bible according to the OT quotes in the NT, it first includes 4 quotes from the Historical books of I Samuel, II Samuel and I Kings as follows.

NOTE: The numbering below is from the original complete topic plus exegetical outline of the Bible, thus 8 is for the topic number.

8-1: Listen to God.

1. Love of God and neighbor is and always was in the Old Testament more important than burnt offerings and sacrifices: I Samuel 15:22 and Mark 12:33.
2. To listen to Christ as Lord is more important than the legal requirements of the sabbath day: I Samuel 21:1,6, Luke 6:3,4, Mark 2:25, and \Matthew 12:2,3.
3. When you listen to God in the predictions of the Bible you have to listen twice as hard as the predictions often have double meaning--that is, a wider spectrum of

meaning than immediately obvious as here where it applies to King Solomon and King Jesus: II Samuel 7:12,14 and John 7:42.

4. Listen to God talk about His own remnant of Israel when He tells Elijah that He has reserved 7,000 for Himself that have not bowed the knee to Baal: I Kings 19:10-18 and Romans 11:4.

NOTE: Most generally as above there will be about 4 quotes under the subject, the subject above is LISTEN TO GOD, and there are under it 4 quotes from the OT. Two from I Samuel, one from II Samuel, and one from I Kings. However, it is interesting to note that the queen of Prophets, Isaiah, as court historian wrote the historical books as well as the major book of Isaiah.

Introduction 2. Quotes and topics from the Pre-Isaiah Prophets. Below is a rare exception of a subject on top of Jonah and Joel, Listening Signs for the Early Prophets and Jesus, having only three sub outline subjects which you can see below.

8-2: Listening Signs from the Early Prophets and Jesus.

1. The Listening Signs for This Generation is Both Solomon, Jonah and Jesus as recorded in the Bible while in Nineveh's generation it was the Prophet Jonah and in Jesus time it was Him the Prophet Messiah: Jonah 3:1-4 and Luke 11:29.
2. Listen to the Apostle Peter on the first day of Pentecost after Christ's Ascension as he quotes from the Prophet Joel to explain both what happened on that day, and what would happen from this the beginning of the last days until the end of time: Joel 2:28-31 and Acts 2:16-21.
3. Listen to the Prophet Joel start the ball rolling on the prime them of the Bible about eschatology, the One Day of the LORD: Joel 3:13, Mark 4:29, and Mark 13:24.

Introduction 3. The 3 quotes from Amos naturally outline themselves by exegesis as sub-heads under one of the most important subjects today and then about Israel; that is the timely question of the what extent then and now are the people of Israel the chosen people of God. It is critical to have a right attitude on Israel, and the advised even commanded attitude in the Bible is that given in the word of the Apostle Paul in Romans 11 –

As concerning the gospel, *they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*" (Romans 11:28-29)

And in the course of the four messages on Top Topic #8, we must give exegetical time, called expository preaching, to the whole chapter of Romans 11.

8-3: To What Extent Israel Was and Was Not God’s Chosen People.

Listen to God Himself tell in the Bible to what extent the nation of Israel was and was not His chosen people.

1. Immediately after rescue from Egyptian bondage God turned away from most of Israel, giving them up to worship the host of heaven; Amos 5:25-27 and Acts 7:42.

2. God takes a people for His name from among the Gentiles:

{Please read Amos 9:11,12 and Acts 15:15-17.}

3. These same Gentiles shall be called sons of the living God: Hosea 2:23 and Romans 9:25,26.

Introduction 4. Now the main course of the Bible meal of Top Topic 8, Most of this topic number 8 is from Isaiah 1-39. With the fourth sub head the exegesis of Isaiah 1-9 completes the outline above, and then comes the four under eschatology of listening to God.

Proclaimed (Old Test)	Established (Matthew)	Explained (Heb/Rom)	Reinforced (Luke)	Appendix (Mark)
Isaiah 1:9		Romans 9:29		
Isaiah 2:18,19	11:5			
Isaiah 5:1ff	21:33		12:2	
Isaiah 5:17			11:17	
Isaiah 6:9,10	13:14,15	Romans 4:12		8:18
Isaiah 7:14	1:23			
Isaiah 8:14	21:44	Hebrews 9:33		
Isaiah 8:17		Hebrews 2:13		
Isaiah 10:22,23		Romans 9:27		

Isaiah 11:1,10		Romans 15:12	
Isaiah 13:9,10	24:30		
Isaiah 14:13-15	11:23		
Isaiah 27:9			11:27
Isaiah 28:16		9:33/Rom 10:11	
Isaiah 29:10		Hebrews 11:8	
Isaiah 29:13	15:8,9	Romans 7:6,7	

Isaiah 1-39

4. If God had not chosen a small remnant out of Israel, they would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah: Isaiah 1:9 and Romans 9:29.

8-4: Listen to God Himself in His book on matters or eschatology, or last things.

1. You must first of all see the double nature of predictions as related to eschatology as when the Old Testament said,

“I will call my Son out of Egypt.” (Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15) NOTE: The Son has a double meaning:

(1). First it is the nation of Israel as the Son; and

(2). Then it is Christ as the Son.

2. Immortality and the sting of death: { **Read Hosea 13:14 and Isaiah 29:8.**}

3. Day of the LORD: {**Please read references of Isaiah 2:3,12,18, and 19, and I Corinthians 14:36, II Thessalonians 2:2, and II Thessalonians 1:10.**}

4. Read Isaiah 35:51; 61:1 and Matthew 11:5.

It is stated often in the Old Testament that it is better to listen to the commands of God than it is to sacrifice; but like in all Bible teachings it comes to us in far more clarity in the New Testament, the book of Romans, where Paul had to say of His own formerly people of God, **“they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God by faith.” (Romans 10:3)** This characteristic of human nature persists today, especially among church members who think their little sacrifices of attendance, work for the

denomination, and nominal commitments can establish themselves in the sight of God like they know they are established in the community and an established church. Yet the people of God today, Jews or Gentiles, apart from both an initial righteousness by faith and a continued righteousness by faith, once again tend to sacrifice as a substitute for listening and heeding the clear teachings of God through the Lord Jesus Christ and recorded long ago in the Bible. There just is no substitute for “listening” and heeding. This “own righteousness” substitution was the downfall of the original people of God, the nation of Israel; and at least from Isaiah on, and especially in Jeremiah, do you see the completion of that downfall. The wording in Jeremiah is a little different--“you have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn out for yourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water” -- but the trend is the same, don’t listen to God and Christ and the Bible, but make up your own mind on what is right and wrong, then establish that life style.

Right or wrong, we have chosen to place at least in our outline, Obadiah, Jonah, Joel, Amos, and Hosea as Pre-Isaiah Prophets. The messages of these prophets as derived from their OT quotes and explanations of such quotes in the NT fit best there in the total subject outline. We will see as we go along with these where the internal evidence other than the quotes would put them. We know that Jeremiah of the last chapter-message quoted from Obadiah. These are the Pre-Isaiah Prophets of Table 9 in Appendix A. If you actually look at our subject outline below based on a sequencing of these historical books and the Prophets, you will find the sequence of Old Testament books as I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, Jonah, Joel, Amos, Hosea, and some of Isaiah included, Isaiah 1-39, which was more dictated by the commonality of subject more than historical sequencing. **{Remember our desire to look at the Bible as a “gradual revelation of God coming to a climax in Christ” and with a gradual revelation of the doctrines of God based on His character.}** If you look at the NT books where those quotes are found in the OT sequence, you have Mark, Luke, Matthew, John, Romans, Acts, I Corinthians, and II Thesalonians.

8-5: Jonah and What’s Happening in the City?

Rather than now considering the Prophet Jonah, since like Jonah we find that many of the OT Prophets delivered **Messages to Cities, Nations, and the Temple**, we will consider those prophets under the headings of these institutions. I think this helps us to see more of the relevance of the Prophets in our time. They had a message for the civil institutions as well as the religious, a message and message from God Himself, and I believe we can easily relate them to our cities and other institutions today, especially our nation. Jonah had a message for the city of Nineveh, also Nahum and Zephaniah wrote of the city of Nineveh. {Genesis 10:8-11 tells us the building of the city in Assyria by Nimrod the “mighty hunter”.} Also the Prophet Micah speaks of in Assyria, a city which is the entrance of the city of Nimrod.

What's Happening in the City?

The complete title of this chapter would be: "What's Happening in the City That is Most Important to God?" Recently I traveled from Tucson to LAX and Port Hueneme, California and later to the high desert in the city of Lancaster, California. While waiting to visit a friend that I worked with years ago at Edwards AFB, the thought came to me, "I wonder what is happening in this city that is most important to God." Of course, God does not have the same value-system as this world so that entertainment would, no doubt, not even be a factor. God is always interested in His own people so we know that He would be keeping an eye on them. Also we know that even a sparrow in the city cannot fall to the ground without God's knowledge. That still does not answer the question as to what to God is the most important in thing happening in the city? We know that God is more interested in poor people than the well-to-do as the gospel is primarily given to the poor, and that may give us a clue; and of course we know especially from the Prophets that God is also interested in national and city leadership as often we are told that He puts leadership in those positions for His own purpose. As I thought these thoughts, a vagrant with his cart, bedroll, etc. passed by, and I thought because of the uniqueness of God to always seek and save the lost, this could be what was happening in the city of Lancaster that was most important to God. Recall the lesson Jesus gave us on the value-system of God when He told His disciples of the fame and place in the kingdom of the woman that gave the penny.

“Then He (Jesus) looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. So He said, 'Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty has put in all the livelihood that she had.'” (Luke 21:1-4 NJKV)

Then I naturally thought of the Prophet Jonah who was sent to one particular city, the city of Nineveh, because God saw what was happening in the city and wanted Jonah to preach to it! How Much Do We Know About the City of Nineveh? Nineveh, of course, like Babylon and Bagdad are all cities of Iraq; and we know of the recent fighting nature of that nation. Apparently, it has always been so. Layard in his book on NINEVEH AND BABYLON writes of the warlike nature of the nation.

“The annals of Assyria (same as Iraq) are nothing but a register of military campaigns, spoliations, and cruelties. Their monuments display men of calm and unmoved ferocity, whose moral and mental qualities are overborne by the faculties of the lower, brutal nature.”

We think of Sudan Hussein and his recent unprovoked attack on Kuwait and the ensuing Persian Gulf War, and we can see the conclusion of this book written over 50 years ago. Well, three books in the Old Testament Prophets tell us something about Nineveh. First, there was the book of Jonah which tells us that God noticed the moral corruption in the city of Nineveh and sent Jonah to preach repentance to the city. Maybe this alone gives us a clue to “What Is Happening in a City that is most Important to God?” In this case, and perhaps in the case of many cities in our nation, it was the moral corruption that attracted the special attention of God. “For their wickedness is come up before me...” (Jonah 1:1) Besides knowing all that goes on the earth to the extent of the sparrow falling, there seems to be a stench from “wickedness” that floats up to God from earth to heaven thus attracting His attention. It irritates God. He is tempted to wipe out a city whose stench becomes overwhelming; and long before God acts on any city or nation, or the whole world, in judgment, He sends Prophets to warn the city or nation. Also the Prophet Nahum writes about Nineveh. “Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery. Its victim never departs. The noise

of a whip and the noise of rattling wheels, of galloping horses, of clattering chariots! Horsemen charge with bright sword and glittering spear. There is a multitude of slain, a great number of bodies, countless corpses--they stumble over the corpses--because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot, the mistress of sorceries, who sells nations through her harlotries, and families through her sorceries." (Nahum 3:1-4) Very figurative language here to describe the city: the "seductive harlot" refers to a spiritual unfaithfulness of the city, and "mistress of sorceries" refers to a goodly charm that is bad. Since Assyria had plundered other countries she had captured unlike Greece and Rome who came later, the city of Nineveh was full of the loot. Assyria literally lived by the plundering of other nations. The Prophet Zephaniah also writes about the city of Nineveh. "This is the rejoicing city that dwelt securely, that said in her heart, 'I am it, and there is none beside me.'" (Zephaniah 2:15 NJKV)

There could, no doubt, be said of many cities in our world today. The people say and think, "We are it. All other cities are nothing compared to us." Perhaps Paris, Bagdad, New York, or even Tucson. We never thought 50 years ago that we come to the point of seeing the growth of gambling establishments in our cities and nation; and we would never have conceived that gambling on the state lottery level would flourish under the excuse of providing for education. It has been an education alright: it has taught us that our own cities of the United States come under the same indictment of the nations of the Prophets where the people "want to get something for nothing"! From your Bible history background, you will recall that Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth that were born to him after the Great Flood that destroyed the whole earth with water. Well, Ham had a grandson that was called Nimrod. It was Nimrod, the great famous hunter, that was the founder of Nineveh. We read in Genesis 10:8-11. "Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, 'Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.' And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh..." (Genesis 10:8-11 NJKV) Also the Prophet Micah speaks of the "sword (of) the land of Assyria, and the land of Nimrod at its entrances" (Micah 5:6 NKJV). Numbers 24:22,24 also has an early historical reference to Assyria in the prophecy of Balaam of how that nations would carry Israel away into Captivity, and how later the ships from Greece would in turn afflict Assyria. And Psalm 83:8 and II Chronicles 20:1-4 give the historical account of Assyria under Shalmaneser II who allied with Moab and Ammon against Israel under King Jehosphat. The nation of Israel was victorious,

but this was just the beginning of the real-world power of Assyria. We now come to the description of Nineveh in the book of Jonah. B.H. Carroll gives us a summary of the description of Nineveh in Jonah.

"The record here in Jonah says that Nineveh was a 'great city.' It was located on the Tigris River and in the shape of a parallelogram, sixty miles around and three days' journey on a straight line through it. Its walls were sixty feet high, with 1,500 towers, 200 feet high. The walls were broad enough on top to receive three chariots driving side by side. It is almost certain that this city was larger than Babylon, especially if we include in the estimate of its suburbs. Jonah calls it 'an exceeding great city of three days' journey' and with 120,000 infants, all of which indicate that Nineveh was no ordinary city."

8-6: "What Is Most Important to God?"

We do not have the details about how Jonah preached in the city; but we do know that Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah and that God spared the city. I think that Carroll is right that the story of Jonah and the whale, or large fish, got back to the city of Nineveh before Jonah, the king and the people deciding that the God that could do that could also destroy them. I think you begin to see what is most important to God in the dialogue between Jonah and God as he built his hut on the hill and waited for the destruction of the city! "Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it." (Jonah 3:10 NJKV) It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. (Jonah 4:1) Jonah started pouting, and he prayed.

"A, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? There-fore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, one who relents from doing harm. Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!"

1. What Was So Important to Jonah?

Before we come to some of the details about what was so important to God, let us figure out as a background what was so important to Job that he first got angry; then he protested to God that he had told Him so back his home country; then excused himself for running off to Spain because he knew this would hap- pen; and then the anger turned to despair of returning home where this news of the salvation of Nineveh would go ahead of him, asking God to take his life.

(1). Jonah like all of the Jews had a hatred for the idolatrous Gentiles of Nineveh.

- (2). "Ah, didn't I tell you so, God," Jonah prayed. He had the fear that God would show mercy and the Great Preaching with the Prediction of Destruction that God told him would be discredited. His life was over as a prophet and priest. He had lost face!
- (3). Nineveh would grow in strength and if spared would become a terror to Israel. Therein Jonah was also a prophet. Nineveh with Babylon and the whole nation Assyria did become a powerful nation and did take captives of Israel and Judah.

2. What Was Important to God?

(1). God is concerned about rightness of our attitudes, emotions, and conscience. First of all it was important to God what was the attitude of Jonah on the matter of preaching, repentance, and as to God changing His mind about destructions.

"Then the LORD said, 'Is it right for you to be angry?'" (Jonah 4:4 NJKV) God was saying in effect, "I know your conscience tells us that these people should be destroyed but is your conscience right! Check the value system of your conscience. Is it right for you to be angry?"

(2). God has a sense of humor, and that is important to Him.

"So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city." (He was still looking for and hopeful of destruction.) There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'" (Jonah 4:5-8 NJKV)

Don't you see a sense of humor there. Jonah's emotions as he waited for something to happen to the city were up and down. He was satisfied that he had made a shelter from the sun; and then as it was enhanced by the blessing from God of additional shade from the hot desert sun as God make a large plant like a tree to provide additional relief from the desert. And since God knew that the tired prophet was tired, and that he was make a decision while he was tired, never a good thing, thus provided a good night's rest. However, since it was time for the Prophet to move on back to Israel, and take up the work of God there, God sent a worm to fester the plant of shade and wither it up. Not only did Jonah's plant shade disappear, but then a violent wind came from the east that blew his shelter across the desert. Jonah grew faint in the desert heat, and I know you can appreciate that. Then again Jonah wished that it was better for him to die than to live.

(3). God is concerned about our value system. Jonah became just as angry about the loss of the plant that had provided shade as he did over God relenting over the destruction of Nineveh. Jonah, is it right for you to be angry? Child of God today, is it

right for you to be angry. Is it right for you to be angry with a brother that has wronged you? Is it right for you to be angry with that fellow member of the church, or that preacher? Or you holding a grudge because things did not work out for you the way they were planned?

(4). God like many of His servants are concerned about the plants like the lilies of the field and the sparrow, but God is more concerned about those who are lost.

“Then God said to Jonah, 'Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?' (Jonah 4:9a NJKV)

“And Jonah said, “It is right for me to be angry, even to death!” (Jonah 4:9b NJKV)

God is patiently working to change the value system and conscience of Jonah. To change the concept of what is right and what is wrong. Is it right for you to be angry? Often our concepts of what is right is self-centered. It is more a matter of what is right and wrong for us than what is right and wrong for a whole city, or even what is right and wrong to God! But Jonah is still determined, and says, “Yes, it is right for me to be angry even unto death.”

(5). It is important to God to be consistently what He is, gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.

a. God is gracious and wants us to be gracious. b. God is merciful and wants us to be merciful

c. God is slow to anger and wants us to be the same way. He was trying to get that message over to Jonah as He said, “Is it right for you to be angry?”

d. God is abundant in lovingkindness and expects the same from us. (5). God spells out what is important to Him now that He hopefully has the attention of Jonah.

“But the LORD said, 'You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and also much livestock?’” (Jonah 4:10-11 NJKV)

a. Your conscience has allowed you to have more concern about a plant that for 120,000 children that do not know the difference between right and wrong.

b. Your concerns are too short ranged rather than eternal. You are more concerned for a plant that grew up in one night and perished in one night. c. You are more concerned about the things for which you have not

labored than those things for which you have labored.

d. Think of the livestock if you cannot think of the children.

The History of Nations in the Writing Prophets

You have noticed how that many of the Prophet mention the say nations so that you could almost write a history of the early world from the writings of the Prophets. You

noticed, for example, at the beginning of this book how that Edom and their destruction was not only mentioned in Obadiah but echoed and told in differing stages in other Prophets. There is one thing that this allows us to clearly see and that is that God is interested in the people of all nations, and the nations of all peoples. Also, that God never performs a judgment on any peoples without first giving those same people the message of judgment and the opportunity to repent. This is especially true of the Final Judgment at the end of time, and this is one of the prime subjects of all 16 of the Writing Prophets.

8-7: AMOS and What Is Happening in the Home Country?

Okay, Jonah is off touring the city of Nineveh in Assyria, so who is minding the store back in Judah and Israel. Recall that Jonah was a prophet of the northern kingdom of Israel. We see this in II Kings 14:25. "He (Jeroboam II) restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah, according to the word of Jehovah, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gathhepher." (II Kings 14:25) Jonah identifies himself as the son of Amittai (Jonah 1:1), and Joshua 19:3 describes Gathhepher as a town three miles northeast of Nazareth which places him in the northern kingdom. Then obviously, Jeroboam II was a king of Israel, and his reign is called the "Indian Summer" of Israel's history (II Kings 14:23-29). While Jonah was off pouting in Assyria, Amos was preaching to the northern kingdom. However he was from the southern kingdom, so he too was a missionary in a more limited sense of distance. Tekoa, the hometown of Amos, was 12 miles south of Jerusalem.