

Last Tuesday we looked at the first few vv. of the book of Jonah. I believe comparatively few people have any real idea of Jonah's character and importance. Probably he is as well known throughout the world as any character in the Bible because it is customary for him to be ridiculed for the idea of his having been swallowed by the great fish, and then thrown out on the land. It is these miracles that unbelievers like to make fun of.

Of course God is creator and could do whatever he chose. Some people have the idea that the Bible is a continuous lot of miracles. That it is a bizarre book that has little contact with human life. The fact is just the opposite. The Bible has tremendous contact with human life as it is. ~~The~~ Tremendous contact with the life of every one of us. You can't read == you can read chapter after chapter in the Bible and not strike any miracle at all. The miracles in the Bible are mostly around a few great crises times which if the knowledge of God was to stay alive on the earth there was real point in having a great outpouring of God's wonderful grace.

We find, for instance in the days of the early church when light of Christianity was a little candle, just beginning to spread. In days when you would think it could be puffed out with very little effort. In those days in order to start things going God performed quite a number of very unusual acts of power in order to protect the little flame until it spread widely enough and strongly enough that if it disappeared in one spot it could spring up into great life and power in another.

Since that time God has allowed Christianity to disappear practically in areas that have been great Christian centers--centers in which the Word of God was powerfully in the minds of people; centers from which missionaries have gone forth to spread his word. He has allowed them to disappear from the earth. I think of N. Africa in particular. One of the outstanding leaders in the history of the Christian church was St. Augustine. In St. Augustine's day most of the people in N. Africa considered themselves Christians. Under the preaching of St. Augustine there were tremendous movements of the Spirit of God in that area. But God permitted Christianity to be just wiped out of that ~~se~~ area until today it is worth a person's life to call himself a Christian in that area. A missionary will work there for 30 yrs. and if he has two converts he feels he is very fortunate. He may have a few secret converts, but the same is true in China.

There was a time when missionaries went across China and there were hundreds of Christian churches in China. 1000 yrs. ago there was a tremendous Christian movement in China, and Christianity was almost completely wiped out of China. Till practically all the Christians in China today--either they or some of their very recent ancestors ~~a~~ came to Christ through the preaching of missionaries in modern times.