

Jonah 1

Introduction:

The book of *Jonah* is one of the most interesting and famous of the 12 books we call the “Minor Prophets”

-**Why are these 12 men referred to as the Minor Prophets?** Because of the shortness of their books (not that they are unimportant)

-**Major prophets?** Isaiah, Jeremiah (and Lamentations), Ezekiel, and Daniel

-*Jonah* is 5th of the 12 Minor Prophets

It is a very unusual book:

1. Almost no preaching of Jonah is recorded (only 8 words in 3.4)
2. He is the only minor prophet whose life involved miracles (storm, large fish, sea calmed, and gourd plant)
3. Only the work of Jonah and Obadiah take place in a foreign country
4. He is the only minor prophet to take a trip on a boat
5. He is the only minor prophet specifically mentioned by Jesus
– **Read Matthew 12.38-41 and Luke 11.29-32**
6. He is the only preacher in the entire Bible who wanted his preaching to fail; he did not want the people of Nineveh to repent!

Theme of the book: The grace of God extends to all people; it is not limited just to one race or color or country

Date for book: about 755 BC in the Northern Kingdom of Israel

-According to *2 Kings 14.25*, he lived during the reign of Jeroboam II

-The Northern Kingdom was coming to an end soon (721BC)

-**Why didn't Jonah preach to the Northern Kingdom?** Because they already had Amos and Hosea preaching there

Jonah 1

The word “Jonah” means “dove” – he was a shy person and had trouble delivering his message to the people

-He was a pouter and was rather moody

-He could preach great sermons, but could also stick out lower lip and throw a little fit when he wanted to

However, he did remain faithful; he just had to be helped a little by God in the area of obedience

Modern critics of the Bible dispute the whale story

-Actually, the Hebrew people did not have a word for whale/only a word for “large sea creature”

-All large sea animals were called by this word

So whether it was a whale or some other kind of sea creature, it happened, because the Bible said it happened

Jonah 1.1-3

V1 – Jonah is referred to in *2 Kings* - **Read 2 Kings 14.25**

- From *2 Kings 14.25*, we learn that his hometown was Gath-hepher (later known as Cana of Galilee – about 3 miles northeast of Nazareth)
- What do we know about the town of Cana?** The wedding feast in *John 2*
- Interesting: *John 7.52* – Pharisees said that no prophet had ever come out of Galilee (they forgot about Jonah)
- Many times false teachers do not know the Bible very well – this was a very serious mistake on their part

V2 – **Where did God want Jonah to preach?** In Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria

- Problems:
 1. Nineveh was about 500 miles from the Northern Kingdom
 2. The Assyrians were the enemies of the Northern Kingdom of Israel
- Several of the kings of the Northern Kingdom had been defeated by the Assyrians
- The Assyrians were the terrorists of the day, fierce in battle, known for their brutality (see book of *Habakkuk*)
- Maybe this was like being told today to preach in North Korea or Iran
- Nahum, another minor prophet, delivered his whole message about the wickedness of Assyria
- 3. Preaching in Nineveh would make Jonah very unpopular at home in the Northern Kingdom
- If the Assyrians repented to their wickedness, then God would save them; but Jonah didn't want that
- Jonah was a prophet of God, but he had some very serious human problems
- Anyone in the New Testament like that?** Peter – very nationalistic and racist, had human weaknesses (denying Christ, etc.)
- But God did not give up on Jonah or Peter

V3 – **But what did Jonah do? Headed straight for Assyria? No**

- Tarshish (modern Tartessus in Spain at the Straits of Gibraltar, the opposite end of the Mediterranean Sea)
- So much like people today; God tells them to do something, and they go in the opposite direction
- Jonah went to the port of Joppa, got on a ship going to Tarshish, and began running away from God

Jonah 1.4-9

V4 – **Did God change his commandment because Jonah didn't like it? No**

- God “hurled” a great wind/in other words, God was angry
- How bad was the storm?** The ship was about to break into pieces

V5 – **What did the sailors do?** They were terrified

1. Each prayed to his own god
2. They began throwing cargo overboard (similar to the ship in *Acts 27* – Paul's fourth missionary journey)

- Where was Jonah?** Asleep in the hold of the ship
- Why asleep?** Comfortable because he had avoided going to Nineveh
- According to the Septuagint, he was snoring

V 6– **What did the captain of the ship do?** Woke Jonah up and told him to pray to his god
 -They were grasping at anything; it must have been a terrible storm

V 7– **Next idea (praying was not working)?** To cast lots – **Read Proverbs 16.33**
 -This was one way that God allowed people to know his will before the Bible was completed
 -**When was the casting of lots used in the New Testament? Read Acts 1.23-26**
 -Not used after *Acts 2*
 -The lot fell on Jonah

V 8– **Questions they asked Jonah?** Basically, "Who are you?"

V 9– **Jonah's reply?** I am a Hebrew, and I fear (respect) the Lord God who made sea and dry land
 -In other words, Jonah was acknowledging his guilt here

Jonah 1.10-14

V 10– **"How could you have done this?"**
 -**Why must that have hurt Jonah?** He was being rebuked by pagan men
 -They knew he was guilty; he confessed

V 11– **What did they want to know?** What they should do (the storm was getting worse)

V 12– **Jonah's answer?** Throw me into the sea - he was to be a sacrifice for these pagan sailors
 -**Remind you of anyone else?** Jesus on the cross

V 13– **What did the sailors do?** Rowed harder
 -**Meaning?** They did not want to throw Jonah overboard

V 14– Beautiful and impressive statement!
 -**How had their view of God changed?** They knew that He was the one true God

Jonah 1.15-17

V 15– They realized that they could not be saved any other way
 -Notice how the Holy Spirit keeps working in the message of Christ! The golden thread that runs through every book in the Bible (Passover, Rahab and scarlet thread, etc.)
 -There was no way to miss it here in *Jonah*
 -They could not save themselves
 -**What did they finally do?** Threw Jonah overboard
 -**Result?** The sea calmed down

V 16– Effect on these men? Feared God

-**What did they do?** Offered sacrifices to God and made vows

V 17–**What had God done in the meantime?** Prepared a great fish to receive Jonah

-The great fish swallow Jonah – for three days and three nights

Lessons from *Jonah 1*:

1. It is impossible to run from God
2. God is not impressed with our disobedience
3. All people can be saved

-**Why so much emphasis on the sailors in this chapter?** Pagans, yet they found the one true God and repented

-They prepared the way for the theme of the book (salvation of Nineveh)

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