

JONAH Lesson 01

Jonah Chapter 1

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Memory verses for this week: *2 Cor 1:7 And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.*

Introduction: We begin a series this week on the book of Jonah. Jonah is perhaps the most disputed book of the 66 in the Word of God. People thinking from a purely worldly viewpoint have a hard time believing a man could have been swallowed by a whale and cast up on dry land after a period of three days. However, I know we can believe this record as fact.

Jonah is the fifth book of what is traditionally referred to as the Minor Prophets. The book is a record about a man of God who was chosen as God's instrument in proclaiming God's message to the Assyrians, particularly to the idolatrous pagans of Nineveh. This book is also a revelation of the amazing grace of God as He deals in mercy and patience with His servant who at first refused to carry out his divinely appointed task.

Jonah is a unique book in the sense that it not only is a biography of a passionate prophet, but it also gives a prophetic preview of Christ's burial and resurrection (Mt.12:39-40) and a remarkable prophecy of the entire history of the people of Israel.

In chapter 1 we are shown a classic illustration of the folly of trying to run from God and His calling upon one's life. Whatever God's will for our life is, we must submit to it and obey it without question, doubt, or hesitation. We all have trouble now and then that makes the simplicity of obeying God seemingly impossible.

All scripture is true, and I agree with J. Vernon McGee on his summation of why we should believe Jonah.

We have an historical record of Jonah in the Old Testament, and we also have one in the New Testament given by the greatest authority who has ever lived on this earth, the Lord Jesus Christ. He personally gave authenticity to the historical character of Jonah and to his experience in the fish. We read in Luke 11:30, "For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation." Then in Matthew 12:39-41 we read: "But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and 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. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment

with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.”

The moment you question the historical record of the Book of Jonah, you question the credibility of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is very strange to hear the liberal say, “Jesus was the greatest teacher that ever lived,” since one of the marks of a great teacher is that what he teaches is accurate and truthful. If Jesus is a great teacher, my friend, then His authentication of the Book of Jonah has to stand.

I. Jonah’s Call and Commission

Jonah 1:1 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

Jonah 1:2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

God had a task to be done and chose from among His servants, Jonah, the son of Amittai. Jonah was a tried and proven prophet of the Lord who served during the rule and reign of a wicked king named Jeroboam (II) whereby he predicted that this king would reclaim some territory for Israel which had been lost under previous administrations. (2 Kings 14:23-25)

When was the term “The Word of the Lord” first used in the bible? No, this is not the first account. In Genesis 15 and verse 1, the bible states:

Gen 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

Jonah’s call came from the Lord, as does all truly called ministers of God. Jonah’s command was to go to Nineveh and to cry against it. Nineveh was a Gentile city and its inhabitants were considered enemies of the Jews. God wanted Jonah to go down and declare judgment was to come to this great city. God declared that the city was wicked in his sight in verse 2. But he did not heed God’s call, and decided that he would prefer to go another direction as we find in verse 3.

God destroyed man by the flood due to wickedness.

Gen 6:5 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Gen 6:6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

Gen 6:7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

Because of the great sexual wickedness in Sodom and Gomorrah, God rained fire and brimstone upon them.

Gen 19:24 Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;

Gen 19:25 And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

God's word to Jonah was a clear and unmistakable command to go to heathen Nineveh and preach against it because of its grievous wickedness. Note that God chooses to reveal His will through His Word. (Ps.37:23; 119:104-105.) b. If we want to know our divine obligations and responsibilities, we must first know the Word of God.

Even though God's divine command was clear, it would not be easy. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire which was known to be a cesspool of debauchery and immorality. It was also given over to idolatry, witchcraft, and barbaric cruelty. Nineveh was located on the Tigris River about 75 miles south of the border of our present day Turkey and about 200 miles north of Baghdad in Iraq. The specifics of Jonah's duty are found in the words: arise, go, and cry against. That is, wake up, get up, and speak up against the sins of the people.

The reason for God's divine directive was not just because of the wickedness of Nineveh but mainly because of the infinite holiness of God. God will not tolerate such evil and iniquity.

II. The Flight of Jonah

Jonah 1:3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

Jonah, in a daring and blatant way, disobeyed the divine commission given to him by fleeing to Tarshish. Jonah ran in the opposite direction than he was suppose to because Nineveh was east of where he lived and Tarshish was west.

In his disobedience, he wanted to put as much distance as possible between himself and God and going to Tarshish emphasized this separation. Twice we're told that Jonah's intentions were to flee from God's presence. While he could never escape the omnipresence of God, he could flee and depart from the place of God's perfect will and blessing for his life. Fleeing the presence of the Lord is possible when one forsakes the place of worship, prayer, and service unto God.

Jer 23:38 But since ye say, The burden of the LORD; therefore thus saith the LORD; Because ye say this word, The burden of the LORD, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the LORD;

Jer 23:39 Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you,

and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence:

Disobedience and rebellion will always produce a decline in our interest in spiritual things and a dislike for the presence of God. Jonah's determination to run from God can be attributed to two things:

(1) Notice his spiritual deterioration -- The quickness and rapid pace with which Jonah disobeyed God revealed that his spiritual health was already on a downward spiral. One does not backslide accidentally or overnight; disobedience and rebellion against God does not occur unless there has been some groundwork laid for it: neglect of Bible study, prayer, church attendance, etc.

(2) Notice his spiritual discrimination -- In 4:2 Jonah explains why he fled: he was afraid the Ninevites might repent at his preaching and be spared God's judgment, thereby sealing the doom and downfall of his own people. Israel (ten northern tribes) had been repeatedly warned by God through His faithful prophets (ex.: Hosea 9:3) that they would be taken captive by the Assyrians for their persistent rebellion against God. Jonah rejected the notion of God showing His mercy and grace to a heathen people and Israel's mortal enemies.

As soon as Jonah disobeyed God, his life began to plummet downward: he went down to Joppa, he went down into the ship, he went down into the sea, he went down into the belly of the fish. The path of disobedience is always down. Jonah "*paid the fare thereof*" but little did he realize there would be a higher price to pay for his disobedience and rebellion against God.

Heb 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

Heb 11:25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

Heb 11:26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

God gave direct orders for Jonah to go to Nineveh, but he rather chooses to flee to Tarshish. He thought he was getting away from God. But you know what? There is no where we can go that God is not there. David commented on this in Psalms.

Psa 139:7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

Psa 139:8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

Psa 139:9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

Psa 139:10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

Psa 139:11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

Psa 139:12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

Psa 139:13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

Psa 139:14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

Psa 139:15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

Psa 139:16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

There is no place where we can truly hide from God. When God's people backslide from the Lord, they want to flee from God. That is what happens when we become disobedient children rather than obedient. But there is no place we can go. Jonah's attitude is like many today. They don't want God's dominion over them. In Jesus' day, they stated that they did not want Him to rule over them.

Luke 19:12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

Luke 19:13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

Luke 19:14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

But look at the difference in a humble man who wanted God's presence with him at all times. Moses had no desire to go without the presence of God being with him.

Exo 33:13 Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.

Exo 33:14 And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.

Exo 33:15 And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.

Tarshish was a city located in Spain. It is interesting how many times the scriptures here refer to going down. It is in verse 3, verse 5, and in Chapter 2 verse 6. This is the way it was going with Jonah in his life... heading down, down, down. Anytime a child of God gets away from the Lord that is what will happen to us. We will go down. Jonah paid the fare to board the ship. When we run from God, believe me, there is a payment that has to be made. The price of sin is high, and someone has to pay the penalty of sin.

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Heb 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

III. The Mighty Storm and Jonah's Confession

Jonah 1:4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

As a result of Jonah's disobedience, God sent a great wind and mighty tempest on the sea. This was no small storm because v.13 says the sea was "tempestuous" and v.15 says it was "raging." Jonah may have fled but God did not relinquish His sovereignty over nature or His creatures. He who created the elements is able to direct and control them: (Ps.107:23-25; 135:7; Mt.5:45; Mk.4:39.)

God did not react to Jonah's decision to disobey. The storm by Gods own design accomplished His sovereign will. The storm was so powerful that the ship was in danger of literally being torn apart. God was grieved over Jonah's sin; no one is immune from storms brought on by disobedience to God's commands.

Isa 57:20 But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

Isa 57:21 There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

Many lives have been made a shipwreck because of their rebellion and running from God.

Jonah 1:5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

When we run from God, there are many storms that will come our way. God was going to use this storm to teach Jonah a great lesson.

Perhaps nothing can conjure up fear greater than imagining that you are in a storm out in the sea. Tossed to and fro and nothing that you could do. I've heard sailors tell of that feeling, and the utter fear that overcomes you in that moment. God sent this great storm out on the sea. And in our lives, we can be

sure that many storms will come our way. But like Minister W. A. Criswell told his young assistant one day many years ago, when those storms come, you have to get in the very middle of God's will, and then hunker down in that great ship of Zion and ride out the storm. When God is in control, there is no reason to fear.

Verse 5 says that this storm was so severe that it brought fear upon the mariners, and they all became afraid. It says that they all called out to their own gods. Many today are like that... they get in a storm and they cry out but they know not truly to whom. There is only one true God who can calm the storm in our lives, and that is the Jehovah God of the universe, the one that is made up of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. One time the disciples were traveling with Christ in a ship when a storm came up.

Mark 4:35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

Mark 4:36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

Mark 4:37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

Mark 4:38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

Mark 4:39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

Mark 4:40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

Mark 4:41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

The sailors on board with Jonah did all they could in their power to bring the ship to land. But they had little power over such a great storm. If we are backslidden and away from God, we can do very little in our lives to make things right except one thing. And that is to come back to God, bow and ask Him to forgive you and to make things right. When you do, God will calm the storm that you are in.

During the storm, we find Jonah was down in the ship trying to hide from the Lord and sleep off his convictions. It is ironic that Jonah, the one who had power with the true God, was sleeping, while those above who knew not the Lord were trying to call upon their gods to save them. It is high time that all of God's people awaken from their sleep and take the gospel message to this lost and dying world. How does the world view the church today? Do they see us as concerned people who really care about them, or do we appear to be just one more social gathering of the world? God helps us to be people who are compassionate, making a difference in the world and doing all we can to reach

the lost.

Rom 13:11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

Rom 13:12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

Rom 13:13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

Rom 13:14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

John 4:34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

John 4:35 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

Recognizing this was no ordinary storm and realizing their imminent danger, these sailors did two things: they prayed to their false gods out of desperation and in their panic began to overthrow the cargo of the ship. v.5a These seamen were no doubt experienced, skilled sailors that had been through many storms in their lifetime but this storm was so fierce and ferocious that they knew there was no chance to survive in the turbulent waves and stay afloat in the raging sea if the boat sank.

Adam Clarke made these comments about verse 5.

Cried every man unto his god—The ship's crew were all heathens; and, it is probable, heathens who had each a different object of religious worship.

Cast forth the wares—Threw the lading overboard to lighten the ship, hoping the better to ride out the storm.

Jonah was gone down—Most probably into the hold or cabin under the deck; or where they had berths for passengers in the sides of the ship, something in the manner of our packets.

Jonah 1:6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

Jonah 1:7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

While the sailors were feverishly praying and working to save their lives, Jonah was below the deck fast asleep, for which he was sternly rebuked by the captain of the ship who requested that Jonah begin praying to his God for help. vs.5b-6 It is pathetically sad that a prophet of God was called upon by a pagan to pray. Sin is like a numbing narcotic, anesthetic drug that soothes people asleep to where they are unaware of their backslidden, rebellious condition.

With life and death in the balances, the sailors concluded someone on board was responsible for the storm and after casting lots, Jonah was found out to be the guilty individual.

Jonah was asked by the shipmaster to call upon God that they might not perish. I'm afraid things are a bit out of hand when someone has to ask us to call upon the name of the Lord. We should not have to be asked to pray, or to be begged to attend our church services and prayer meetings. We should come because of all the God has done for us. It says they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. Jonah was found to be the guilty one. It is a sad day when it is a Christian that brings defeat to the cause of Christ, but we can sure do that if we are not careful.

We see six question in verses 8 to 11 asked of Jonah by the men of the ship.

Jonah 1:8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?

Jonah 1:9 And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.

After an intense interrogation by the sailors, Jonah finally confessed his sin of trying to run from the one true God who was the Sovereign Creator and Ruler of all the universe. At this point Jonah was made to realize that it was utterly impossible to hide and run from God. Jonah declared he feared the Lord:

Ecc 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

Jonah 1:10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

Jonah 1:11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.

1. What is thine occupation.

2 Cor 5:20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

2. Whence comest thou? When we are saved, we are born from above.
3. What is thy country? Our country is heaven.... We are just pilgrims passing through this old world.

Phil 3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

4. Of what People are thou? We should be known as people of the Lord.
5. Why has thou done this? Effectively, they are questioning why Jonah was running from God.
6. What shall we do unto thee? Jonah answered them that they should throw him overboard.

IV. Jonah is Swallowed by the Fish

Jonah 1:12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.

Jonah gives the sailors advice. Upon asking the question what should be done to him by the sailors who were now even more terrified (v.10a), Jonah humbly responded by advising them to throw him overboard into the sea. vs.11-12.

Here we see evidence of Jonah's true repentance wherein he was willing to accept the just penalty for his sin. He who had at first tried to run from God's divine duty was now willing to give his life, if necessary, in order to save the sailors and do God's will.

Jonah 1:13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

Jonah 1:14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.

Jonah 1:15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

The sailors fought and fought, but they could not bring the ship to land. When they realized that they could not, they then cast Jonah overboard. I was thinking how that we get thrown by sin so many times, when we could be safe in the boat

if we would keep close to God and keep sin out of our lives.

As soon as Jonah hit the water, the raging of the storm ceased. These once pagan sailors were made to respect and submit to the power and authority of Almighty God. They realized that the lot and the word of the prophet, as well as the storm were indications of the sovereign will of God in the matter. God had done as it pleased Him.

Jonah 1:16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

Jonah 1:17 Now 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.

The Lord prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah as soon as he plunged beneath the sea. The word "prepared" means: to appoint, order, assign. God arranged it that the fish should be there when Jonah was cast into the sea. Jonah's preservation in the belly of the fish for 3 days and nights can only be explained as a supernatural miracle. The skeptic's problem with Jonah and the great fish is not a lack of explanation but a lack of faith.

We are not required to explain Bible miracles; we are only required to believe them by faith. God had a job to be done. Jonah was still to be the messenger. The Lord graciously intervened and His prophet was miraculously spared.

After they did this (throw Jonah overboard), they became very fearful. It says it caused them to fear the Lord exceedingly, and that they offered a sacrifice unto God and made vows. When we see the hand of God fall upon a disobedient child, it should make us fear. Many are quick to vow great things to God in a day of trouble, but when the trouble is gone, they forget those vows. God expects us to honor the vows we make.

Ecc 5:4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.

Ecc 5:5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

Ecc 5:6 Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?

Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days. (72 hours). This was a type of Christ, in that our Lord Jesus Christ's body lay in the grave 3 days and 3 nights. (72 hours). And make no mistake about the identity of the fish. It was a whale.

Mat 12:39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

Mat 12:40 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.

This chapter clearly reveals not only the patience and longsuffering of God towards His disobedient servant but also the futility of running from God. God, in His love, will chasten every one of His rebellious children and when He does, the Bible declares it will be "grievous" (Heb.12:11). Such was the case with the life of Jonah.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.