

Jonah: Jesus the Missionary to all People

I. Chapters 1-2 The Prodigal Prophet

II. Chapters 3-4 A Change of Heart

Last week we looked the first of two small books both with prophecies to gentile nations; Obadiah writes to the Edomites (descendants of Esau) and Johan writes of his reluctant missionary journey to the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. Many people are familiar with this book and the first thing they think of is the story of Jonah and the whale but the Bible does not say that it was a whale instead it says that it was a ***great fish***. Further more it is mentioned only 4 times. Another thing people will remember is that it is a book about the preaching in a great city, (Nineveh, which was founded by Noah's great-grandson Nimrod Gen. 10:8-10), but it is only mentioned 9 times. Still others will remember that it is about a disobedient prophet, yet he is only mentioned 18 times. The most important character in this book is not the fish, a wicked city, or even Jonah. ***It is God!*** He is mentioned some 38 times in 4 short chapters. **In this book we will look at God working a wonder through us when He would rather work a wonder in us!** God is more concerned about His workers than He is about their work, *for if the workers are what they ought to be, the work will be what it ought to be.* In 2 Kings we find out that Jonah was a prophet during the time of the reigns of Jehoash, to Jeroboam II. During the reign of Jeroboam II the nation was in a time of great prosperity and national pride. They had regained the land that they had lost from wars and raids of the Assyrians'. In fact they had even expanded their boundaries. Yet with that said it was a time of moral & spiritual decay. Since Jonah was not speaking out against the nation like his contemporaries, Amos and Hosea, I'm sure he was quite popular with the people.

I. Chapters 1-2 The Prodigal Prophet

Of further interest is that Jonah was the son of Amittai, who according to 2 Kings was from Gath Hopher, which was a city about 15 miles west of the Sea of Galilee in the territory given to the sons of Zebulun. This was the very land that had regained from wars and raids of the **Assyrians** and the capital city of Assyrians' was Nineveh! Having Jonah go to Nineveh to preach to these folks would be about like him going as a Jew to Hitler's Berlin in the 40's.

Look at the message Jonah was to give to this city in verse 2 as he was to *"..cry out against it.."* because their wickedness had come before the Lord. Well no wonder he ran away from the call, it was a suicide mission. But that wasn't why Jonah was reluctant according to 4:2 as we are told that Jonah knew that, *"You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm."* Jonah was not afraid of the Ninevehites, no, **he was afraid of God's mercy towards them**. Notice the downward slide when Jonah decided to disobey in verse 3:

- 1.) **"flee...the presence of the Lord.."**: Know matter how you try to cut it when we don't allow God into areas of our lives, you are fleeing His presence.
- 2.) **"..down to Joppa.."**: Joppa was located in the area that was given to the tribe of Dan. which was the first tribe to turn away from God to idolatry. The first downward step we make away from the Lord is to get to an area that is more sympathetic with rebellion.
- 3.) **"...found a ship going to Tarshish.."**: Isn't it amazing how easy it always is to find a ship going in a direction away from the presence of the Lord? Ask yourselves is this thing I'm heading towards drawing me closer to the presence of the Lord or towards something else? The right direction is always obedience and closeness to God!

4.) “**...he paid the fare...**” : Make no mistake about, Jonah paid for his disobedience. The ship may be there waiting but you still are going to have to pay.

5.) “**...went down into it..**” : Not only did he go down to Joppa, but here he goes down even further into the boat. Notice it says that Jonah went “*with them*” a bunch of idolaters.

God’s response to Jonah’s disobedience is to send, “A STORM”. I love the fact that **God loves us too much too ever let us leave His presence!** Folks, if you think back over your life you will find many times that God has sent a storm upon your life to get you to turn back to Him! God not only sent a storm he prepared a “great fish” to swallow Jonah. The greater miracle of God’s is His grace in sending the fish to save Jonah! Jonah is being saved not because he deserves it, but rather because God loves Jonah, a prodigal prophet who would rather die then surrender to the will of God. Hey folks, if God will go to those lengths for Jonah He will do the same for you!

Chapter 2: There are some who believe that Jonah was actually drowned in the sea, as (verse 5 where Jonah says that the waters *encompassed me even to my soul*) further more in verse 6 Jonah says that God has, “*brought up his life from the pit.*” The salvation of Jonah was from the Lord by way of a “fish”. Can you imagine Jonah telling this story years later? “*I was drowning and went un-conscience and when I awoke I was inside this smelly slick and gooey thing, I later realized that it was a great fish!*” “*You might that the Lord saved me though this fish.*” I’ve heard of a COD-FISH but this is the first GOD-FISH. **Often times it is the things that we think are going to destroy us that God uses to bring us back to Life!**

Verse 10: I'm so glad that if the Lord is trying to speak to me and I won't listen then He will speak to a dumb fish and it will. Jonah's rebellion caused him to be treated as a foreign substance. It just goes to show us that disobedience in our lives ought to be something that we just can't swallow! Jonah may have felt as though he was heading nowhere but the great fish took him right where God wanted him to be right back dealing with his own prejudice.

II. Chapters 3-4 A Change of Heart

In these first four verses we are going to deal with how the Lord treats Jonah after his repentance, but first let me make a simple observation: **CHANGE IS NOT EASY!**

Verse 1 reads, "*Now the Word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time...*" This sentence gives me great hope because it shows us how God treats His children when they blow it and then come back to Him! God does not refuse to speak to him, the moment Jonah repents the "**Word of the Lord comes.**" In verse 2 see that this is almost the exact commission that the Lord gave Jonah in chapter 1:2, except that this time the Lord only tells him to go. When Jonah was told what he was to say he ran this time God tells him to go then He will give him the message. Folk's God is willing to work with us for He will only give us what he can handle. In verse 3 we are told what Jonah does with the Word of God as he, "**arose and went**". This is what God wants from those who stumble and fall, "**ARISE & GET GOING**".

Now notice what Jonah says in verse 4, "*Yet forty days, and Nineveh will be **overthrown**.*" This word here used for "**overthrown**" is the exact word used to describe the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. But I think that there was another reason for the reaction of repentance in the Ninevehites. Can you just imagine this guy coming into

your city, hairless and bleached white. Perhaps Jonah's story of rebellion had already reached Nineveh. Some guys were out there fishing from the shore when the fish belched Jonah onto the beach. "Man what happen to you?" "Well you see I was sent to preach against Nineveh and I didn't want to go so I went the opposite direction, and a storm was going to sink my boat so I went overboard was drown, then this fish swallowed me up and while in the fish I repented." "So all this happened because you were disobedient to Gods plan in your life?" "Yep!" **I believe that Jonah's message was received not just for the content but because they could see in Jonah the truth of what he taught, that rebellion and sin doesn't look good, or smell good and if you continue down that road it will eventually kill you!** When they heard Jonah's message and saw him they were looking at a man who had been dead and was now alive. And thought; "**If God would forgive Jonah when he did not deserve it maybe He will forgive us when we don't deserve it!**"

Chapter 4: How strange this first verse is in light of the success Jonah's message had upon the Ninevehites; one would think that he would have been incredibly pumped up after 600,000 people got saved! Yet we read that Jonah was not glad, he was mad!

Let me suggest to you two reasons:

- 1.) Jonah hated the Ninevehites, they were the most vicious people in the history of man kind and Jonah had witnessed their brutality first hand in his life as they came in with their raiding parties to his home town first.
- 2.) Jonah's message was more of a prophecy then an opportunity to respond, (Forty days and you die!). So when Jonah saw the reaction of the city he knew that his reputation was going to go down hill.

In verse 2 we are told why Jonah is mad at God, “for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.” Now that does not seem to be something that you or I would normally protest about God. “*Lord I’m just so ticked at you and do you know why? Well of course you do, Your just to darn good, kind, caring, loving, patient, & forgiving. I want you to cut that out!*” Jonah hates Gods grace towards those that he hates! Jonah has a great grasp upon the character of God here, but he had no grasp at all of how that should impact his own life towards others! Jonah’s is so bummed that he prays that God would just take his life. Now this would have been so much better if instead of asking God to take his physical life Jonah would have asked God to take control of his life so that his flesh might die. Instead Jonah says to God, “*Shed Your grace upon those guy’s; over my dead body!*” Oh how great it would have been if Jonah would of prayed, “Shed Your grace upon those guy’s; over the death to my self!” Folks, that’s our battle!

Vs. 4-5 I love this questing of the Lord here. God is trying to get Jonah to look at where his heart is at. So what does Jonah do? Well he goes for a walk up a hill that over looks the city. Why? Well verse 5 says that he waits to see what would happen to the city! Jonah is still hopping that Ninevehites might have been faking it. I’m of the opinion that Jonah waited there 40 days because that is how long he had told them they had until they were destroyed. So Jonah finds a good spot to over look the fireworks!

Vs. 6-8 God “prepares” three pieces of the puzzle for Jonah so that he might see the whole picture.

1.) Vs. 6 **A blessing**: As Jonah made that little lean too so that he could watch the fire works in the city below but it got hot, so the Lord prepared a plant to bless Jonah. It says

here that God saw that Jonah was in misery. Did Jonah deserve to be blessed? His attitude stunk, he had no compassion on those guys, and in fact he wanted them to be toast! You might say that he wanted them torched but he did not want to be scorched! So what does the Lord do with Jonah? Well, He blesses him with comfort when Jonah least deserved it. To show Jonah that **grace is never shed upon the deserving, only upon the undeserving!** God is showing Jonah first hand that grace is un-merited, undeserving, unearned favor! So God goes out and blesses Jonah not because he was worthy of it, not because of anything Jonah had done, but rather in spite of everything he had done! Do you realize that this is the first time Jonah has been happy in this book, and it's over a gourd!

2.) Vs. 7 **A Loss**: God prepares a worm to destroy what He had provided to bless Jonah. To show Jonah that he should not value the temporal above the eternal. The problem with Jonah was that he like us was far too comfortable with Jonah! Jonah was all caught up in earning Gods blessing, but had he done anything to earn the plant that provided him shelter? Jonah didn't plant the vine nor water it. He just enjoyed the benefits of it. Folks, God is going to strip away from you the things that you value above Him.

3.) Vs. 8 **A change**: If you are out in the hot sun and a scorching wind kicks up to where you start growing faint what would you do? You would MOVE! That's what God does here He sends this wind upon Jonah to get him to move. Jonah should have been down in the city ministering to all the new believers, but his heart was not in the right place.

God prepares:

- **A plant to reveal His heart of grace!**
- **A worm to reveal the heart of Jonah!**

- **And a east wind to get Jonah to move from his heart to Gods heart!**

Jonah wishes for physical death when he should have been doing to himself spiritually!

Oh Folks, if we just change a few words around here with Jonah's statement we would have it: "**It is better for me to die to myself, so that I might live!**"

IV.) Vs. 9-11 Plants Or People?

Vs. 9 Now Jonah did not answer Gods first question, so God again asks it only this time He asks it with reference to the plant that Jonah loved. Now if I was God I would have said, "*Jonah, your gourd for nothing!*" Jonah's only happiness was in a plant! now that's sad, but you know what I've sure let things rip off my joy, how about you? Poor Old Jonah out of his gourd over a gourd!

Vs. 10-11 Jonah, preached a message that brought a whole city to faith in God, yet he did not love a single one that preached to yet He loved a plant that he had nothing to do with.

Jonah loved a plant for what it gave to him and he hated the people for what they

did to him. Lastly God reveals to Jonah that there are 120,000 children there that did not know right from wrong. He had grieved over a gourd dying, but not about 120,000 children dying! Does this make you uncomfortable, because it sure does me.