

Jonah – The Rebellious Prophet

Text : **Jonah 1: 1-17**

INTRODUCTION :

- A. The book of Jonah is well known, but is an often misunderstood book.**
1. It is located among the “Minor Prophets.” (“*Minor*” indicates length, not importance.)
 2. BUT ... it is not primarily a prophecy.
 - a. It has only one line of prophecy in the whole book :
“**Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.**” **Jonah 3: 4**
 - b. It is an historical account of a prophet’s interaction with God. (*Quoted by Jesus*)
 3. It’s preserved in scripture to teach us a lesson we must learn it. (**Rom. 15: 4**)
- B. Many miss the lesson because they get hung up on the fish, whale, or whatever ...**
1. The main message of the book is to educate us about God’s interaction with man.
 2. Israel thought God was their national deity and not for anyone else. (**cf- John 3: 16**)
 - a. The Jews had a special covenant with God because of Abraham.
 - b. God has always been the God of all mankind. (**Isa. 2: 2-3, Joel 2: 28-32, etc.**)
 3. The book of Jonah reveals God’s love for all of His creation, even the animals. **4:11**
 4. It displays God’s providential work among the nations, preparing future. (cf- *Esther*)
- C. In addition to universal love, the book of Jonah reveals other attributes of God.**
1. Omniscience
 2. Omnipresent
 3. Omnipotent (*His Omni-Omni*) ** *Infinite in all His attributes.* **
- D. The consequences of rebellion against God are seen in the first chapter.**

I. Jonah’s great commission revealed. “The word of the LORD came to Jonah.” Vs. 1

- A. This is not Jonah’s first assignment from God. (Compare : **II Kings 14: 22-27**)**
1. **II Kings 14: 25** – He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher.
 - a. Jonah was an established prophet who spoke to the king concerning the nation.
 - b. Kings typically sought the opinion of prophets (*seers*) before going to war.
 - c. God had spoken to His people through Jonah. (*Hadn’t persuaded Israel to repent*)

2. CONTEXT : Jeroboam II was a wicked king, but God blessed Israel through him.
 - a. God can use even wicked people to accomplish His purposes. (*Babylonians*)
 - b. God demonstrated His faithfulness even as Israel rebelled against Him.
 - c. Israel was again restored the territory promised to Abraham. (*Judea was separate.*)

***Note :** *This demonstrates that peace and prosperity does not indicate that God looks upon a nation with favor. God refers to Israel as fattened cows.*

Amos 4: 1-2 Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria, Who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, Who say to your husbands, “Bring now, that we may drink!” ² The Lord God has sworn by His holiness, “Behold, the days are coming upon you when they will take you away with meat hooks, and the last of you with fish hooks.

** It’s better for America to learn the lesson from Israel before we follow her.*

B. We’re not told how, but the prophet was instructed by God in some way.

1. Prophets received word from God in several ways :
 - a. In dreams : **the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; I Kings 3:5**
 - b. In visions : **1 the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.**
3 the word of the Lord came expressly to Ezekiel the priest... Ezek 1:1-3
 - c. Delivered by angels : **So the angel who was speaking with me said to me,**
“Proclaim, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion.” Zech 1: 14
 - d. Moved by the Spirit : **2 The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me,**
And His word was on my tongue. II Sam. 23: 1-2
2. **You and I receive the word** of the Lord in the same way as God’s people of old. God communicated His will to selected men and they passed it on to us. **STUDY**
 - a. **II Pet. 1: 20-21** But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, ²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.
 - b. **I Tim. 4: 1** – But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,
 - c. Compare : **Acts 20: 23 , 21: 11 , John 16: 13** (*We must study their writings.*)

II. His commission was to “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it,” Vs. 2

- A. He was “Arise, go” to Nineveh. (*Personal involvement ... not send letter or invite*)
 1. He was to leave an easy job telling the king what he liked to hear.
 - a. It was a time of great prosperity and he worked in the capitol city. (*Luxury*)
 - b. Jonah had the prestige of being the king’s prophet.

- c. He was at the point in his carrier that others would envy, but he had to leave.
- 2. There were other prophets that God could have sent, but God chose Jonah .
 - a. Jonah was required to leave his well established life. (*Perhaps he had a family.*)
 - b. He was going to a strange city in a strange land with a different language.
 - c. The journey was long and dangerous. (*An alien in enemy territory*)

B. Nineveh was an intimidating city, probably the largest city in the world.

- 1. It was located across the Tigris River near modern day Mosul, Iraq.
- 2. It was the capitol of a super-power who was Israel’s arch enemy. (*It will destroy.*)
 - a. Walls 100 ft. tall and so thick three chariots could go side-by-side around it.
 - b. 1500 towers reaching 200 ft. high
 - c. Took three days to walk across the city. (*diameter, not circumference*)
 - * **Remember : Israel walked the circumference of Jericho 7 times in one day.**
- 3. It was the stronghold of the most cruel army in the world. (*Prophesied to destroy*)

C. Jonah’s message was to be a “cry against” Nineveh. “You’ve got 40 days !”

- 1. The Assyrians worshipped only one God (*viewed as creator*), but it was not Jehovah.
- 2. Jonah would be preaching a message against the Assyrians (*enemies*) and their god.
- 3. There was every reason for Jonah to fear preaching there.
- * **What would your response be if you were sent to preach in Tehran ?**

C. God challenges our faith and our faith challenges our fears.

- 1. God demands that we put our fears aside and trust Him. **HAVE FAITH !!**
 - a. *God never demands more than He enables us to do.*
 - b. What was to reason that the one talent man was condemned ?
 - Matt. 25: 24-25** And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. ²⁵ And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours. **His fear was not accepted as an excuse !**
 - c. Why did Peter begin to sink in the sea after walk out on it ?
 - Matt. 14: 28-31** Peter said to Him, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” ²⁹ And He said, “Come!” And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” ³¹ Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” **His fear was a lack of faith !**

2. Anytime we fear, we are out of the will of God.

II Tim. 1: 17 – For God has not given us a spirit of timidity (*fear*),
but of power and love and discipline.

3. Standing in the face of opposition creates faith to overcome fear.

Phil. 4:12-14 Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, ¹³ so that my imprisonment in *the cause of Christ* has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, ¹⁴ and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

E. You and I are simply told to tell the message of God to those with whom we come in contact as we go about in this world.

1. We are put in no danger by doing it.
2. We do not have to spend for long distant travel.
3. And yet most often we don't do it, we are timid, distracted, or both.

III. Like us, Jonah refused his great commission.

A. But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. Vs. 3

1. Nineveh was 500 miles east of Samaria.
2. Jonah took off in the opposite direction from where he was sent.
 - a. Joppa was about 30 miles west from the city of Samaria. (*Oldest sea port*)
 - b. Tarshish was more than 2000 miles west of Joppa. (*Imagine the cost of the fare.*)
3. Tarshish was at the outer edge of the known world.
 - a. It was about as far as one could go west. (*Didn't do it half way.*)
 - b. It was a mining area on the southern shore of Spain.

* *Christians today don't run away from God, they just don't go where He sends.*

B. His goal was to get so far away that God either could or would not use him.

1. Though he was a prophet, he did not have a good concept of God.
 - a. How could a prophet think he could get away with telling God no ?
 - b. How could a prophet think he could get where God could not see him ?

- c. He knew the words of Solomon :
- Prov. 15: 3** – The eyes of the Lord are in every place,
Watching the evil and the good. Cf. - **5: 21**
2. Perhaps he thought of Jehovah as just the God of Israel.
- a. This was to common belief among nations at the time.
- b. Each nation was thought to have its own god who protected it.
3. David lived 200 years before Jonah so Jonah had read and had sung the Psalms.
- Psa. 139: 7-12** Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.
9 If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,
10 Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.
11 If I say, “Surely the darkness will overwhelm me,
And the light around me will be night,”
12 Even the darkness is not dark to You,
And the night is as bright as the day.
Darkness and light are alike to You.
4. 50 years later Jeremiah had learned the lesson from Jonah.
- Jer. 23: 24** – “Can a man hide himself in hiding places So I do not see him?”
declares the Lord. “Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?”
declares the Lord.
5. When we go through the temptation process, God is aware of every thought.
- a. God knows the decision we will make even before we will make it.
- b. **Psa. 139: 2-4** You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my
thought from afar. 3 You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And
are intimately acquainted with all my ways. 4 Even before there is a
word on my tongue, Behold, O Lord, You know it all.
- c. Jonah’s attempt to escape was futile because God knew before he decided to run.
- * *We’re not told exactly why Jonah decided to run, but God knew before he did.*
6. This is a lesson each one of us must learn and make part of our thinking process.
- a. God sees everything , everywhere , every time. (*And God never forgets*)
- b. It does not matter if it is light or dark.
- c. When my son saw the Superman cartoon, he said, “*Superman has God vision.*”
- * *Every time we come in contact with a “Ninevite” God sees whether we
“cry out” God’s message to him or go hide in the ship to Tarshish.*

CONCLUSION :

A. All of the O.T. books are preserved for us because they teach us valuable lessons.

1. **Rom. 15: 4** – For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.
2. We cannot understand God without understanding His word.
3. We cannot understand God’s word without understanding the O.T.

B. We cannot maintain a relationship with God out of ignorance. (Rom. 10: 17)

1. **Hosea 4: 6** – My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.
2. We’ve become so involved in this life’s pleasures that we’ve neglected knowledge.
3. We don’t go to our Nineveh because we don’t know enough about God to understand the importance of obedience.

C. In Jonah we are being reminded about the nature of God.

1. He is all knowing.
2. Even though He knows our flaws, He gives us :
 - a. Opportunities to serve.
 - b. Opportunities to choose to obey.
 - c. Opportunities for eternal rewards. *But God must be obeyed.*

D. All of us have a Nineveh.

1. It may be our next door neighbor or someone we work with.
2. It may be a child or grandchild or even a stranger.
3. The important thing is not who it is, **but** that we “**arise, go and cry out.**”

INVITATION :

**Someone is waiting for God’s ambassador and YOU are that ambassador.
If you have not yet become an Ambassador, God is inviting you right now.**

Lesson Text :**Jonah 1: 1-17**

1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, **2** “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.” **3** But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

4 The LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. **5** Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten *it* for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep. **6** So the captain approached him and said, “How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps *your* god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish.” **7** Each man said to his mate, “Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity *has struck* us.” So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. **8** Then they said to him, “Tell us, now! On whose account *has* this calamity *struck* us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?” **9** He said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.”

10 Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, “How could you do this?” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. **11** So they said to him, “What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?”—for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy. **12** He said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm *has come* upon you.” **13** However, the men rowed *desperately* to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming *even* stormier against them. **14** Then they called on the LORD and said, “We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man’s life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O LORD, have done as You have pleased.”

15 So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. **16** Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

17 And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.