

Jonah: The Rebellious Prophet

3. Jonah: Running from God

The Call of Jonah



Jonah was called by God to deliver a message to the pagan cruel city of Nineveh. The mercy of God and his desire to save lost people is revealed in the life of Jonah. Nineveh had been through 2 plagues and total Solar Eclipse before Jonah arrives on the scene. The people's heart was open to hearing God's warning. Jonah was the man God wanted to deliver the message, even if Jonah rejected God's plans. Jonah refusal to deliver God's message to Assyria was a picture of Israel's rebellion against God's call.

Jon 1:1-6 ESV

- (1) Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,
- (2) "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me."
- (3) But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.
- (4) But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up.
- (5) Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep.
- (6) So the captain came and said to him, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish."

Running from God



Many principles can be drawn from the book of Jonah. Jonah did not agree with God's call because Jonah had sin in his heart, blinding him from God's perspective. Like Jonah, many times we do not understand God's reasoning, putting our interests above God's vision. Jonah was proud of his Israelite nation, he despised and hated Assyria, wanting God to destroy them. In his blindness Jonah rejects God's call in his life and runs in the exact opposite direction. God's plans were much bigger than Jonah, God wanted to use Jonah in a way he could never understand.

Jonah in many ways is a picture of the disobedient nation of Israel (Including Judah). They are called by God to deliver the message of the Creator to the pagan world, yet the nation was

indifferent to the status of the lost. Jonah on the boat was asleep as the ship was in the midst of the storm, the crew and ship were about to be destroyed. The crew was about to enter eternity. God was waiting for Jonah to pray, to reveal Himself to the men on the boat.

Jonah confesses

6 So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish."
7 And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.
8 Then they said to him, "Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?"
9 So he said to them, "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."
10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why have you done this?" For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.
11 Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?"-for the sea was growing more tempestuous.
12 And 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 this great tempest is because of me."

(vs.6) The captain: The security demonstrated by Jonah in the midst of the storm astounded the captain. How could Jonah just sleep while they were all in danger of dying? Either Jonah was a fool or Jonah knew something they didn't.

Today for example the world is desperate, Global Warming, the Environment, Nuclear War are all storms our world is enduring. Those who know the Lord is in control are not moved with the fears of this world; we know God is in control. In many ways Jonah was in similar frame of mind, he knew God controlled the oceans and the wind. He was secure in his knowledge, so he could sleep in the midst of the storm.

Sleeper: The captain woke Jonah out his sleep because the situation had become perilous. The captain wanted Jonah to pray to his God. Normally religion would have been a topic just like any ordinary conversation, everybody has their religion it all seems the same. The desperate situation demonstrated something unique about Jonah and His God. Why wasn't Jonah crying out and afraid like the rest of



men? Through Jonah's sleep God would reveal Himself. The pagans had their turn to cry to their gods and goddesses, now they would see the truth of the God of Israel revealed through the disobedient sleeping prophet.

(vs.7) Cast lots: At this point, Jonah still does not admit he is the cause. Jonah could have stopped the casting of lots and admitted he was the guilty party. Perhaps marked stones were placed in a container and the person who took out the marked stone was the guilty party. Casting lots is depending on a power outside to reveal the cause. Similar to rolling dice or putting pulling of lottery numbers.

Fell on Jonah: Jonah only admits he is guilty after the lot falls on him. This was a way of turning the situation over to random chance, where the gods would reveal

who was at fault. God intervened in the lot to reveal Jonah. Only after the lot does Jonah confess to what he has done.

Psa 22:17-18 ESV

(17) I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me;

(18) they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

(Vs. 8) Please tell us: OK, now the secret is out. They want to know Who, What, Why, Where and When...What is the story behind Jonah? These desperate men wanted to know Jonah's story. This opens up the opportunity of Jonah's witness. The storm provided the evidence of contrast between the gods of the mariners and the one "True" God of Israel.

Looking at Jonah from a personal practical application, our personal experiences can often open up an opportunity to share our faith. Jonah knew he was in rebellion against God, even in rebellion he does not deny God, but give him the credit. In our personal testimony, we can relate to a fallen world how God dealt with us to bring us to Him. God chastises those whom He loves, God gives us room to make choices but that does not prevent Him from protecting us from bad choices through chastisement.

Heb 12:5-7 ESV

(5) And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him."

(6) For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

(7) It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

(Vs. 9) I am a Hebrew: Though Jonah was Hebrew a descendent of Eber this was a more generic term then being an Israelite.

I fear the Lord: Jonah reveals to the men on the ship the God of Israel saying I fear *Yehovah*. Jonah identifies Him as the creator God, who was one. He alone made the Heavens, Earth and Sea as opposed to the many different gods of the pagans each with their respective areas of authority. (Exodus 20:11, Ps. 95:5) Greeks, Phoenicians and other believed in a pantheon of gods, the Thunder god, the sea god and etc... Even our days and months of the year are based on the pagan gods of the past.

Jonah identified himself with Creator God, who made Heaven and Earth.

Days of the Week	
Name	Origin
Sunday	The sun's day
Monday	The moon's day
Tuesday	The day of the Norse god Tyr
Wednesday	The day of the Anglo-Saxon god Woden
Thursday	The day of the early Germanic god Thor
Friday	The day of Woden's wife Frigg
Saturday	Saturn's day

(Vs. 10) Exceedingly afraid: The men now had come face to face with the Creator through the witness of Jonah. They saw themselves in the middle, a conflict between God and His prophet, they were third-party witnesses.

In many ways this is the power of Israel's witness. The events between Israel and God do not only affect Israel but the whole world. Israel is on the world stage like Jonah on the ship. These pagan sailors are the audience like the world is to Israel.

Why have done this? Our rebellion against God is part of our testimony, How God dealt with our rebellion, how God brought us back. The power of restoration.

he had told them: Jonah told the men on the ship he was fleeing from God's mission to Nineveh. The men seemed to have compassion on Jonah. Being Phoenicians, they also might know the cruel reputation of the Assyrians, so Jonah seems to have enlisted them in his help.

(Vs. 11) What shall we do: The "Light" of the Creator of universe gave Jonah authority with the men, they wanted Jonah to tell them what they needed to do. Jonah escape from God in many ways was suicidal, the men are putting him in control. *What shall we do?*

(Vs. 12) Pick me up: Jonah was intent on not going to Assyria. At this point Jonah might have prayed and asked God to forgive him. He chooses death over going to Assyria, he knew that being thrown overboard would be his death. Jonah refused to repent and ask for forgiveness and maybe God would cause the storm to stop, rather he wanted them to throw him into the Sea. Jonah thought, he might die but at least he will not help save these cruel Assyrians.

This great tempest is because of me: Jonah understood God was supernaturally intervening in the situation, but Jonah would rather die than help the Assyrians. Again, he did not see the world from God's perspective but from mans.

The events in the last days, the storms to come upon the earth will also be because of Israel. Jonah in many ways foreshadows Israel and the nations.



Figure 1 Phoenician Coin

Jonah was a likeable guy, he won them over to his cause, they wanted to spend more time with him. They attempt to save Jonah by rowing to shore. Typically, these ships would travel by moving along the coast of the land, the ship might have been traveling northward from Joppa toward the Asia Minor coast, so the mariners were trying to row back to land.

The men try to save Jonah

The shipmen clearly do not take Jonah's advice; Jonah seems to have won them over to his cause.

Jonah was a likeable guy, he won



13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them.

14 Therefore they cried out to the Lord and said, "We pray, O Lord, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You."

15 So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.

16 Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows.

(Vs.13) Nevertheless: These hardened seamen were won over by Jonah; they did not want to cast him into the Sea. He represented the Creator of the Heavens, Sea and Earth, they probably would have loved to hear about the God of Israel.

They could not: They were now fighting against the God of Israel like Jonah was running from the God of Israel. Who knows the final destiny of these men, they could have spread the message of the God of Israel to the land they would travel? For generations to come people would hear about the story of the fish and the storm and the God of Israel.

More tempestuous: The storm testified to the power of God. In the end, people must make the choice for their own eternity. The waves and storm were evidence to the God of Israel. In the end the men are won over reluctantly to the God of Israel through the tribulation of the events.

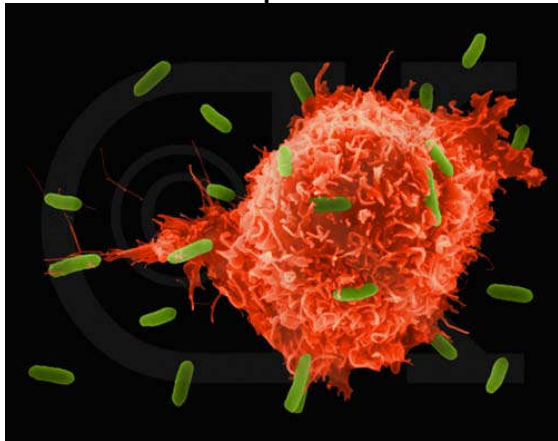
(Vs. 14) They cried...to the Lord: They now called out to the God of Israel *Yehovah*.

You, O Lord: The pray personally to the Lord calling Him "You".

(Vs. 15) So they picked up Jonah

The sea ceased:

(Vs. 16) Men feared the Lord: The men now feared the God of Israel, the LORD. So Jonah was successful in his witnesses even before he arrived in Nineveh. God can use our lives, even when we don't know we are being used.



God prepares a fish

17 Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

(Vs. 17)The Lord...prepared: The key to remember here is that God prepared the fish. So this could have been a fish we are familiar with such as a Whale or other type of sea creature. The point is the event is a miracle, the Creator of the universe prepared a fish for the event.

Swallow Jonah: The fish swallowing Jonah is mocked in the secular world because they reject something "Supernatural". They however fail to see we are surrounded by the supernatural. This Macrophage (White Blood Cell) is hunting E Coli bacteria on a level beyond anything we could see before the invention of the Electron Microscope. So, to image a man kept alive in the fish is understand the "Supernatural" world live in.

Personal Application: God can allow events to happen around us to get our attention, God loves us more than we can imagine. He will get our attention

fish three days and three nights: This does not necessarily mean 72-hours but could mean a portion of two days with a full day.

