

Jonah

- I. The Book of Jonah is the divinely preserved account of a reluctant, recalcitrant prophet whose deliverance from a three-day entombment for sin ironically became the model of the foremost sign of the messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth. **LUK 11:29-30.**
- A. He is an eminent example of a rebellious yet truly called minister of God.
EPH 4:8 c/w PSA 68:18.
 - B. He is also an example of the fearful consequences of a minister refusing his duty.
1CO 9:16-17; JER 48:10.
 - C. He was specifically a prophet who spoke of Christ and the church age, as did all the prophets. **ACT 3:24; 26:22-23.**
 - D. He was otherwise a man subject to the kind of passions we all face (c/w **JAM 5:17**) and a cursory review of him definitely shows him to be driven by passion.
 - 1. passion: Any kind of feeling by which the mind is powerfully affected or moved; a vehement, commanding, or overpowering emotion.
 - 2. He stands as a warning to all believers about the dangers of letting emotions govern the mind rather than making the mind govern the emotions.
PRO 23:19; 25:28; 2TI 3:4.
 - E. He preferred judgment without mercy in the service of the God Who rejoices in mercy against judgment (**JAM 2:13**) and was therefore a great object of the mercy he scorned.
 - F. Jonah was from Gathhepher. **2KI 14:25.**
 - 1. Gathhepher was of the tribe of Zebulun's inheritance. **JOS 19:10-13.**
 - 2. This region was known as Galilee. **MAT 4:15.**
 - 3. The chief priests and Pharisees were therefore terribly wrong in their challenge, "...Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (**JOH 7:52**).
 - G. Jonah's name signifies "dove," an interesting name for a sent minister of God who had a mandate to cry against sin and call men to repentance.
 - 1. Christ told His apostles that they should be "...harmless as doves..." (**MAT 10:16**).
 - 2. Ministers should be Christ-like, harmless (**HEB 7:26**), though they mourn (as doves mourn, **ISA 38:14**) over sin.
 - 3. The time when Jonah was harmful was when he was not doing his job. **JON 1:12.**
 - 4. Ministers who are derelict in their duty to call men to repentance are also harmful and shall themselves bear the guilt. **EZE 3:17-18.**
 - 5. Doves are also known to have "flown the coop." **PSA 55:6-8.**
 - H. Interestingly, years later after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the man who was first sent to preach repentance to the Gentiles was "...Simon, son of Jonas..." (**JOH 21:15**), a Galilean. **MAT 4:18; ACT 15:7.**
- II. Jonah was sent to preach against "...Nineveh, that great city...for their wickedness..." (**JON 1:2**).
- A. This was the capital city of the Assyrian empire, the Rome of its day.
GEN 10:11 c/w 2KI 19:36.
 - B. Profane history and archeology confirm that it was indeed an immense city with walls many miles in circumference. Yet for all of its greatness, it was exceptionally wicked.
 - C. But they repented in faith (**JON 2:5**). Let us therefore not assume that people living in great darkness are beyond the reach of God and that preaching to them is futile.
 - D. Their repentance was a condemnation of the Jews of Christ's day Who would not repent when a "greater than Jonas" with a greater resurrection than Jonas preached against them.
MAT 12:41; LUK 16:31.

- E. Sadly, Nineveh's repentance did not last. Nahum shortly after this prophesied their doom. **NAH 3:1-7.**

Chapter 1

vs. 1-3.

- A. Jonah was clearly called to *cry against* Nineveh. **v. 2.**
1. cry: To entreat, beg, beseech, implore, in a loud and moved or excited voice.
 2. Rebuking prophets were to “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet...” (**ISA 58:1**).
 3. N.T. ministers are similarly called to *rebuke* sinners. **2TI 4:2.**
 - a. rebuke: To beat down or force back; to repress or check (a person); to repulse. 2. To reprove, reprimand, chide severely.
 - b. chide: To give loud or impassioned utterance to anger, displeasure, disapprobation, reproof.
 4. Sin and impending wrath must be authoritatively addressed. **ACT 13:46.**
 5. Mind that the Ninevites' wickedness had *come up before the LORD*.
 - a. Funny how idolaters' wickedness never *came up before* their idol gods.
 - b. If anything, their idol gods sanctioned and demanded wickedness. **DEU 12:31.**
- B. Having received his commission, Jonah elected to avoid it. His reaction was not exactly, “...Here am I; send me” (**ISA 6:8**).
1. His reluctance was at least partially based on what he perceived to be the dissatisfying and contradictory nature of his mission. **JON 4:2.**
 2. He would look foolish, prophesying of wrath which wouldn't come. But willingness to be a potential spectacle is the lot of God's messengers. **1CO 4:9-10.**
 3. If Jonah's flight was based on fear, his fear was misplaced. **MAT 10:27-28.**
- C. Hiding from God, even at sea, is futile. **PSA 139:7-12.**
1. The LORD is not a geographically limited God like the pagans' gods. **1KI 20:23.**
 2. To turn from God is to be turned over to delusions. **2TH 2:11.**
- D. Jonah intended to flee to Tarshish.
1. That he found a ship going to Tarshish is NOT because God was blessing him. Beware of being governed by coincidences or circumstances! **ACT 28:3-4.**
 2. Tarshish was a maritime city noted for commerce. **1KI 10:22; EZE 27:12.**
 3. Jonah fell prey to what many ministers of God have fallen prey to: the allure of a place of worldly advantage when duty was calling to something else. **2TI 4:10.**
 4. This is the lot in general of the thorny-ground hearer of the word. **MAT 13:22.**
 5. The power of the call of commerce and prosperity played a significant role in the Jews' resistance to Messiah. **MAT 22:2-7 c/w HEB 10:34-35.**
 6. NOTE: If a person is bent on being someplace where God is not, a place or a people who are sold out to materialism is probably as good as any other.
- E. Ministers who reject known duty are usually poor choices for further work. **ACT 15:37-38.**

vs. 4-10.

- A. No ship is safe when amongst its boarders are those who defy God, not even the Titanic.
1. Mind that these verses present a man of God who was asleep to the imminent peril to which unbelievers were awake. **LUK 16:8.**
 2. Such are the delusions of sin: they numb us to things that even the brute creation accounts for. **PRO 6:6-11.**

- B. See how the LORD is God over all things, including the elements, which He uses to accomplish His purposes. **JOB 38:22-23; PSA 148:8.**
- C. The tempest was sent for Jonah's sake, not for the mariners. Yet they were imperiled by it.
1. Judgment begins with those closest to God to whom much has been given. **1PE 4:17; JAM 3:1.**
 2. Should we be shocked if the comrades or culture of deserting disciples are put to peril?
 3. See here a picture of corporate church judgment: the group falls under judgment for the sin of one. **JOS 7:1, 12-13; REV 2:14-16.**
- D. There is a mixture of wisdom and folly in the way the mariners processed their situation.
1. They *cried every man unto his god.* v. 5.
 - a. They were a marvelously diverse religious crowd, using the shotgun approach. Their uniting principle was ignorance.
 - b. They did not cry to the LORD though vs. 9-10 imply that they were familiar with Him. Many prefer gods and “truths” of their own choosing to the disregard of the God and the truth---and God will accommodate them. **JOS 24:15; MAT 7:13-14.**
 - c. When their efforts proved fruitless, they awakened Jonah to call on his God (v. 6). This implied that their gods were no gods, indifferent gods, deaf gods or powerless gods. Idolatry is truly stupid. **ISA 44:19-20.**
 2. They *cast forth the wares* (merchandise, goods, commodities to sell). v. 5.
 - a. Would that believers would be so wise. **MAT 16:26.**
 - b. Those that insist on being materially rich at all costs are prone to drowning. **1TI 6:9.**
 3. They assumed that their troubles were divine punishment.
 - a. Troubles should urge us to examine our lives since sometimes they are the chastening stripes of God. **PSA 119:67; HOS 5:13-15.**
 - b. But it is superstitious folly to automatically assume that troubles or dangers are the direct result of crime or sin. **JOH 9:1-3; ACT 28:4; 2CO 11:26.**
 4. They cast lots in superstitious inquisition for justice. v. 7.
 - a. This folly was based upon the faulty premise that troubles or dangers are always because of crime or sin. One error begat another.
 - b. The lot fell on Jonah because God rules over the lot. **PRO 16:33.**
 - c. Their superstition appears to continue in v. 8 as if they want to be able to guard against a repetition of their present distress by shipping with cursed men.
 5. Note the mariners' frightened response when they found out that Jonah was a Hebrew, a servant of the LORD. vs. 8-10.
 - a. God had said that He would use Pharaoh to make His name known throughout the earth. **EXO 9:16.**
 - b. For centuries, the nations knew of and feared the LORD God Who had His way in the sea. **JOS 2:10.**
 - c. Sadly, the man who had been sent as a reprover to the heathen ended up being reproved by heathen (v. 10). It is a bitter pill to swallow when unbelievers justifiably reprove a believer for the inconsistency of his profession.
- vs. 11-16.**
- A. Note that after Jonah was discovered, the sea still raged. Knowledge of the offender is not what abates the wrath of God; it is the execution of justice.
- B. Jonah never bothered to pray. Such would be futile; his sin was essentially a *sin unto death*. **1JO 5:16.**

1. This resignation is typical of those who have abandoned hope in hiding their sin from God.
 2. They reckon their damnation is just and justify God. **MAT 21:31-32 c/w LUK 7:29.**
 3. Their only hope is mercy. **LUK 18:13.**
- C. God's justice caught up with Jonah for his own sins but caught up with Christ for our sins.
- D. The scene in **vs. 12-13** bears similarity to Christ's disciples' reluctance to accept His account as to how justice must be satisfied. **MAT 16:21-22; 17:22-23.**
1. The mariners tried to avoid the necessary solution but wrath can only be abated by the means which God has ordained. **NUM 35:33.**
 2. They typify all who would seek favor with God other than through Christ and His sacrifice for sin. **GAL 6:14-15.**
- E. Curiously, this situation produced a conversion of sorts in these heathen. **vs. 14-16.**
1. Jonah's disobedience facilitated a conversion in these heathen before his obedience facilitated conversion in the Ninevites!
 2. God may be known by both the judgments which He does not execute and by those He does. **ROM 15:9; ACT 19:13-17.**
 3. The wicked and the troubled sea have much in common. **ISA 57:20.**
 - a. Thus Jonah "...made his grave with the wicked..." **v. 15 c/w ISA 53:9.**
 - b. But he could not promise any there with him that they would be with him that day in paradise. **LUK 23:43.**
 4. Note how peace came for the mariners. Through the judgment of sin in the depths of the sea, the wrath of God subsided. **MIC 7:19; COL 1:20; ROM 5:9.**

v. 17.

- A. God *prepared* a great fish to receive Jonah, even as He later *prepared* a grave for Christ. **JOH 19:41.**
1. Jesus called it a whale. **MAT 12:40.**
 2. Worry not over the subjective scientific distinctions between fish and mammals; it was a big marine creature such as was created on the fifth day. **GEN 1:20-23.**
 3. If God equates a whale with a fish, so be it! **ROM 3:4; MAT 11:19.**
- B. This is the first of four things which God *prepared for Jonah*. **JON 4:6-8.**
1. The Holy Spirit also revealed many *heavenly* things which God has *prepared for us* in Christ. **1CO 2:9-10; JOH 14:2; MAT 25:34; HEB 11:16.**
 2. Others pertain to this life and they are not all *gourds to shade us*. **PRO 19:29; HEB 12:6.**
- C. Jonah's burial and resurrection typify Christ's burial and resurrection to save us. **MAT 12:39-40; 1PE 1:3-4; ROM 4:25.**
1. Mind that the whale was a tomb for Jonah yet also a place of salvation.
 2. As the whale's belly could not consume nor continually hold Jonah, so the grave could not corrupt nor hold Jesus Christ. **ACT 2:24-27.**
 3. Jonah's being cast into the sea should have been his death but that a prepared whale's mouth and belly received him for a season until his "resurrection" was a case of "...Death is swallowed up in victory" (**1CO 15:54**).

Chapter 2

vs. 1-7.

- A. Jonah's choice of flesh over obedience had thrust him into a place of corruption (**v. 6**). Such is the lot of those who pursue the flesh. **GAL 6:8.**
- B. "Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly" (**v. 1**).

1. This is the first record of Jonah praying. No such thing is said of him when the shipmaster said unto him, "...arise, call upon thy God..." (**JON 1:6**).
2. The first record of prayer unto the LORD is that of the heathen mariners (**JON 1:14**)! It is a curious reproof when heathen show more faith in God than do the covenant people. **MAT 8:10**.
3. Perhaps Jonah's knowledge of his own disobedience had smothered his confidence as it had for Adam. **GEN 3:8-10 c/w 1JO 3:20-21**.
4. The belly of a whale was not the most commodious place for offering prayer but difficult environs or circumstances should not prohibit it. **1TI 2:8; ACT 16:25**.
 - a. NOTE: Thick blubber is no barrier to prayer but should rather excite it. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden..." (**MAT 11:28**).
 - b. Neither is our personal inadequacy a barrier to prayer since the Spirit has promised to help us in prayer. **ROM 8:26**.
5. Jonah cried unto God because of his affliction. **v. 2 c/w JAM 5:13**.
 - a. Jonah had played the fool and won affliction which drove him to prayer. **c/w PSA 107:17-19**.
 - b. God's chastening rebooted Jonah to duty and acting like a minister. **PSA 119:67 c/w 2CO 6:4**.
 - c. Why do we neglect prayer until we are in trouble? It was when Jonah's soul fainted within him that he remembered the LORD (**v. 7 c/w PSA 107:5-6**). Rather, we should always pray and not faint. **LUK 18:1**.
 - d. Sometimes it takes affliction to remind us of our dependency upon God. **2CO 1:8-10**.
6. Jonah had been *swallowed* alive and was facing *mortality*, and thus he prayed for deliverance, "...that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (**2CO 5:4**).
 - a. He longed for the redemption of his body from corruption. **c/w ROM 8:21-23**.
 - b. He longed for deliverance from the power of the grave. **c/w 1CO 15:54-55**.
 - c. The hope of resurrection power is everywhere in Scripture!
7. He cried "...out of the belly of hell..." (**v. 2**). This was a hell from which a man may pray and God hear him to deliver him. This cannot be said of the hell of torment *after* death. **LUK 16:23-26**.
 - a. Jonah here experienced some of the horrors of hell itself.
 - b. He was under God's judgment as are those in hell.
 - c. He was cast out of God's sight and separated from Him as are those in hell.
 - d. He was trapped in a deep place of darkness as are those in hell.
 - e. These are sorrows, torments and horrors of the soul in which Jonah for his own sin formed a type of Christ who suffered similar soul distress (and more) because of our sins. **ACT 2:31**.
 - f. Compare Jonah's description of his troubles here with **PSA 88:7, 15-17**.
8. Jonah deemed himself as cast out of God's sight. **v. 4**.
 - a. But his faith overcame his perception: "...yet will I look again toward thy holy temple" (**v. 4**).
 - b. A believer may, because of tribulation or persecution, be "...cast down, but not destroyed..." (**2CO 4:8-9**).
 - c. A believer may, by not reining in bodily desires, be made a castaway (**1CO 9:27**) in that he loses his inheritance or office in God's kingdom.
 - d. But thankfully, God's faithfulness to His covenant is such that His elect are not permanently cast away. **ROM 11:1-2, 25-29**.

- e. Faith in God's eternal covenant promises gives the believer hope that temporal separation from God is not permanent separation from God and that there is forgiveness with Him Who is ever faithful. **PSA 130:1-5; LAM 3:18-24.**
 - f. Even though he was cast into the deep, he hoped for God's holy temple. Afflictions and chastening should not crush but enhance our longing and enthusiasm for God's house. **ISA 38:22; PSA 27:4, 13.**
9. NOTE: Jonah never died physically here and thus in that sense *his flesh saw no corruption* (the destruction of anything, esp. by disintegration or by decomposition.... decomposition as a consequence of death; dissolution).
- a. Yet he said, "...yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption..." (v. 6).
 - b. This would seem to agree with what was said of Christ in **ACT 13:34-37.**
 - c. Thus, "corruption" in **JON 2:7** and **ACT 13:34** must refer to the *place* of corruption, not the *condition* of corruption.
 - d. The record does not indicate that Jonah's body was in any way digested by the whale's gastric juices.
 - (1) Neither did Daniel's brethren's bodies bear any indication of the fire in which they were cast. **DAN 3:27.**
 - (2) It is truly "...of the LORD'S mercies that we are not CONSUMED..." (**LAM 3:22**).

vs. 8-10.

- A. **vs. 8-9** imply that the idol-worshippers reneged on their vows or perhaps rendered their vows unto their idols. c/w **JON 1:16.**
 - 1. God will hold accountable those who renege on their vows to Him. **ECC 5:4-6.**
 - 2. Jonah, though, resolved to be faithful to his vow if God should save him.
 - 3. "Salvation is of the LORD," not of lying vanities or any other name. **ACT 4:12.**
- B. Jonah spoke to God but God spoke to the whale. Answers to prayers for deliverance may come from God speaking to nature. **ACT 4:31; 16:25-26.**
- C. The whale did not just vomit out Jonah into the sea to be swallowed again or destroyed some other way. It deposited him safely on dry land and had no more claim on him. **v. 10.**
 - 1. The grave likewise could not hold Christ nor reclaim Him. **ACT 2:24; 13:34.**
 - 2. In Christ's resurrection, believers have assurance of FULL deliverance to safety. **JOH 6:40; 11:25-26; 1TH 4:14-18.**
- D. This chapter, so richly figurative and prophetic of Christ's entombment and resurrection, has been relegated to the realm of fantasy and fable by many as has the account of Christ's entombment and resurrection. **MAT 28:11-15.**

