

Jonah Notes

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Introduction:

Jonah is a historical account. (Jesus referred to him in Matt. 12:39-41; 16:4; Luke 11:29-30)

Jonah had a prophetic ministry that preceded this book. (1 Kings 14:25)

Jonah means “dove.”

Chapter 1:

1:1 – “Jonah” – He was contemporary with Joel, Amos, and Hosea.

- “Amittai” – means “true to God.”

1:2 – “Nineveh” – The capital of the Assyrian empire.

- Located 550 miles northeast of Samaria, on the east bank of the Tigris River.
- The Assyrians were known for their cruelty: skinning people alive, impaling them on sticks, cutting tongues or eyes out of victims, beheading entire villages and leaving their heads outside the city gate, raping women, tearing open pregnant women, leading away captives with hooks through their noses, lips, or shoulders.
- At the time of Jonah, Egypt and Syria were still the dominant world powers. Assyria was just coming onto the scene.
- And at this time, Amos is prophesying in Israel that the Assyrians will be coming to take the nation captive.
 - This is like sending a Jew to speak to Nazis.
- Bible critics used Nineveh as a reason why the Bible wasn’t true until archeologists uncovered the city in 1834.
- “wickedness has come up before Me” – As with Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - Jonah 3:8 takes specific note of their violence.

1:3 – “Jonah arose to flee” – We hear why in Jonah 4:2, “Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.”

- Jonah has become nationalistic. He seeks God’s favor for His own people, but not for those who have traditionally been enemies to Israel. He has confused politics with evangelism.
- Jonah has come to feel that his will of his life is better than God’s will for His life.
- “from the presence of the Lord” – Jonah knows the Lord is “the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land” (v. 9). So fleeing from His universal presence is useless. Instead, Jonah must be trying to flee God’s manifest presence.
 - It is in God’s manifest presence that we know the reality of God and find fellowship with God.
 - “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?” (Ps. 139:7)
- “down” – In chapter 1, Jonah keeps going down.
- “to Joppa” – Located on the Mediterranean Sea.
 - Joppa is where, at the house of Simon the tanner, Simon Peter heard the call and vision to take the gospel to the Gentiles. (Acts 10)
- “to Tarshish” – Referring to Spain or Great Britain.
 - Jonah is going as far west as he possibly can.

- 1:4 – “the Lord sent out a great wind” – God’s sovereignty brought this storm.
 - Sometimes obeying God can be hard; but disobeying Him will be even harder.
- 1:5 – “the mariners were afraid” – Must be a crazy storm to scare these guys.
 - Sometimes the storms of our rebellion put those around us in danger.
 - “every man cried out to his god” – There is not an atheist on the boat.
 - “threw the cargo...into the sea” – There comes a time when all our ships start going under that we’d be willing to throw all our stuff overboard.
 - “Jonah...was fast asleep” – This seems to be a sleep of resignation.
 - Be careful not to confuse apathy with God’s peace.
- 1:6 – “call on your God” – It is bad when you are condemned for your lack of spirituality by unbelievers.
- 1:7 – “the lot” – “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.” (Prov. 16:33)
- 1:9 – “a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord” – The sailors seem to be aware of the God of Israel.
- 1:10 – “men were exceedingly afraid” – They seem convinced that Jonah is the reason for this storm.
- 1:12 – “throw me into the sea” – Jonah would rather die than repent. He has made up his mind that he is not going to Nineveh.
 - God will prove to be more stubborn than Jonah.
- 1:14 – “We pray” – Is this a revival.
 - “the Lord” – The men are speaking to Yahweh.
- 1:16 – “Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly” – They fear the calm more than the storm.
 - “a sacrifice to the Lord” – Did they become genuine believers?
- 1:17 – “prepared” – Lit. “appointed.”
 - “great fish” – The NT word can be a “sea monster, whale, or great fish.”

Chapter 2:

- 2:1 – “Then” – It took 3 days in the belly of a fish for Jonah to turn to the Lord.
 - God breaks Jonah’s stubbornness.
- 2:2 – “because of my affliction” – The reason for Jonah’s praying.
- 2:2-9 – There are 5 or 6 references to the Psalms in this prayer.
 - Some scholars even believe that Jonah died and resurrected in the belly of the fish because of some of the terminology used here.
- 2:3 – “You cast me into the deep” – This is entirely between Jonah and God. He makes no mention of the sailors throwing him into the water.
- 2:4 – “Yet I will look again” – A picture of Jonah’s faith.

- 2:5 – “Weeds” – (Heb. “suph”) The Hebrew word for the Red Sea is the “Yom Suph.”
- 2:6 – “mountains”- Scientists speak of the mountain ranges undersea.
 - “You have brought up my life” – The first mention of Jonah going up.
- 2:7 – “I remembered the Lord” – Jonah is likely recalling what he knows of God from Jonah 4:2.
 - Was there even a time when Jonah didn’t want that mercy for himself?
- 2:8 – “worthless idols” – Jonah worshipped his own self interest.
 - “worthless” – Lit. “empty, vanity.”
- 2:9 – “sacrifice” – Looking to substitutionary atonement.
 - The sacrifice of the NT church is the “sacrifice of praise.” (Heb. 13:15)
 - “voice of thanksgiving” – Is Jonah singing praises in the belly of the fish?
 - “pay what I have vowed” – Jonah will fulfill his ministry obligation.
 - “Salvation is of the Lord” – Our salvation is dependant upon God.
- 2:10 – “the Lord spoke to the fish” – This fish is more obedient than Jonah.
 - “it vomited Jonah onto dry land” – Jon Courson referred to 3 modern accounts of men being cut out of a fish/whale belly. All three were bleached white and hairless from the stomach acids of the fish.
 - Jonah himself will serve as the greatest witness of God’s judgment and mercy. His testimony is more “who he is” than “what he says”
 - Jonah’s life will serve as a sign long after his words and Nineveh are gone.
 - “onto dry land” – The fish had been moving the entire time. As Jonah has been struggling with surrendering to the will of God, the fish has been getting him closer to land.

Chapter 3:

- 3:1 – “the second time” – God’s will for Jonah has not changed.
 - God is the God of the second (and many more) chance.
- 3:3 – “Nineveh was an exceedingly great city” – The city was 27-30 miles in diameter; the circumference was over 60 miles. The city wall was over 100 ft. high and 25-30 ft. wide. The wall contained between 1,200-1,500 towers over 200 ft. tall. The city contained 600,000 adults and over 120,000 children (Jonah 4:11).
 - “three-day journey” – It seems to take three days to walk from one side of Nineveh to the other.
- 3:4 – “Nineveh shall be overthrown” – The extent of Jonah’s message.
 - “overthrown” – The same Hebrew word used to describe the “destruction” of Sodom.
- 3:5 – “from the greatest to the least” – All the city has repented.
 - Apparently, revival is not dependant on the messenger.
- 3:6 – “Then word came to the king” – This repentance starts with the people. It is not commanded by the king first.
- 3:8 – “evil...violence” – They repent of the very things they are known for.
- 3:9 – “Who can tell?” – Their repentance is without promise. They do all this based on this hope.

3:10 – “God saw their works” – Repentance looks like something.

- “God relented from the disaster” – This is exactly what Jonah didn’t want to happen.
 - It is easier to discipline someone else’s child.
 - God deals with all of us as our sins require.

Chapter 4:

4:2 – “slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness” – From Exod. 34:6-7.

4:3 – “take my life from me” – Jonah would rather die than see Nineveh spared.

- Sometimes we feel like God is quick to get us when we mess up, but Jonah knew of God’s love and mercy better than most of us do.
- Jonah may not want to go back to Samaria and be known as the prophet who preached to the Assyrians to see them come to repentance.

4:4 – “Is it right for you to be angry?” – Jonah doesn’t answer God here. He just walks off.

4:5 – “what would become of the city” – Jonah is hoping for the worst.

4:6 – “very grateful” – This is the only time in the book that Jonah is happy.

4:7 – “it withered” – God is trying to break through Jonah’s selfishness.

4:8 – “God prepared” – In Jonah, God prepared a storm, a fish, a vine, a worm, and a wind.

- “east wind” – The Sirocco.
 - Jonah could easily have gone into the city to find shade from the heat and sun.

4:9 – “it is right” – Jonah is more concerned with justice than with mercy.

- We can all too easily get more concerned about our stuff and easy life than about the eternal souls of those around us.

4:10-11 – “pity” – Used twice. This is the idea of God’s mercy.

4:11 – “cannot discern between their right hand and their left” – Young children.

- Ezek. 18:23, 32 – God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

Conclusion:

Nineveh will eventually be destroyed in 612 BC. 80-150 years after Jonah.

What is God looking for from Jonah?

- He wants Jonah’s heart to be in fellowship with God’s will and desire.