

Jonah

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To God be the glory!

The compiled teachings through
the book of Jonah from 2024.

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Chapter 1

Who is Jonah? Jonah is one of the bibles minor prophets and is the son of a man named Amittai from Gath Hepher in Galilee. Historians feel this book was written somewhere around 800 B.C.

As we go through this smaller book of the Old Testament my hope is to uncover and bring out some things that you haven't thought about before.

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.”

So why is Jonah considered a prophet? Well it states that God had given Jonah a message to to bring to the people of Nineveh. A prophet in the Old Testament is a person regarded as an inspired teacher and a pro-claimer of the will of God.

As we know in those days God worked with people directly and today God works with people through scripture. The Jonah of today receives a message from God through the Bible and then delivers that message to others. In some sense that makes us all Christians prophets to some extent or another.

Now we also like Jonah, have been given a message from God and are called like Jonah to go out and deliver this message. Our Message is Sin, Christ crucified, faith and repentance.

Here is the question, are you? Or are you running from God like Jonah is going to?

So what was this evil talked about in verse 2 that had God call Jonah to go there?

We need to look in the book of Nahum to get a better picture of it.

Nahum 3:1-5 ~ Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and plunder— no end to the prey! 2The crack of the whip, and rumble of the wheel, galloping horse and bounding chariot! 3 Horsemen charging, flashing sword and glittering spear, hosts of slain, heaps of corpses, dead bodies without end— they stumble over the bodies! 4 And all for the countless whorings of the prostitute, graceful and of deadly charms, who betrays nations with her whorings, and peoples with her charms. 5 Behold, I am against you, declares the LORD of hosts

It goes on -

10 Yet she became an exile; she went into captivity; her infants were dashed in pieces at the head of every street; for her honored men lots were cast, and all her great men were bound in chains.

This calling to Jonah is to expose the evils of this place. It's not much different for us today, we are to do much the same. We are to expose the darkness of evil and bring into it the light of the holiness of God.

Without exposing evil and in contrast showing God, the need for salvation is unfounded. In other words people need to know why God is against them and their evil ways so that they can then see the need for a savior.

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.

I always say we need to hold up the truths of scripture to our own lives and evaluate how we are doing as a Christian and even if we are really a Christian at all.

I'll ask again, are you running from God and the calling He has given you in the mission as a Christian to go out into the world and share the gospel? If you are, I would urge you to stop running and submit to God and His calling for you.

If not will it take God bringing upon you something like what He is about to bring upon Jonah?

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.

You see even though Jonah fled, God didn't give up on him. God still had His hand on Jonah and is now going to create circumstances in which Jonah will repent and come back to God and fulfill his will. Scripture says there is a point in which God may remove his hand from someones life who does not submit.

Is God still working on you?

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.”

Jonah is now understanding that he has left God and God's will to follow his own path. See Jonah doesn't see the need anymore to call out to God. Jonah understands that this great storm is most likely due to what he has done and again he runs away to the only place he can at this point and that is below deck to fall asleep.

Jonah's “freewill” has taken him to this place and this is the most common place “freewill” will take you if you truly have it.

Definition of Freewill

Romans 3:10-11 ~ As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.

That is freewill in action, it knows no other way as scripture says.

We at times are much like Jonah in that when God commands us to do something we often at times run from that which He asks.

So this brought about a question, what are you running from? What in scripture has God commanded of you that you like Jonah are running? Because I think we all do at times and we need to pinpoint what that is and stop running from it and do it. We need to repent.....

As we start today by these seamen casting lots in order to find out who on the ship is bringing about Gods wrath.

We have seen in scripture before the casting of lots in order that God may provide an answer to a question. It seems to be a common thing. I'm not sure I would count on God responded in this manner today.

7 And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.

It's Jonah the “sleeper” as he was called last week when he was found hiding below ship from the supernatural storm God has brought about.

When it comes time for God to expose who you are in your rebellion to him He will find a way to do this. Our running away solves nothing, if anything you will just make God even more mad and disappointed with you. Even more you may just put others around you in harms way as well.

I have heard some say that there are certain types of sin that don't effect others but just effects the self but I'm not sure that's the case.

That storm or that lightning bolt or whatever God decides to use may just afflict harm on others and possibly others you love.

8 Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?”

And Jonah responds “Hi I'm Jonah the sleeper and a runner from God” LOL NO

The others are asking questions in the hope that they can figure out what exactly Jonah could have possibly done to bring this upon them.

They may have thought Jonah may not have even known so they took it upon themselves to try and figure it out. But Jonah is well aware of what he has done.

9 And 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.”

Now honestly I find this answer from Jonah a little troublesome. See I don't believe that Jonah feared God at all. If he did he wouldn't have run to begin with.

10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

It seems these others are more afraid of Jonah's God than Jonah is himself. There is no indication that they even know Jonah's God is but they know Jonah messed up and that his God is making a statement to Jonah to get his attention.

11 Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. 12 He said to them, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you."

Basically Jonah is saying kill me, because he could not have expected to live from being thrown overboard. Notice what he didn't say, he didn't say turn the ship back so I can go to Nineveh. Jonah would rather be dead than to go where God told him to go. Jonah has no intention of repenting.

13 Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.

The grace of these men towards Jonah is shown here because they didn't just automatically throw Jonah over. They decided to fight the storm again and fight as hard as they could to get to shore.

In the face of being wronged by the sin of Jonah they showed grace. They showed grace to someone who they had not known for very long and to someone who had brought harm against them. This says a lot about these men, these were good men.

14 Therefore they called out to the LORD, “O LORD, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you.”

They called out to God because they were conflicted. They didn't want to die for the sins of Jonah yet they didn't want to sin themselves by throwing Jonah overboard to die. But a decision needed to be made.

15 So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. 16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

Salvation is making a vow to God himself that you will do what you are called upon to do. It is a covenant between an individual and God that you will hold up your end of the covenant and God will of course hold up his end.

How are we doing with that?

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

God brought the storm in order to persuade Jonah to fulfill God's will and when that didn't work God did not allow Jonah's will to thwart His plan but instead took steps a little further to insure Jonah did what God called him to do. God appointed a fish to swallow Jonah.

Now not only did Jonah's will not prevail but I am sure this great fish had other plans for the day as well. God's will effects everything no matter if it's a person, an animal, fish or bird, the weather and everything else that has been created. Nothing is outside the will of God when God imposes His will.

One may say that Jonah being inside this fish for three days and three nights is impossible. They may say that there isn't any air or that the stomach acids would eat him up. If God can create a storm and have a big fish swallow Jonah I am sure Jonah's survival within that fish was taken care of by God as well.

I wonder what Jonah was thinking the moment he found himself in that fish? Do you think his understanding of the authority of God quickly improved?

I would say Jonah for the first time in his life was beginning to understand the relationship he had with God and his position in this relationship. Jonah began to understand that he was merely the creation while God was the creator.

I think a lot of Christians today are much like Jonah was prior to this point. I think they misunderstand who God is and the relationship they have with Him. I think that they feel that their will is in some way superior to God and His will. Those people are highly incorrect in their understanding.

Chapter 2

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, 2 saying, “I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.

At the moment Jonah came to a true realization of the authority and majesty of God and he prays. Jonah realizes his position and his powerlessness in the face of God and humbles himself to Him.

Jonah is a story that resembles really every story in scripture in that God's will, always wins over the creations will. If that were not the case then God would not be God.

3 For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me.4 Then I said, ‘I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.’ 5 The waters closed in over me to take my life;the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head 6 at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God.

Sometimes it takes a lot for us to submit to God. Sometimes it even takes us being swallowed by a great fish. Do you have a story like this? If not a fish what was it for you? What did it take?

7 When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. 8 Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. 9 But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay.

Repentance and a re-commitment at times is what's needed in the life of a believer. This could be exactly what's needed to make you the strong committed Christian God wants you to be.

Have you ever had to do this? Are you in a place in life right now where maybe you need to do this?

I can tell you that when you fully give yourself to God and allow Him to use you for every want of His everything in life changes for you.

I have seen God do miraculous things not only in my life but in situations He has put me in for His glory and purpose. Maybe not like what Jonah is experiencing but just the same powerful things.

Are you willing to give yourself to God in a way where you hold nothing back no matter what He asks of you? Are you ready to do the things you were always afraid to do for Him because of what people thought?

If not will you ever be ready?

Salvation belongs to the LORD!"

Salvation belongs to the Lord! He is the one who starts that flame in you and nurtures that flame in you until you you

want nothing else but to give your life over to Him.

10 And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

God's will always happens!

Chapter 3

Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.”

God is giving Jonah yet another chance to repent and follow through with God's will and repent from his sin.

Romans 9:19 ~ For who can resist God's will? The answer is no one. Once God wills something into motion it will happen 100% of the time if that is what He wants. You can try to resist, you can try to overpower God's will, you can run and you can hide but when God wills you to do something you will do it one way or another or it could be His plan is to set you free.

Hebrews 12:3-11 ~ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. 4 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 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?

8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Jonah, has just been put through a string of God's discipline. Will it make him stronger? Will it make him weaker? Will it do nothing? Will he finally listen to God and do what is commanded of him? Only time will tell.

Do we all believe this is the word of God? Do we all believe when we read it God is speaking to us? Every time we read it God is giving us another chance to do what he says.

Mark 16:15 ~ And he said to them (Jesus), “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.

God is speaking to us once again, will we obey His command?

3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD.

It seems Jonah has bent the knee to God finally doesn't it? This is a great sign and first step.

Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. 4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" 5 And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

When we speak the word of God those in whom God is speaking to will respond. They will hear God's voice and they will respond. And they will respond in the way intended or else they will end up like Jonah having to be persuaded.

There is though another group though, those in which God is not speaking to.

Romans 1:24 ~ Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

This is God removing His hand from someone or a group of people. God has spoken and compliance or repentance did not happen thus God said He is done with them. They will not feel God's hand on them anymore urging them along to do His will and God will let them fall to their own desires.

For us today we may not feel God encouraging us to go out and share the gospel as He has commanded us. This is a sign that God is letting us fall to our own desires and ways, that because of our unwillingness to repent He is letting us go. That would be us falling from His grace.

But Jonah, he decided to come back to God. It is much like the story of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. God will accept us back if we repent and obey His will for us. God is a loving father.

Over the years I have seen many that have come to the alter not seeking to profess their salvation, but rather to profess to God that they repent and are sorrowfull for falling away, or backsliding, and will willingly repent and submit to His will once agin.

If that is you I would encourage you to do just that no matter if it is here at the alter or at home on your knees. The importance is to do it no matter where you decide.

6 The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

This king did not hear Jonah speak directly, but it says the word reached him, and yet still the power from just that alone moved this king to put on sackcloth as if he was a common slave. (ashes = ground)

I have been given the gospel by someone, I then shared the gospel with others and they then shared the gospel with even more. That is the power in God's word, you don't have to hear them spoken by God himself, the power travels with His word from person to person to person.

Romans 1:16 ~ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Did you know what power you wield with the gospel? Not your power but the power of God. You can save souls by just repeating God's words.

Taking lives is easy, you just need to be a little crazy, or depressed, or mad. But saving souls that is something that only God can do, and He does it merely through His words being spoken.

By the words of God you can be one of the most powerful beings on this planet by just speaking. Kings and presidents would have nothing on you. You can be the poorest person money wise yet be one of the most powerful there is just by speaking some words, some very powerful words.

7-9 ~ And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, 8 but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 9 Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish."

The king has just turned into a pastor or preacher. The king understand his responsibility to his people now to encourage them, to guide them, to humble himself before them and show them the way.

Who are you a king or queen to over your little kingdom?

How can you humble yourself to them in order to bring glory to God by leading them to Him?

Imagine the celebration that would be in heaven to have this church filled every week. Good and faithful servant comes to mind.

10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

Many take this word relented and twist it all around to make God seem imperfect or ignorant. God gives options to us, repent or face the consequences. God does not destroy people once they have repented, what kind of God would He be if He did that. He wouldn't be the God of the Bible.

Luke 15:7 ~ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Are there really righteous people? No, we are credited the righteousness of Jesus as a believer but we or no one else has any righteousness of their own. Everyone needs repentance.

Chapter 4

Malachi 3:6 ~ “For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.”

We see the same thing in Malachi as in Jonah. God had given the people an option thus He relented from destroying them and instead gave them grace. It is an option that has been around since the beginning of creation and will be around as we had seen when we read through Revelation.

God doesn't work any differently today, He is still unchanging in how He deals with nations and individuals alike.

Are we as an individuals living in a state of repentance or are we still living in a state of rebellion? Rebellion or sin is anything that goes against what scripture says or in some way does not fulfill something we are called to do.

How about as a nation? Are we as a nation growing in Christianity and repenting and fulfilling our calling?

If the answer to either of these or both of these is no why not? We are in many ways responsible for both.

So Jonah was forced to go to Nineveh by God and reluctantly did what God had commanded of him, and Nineveh repented.

1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry.

Jonah was mad, he was mad that those he had hated repented and were given mercy and grace by God. This story could fit as easily today as it did then. Not much has changed it seems.

I can't count the times people were angry because I had repented and was saved. They wanted nothing less than for me than to fail. They hated that God had given me grace and purpose and called me to the work of the ministry.

Understand I am talking about Christians and I'm not talking about just when I was saved, it still happens fairly often to this day.

We should be rejoicing at God's work in the life of those He has saved no matter who they are. If they were in some way an enemy, once God saved them they then became our brother or sister in Christ. We then love them and nurture them in their journey as a new believer as best as possible.

So why was Jonah so angry? We know Nineveh was a wicked country but did Jonah have a bitter heart? Was it jealousy? I'm sure it was some of both.

2 And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.

Jonah is not only angry about the people of Nineveh but in some ways he is angry at God.

This again is what Jonah is angry at God for **“I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love”**, isn't that the most sad and ridiculous thing for a professing believer to be angry about?

The very things that saved Jonah made him angry when God saved others. What this shows is Jonah's misunderstanding of who he was as a sinner in need of being saved.

Jonah thinks that in some way he was deserving of his salvation and others are not. Jonah is as undeserving as any there ever was or would ever be, and it is no different for us.

Once we think that we are deserving or more righteous than someone else we have then diminished grace, and we have made it like trash.

3 Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

Anger, jealousy, a misunderstanding of God and a misunderstanding of God's ways.

In some ways Jonah may be right though, that it would be better for him to just die. But it isn't because of God or Nineveh, it is because of himself. There is a complete disconnect in biblical reality in Jonah at this point.

If you want to know why it is so important to me how I teach and my trying to be as thorough as possible it is just this reason. Christians are stuck in their first grade understanding of God and scripture when most should have a masters degree.

If you can make it through elementary school, high school and for many even college but you don't see the value of the same effort in understanding scripture there is something wrong with your priorities.

There is nothing as important as your understanding of scripture, nothing.

4 And the LORD said, “Do you do well to be angry?”

What God is saying to Jonah here is Jonah you are wrong, you don't have the right understanding of me, you think you got it right but you don't.

Now Jonah was a little at a disadvantage in his time compared to today. Jonah didn't have a complete understanding because scripture wasn't complete yet. We are so blessed today and so many don't even know it.

Jonah isn't done with his little temper tantrum yet as we will see in these last verses. The lesson that God is attempting to teach Jonah is about sharing the saving message He had given Jonah to give to these undeserving people, and it doesn't seem to be getting through to him. Jonah has become hardened and rebellious.

What have we learned about this story and our calling to share the message we have been given? Are we fighting God? Are we rebellious? Do we think others are not deserving to hear it?

Have we learned that God's will is always what comes to fruition no matter if our will is in conflict with it or not?

5 Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city.

Why do you think Jonah was sitting around waiting to see what happened in the city? Do you think he was hoping for their success or hoping for their failure?

I have no doubt Jonah was waiting around hoping for their failure so he could say to God, see God I told you, they weren't worth your effort or mine, you should have listened to me God, I know what is best.

That is what we do when we refuse to share the gospel with others, we tell God we know what is best and He doesn't. We tell God others are not deserving of His patience, mercy and grace only we are. So let's see how God response to Jonah and his little temper tantrum.

6 Now the LORD God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant.

God's response to Jonah is to give him more patience, to give him more mercy, and to give him more grace.

There is this saying, it is "kill them with kindness" I think this is what God is doing here. What it means is as bad as someone is being to you return it with kindness. The hope is that the kindness will kill the poor attitude. That something inside that person will tell them how much of a jerk they have been.

Really it is telling them how good God is. We are reflecting God by doing this, undeserving kindness mixed with patience, mercy and grace.

Love incorporates these things doesn't it? The way we show love is by having kindness, patience, mercy and grace towards another who may be undeserving of it.

7 But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. 8 When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint.

God is showing Jonah a comparison of what it is like to be in His undeserving favor and what is like to not be in His favor.

See God hasn't given up yet on Jonah. Patience, kindness, mercy and grace is still on display. It is a what we are to reflect again and again and again to others.

Don't give up on people, I can guarantee you giving up is what they expect you to do.

So how does Jonah react now to what God has done?

8 And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

Jonah is one tough nut to crack isn't he? This is the third time if my recollection serves me well that Jonah wanted to just die over this. He still hasn't learned the lesson God is trying to teach him.

Jonah should have been overjoyed by Nineveh coming to God. He should have thought, well I'll be God was right. He should have been amazed at the power of God's words and the effect it had on them. He should have been reminded how retched he was and how God shed these same blessings on him. Jonah should have, but he didn't.

9 But God said to Jonah, "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?" And he said, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die."

Again this phrasing can be tricky, God is saying to Jonah "you don't understand Jonah, look what I am trying to show you. You are mad that I took away something you didn't deserve in the first place. You didn't cherish that grace when it was given to you.

10 And the LORD said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. 11 And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"

Jonah, you didn't deserve it like Nineveh didn't deserve it, and you still don't get it.

Do we get it? I pray we do.