

13076-E September 11, 2013

Jonah

“One greater than Jonah is here.”

Matthew 12:41

I. Jonah, the man and his message

a. The Man:

- i. Jonah was a real prophet in Israel, who lived and ministered in the mid-8th century BC, roughly around 750BC. He was from the town of Gath-hepher, which is northeast of Nazareth.
- ii. The book of Jonah is not the first place we see Jonah; the first place we see Jonah is in II Kings 14:25, where he prophesizes in northern Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II.

- b. **The Message:** Jonah’s message to the people of Nineveh was one of doom and destruction. He reluctantly walked into that great city and proclaimed, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned” (Jonah 3:4).

II. Jonah, the book:

a. The book of Jonah is essentially about three people:

- i. A Hard-Hearted Prophet, Jonah.
- ii. A Wicked Nation, Assyria.
- iii. A Compassionate Lord

- b. **What’s it *not* about?** A great fish.

- i. The fish is just a vessel the Lord uses to accomplish His purposes, just as He used the sprouting vine in chapter 4, and the parasite that devours the vine and then the east wind that torments Jonah. They are just instruments God appoints and uses to accomplish His purposes.
 - ii. One commentator says, “In a way, it is a shame that this most familiar part of the book has attracted so much attention, for such attention detracts from the purpose of the book.
- c. Outline of Jonah
- i. Chapters 1 & 2: Jonah Flees from His Calling.
 - ii. Chapters 3 & 4: Jonah Fulfills His Calling.

III. Sailing Through Jonah

a. Chapter 1: Jonah’s Disobedience & The Lord’s Sovereignty

- i. Jonah’s Running from the Lord-- He wants absolutely nothing to do with God’s plan.
- ii. The Lord appointed or ordained His creation to stop Jonah’s running and to draw him back. First, he sends the wind that creates the storm, and then He ordains a great fish to deliver Jonah.
 1. Some of you have kids or grandkids who may have made a profession of faith in Christ at one time and yet seem to be running from the Lord right now....take assurance, they can’t flee from the Lord. The Lord will use whatever means to draw His kids back, including you, so don’t give up praying for them, but take assurance that the Lord knows where they’re at, and He’s at work

behind the scenes using His creation, both people and things to draw them back.

2. Now some of you, may be like Jonah, where the Lord has spoken plainly to you about something He wants you to do that fits within His redemptive plan and you've been running away from it for whatever reason. If the Lord has spoken to you about ministering to someone or some group and you've been running away from His assignment, let me encourage you to stop resisting His call, because again, He will use whatever means, including a great fish to bring you to a point where you'll submit to Him and His mission, as He did Jonah.

b. Chapter 2: Jonah's Deliverance and Thanksgiving

- i. This is a song of Thanksgiving—Jonah's prayer is not a request to be saved *from* the fish but is a prayer of thanksgiving for being saved *by* the fish.
- ii. He recognizes the fish was not an instrument of God's judgment, but rather an instrument of God's deliverance, since it saved Jonah from death by drowning.
 1. No matter where we're at, the depths that we sink to due to our own sin, that the Lord still hears and answers our prayers! Here's Jonah at the bottom of the ocean, inside of a great fish and he prays to the Lord and the Lord hears his prayer and answers him! Your

sin is never too great; your predicament never too difficult, you've never sunk too far for the Lord not to hear you.

c. Chapter 3: Jonah's Obedience & The Lord's mercy

- i. The Lord gives Jonah a second chance to serve Him. (Verses 1-2)
 1. Although at one time Jonah had run away from God's work, he was given a second chance to participate in God's work! You may feel like you're disqualified from serving the Lord because of past disobedience and there may be a season of discipline followed by restoration, but the Lord's not done using you. You may yet have another chance, the question is will you be obedient the next time He calls upon you to serve Him?
- ii. Large Scale Repentance Takes Place in Nineveh through the Proclamation of God's Word. (Verses 4-10)
 1. These were the Assyrians, these were Gentiles, these were Israel's enemies, these were people who had done horrible things...these are people that from the outside probably never would have looked like they'd respond to God's Word----and yet they did when someone was faithful enough to proclaim it!

d. Chapter 4: Nineveh's Deliverance & Jonah's Displeasure

- i. Jonah's prejudice against the people of Nineveh has not been completely removed from him yet. (Verses 1-4)
 1. It's interesting, Jonah was very thankful when the Lord's mercy was extended to him, but very, very angry when the Lord's mercy

was extended to the people of Nineveh. How quickly we forget that we're all on equal footing before the Lord—that we're all rebellious, jacked-up sinners who are only alive today because the Lord has extended His mercy to us.

ii. The Lord's Object Lesson for Jonah. (Verses 5-10)

1. Jonah was more concerned with his own interests, his own comfort and his own well-being than he was about a city that contained more than 120,000 people who the Lord cared deeply about.

IV. Closing: The Book of Jonah closes with a question---so let's ask some questions in closing.

a. What's Jonah teaching the people of Israel?

- i. Remember this book has a context; it's a book of the prophets, therefore, we should expect the Lord to be instructing His people through it. He's teaching and showing Israel is that He will certainly forgive His own people if they repent of their sins and turn to him. So it's not just good news for Nineveh; it's great news for Israel.
- ii. Unfortunately though, they never learned the lesson and the Lord sent Israel and Judah away into exile because they didn't respond to the warnings of the prophets.

b. What's Jonah teaching Us? It's teaching us that God's grace stretches to us, wherever we are.

- i. Maybe like Jonah, you're running from God, trying to flee His presence. Maybe like the people of Nineveh, you've done horrible, unspeakable

things and you think you're too far gone, too messed up for God to want to redeem you.

ii. Please, listen: God loved and restored Jonah. God loved Nineveh.

Idolatrous, cruel, barbaric, Nineveh. That in itself is a sign that He loves and reaches out to you. God's pursuit of the Ninevites is proof that His grace stretches to you, wherever you are!

iii. If God wants to restore a runaway prophet like Jonah, and forgive such wickedness as that of Nineveh, than what Jonah teaches us is that God wants to forgive you of your sins.

c. Well, how will the forgiveness of sins come about? Through the True and Greater Jonah: Jesus is the greater Jonah, because unlike Jonah, Jesus had the Father's heart concerning those who were perishing.

i. Jonah ran from his assignment; Jesus ran toward it.

ii. Jonah came only because he had to; Jesus came because He wanted to.

iii. Jonah sat outside the city and hoped for Nineveh's destruction; Jesus stood outside Jerusalem and wept and pleaded for her salvation.

iv. Jonah delivered his message simply to save his life; Jesus delivered his message knowing it was going to cost him his life. .

v. Jonah was thrown overboard into the sea because of his sin; Jesus was cast into the sea of God's wrath for our sin.

vi. Jonah was taken down into the depths of darkness for three days because of his disobedience; Jesus was taken into the darkness of death for three days for ours.

- vii. When God's mercy was extended to Nineveh, Jonah wallowed in self-pity and cursed God. Jesus depicted Himself as a Father who yearns for the return of His son so badly that He runs to meet him and forgives him before he can even say I'm sorry.
- viii. Jesus is the True and Greater Jonah—who's message is not one of condemnation, but rather, one of salvation.
- ix. Jesus' message to you, through Jonah, and through the rest of the Bible is that His grace stretches you to, wherever you are, but you must make Him the Lord and Savior of your life.