

JONAH

Who was Jonah?

Recorded in Jewish, Moslem and Christian tradition.

A Prophet in the Northern Kingdom from Gath Hepher, near Nazareth 2 Kings 14:25

Lived about 800 BC was an older contemporary with Amos and Hosea

Previous history of prophecy for Israel. 2 Kings 14:25

Reported grave was destroyed by ISIS in 2014 in Mosul

Why is Jonah important?

- Jesus mentions Jonah twice – Matthew 12:38-39 and Matthew 16, Also recorded in Luke 11:
- A picture of His burial and resurrection – the only sign Jesus will give.
- A warning to repent

Book of Jonah

Called to deliver a message that God cares for the whole world – not just Israel. Like Peter and Cornelius and Paul's call to the gentiles. Relevant for us today. We can get caught up with our own Christian world – but God cares about the WHOLE world.

A prophet sent to a heathen city to announce destruction but only as a means of winning them to repentance.

It declares God's care for the world and not His exclusiveness which Israel considered for themselves, seen in Jonah's reluctance.

He had to consent with his will and make the sacrifice as we all do. We must yield our will, bury our prejudices and sacrifice our tastes and preferences and say Not my will but Your Will Lord. Here I am send me.

Jonah didn't want Ninevah to be blessed – He wanted Israel to retain those privileges. He had an elder brother attitude. – We can have an elder brother attitude about new fields....what about us?!

Tarshish was at the other end of the world from Ninevah. The Jews were not sailors and the choice of sea escape shows his stubborn determination.

Falls asleep – in denial, exhaustion escaping from God?

The heathen idol worshippers have a sense of dependence on something greater to save them and pray. They are courageous battling the storm and do everything they can to save the ship. Even knowing Jonah's crime they try to save him and the ship in the storm.

When they do through him over their cry is for forgiveness. They have more grace and mercy than Jonah

When they are saved from the storm they begin to worship Jonah's God.

Jonah 1 The Call – The Storm – The Wake Up Call

Go to Ninevah

Ninevah - Capital city of Assyria, enemies of Israel. Located in current day Iraq. Found in last century in archeological digs in Mosul.

- 1,200 x 200ft high towers
- Surrounded by 100ft high wall, foundations of polished stone, wide enough for 3 chariots
- 60 miles in circumference
- Magnificent palaces, hanging gardens, temples, libraries and more – all built by foreign slaves

Assyrians –

- known as the cruelest most sadistic people in world history
- led their captives with fish hooks in their mouths and noses connected to ropes dragged thousands of people over rugged terrain to captivity.
- Chopped off noses, hands and feet of victims leaving them to bleed to death.
- Skinned victims alive or beheaded
- Furniture made from human skin
- Pyramids made from human skulls

Understandable why Jonah didn't want to go –

- But it wasn't fear of the Assyrians
- It was fear of God's mercy
- He didn't want them to repent and receive mercy – He wanted judgment and revenge.

Jonah's Mind Set:

- Jonah runs as far as possible in the opposite direction from the Presence of God.
- He puts patriotism and self-righteousness above God's call to evangelize his enemies.
- He doesn't understand God's heart, His kingdom or His purposes.
- God sends Peter to the Centurion to show the Jews He cares about all people.

Read Isaiah 55: 6-11.

- God's thoughts are not our thoughts.
- His word is to go out to all people and will not return void.

The Storm

God sends a storm – a Manah – God's appointing/ordaining our days.

- We cannot move against the wind of the Holy Spirit - it's too difficult, it's a struggle.
- The Pagans cry out. They are dependant in the storm and pray.
- Jonah is asleep in the bottom of the ship – exhaustion? Denial?

Jonah Gets a Wake Up Call

- ⁶So 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.”
- Are we sleeping while lost people around us need prayer in the storms of this world?
- Jonah remembers who He is and whose He is. He gets clarity and knows what he needs to do.
- Confession of faith, identity and purpose accepts the outcome
- We have to surrender to the call of God – whatever the cost. We cannot run from Him. It affects others as well as ourselves.
- The pagan men have more grace and mercy than Jonah for Ninevah, they don't want to kill him.
- The sea becomes calm. When we change our course and repent, the will of God brings peace and the wind of God moves us in the right direction without effort and struggle.

My testimony - Moved in opposite direction from God in Greece. Storm got back and delivered me back to God. And only then did the colleagues in Greece see God and repent and turn to Him

Jonah 3 - God prepared a fish

- The fish is like the cocoon – a wilderness place where there are no distractions, where we have to come face to face with ourself and our destiny, to live or die.
- Jonah takes 3 days before he prays and repents
- It takes a fish, a cocoon, a wilderness or a pit to cause us to cry out to God in desperation, desolation.
- If we want revival we need devastation and desolation
- The Pit brings repentance and renewal
- Jonah remembers God and prays
- Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own mercy – God alone is our mercy there is no one else who can help us.
- When we confess the Lord alone can help us – He is Lord – God delivers us.
- God delivered Jonah onto dry Land
- All the time Jonah was in the fish – the fish was moving Jonah to the place of God's will
- Psalm 71:20-21
- *You, who have shown me great and severe troubles,
Shall revive me again,
And bring me up again from the depths of the earth.*
- ²¹You shall increase my greatness,
And comfort me on every side.
- You may think the pit is a one time event but it's not. We can never get lazy or assume our flesh will never go back to the pit. We must be on our guard continually.
- 2 Corinthians 3:18 we are being transformed from glory to glory. What takes us to glory is the experience in the pit – a revival of our hearts towards God, a desperation, a reminder of what's truly important – no other God but Him
- The pit brings us to closer encounter with Mark 12:30 ³⁰And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment.

Jonah 3 - God of Second Chances and Grace

- God hadn't changed His purposes for Jonah or for Ninevah
- Ninevah is 3 days walking distance - from day one – revival breaks out.
- Word gets to the King – you never know how far the repentance will have impact.
- God relented from destroying this wicked city!
- No matter how bad the abuse – God's heart is to redeem and save – not to destroy

Testimony of VN – how far it has gone in 7 years

Jonah 4 - Jonah's Mind v God's Mind

- Jonah not at all happy with God's heart. He is displeased!
- He knows God's character, He has experienced His mercy and grace but He doesn't want God to extend His mercy and grace to others.
- He prays – he'd rather die than see his enemies receive mercy.
- God asks – *"Is it right for you to be angry?"*
- Instead of encouraging these new believers, discipling them, teaching them about God, he sulks. He sits outside the city.
- He builds a shelter to sit under – but God in His mercy provides a better one to protect him and Jonah is very glad for the plant – for God's blessing. He is willing to receive God's blessing but not to pass it on.
- God sends a worm to destroy the plant and a wind to blow on him - Jonah gets angry.
- Again God asks Jonah - *"is it right for you to be angry?"*
- God ask Jonah – is it right that he cares more for the plant than he does for Ninevah.
- Jonah does not have God's mind or heart. He doesn't understand God's mercy and grace even though he has experienced it.
- Jonah is selfish – as an Israelite and as an individual. Concerned only with His own comfort not with God's concerns.

How does this apply to us?

- Do we have God's mind and heart for the world?
- What group of people are you unconcerned about?
- What group of people or person have you treated without mercy in your heart?
- Are you prejudiced by Color? Race? Economic status? Church denomination? Experience?

Which part of Jonah's story do you most identify with?

How do we prepare for numbering our days, for God's appointment and ordaining of our days?

Prayer.

Jesus said:

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those

who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so? ⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Reflection:

- Which person or group of people does God want me to love and show mercy and grace that I am with holding His blessing from?
- What is in my heart or mind that prevents me wanting to bless them?

Fear?

Resentment?

Anger?

Un-forgiveness?

Disappointment?

What should our Mindset be?

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earths one

- What mindset do we need to have to reflect Jesus?
- How can you show some one, or a group of people - that you value them above yourself and your own thoughts and feelings?
- What is one way that you could reach out to unbelievers around you, or in another country or culture to show them God's love, mercy and grace?
- What can you do to impact non-believers in your community and in other areas?

PRAY GIVE GO

Praying for un-believers: Acts 26:18

open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light,

and from the power of Satan to God,

that they may receive forgiveness of sins

and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.