

JONAH 1-2

INTRODUCTION...

- **THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD**
 - o We finished **Obadiah** - the 31st book of the Old Testament - 8th of 16 prophetic books in the OT...
 - o We will start **Jonah** - the 5th of what is known as the 12 Minor Prophets...
 - o So open the Bible to the Book of Jonah - perhaps the best known of all the Minor Prophets!
- **1ST - WHO WAS JONAH...**
 - o Jonah (*dove*) was one of several prophets to the rebellious Northern Kingdom...
 - o The only one that we have mention of outside of the prophetic books they wrote - **II Kings 24**...
 - o He was the son of Amittai (*truth*) - there were no last names in the Bible - son of...
 - o He was from the - Gath Hopher (*in Zebulun*) - about 3 miles north of the city of Nazareth
- **2ND - WHEN WAS THE BOOK WRITTEN...**
 - o 1st - Jonah in the early years - 841 B.C. - the end of the reign of King Jehoram...
 - Israel had been divided for 150 years - and had yet to have a Godly King in the north...
 - The current king Jehoram was the grandson of the wicked king Ahab and Queen Jezebel!
 - In **II Kings 9:1-13** - Elisha summoned one of the 'prophets' to go to Ramoth Gilead...
 - Jewish tradition says this was Jonah - in his early years as a prophet!
 - Jonah was to take 'Jehu' into a back room and anoint him as the new King of Israel...
 - Fulfilling the command of God given to Elijah the prophet - **I Kings 19:16**
 - Then the Jonah was then to open the door - and run for his life (*it was a coup d'état*)!
 - The question could be asked why did Elisha send Jonah - why not go himself...
 - Anointing a new King was a BIG deal - and Elisha was certainly the MOST qualified!
 - You might think it was because it was VERY dangerous - 'run for your life'...
 - But Elisha was not one to be afraid - he had stood up to whole armies - **II Kings 6**
 - I think it was more about preparing a new generation of prophets to serve the Lord!
 - **The best person for the job - is not always the most talented / experienced...**
 - **The most gifted teacher - the wisest leader - did not start out that way...**
 - **At some point they were shy to get up in front of others - unsure of what to say...**
 - **But someone gave them an opportunity - and they stepped out in faith and learned...**
 - **Great Godly men start as ordinary men - who were given a chance to step out in faith!**
 - o 2nd - Jonah in the later years - 50 years later - 792 B.C.
 - In **II Kings 14:24-25** - God fulfilled a prophecy of Jonah (*mentioned by name*)...
 - God had seen the wickedness of Israel - but God was not ready to blot them out...
 - So God used an ungodly king - Jeroboam II - to save his people and give them more time...
 - Fulfilling a prophecy of Jonah to Israel - God would spare them for a time (*70 years*)...
 - Meaning Jonah had seen the Mercy of God - holding off judgment to a wicked nation!
 - Ultimately Israel would be conquered in 722 B.C. by Assyria...
 - This makes Jonah the first of the 'Minor Prophets' to prophecy to the Northern Kingdom
 - The others - Amos and Hosea - prophesied during the final years before the Diaspora
 - The events of this book most likely take place around 100 years before the fall of Israel

RUNNING FROM THE LORD... (2 THINGS)

- **1ST - REFUSING TO OBEY GOD... VS. 1-16**
 - o 1st - Go to Nineveh... vs. 1-3

- The Word of the Lord came to Jonah to go to Nineveh (*Mosul – Iraq*)...
 - Nineveh was the capitol of the up and coming superpower – the Assyrian Empire...
 - It was a very old city – perhaps the oldest – built by Nimrod in **Genesis 10:11**
 - It was a ‘great’ city – it took 3 days to walk across it (*estimated at over 50 miles*) - **Jonah 3:3**
 - That was not just the walled city – it had to also include all of the ‘suburbs’...
 - The walled city was said to be 100 feet high – and wide enough for chariot races...
 - The city had an estimated population of over 2.5 million!
- The Assyrians who lived there were polytheistic – with over 2400 gods in their pantheon...
 - They were also a particularly cruel people – that used fear to keep others subjugated...
 - So it makes sense that their wickedness had come up before God...
 - But at a time when Israel was spiraling into depravity – and ultimately destruction...
 - It does raise the question – why would God send Jonah to Assyria and not Israel!
 - Jonah is unique among all the prophets because he is the only one never to mention Israel!
 - But that may be the point – Israel refused to listen to a litany of passionate prophets...
 - Yet Nineveh would repent at the half-hearted warning of a reluctant one!
 - **In Acts 8:26 – God told Philip to leave Samaria and go into a deserted place...**
 - **The natural questions might be ‘why’ – but Philip just got up and went!**
 - **Because God knows where the ‘fishing’ is good – and will always try and direct us there...**
 - **And if we are willing to listen and obey we will see people come to the Lord!**
 - **Yet we often make the mistake of questioning the opportunities God gives to us...**
 - **We see the new job / or change of location – as a burden and curse...**
 - **Or that person who God puts on our doorstep – that we really wish would go away!**
 - **But God has us there so we can use it as an opportunity to share the Love of Christ!**
- Jonah got up - and ran to Tarshish...
 - He went to Joppa – on the coast of the Mediterranean – and bought a ticket to Tarshish...
 - Nineveh is to the east of Israel – Tarshish was WAY to the west in modern day Spain...
 - Jonah was running from the presence of the Lord – apparently he never read **Psalms 139:7**
 - He was not afraid of Assyria – or for them – he was afraid God would forgive them...
 - Jonah wanted God to judge Assyria – to him they were the enemy!
 - **Jonah 4:2 – “I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know You *are* a gracious and merciful God.”**
 - **God does not just call us to love those we like – He calls us to those we despise...**
 - **It is easy to love someone - if they love us back - are a blessing to us...**
 - **How about if they really irritate us / what if we cringe every time we hear their name...**
 - **The mark of the Love of Jesus is even being able to love the unlovable!**
 - **Luke 6:27-35 – “But love your enemies... and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.”**
- o 2nd – No where to run... vs. 4-10
 - The Lord caused a great wind on the sea – perhaps a euroclydon – **Acts 27:14**
 - Violent storms that blow in from northeast and hit the Mediterranean with ferocity!
 - The ship was in danger of breaking apart – and the sailors were terrified...
 - They began to throw their cargo overboard – and pray to their various gods...
 - But Jonah was in the belly of the ship – sound asleep!
 - The captain came down and had to reprimand him – pray to your God to save us!
 - But Jonah was sleeping to hide from the fact he was responsible for the storm!
 - **In Mark 4:38 – the Disciples were in a storm – but Jesus was sleeping on a pillow...**
 - **The Disciples woke Jesus up – do you not care we are perishing!**
 - **Jesus rebuked the storm – ‘peace – be still’ – and asked the Disciples why they were afraid!**
 - **He told them they would cross over – and the storm was not greater than his Word!**

- There is no question there will be storms in life – but God is the one who allows them...
- They might be there because – like Jonah – we are trying to hide from the Lord...
- Or they might be there because – like the Disciples – we are not putting faith in the Word!
- Either way the solution is simple – turn back to the Lord – only He can calm the storm!

- The sailors decided to cast lots (*draw straws*) to see who caused the storm...
 - The lot fell upon Jonah – and they began to ask all about him...
 - What did he do / where was he from / what was his nationality / his religion...
 - Caught – Jonah came clean and confessed he was running from Yahweh – the God of Heaven
 - The God who made the sea and the dry land - the men were exceedingly terrified!
 - Because they had gotten caught up in the consequences of the sin of Jonah!
 - When we are disobedient to the Lord – we end up hurting those around us
 - We often make the mistake of thinking that our choices only affect us...
 - If we choose to sin – only we face the consequences – we are not hurting others...
 - The truth is that our lives affect many people – our kids / family / friends...
 - Either indirectly by our example – or directly as a result of our actions!

o 3rd – Tossed overboard... vs. 11-16

- The men asked Jonah how to stop the storm (*it was getting worse*)...
 - Interesting the confession of Jonah did not stop the storm – in fact it got worse!
 - Jonah confessed – but only because he was caught – he was not asking to go to Assyria!
 - **II Corinthians 7:10** – “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”
 - If we do not turn from our sinful ways TO JESUS – we will not change...
 - True repentance is seen through a transformed life – no longer doing the same things!
 - But if we do not repent – God is more than able to make the storm get worse!
- Jonah told them to throw him overboard – only then would the storm stop...
 - I do not think that God was demanding the life of Jonah – this was his idea...
 - Jonah was still rebelling against the Lord – he would rather die than go to Assyria!
 - But the men refused and tried hard to row the ship back to the safety of land...
 - Yet in spite of their best efforts – the storm continued to rage against them!
 - It is hard to see someone destroy their lives with poor sinful choices...
 - We often feel compelled to step in and try to save them from their consequences...
 - But in truth we are getting in the way – they need to be broken / humbled!
- So they cried out to Yahweh – do not let us perish for the life (*sins*) of this man...
 - And they picked Jonah up – and they threw him into the sea – and the storm stopped!
 - And the men feared Yahweh – and they all offered a sacrifice and took vows to the Lord!
 - It was through the storm – that these men became believers in Yahweh!
 - When God used Moses to bring the Israelites out of Egypt – He used 10 plagues...
 - God easily could have just wiped out the Egyptians – and let his people go free...
 - But God was not just saving Israel – He was making Himself known to the Egyptians!
 - **Exodus 7:5** – “When I show the Egyptians my power and force them to let the Israelites go, they will realize that I am the LORD.”
 - Certainly God could keep us from difficulties – He could make our lives very easy...
 - But it is in the hardships that God gets to be magnified – He shines through our lives...
 - It is easy to worship Jesus when everything is going well – no one notices...
 - But when we get sick / bad things happen – just like they do to everyone else...
 - And rather than complaining about life – we rejoice in the goodness of God...
 - Then people stand up and take notice – through our trials they see Jesus in us!

▪ 2ND – IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST... 1:17 / 1-10

- o 1st – After 3 days... vs. 17
 - The Lord prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah...
 - Here in lies one of the great stories of the OT – famous in kids curriculum world over...
 - It is commonly attacked by so called intellectuals today as a foolish fable – Pinocchio...
 - Going so far as to suggest it is just the Jewish version of a story from the Iliad...
 - *Hercules sprang into the jaws of a sea monster and was three days in its* - Iliad
 - Liberal Christianity quickly derides it as simply a parable and not history!
 - Therefore 2 obvious questions rise from the narrative – is it meant literally / is it possible...
 - The answer to the first question is absolutely – this is a literal event...
 - Jesus references it in **Matthew 12:40** – when the people were demanding a sign...
 - THE ONLY sign Jesus was going to give to those who did not want to believe...
 - Was Jonah - Jesus would also be 3 days and 3 nights in the heart of the earth...
 - Speaking of the cross – and 3 days after – His glorious resurrection!
 - Why the ‘Sign of Jonah’ - it was the only one that brings salvation!
 - We might think that if only we (or someone we know) could see a miracle - see Jesus...
 - That would be all that was needed in order to really believe in Jesus...
 - But the men who saw Jesus - saw the deaf and blind healed – still wanted a sign...
 - People do not need to see miracles – they need to hear the Sign of Jonah / Gospel!
 - **Romans 1:16** – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”
 - The answer to the second question is a bit more involved...
 - The Hebrew for ‘great fish’ simply describes a great marine animal...
 - The sperm whale for instance is quite capable of swallowing a man whole!
 - Could a man survive 3 days under such conditions - there are three possible answers...
 - NATURAL: There is always some ‘air’ in the stomach of a whale...
 - As long as the animal it has swallowed is still alive - digestive activity will not begin!
 - MIRACLE: It is much more likely that the event involved a divine miracle...
 - RESURRECTION: A third possibility is that Jonah actually suffocated and died...
 - His prayer implies this when he said – ‘out of the belly of sheol (*grave*) I cried’!
 - So it is possible God resurrected Jonah after 3 days (*fits the narrative of Matthew 12:40*)!
- o 2nd – The prayer of Jonah... vs. 1-9
 - After 3 days in the belly – Jonah prayed... vs. 1
 - I have to think that this is one of the most amazing verses in the Bible...
 - Jonah was in pitch-blackness – overwhelmed by the stench of rotting fish (*fish market*)!
 - There he sat wallowing in the acids – for 3 days – and THEN he prayed!
 - It shows you how hard the heart of Jonah was – it took 3 days in a fish to break him!
 - In of his affliction Jonah cried out... vs. 2-7
 - In his prayer of true repentance – Jonah describes what it took to humble him:
 - From of the belly of sheol – Hebrew for grave – Jonah thought the fish would be his tomb...
 - He had been thrown into the sea – the water surrounded him – the waves crashed on him...
 - It was at the moment – when he realized he would never see the Temple again...
 - Waters closed over him – about to die – seaweed wrapped around his head (*literally*)...
 - Jonah sank down to the roots of the mountains – to the depth of the sea!
 - Funny how it takes dire circumstances to turn us to Jesus...
 - Often in hardships we ask ‘why God’ – but notice that we are talking to God now...
 - If things were going well - we would likely not be having that conversation!
 - When Jonah had lost all hope – THEN he remembered the Lord again... vs. 8-9
 - He finally went to prayer – and those prayers came went up to God – into His holy Temple!

- BECAUSE Jonah was finally broken - ready to obey the command of the Lord!
 - He understood that who regard lying vanity (*idols*) – forsake the mercy of the Lord...
 - Jonah had lied to himself – thinking he could run away from command of God...
 - He had been vain – thinking that Israel was better than Assyria...
 - And in his lying vanity – he had forsaken the Mercy of God – and met the whale!
 - But Jonah would offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving – he would go to Nineveh!
 - He would do what he promised – because his only hope of salvation was from God!
 - It is never too late to cry out to God – His Grace always stands ready to save – **Romans 5:20**
 - God is not looking remorse – He is looking for humility and obedience to His Word!
 - **Psalm 51:17** – “A broken and a contrite heart - these, O God, You will not despise.”
- o 3rd – Vomited out... vs. 10
- The Lord spoke to the fish – and it vomited Jonah out onto land...
 - It is likely that the fish began to head back to shore the moment Jonah was swallowed...
 - But as they were quite far out to sea – it took three days to return...
 - And Jonah was ejected right back where he began – though a bit worse for the wear!
 - Life is rather simple – we can either choose to disobey or obey God...
 - If we choose to go our own way – then we choose the hard way...
 - God will still get us where He wants us to be – via a whale – a little worse for the wear...
 - But how much better to simply obey from the start – and skip out on being swallowed!
 - The example of Jonah is a powerful one – better to obey the Lord now than later!