

Jonah

Possible titles for this series

Most preachers pass through this fascinating book of 4 chapters in 4 weeks. However, these sermon inspiration notes are offered with the prayer that both you and your congregation will be able to spend a little more time, and gain deeper insights from this portion of God's Word.

Possible titles for this series include:

- Man overboard
- Can you outrun God?
- A fishy, but true, tale
- When saints become sinners
- Finding direction after disaster

Is Jonah fact or fiction?

There is a branch of scholarship that arose in the Nineteenth Century, and held sway for more than one hundred years. It contained ideas that attempted to move the Bible from the field of history to the area of myth, legend, allegory, or symbolism. These scholars tried to teach that Jonah was not an historical person but his story was a parable that contained a moral lesson.

Other scholars examined those ideas and easily pointed out that those fallacies were full of holes. For example, linguistically, the book of Jonah is written as a factual account, not as a moral lesson. The book cannot be regarded as a parable, because Jonah's narrative contains many miracles (perhaps 8), but parables never, ever, contain miracles.

From Jonah's own time and onward, the book of Jonah has always been accepted as historical fact. The matter should be settled by the fact that Jesus accepted Jonah as a factual historical record. On several occasions, Jesus based His predictions of His crucifixion and resurrection on the history fact of Jonah.

Today, most of the acceptance, or rejection, of Jonah seems to be based around whether or not it is possible to survive inside a sea creature for three days. This question is examined in depth in the notes for Jonah 2:1-6 and 2:7-10. The answer may surprise you.

Jonah in history

Crown Prince Jeroboam began to co-reign with his father, King Jehoash, of the northern kingdom of Israel in the year 765 BC. However, his father was only the nominal senior monarch. In fact, it was Prince Jeroboam who quickly asserted himself as the dominant member of this father-son partnership. When his father died in 753 BC, Jeroboam became sole ruler of Israel. He reigned until 712 BC. This was 12 years co-ruling with his father, plus a further 41 years as sole ruler.

Jeroboam II was an ungodly warrior-king who achieved many victories for northern kingdom, but at a cost.

²⁴ He did evil in the eyes of the Lord and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam I, son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit. ²⁵ He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Dead Sea, in accordance with the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, spoken through **His servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hepher.**

²⁶ The Lord had seen how bitterly everyone in Israel, whether slave or free, was suffering; there was no one to help them. ²⁷ And since the Lord had not said he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam son of Jehoash. (2 Kings 14:24-27)

The reign of Jeroboam II was the last hurrah for Israel. It was a time of victory and prosperity but defeat and destruction lay just around the corner. The kingdom of Israel had been in spiritual decline for many generations. But, in His mercy, God continues to give His people opportunities to repent. They didn't. So, judgement fell.

⁵The king of Assyria invaded the entire land, marched against Samaria and laid siege to it for three years. ⁶In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria. He settled them in Halah, in Gozan on the Habor River and in the towns of the Medes. (2 Kings 17:5-6)

¹²This happened because they had not obeyed the Lord their God, but had violated his covenant; all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded. They neither listened to the commands nor carried them out. (2 Kings 18:12)

The king of Assyria marched from his capital city of Nineveh, and crushed all who stood before him. In this way, the kingdom of Israel ceased to exist in 671 BC. We do not have a specific date for Jonah, but Nineveh, which repented at his preaching, came and crushed his homeland about 80 years after Jonah preached there.

Geography

Jonah was from the village of Gath-Hepher (2 Kings 14:25).

Jerome (c345 AD – 420 AD), described Gath-Hepher as "an inconsiderable village" and tells that the tomb of Jonah was nearby. Also, the medieval geographer, Benjamin of Tudela (c1165 AD), also tells of the tomb of Jonah during his travels to the area.

Today, the site is a small set of ruins on a hilltop, five kilometres north from Nazareth and one kilometre from Canna. The tomb of Jonah is still pointed out by locals.

Jonah was sent to Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria; a distance of about 640 kilometres to the north-north-east. But instead, he chose to go to Tarshish; today known as Spain; a distance of about 3,600 kilometres to the west-north-west.

Jonah and Jesus

Jonah is the one person among both the Major Prophets, and Minor Prophets, to whom Jesus compared Himself. That comparison is only in relation to His death and resurrection. Jesus spoke of the sign of Jonah on at least two occasions. The first occasion was in about August 28 AD. Jesus' words were recorded in Matthew 12:39-40, and in Luke 11:29-30

Matthew 12:39-41	Luke 11:29-32
<p>³⁹A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.</p> <p>⁴⁰For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.</p> <p>⁴¹The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here.</p>	<p>²⁹ As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.</p> <p>³⁰ For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation.</p> <p>³¹ The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom; and now something greater than Solomon is here.</p> <p>³² The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and now something greater than Jonah is here.</p>

Then, a little over six months later, in about March 29 AD, Jesus again spoke of the sign of Jonah. The incident is recorded most fully in Matthew 16:1-4, and in a shorter form in Mark

8:11-12. On this latter occasion, Jesus does not add an explanation as to what He means by the 'sign of Jonah'.

Matthew 16:1-4	Mark 8:11-13
<p>¹Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came and tested Jesus by asking Him to show them a sign from Heaven.</p> <p>²But He replied, "When evening comes, you say, 'The weather will be fair, for the sky is red,' ³and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but not the signs of the times.</p> <p>⁴A wicked and adulterous generation demands a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Then He left them and went away.</p>	<p>¹¹Then the Pharisees came and began to argue with Jesus, testing Him by demanding from Him a sign from Heaven.</p> <p>¹²Jesus sighed deeply in His spirit and said, "Why does this generation demand a sign?</p> <p>Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to this generation."</p> <p>¹³And He left them, got back into the boat, and crossed to the other side.</p>

Summary outline

Jonah			
1:1-17	2:1-10	3:1-10	4:1-11
God's first call		God's second call	
Discovering salvation		Discovering sanctification	
Talking to the world	Talking to the Lord	Talking to the world	Talking to the Lord
With others	With the Lord	With others	With the Lord
Running away from God	Swimming back to God	Walking slowly with God	Sitting, waiting for God
Rejecting obedience	Promising obedience	Practicing obedience	Beyond obedience
Commission	Confession	Commitment	Complaints
Running	Regret	Reluctance	Refusal
No prayer	Panic prayer	Answer to prayer	Conversation prayer
Going the wrong way	Praying the wrong way	Obedying the wrong way	Waiting the wrong way
I can't outrun God	I can't outlast God	I can't outdo God	I can't outargue God
Problem: God is too demanding	Problem: God is too big to fight	Problem: God expects too much	Problem: God is too good to hate
Dominated by flesh	Dominated by fear	Dominated by force	Dominated by fury
What I want	What I feel	What I do	What I know
Understanding myself	Understanding creation	Understanding people	Understanding God
How I function	How creation functions	How people function	How God functions
Typical heart	My heart	Human hearts	God's heart
Service	Salvation	Submission	Sanctification
Chastening	Conversion	Commitment	Caring
Refusal	Repentance	Reluctance	Reproved
Protest	Prayer	Proclaim	Prejudice
Sailors turn to God	Jonah turns to God	Nineveh turns to God	Will Jonah turn to God?
Sailors obey God	Creation obeys God	Sinners obey God	Will Jonah obey God?
Rebelling and running	Repenting and returning	Restarting and reluctance	Remembering and resenting
Jonah 1:1-3	Jonah 2:1-6	Jonah 3:1-10	Jonah 4:1-11
Jonah 1:4-6	Jonah 2:7-10		
Jonah 1:7-10			
Jonah 1:11-17		© 2022, Ian Duncan, www.sermoninspiration.net	

