

An underwater photograph showing a hand reaching up towards the surface. Sunlight rays penetrate the dark blue water from the top right. The word "Jonah" is centered in white text.

Jonah

Prophet to the Gentiles

Message

Only 8 words of prophetic discourse in whole of book:

‘Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned’, 3:4

The message comes through the life of the messenger...
through the ‘life-acts’ of the prophet

Message - Genre

A fast moving story / narrative which reveals...

- The heart of God
- The heart of Jonah
which helps illuminate – sometimes disturbingly...
- The heart of the reader.

Message – Summary Teaching

God is in the business of relentlessly pursuing rebel believers
(there is a slice of Jonah in each one of us...)

To expose us to our own idols (things that get in the way, or take the place of God in our lives)

That we may freely chose to wholeheartedly serve Him.

Authenticity (How true?)

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Lk 9:29-30 | ...Jesus said, 'This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation...' |
| Lk 11:30, 32 | For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation... The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgement with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now One greater than Jonah is here. |
| Matt. 16:4 | A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. |
| Matt.12:39-41 | A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For 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. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgement with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now One greater than Jonah is here. |

Historical Background

First read of *'Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hepher'* in 2 Kings 14:25-27

(during reign of King Jeroboam – N. Kingdom, first half of 8th C. BC)

'He was the one who restored the boundaries from... to...in accordance with the Word of the Lord, the God of Israel, spoken through His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hepher.'

'The Lord had seen how bitterly everyone in Israel... was suffering; there was no one to help them.'

'...He saved them through the hand of Jeroboam, son of Jehoash.'

Outline

- Ch's 1-2, God commissions Jonah to preach against the great city of Nineveh.
 - Vv.1-3, God calls Jonah.
 - 1:4-16, In an great storm.
 - 1:17 – 2:10, In a great fish.
- Ch's 3-4, God recommissions Jonah to preach against the great city of Nineveh
 - Vv.1-3, God recalls Jonah.
 - Vv.4-10, In a great city.
 - Ch. 4, In a great rage.

Recurring words/themes:

'great gadol' – storm, fish, city, rage...

'appointed' – storm, fish, vine, worm, scorching east-wind – God in control and intentional

God commissions Jonah to preach against the great city of Nineveh, Ch's 1-2.

Application – we need to see situation for what it is!

- Every time we navigate a situation our way, and not God's way, we are saying we know better than God = sin.
- Not – that we have stopped believing; rather, what we believe in has changed, i.e. we are believing in ourselves as god = idolatry.
- The story and Jonah could have ended right here! The reason it didn't = God's mercy and grace!

In a great Storm, Ch. 1:4-26

Notice... Jonah's flight from God... he...

- '...went *down* to Joppa to find a ship...'
- '...went *down* into the ship's hold...'
- '...lays *down* in a deep slumber...'

Point... running from God very often leads...

- ... into a God appointed storm.
- ... into a downward spiral at cost to himself and others.

Lessons....

- You cannot outrun God – it is foolish to try...
- God's grace IS MASSIVE.
 - God spares no expense pursuing those who run away, e.g. Christ' incarnation.
- God appointed storms are designed...
 - ...to get my attention... and...
 - ...to help me become the person God desires.

In a great fish, 1:17 – 2:10

Focus: Not 'Jonah & fish' but 'Jonah & God'

| Cycle | Verse(s) | Despair/distress – caused Jonah to pray | Hope – that God hears & delivers |
|-------|----------|--|--|
| 1 | 2 | In my distress I called to the Lord... From the depths of the grave I called for help... | ...and He answered me. ...and you listened to my cry. |
| 2 | 3-4 | You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me. I said 'I have been banished from your sight...' | ...yet I will look again toward your holy temple. |
| 3 | 5-6 | The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. To the roots of the mountains I sank down, the earth beneath barred me in forever... | ...But you brought my life up from the pit, O Lord my God. |
| 4 | 7 | <u>Summary of cycles 1-3:</u> When my life was ebbing away... ↓ | I <i>remembered</i> you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. |
| 5 | 8-9 | <u>Jonah's conclusion:</u> Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs... | But I, with a song of thanksgiving will sacrifice to You. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the Lord. |

2:10, 'And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land'.

God recommissions Jonah to prophesy against the great city of Nineveh, Ch's 3-4

- Lessons...
 - God does not hold grudges...
 - Jonah messed-up but God does not remind of past failing.
 - God does not lighten the load...
 - Jonah will need to grow and move beyond himself.
 - God does not give-up.
 - Jonah, as much as Nineveh, was God's project

In a great City, 3:4-10

‘Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned’

‘For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation’. (Lk. 11:30)

Key question:

‘Who knows? God may yet relent and with *compassion* turn from His fierce anger so that we will not perish.’

v.10, ‘When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways He had *compassion*...

In a great rage, Ch.4

Reason Jonah was quick to flee – he didn't fear failure, he feared success!

'...Is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that You are a gracious and *compassionate* God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now Lord, take away my life... (4:2-3)

Question to Jonah, but also intended for reader to personally ponder...

v.10, Jonah's concern (heart)

- For his own self centred well-being through a vine... which was...
 - Temporal & material (*'...sprang up and died over night...'*)
 - Graciously provided (*'...you did not tend it or make it grow...'*)
 - Enjoyed while benefiting from God's grace yet brooding over God's grace to Nineveh

v.11, God's concern (heart)

- For His compassion to a multitude of people... which were...
 - A part of God's own creation.
 - Morally blind yet morally responsible with an eternal destiny (*'...who cannot tell their right hand from their left...'*) *Matt. 9:36, 14:14, 15:32*

Q. Is my self-centred concern / heart for the 'temporal and material' keeping me from God's concern / heart – His compassion for the multitude?

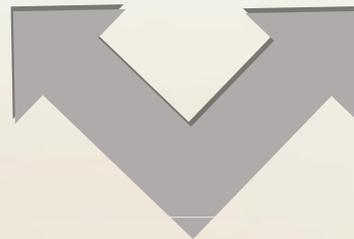
Community: The 'tribal' mind-set of Jonah Vs. the 'missional' mind-set of God

Values of 'tribal' community

- Inward focused (me & mine – creature comforts) - self preservation
'How can we protect ourselves from those who are different?'
- Unbalanced patriotism
'If everybody were like us the world would be better place'

Values of 'missional' community

- Other orientated - self sacrifice
- Willingness to be inconvenienced and discomforted for others on God's behalf.
Ever gracious, ever pursuing, ever compassionate – embodied in the gospel...



Antithetical:

Jonah runs *from* his enemies; God runs *toward* His enemies
Jonah serves *himself*; God serves *the world*