

1/3/16

Intro To Jonah

If there is a book in the Old Testament that even the non-Christian world is familiar with it must be the book of Jonah.

But tragically most people, even many Christians refer to it as a story about a whale when in fact it is a story about a dove; that is the meaning of the name Jonah.

1. It is the fifth of the Minor prophets.
2. In Scripture the number five is symbolic of God's grace.

The book of Jonah is the story of God's grace extended; first to the prophet Jonah, secondly to the people of Ninevah.

1. The grace of God always results in the peace of God and Jonah would have to appropriate the grace of God to experience peace with God, which his name symbolized, **a dove** is symbolic of peace.
2. The symbol is only a reminder not, the reality and God desires His people to live in His reality.

I. Jonah the man and prophet.

A. The man.

1. Johan was the son of Amittai. Jonah 1:1

* The name Amittai "Amittay", means "my truth", without doubt a man of integrity and character.

2. His name appears only one other time in the Old Testament. 2Kings 14:25
 - a. His name appears 18 times in the book and as we stated means "dove".
 - b. The Jewish tradition mentioned by Jerome was that Jonah was the son of the widow of Zerephath who Elijah raised from the dead, but there is not Biblical evidence for this opinion.

B. The prophet.

1. Jonah was a prophet of God, indicated clearly by the opening words, "The word of the LORD cam to Jonah" Jonah 1:1
 - a. God had used Jonah to prophesy during the reign of King Jeroboam II, 793-753 B.C , that the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah would be restored. 2Kings 14:25a
 - b. God was the source of the prophecy, "according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of **Amittai**," 1Kings 14:25b-c
2. The place of Jonah's origin is stated, "The prophet who *was* from Gath Hopher." 2Kings 14:25d

- a. Gath-Hepher means “the winepress of digging”.
- b. Gath-Hepher was three miles north of Nazareth in Zebulun of Galilee, later known as Cana. Josh. 19:13
- c. Jonah was called by God to go to Ninevah and cry against it for its wickedness that had come up before God. Jonah 1:2

This was the man and prophet Jonah!

II. The book of Jonah.

- A. The book is a narrative.
 - 1. The narrative is about God, Jonah and the Ninevites.
 - a. The book has no prophetic message regarding the future for any people or nation.
 - b. The book contains the impending judgment of God if they didn't repent.
 - 2. The book was never disputed about being historical till the 19th century.
 - a. The first significant opposition came by J.G. Eichhorn (1823).
 - b. This came with the rise of rationalism because of the miraculous.
 - b. The rationalist could not except miracle, the greatest being the survival of Jonah in the belly of the

- whale, so they just dispelled them, disqualifying books as authentic and historical.
- c. Modern scholars say it is non-historical and that the Psalm in chapter two is a later interpolation, without any evidence. Jonah 2:2-9
- d. This is nonsense for chapter two is key the central theme of the deliverance of Jonah from the belly of the fish, marking Jonah's gratitude and reluctant obedience.
- e. The objection to the “king of Nineveh” has no sense since Nineveh was an alternate capital, if not the capital of Assyria throughout much of the first half of the eighteenth century.
- f. Shalmanesar I (1275-1246 B.C.) began an expansion of the city and that by the time of Tiglath-Pileser I (1114-1076 B.C.) Nineveh had become an alternate royal residence to both Assur and Calah.
- g. And various other kings used it as such, like Ashernasirpal II (883-859 B.C.) before Johan's time and Sargaon II (722-705 B.C.) after Jonah's time.
- 3. Therefore many teach the book subjectively, instead of allowing the

literal account to speak for itself and provide the theology behind it.

- a. Some teach it as an allegory spiritualizing it to teach spiritual truth.
 - b. Others teach it as a parable doing the same.
 - c. Still other say it is midrash that functions as commentary upon a particular Biblical text, including illustrations and propositional explanations, but it is not midrash literature.
 - d. The only way we can teach Jonah is literal and actual history.
4. The evidence is overwhelming for the literal teaching of Jonah.
- a. It speaks of real people and city Ninevah.
 - b. Jonah was a real historical figure and nowhere else is his name found or his father's, but in the book and Second Kings. 2Kings 14:25
 - c. Some place Jonah towards the end of the ministry of Elisha and possibly was one of the leaders of the schools of the prophets. Baxter
 - d. Jesus believed in a real Jonah and linked him with Solomon and the temple, the one who preached to Nineveh and used him as a prophetic type of His resurrection and

condemnation for not repenting at the words of Jesus, who was greater than Jonah. Matt. 12:39-41; Lk. 11:29-32

- e. The historian Josephus and the catacombs of Rome have the give witness to Jonah more than any other.
 - f. Church Fathers, Jerome, Irenaeus, Augustine, and Chrysostom, etc.
 - g. The Reformers, Calvin, Luther and other believed and accepted Jonah to be a real person.
- B.** The date of the prophet Jonah and his book.
1. Jonah is one of the twelve Minor Prophets, there were six prior to the captivity of the Northern Kingdom by Assyria in 722 B.C.
 - a. Obadiah 845 B.C.
 - b. Joel 835 B.C.
 - c. Jonah 765 B.C. the third in chronological order, the fifth in the order of our Bible.
 - d. Amos 760 B.C.
 - e. Hosea 740 B.C. he is the sixth in chronological order.
 - f. Micah 735 B.C.
 2. The Minor Prophets prior to the captivity of the Southern Kingdom by Babylon from 606-586 B.C. consists of three.
 - a. Nahum 710 B.C.
 - b. Zephaniah 625 B.C.

- c. Habakkuk 608 B.C.
 - 3. There are three Minor Prophets after the return from captivity of Babylon from 536-425 B.C.
 - a. Haggai 520 B.C.
 - b. Zechariah 520 B.C.
 - c. Malachi 430 B.C.
 - 4. A man by the name of Ezra gathered the twelve Minor Prophets in the “The Great Synagogue” in 475 B.C. called “The book of the twelve.”
 - a. Our Bible distinguishes the Minor Prophets from the Major Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.
 - b. We are told that the title “Minor Prophets” was given because of their shorter prophetic content in contrast to the larger content of the “Major Prophets”, but is not true to form because Daniel has less chapter than Hosea and Zechariah.
 - c. The “Minor Prophets” are in no way less importance or inferior to the Major Prophets, both spoke and wrote under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit. 2Tim. 3:16-17; 2Pet. 1:19-21
- C. The key words, phrases and verses.
1. The key words.
 - a. The word great “gadol” appears 14 times.

- 1) Six times for the chief or major importance of the city, its nobles or leaders. Jonah 1:2; 3:2, 3, 5, 7; 4:11
 - 2) Eight times large in size or extent. Jonah 1:4 (2x’s), 10, 12, 16, 17; 4:1, 6
- b. The word wickedness “ra’ ah”, appears nine times.
- 1) Seven times it means “disagreeable, unpleasant and displeasing”, synonymous with disaster, misery or harm. Jonah 1:2, 7, 8; 3:10; 4:1, 2, 6
 - 2) Only two times it means “evil” as an adjective. Jonah 3:8, 10
2. The key phrases.
- a. “But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.” Jonah 1:3a
 - b. Salvation is of the LORD.” Jonah 2:9c
 - c. “God relented” Jonah 3:10c
 - d. “You are a **gracious** and **merciful** God”. Jonah 4:2g
 - e. “And should I not pity Nineveh”. Jonah 4:11b
3. The key verses.
- a. “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their

wickedness has come up before Me.”
Jonah 1:2

- b. “Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.” Jonah 1:17 (This is the first verse of chapter two)
- c. “Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.” Jonah 3:10
- d. The rebellious heart of Jonah is reveled, “Then God said to Jonah, “*Is it* right for you to be angry about the plant?” And he said, “*It is* right for me to be angry, even to death!” Jonah 4:9
- e. “But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry.” Jonah 4:1
- f. The uncompassionate heart of Jonah, “And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left--and much livestock?” Jonah 4:11

This is the book of Jonah!

III. The times of Jonah.

- A. The life and prophecy of Jonah fits during Jeroboam II reign, around 765 B.C.
 - 1. The Northern kingdom of Israel had been apostate or about 200 years.
 - a. Jeroboam I had failed to trust God for the ten tribe He had given to him, through the prophet Ahijah, at the division of the kingdom through the son of Solomon Rehoboam. 1Kings 11:20-39
 - b. So he set up two calf worship centers in Dan and Bethel and feast days to keep the people from returning to Jerusalem and giving allegiance to the house of David and made priest of the common people. 1Kings 12:25-33
 - c. This brought complacency, social injustice and apostasy as we saw in Amos.
 - d. At the present time Jeroboam II had successfully defeated the Syrians, restoring the ancient boundaries of the kingdom. 1Kings. 14:25
 - e. The time was one of prosperity, seeming safety and that God was approving of their evil life-style.
 - 2. Assyria at this time was in a state of decline and weakness between the death of Adad-nirari III in 782 B.C. and the seizing of the Assyrian throne by Tiglath-plileser III in 745 B.C.

- a. After Adad nirari III was Shalmaneser IV 782-773 B.C., then Ashur-dan III 773-754 B.C. at which time Jonah probably came to Nineveh, 765 B.C.
 - b. At this time a trend towards their religion was monotheistic and Ashur-dan III said, "Put your trust in Bel, trust not another god."
 - c. Assyria was in a life and death struggle with the mountain tribes of Uraty and its associates of Mannai and Madai in the north, who had been able to push their frontiers to within less than 100 miles of Nineveh.
 - d. The offer of repentance by the prophet Jonah had to of looked very inviting at this time.
- B.** The contemporaries of Jonah were well known individuals.
- 1. The prophet Elisha.
 - 2. The prophet Amos.
 - 3. The prophet Hosea.
 - 4. The prophet Joel.
- C.** The historical setting for the prophecy of Jonah regarding Assyria.
- 1. Assyria prior to Jeroboam II had made Israel pay tribute for 50 years.
 - 2. Assyria was known for three things.

- a. Fertility cults dealing with sexual perversions.
 - b. Child sacrifice to Molech.
 - c. Cruelty in warfare.
- 3.** Their cruelty was fearfully intimidating.
- a. They lived on plunder and prided themselves on the mounds of skulls they brought back.
 - b. They tore peoples tongues out.
 - b. They flayed men alive and stretched out their skins on the city wall, impaling them on upright poles through the abdomen.
 - c. They led their captives away with hooks in their lips. Amos 4:2
 - d. "Woe to the body city, being full of lies and robbery, the whip and multitude of corpses and harlotries, being a mistress of sorceries selling nations and families. Nah. 3:1-4
 - e. Entire cities would commit mass suicide when encamped by Assyria.
- 4.** Assyria made many attacks on the northern part of Israel.
- a. It is believed that perhaps some of Jonah's relatives had been slaughtered or even taken captive by Assyria.
 - b. So Jonah hated the Assyrian and did not want to go to Nineveh and preach, lest they repent and God forgive them, so he fled to Tarshish. Jonah 4:2-3

- c. Not because he did not know His God, but because he did not want to be like his God to forgive them.
- d. Jonah would have to travel about 500 miles to a great city, the metropolis of the Gentile world on the east side of the Tigris River some 40 miles north of the Zab junction.
* A three-month trip in ancient times.
- e. The city of Nineveh was the magnificent capital of the Assyrian Empire, a constant and dreadful enemy of Israel, the modern-day city of Mosul in Iraq.
 - 1) Established by Nimrod. Gen. 10:11
 - 2) There was Nineveh proper and four large cities that were situated on the edge of the trapezium Nineveh proper, a metropolis believed to have been 300-350 square miles.
 - 3) Nineveh in the broader sense was bounded on three sides by rivers, on the northwest the Khosr, on the west by the Tigris, and on the southwest by the Gazr Su and they Upper or Great Zab and on the fourth side by mountains, which ascended from the rocky plateau; and it was fortified artificially all around on the river-sides with dams, sluices for inundating the

land, and canals, and on the land side with ramparts and castles.

Kiel

- 4) Population is estimated to be about one million.
- 5) The outer wall was 60 miles around, 100 feet high and wide enough for three chariots to be driven abreast on it.
- 6) Spaced around the wall were 50 towers, 200 feet high to guard the city.
- 7) The inner wall of the city was only three miles in diameter, its villages and suburbs stretched over 20 miles.
- 8) Assyria's pride and self-confidence is recorded. Is. 10:12-14
 - a) The conclusion is that there will be a turning point after God is through with "His work", punishing His people in Mount Zion and Jerusalem by Assyria and then punish her for her arrogant pride and haughty looks. vs. 12
 - b) God reveals the words of Assyria boasting, no one saying a word to her. vs. 13-14
 - c) Assyria was destroyed in 612 B.C. by Babylon.

This was the time of Jonah!

IV. The message of Jonah.

- A.** The book of Jonah is the story of God's power to perform miracles.
1. The first miracle was the mighty tempest that God hurled out on the sea. Jonah 1:4
 2. The second miracle was that the sea ceased from its raging, the minute they threw Jonah overboard. Jonah 1:15
* A storm may cease at a point in time, but was not the notable miracle, it was the fact that the sea ceased at the same time as the storm.
 3. The third miracle is the whale that swallowed Jonah. Jonah 1:17
 - a. The Hebrew does not say it was a whale, but a large fish.
 - b. The general consensus is that it was a whale, in particular a "sperm whale" that has a large enough throat to swallow a man.
 - c. There are accounts of men having been found and extracted alive as the whale had been cut open.
 4. The fourth miracle is the plant that God prepared to come up over Jonah to shade his head. Jonah 4:6
* In the midst of disobedience God is still comforting the prophet.

5. The fifth miracle is the worm that God prepared to destroy the plant. Jonah 4:7
 6. The sixth miracle is the vehement east wind, called a sirocco, and with the sun Jonah grew faint. Jonah 4:8
* "Behold, I *am* the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?" Jer. 32:27
- B.** The book of Jonah is the story of God's grace extended to all of mankind to repent and be forgiven and saved or be judged.
1. First to the prophet Jonah, God was desiring to change the prophet's heart.
 - a. The name of Jonah means "dove" and was symbolic of peace, Jonah was a contradiction to his name and calling.
 - b. The grace of God always results in the peace of God and Jonah would have to appropriate the grace of God to experience the peace of God. Phil. 4:6-7
 2. Second to the people of Nineveh who were so wicked and degenerated.
* All of mankind is lost, being dead in their trespasses and sins. Eph. 2:1
 - a. The book of Jonah is the fifth of the Minor prophets.
 - b. The number five in scripture is symbolic of God's grace.

- c. Jonah was to go and cry out against Nineveh for her wickedness had come up before God. Jonah 1:1
- d. Jonah was to preach only the message God told him. Jonah 3:2

C. The book of Jonah is the story of God's people, the believer, particularly those who are called into ministry.

* God is sovereign and merciful. Jonah 4:2

1. Jonah was the rebel of God.
 - a. In chapter one we see Jonah and the storm, revealing disobedience and rebellion.
 - b. In chapter two we see Jonah and the fish, revealing discipline and seeming repentance.
 - c. In chapter three we see Jonah and the city, revealing proclamation through seeming obedience.
 - d. In chapter four we see Jonah and the Lord, revealing resentfulness, but learning.
2. Jonah was the prophet of God.
 - a. In chapter one Jonah is portrayed as the rebelling prophet.
 - b. In chapter two Jonah is portrayed as the praying prophet.
 - c. In chapter three Jonah is portrayed as the preaching prophet.

- d. In chapter four Jonah is portrayed as the pouting prophet.
3. Jonah was the instrument of God.
 - a. In chapter one the will of God was to be obeyed.
 - b. In chapter two the ways of God were to be learned from.
 - c. In chapter three the work of God was to be rejoiced over.
 - d. In chapter four the why's of God were to be accepted.
4. Jonah was the representative of God.
 - a. In chapter one God is pursuing the rebelling prophet.
 - b. In chapter two God is preserving the praying prophet.
 - c. In chapter three God is preaching through the poisoned prophet.
 - d. In chapter four God is preaching to the pouting prophet.
5. Jonah was to learn the lessons from God.
 - a. Jonah ran to Tarshish because he knew his God and His will but he did not want to become like His God! 1:3
 - b. Jonah was to recognize what a self-centered person he was, for the only time he rejoiced with great joy only when God relieved him of the heat by the plant. Jonah 4:6
6. Jonah ultimately had to come to grips with his unloving and uncompassionate

rebellion, for that reason the book ends in seeming unfinished way, but it is a rhetorical question that has a very obvious answer!

- a. “Then God said to Jonah, “*Is it* right for you to be angry about the plant?” And he said, “*It is* right for me to be angry, even to death!” But the LORD said, “You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left--and much livestock?” Jonah 4:9-11
- a. The answer is No, it was not right for Jonah to be angry and uncaring over the salvation of the Assyrians.
- b. Jonah had pity on the plant, yet he had nothing to do with it’s planting or growth, but he had no pity for the Assyrians, who were created in the image and likeness of God.
- b. Jonah should have had pity on them, 120,000 were little children.
 - * Jonah was that unforgiving servant that had been forgiven millions and was throwing his

brother who owed him pennies in jail! Matt. 18:21-35

This is the message of Jonah!

V. The mission of Jonah.

- A. To go to the city of Nineveh. Jonah 1:2-3
 1. The mission was a command not an option, “ Arise, go to Nineveh”.
 2. The mission field was well-known and important city, “That great city”.
 3. The missionary’s message was judgment, “Cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.”
 4. The obedience to the command of God was not in Jonah’s heart or mind, his plan was to rebel against his mission. Jonah 1:3
 - a. Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.
 - b. Jonah went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish.
 - * Believed to be Tartessus, a Phoenician colony in Spain near the Straits of Gibraltar.
 - c. Jonah paid the fare and went down into the ship.
- B. To preach the message God told him came a second time. Jonah 3:1-2

1. Jonah was to arise and go to Nineveh, that great city. vs. 2a-c
2. Jonah was to preach the message the message God would tell him. vs. 2d
3. Jonah's obedience was with reluctance.
 - a. There was no hope in Jonah's message. Jonah 3:4
 - b. There was no joy in Jonah's heart for their repentance. Jonah 4:1

C. To acknowledge his evil heart.

1. In view of his running away from God to Tarshish. Jonah 1:3
2. In view of the mariners who had compassion on him and would not throw him overboard at first, yet he a prophet of God sent to the pagans, had no compassion. Jonah 1:12-13
3. In view of the pagan mariner calling out on God to forgive them for throwing Jonah overboard, yet he was not calling on God to forgive him for his disobedience. Jonah 1:14
4. In view of Jonah's half-hearted repentance in the belly of the whale that was evident as he prayed and told God why he had fled to Tarshish. Jonah 4:2
 - * He found himself in a difficult situation and had remorse, rather than repentance in the belly of the whale!
 - a. He knew the Assyrians could repent.

- * So he prayed to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Jonah 4:2a-d
- b. He knew God was not partial or rejected anyone if they repented, for He was merciful and gracious. Jonah 4:2e-h
 - * Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You *are* a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.
5. In view of his lack of compassion for the lost. Jonah 3:4; 4:1
 - a. His message was, "Forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed", which without any doubt was a joy to him, hoping that they would not repent and fearing that they might! Jonah 3:4
 - * Jonah did not want God to forgive them. Jonah 4:2
 - b. His mental state regarding their repentance was displeasure, "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. Jonah 4:1
 - * The word "but" places Jonah was in sharp contrast to his God!
 - b)) He did not mind declaring blessing to his own people nor did

- he dislike the recognition of being a prophet yet he did mind declaring blessings to the pagan.
6. In view of his desire for death instead of life. Jonah 4:3, 8h
- a. Jonah's conclusion was that it was better to die than live, "Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for *it is* better for me to die than to live!" Jonah 4:3
- 1) If Jonah really wanted to die, why did he ask God to deliver him out of the belly of the whale, he merely used God to get out of a difficult situation!
 - 2) God knew it all along but Jonah didn't, the evidence of a deceptive and desperately wicked heart. Jer. 17:9
- b. Jonah's heart became harder as he sat outside the city to see if God was going to avert judgment by honoring the Assyrian's repentance, wishing only death for himself again, "It is better for me to die than to live." Jonah 4:8h
- * Jonah's uncompassionate and unloving attitude had tainted his message and tortured his mind!

This was the mission of Jonah!

V. The division of Jonah.

I. Jonah's first commission. Jonah 1-2

- A. Jonah and the storm: disobedience and running. Jonah 1:1-16
1. The call and rejection of his commission. vs. 1-3
 2. The sending of the storm by God resulted in desperation. vs. 4-13
 3. The calling on God by the sailors resulted in their conversion. vs. 14-16
- B. Jonah and the fish: discipline and praying. Jonah 1:17-2:10
1. The great fish that swallow Jonah. 1:17
 2. The prayer of Jonah. 2:1-9
 3. The fish vomited Jonah on the land. 2:10

II. Jonah's second commission. Jonah 3-4

- A. Jonah and the city: obedience and preaching. Jonah 3
1. The second commission of Jonah. vs., 1-2
 2. The obedient preaching of Jonah. vs. 3-4
 3. The repentance of the Assyrian. vs. 5-10

B. Jonah and the Lord: pouting and learning. Jonah 4

1. The displeasure of Jonah at the salvation of the Assyrians. vs. 1-3
2. The reasoning of God with Jonah to no avail. vs. 4-9
3. The compassion of God is for all sinners. vs. 10-11

This is sthe division of Jonah!