

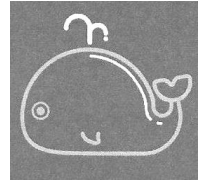


Jonah

October 2023

Jonah 1 Runaway Prophet

(sermons: Sept 24)



Jonah 1: 1-3 God Calls Jonah

- v.1 *Jonah son of Amittai – the name Jonah means ‘Dove’; ‘Amittai’ means ‘faithful’. His preaching in the northern kingdom of Israel is described in 2 Kings 14:23-27*
- v.2 *the great city of Nineveh – at times the capital of Assyria, the growing regional power, that was threatening Israel. It was over 500 miles north-east of Israel by road in what is now northern Iraq.*
- v.2 *preach against it because its wickedness has come up before me – or ‘preach to it’ because its ‘trouble’/‘disaster’ has come to my notice; there may be a hint from the start that God wants to help even the pagan people of one of Israel’s enemies; or, it may be, as in NIV, a message of judgement.*
- v.3 *Tarshish – a port somewhere far away on the Mediterranean, perhaps Tarsus (southern Turkey) or Tartessos (southern Spain) in the opposite direction to Nineveh. Jonah may have been influenced by the belief of many in his time that the power of a god was limited to their particular area, so he tried to escape from God’s ‘sphere of influence’.*
- v.3 *Joppa – modern-day Jaffa, part of Tel Aviv on the Mediterranean coast; then in Philistine territory*
1. Where did God tell Jonah to go? What did he command him to do there? What reason did God give? What does this show us about God and his concerns?
 2. How did Jonah respond to God’s call? Why do you think he acted like this?
 3. Have we ever been fairly sure that God wanted us to do something, or to talk to someone, and we have done the opposite, or not taken any notice?
What can make us reluctant to obey God? How can we help each other to be more responsive?

Jonah 1: 4-10 The Storm Breaks

- v.4 *Then the Lord sent a great wind – the Book of Jonah emphasizes God’s direction of events*
- v.5 *each cried out to his own god – the crew must have come from different places, each worshipping a local deity; at sea they wouldn’t have known who to pray to.*
- v.7 *cast lots – usually different-sized stones that would mean ‘yes’ or ‘no’, eliminating names one by one. The Jews used this procedure to discover God’s will, as did the early Christians – rather than believing in chance they believed that God would determine the outcome (Proverbs 16:33, Acts 1:26)*
- v.9 *I worship the LORD – the name for God often written YHWH or Yahweh. Jonah knows that He is the one true Creator God, even if he sometimes acts as if he thinks that God operates in a limited area. YHWH (LORD) is the Name revealed to his chosen people, to be used to emphasize his special relationship with them, his continuing ‘I AM’ presence with them.*
- v.9 *the God of heaven – here ‘God’ is the word that other nations would use to describe the supreme deity. In using both names/titles for God, Jonah is saying that he worships the Creator whom everyone around him acknowledges but whom he (Jonah, as a Hebrew/Jew) knows in a special way.*
4. How did the sailors and the captain respond to the storm, given their limited understanding? How did Jonah respond, despite his greater understanding of God and of his ways?

5. Do we respond to difficulties with frantic activity of our own, like the ship's crew.
Or are we asleep, as individuals or as a church, in the middle of social and spiritual challenges?
Is our activity, or inactivity, due to fear, lack of compassion, or a desire to avoid responsibility and commitment? Do our responses reveal our faith, or lack of it?
How might God use the unbelieving world around us to challenge us to speak out, or live out, our faith?

Jonah 1: 11-17 Jonah Goes Down

- v.17 the Lord provided a huge fish – perhaps, but not necessarily, a ‘whale’. There are more recent accounts of seamen surviving for only a very short time in the cold insides of large sea creatures. To most people at that time, the sea and large sea-creatures were seen as forces that struggled against their gods; here God is seen to use the sea and a sea-monster for his own purposes.*
- v.17 three days and three nights – to Jews this meant he was effectively dead; he was ‘deep in the realm of the dead (Sheol) 2:2*
6. How do the sailors react to Jonah's admission that he is the one to blame for the storm?
What do they learn about God? What does this show about God's concern for them?
7. How does Jonah continue to ‘go down’ throughout this chapter?
How does his experience show that it is pointless to try to run away from God?
Do we find this reassuring or challenging at times when we feel that God is distant from us?
8. What picture does the whole chapter give of how God is in control of events, directing or re-directing people and the world he has created?
9. Use Psalm 139 as a basis for prayer to the God who knows us and from whom we cannot hide.

2 Kings 14: 23-27

²³ In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel became king in Samaria, and he reigned for forty-one years. ²⁴ He did evil in the eyes of the LORD and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam 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 Hopher.

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.

Psalm 139: 1-3, 7-10, 23-24

¹ You have searched me, LORD, and you know me.

² You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

³ You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

²³ Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.