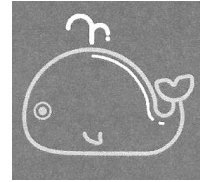




Jonah

October 2023

Introduction



Jonah: Dates of Sermons

Sept 24 Jonah 1 *Runaway Prophet*
Oct 1 Jonah 2 *Grace Experienced*

Oct 8 Jonah 3 *Grace Proclaimed*
Oct 15 Jonah 4 *Prodigal Prophet*

Who was Jonah?

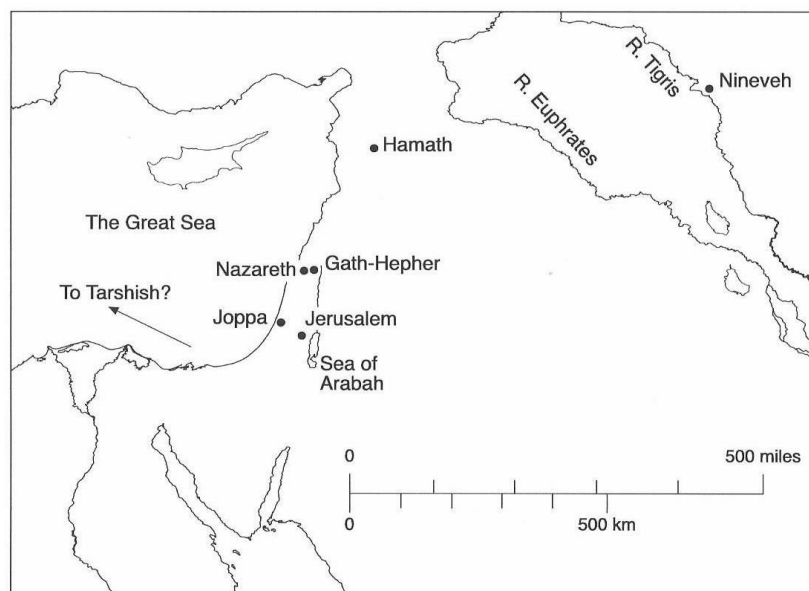
Jonah the prophet came from the village of Gath-Hepher, near Nazareth, in the northern kingdom of Israel. His name 'Jonah' means 'Dove' and he was the son of Amittai, meaning 'Faithfulness'. He prophesied in the reign of the Israelite king Jeroboam II (781-746BC) who was one of Israel's worst kings; although materially successful, he encouraged the worship of idols alongside the worship of the one true God. Nevertheless God worked through Jeroboam to protect Israel from their enemies, as He had promised to do – that was Jonah's message recorded in *2 Kings 14:23-29*:

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 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.

²⁸ As for the other events of Jeroboam's reign, all he did, and his military achievements, including how he recovered for Israel both Damascus and Hamath, which had belonged to Judah, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? ²⁹ Jeroboam rested with his ancestors, the kings of Israel. And Zechariah his son succeeded him as king.

During Jeroboam II's reign the main threat to Israel was Syria, to the north, but the rising regional power was Assyria (whose capital city Nineveh was on the opposite side of the River Tigris from modern Mosul in northern Iraq). In 732BC Assyria defeated Syria and then directly threatened Israel. Assyria captured the Israelite capital Samaria in 722BC and that was the end of the northern kingdom and its ten tribes.



What sort of Bible Book is Jonah?

Although Jonah is counted as a prophet, his book is different from the books of other prophets. It doesn't say when Jonah prophesied to Nineveh and who was king in Israel or in Assyria at the time. It focusses on the prophet himself – and his reluctance to accept God's call and the way that God works – rather than on his message. Some writers who accept the accuracy and authority of the Bible see the Book of Jonah as a sort of Old Testament parable rather than an account of a historical event. But other Bible-affirming writers see the account of Jonah's prophecy to Nineveh as being just as historical as the books of different prophets. The way that Jesus refers to the story of Jonah may help us to decide what we think about this (*see later notes on Jonah 2 and Jonah 3*).

What is the Message of the Book of Jonah?

Rather than focussing too much on the balance between history and parable in the Book of Jonah, we need to see what the book has to teach us. The *Explorer (Good Book Company)* notes on this book by Nathan Buttery put it like this: *Jonah teaches us big truths about God for our good and transformation... Jonah is a God story: the book of Jonah primarily is a book about God... So we're going to learn a lot about God and his character ... Grace is the big theme in this book. Jonah received grace himself, but as we'll see, he just couldn't cope with the hated Ninevites receiving the same grace God had shown to him.*

Rosemary Nixon (*IVP: The Bible Speaks Today*) writes this: *The prophet himself seems to have had no difficulties at all being swallowed and spat out by a great fish in chapter 2, but from the beginning of chapter 1 to the end of chapter 4, Jonah had huge problems with a great God. He knew the truth about God, that he was merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, always ready to forgive and desist from punishment (4:2) but the implications of this truth were too great for him to contemplate. In consequence he remained at the level of awkward and endless debate in the face of God's word, fired by self-righteousness and unbelief....*

But God had questions too. He addressed Jonah through questions on the lips of pagans: 'What kind of person are you?' and 'What kind of God do you worship?' (1:8) So while we, the readers, question some of the extraordinary features of this little story, we too are being questioned by the God who questions Jonah.... Although ways of understanding the fish may have the effect of polarizing readers of the Bible, the central importance of being open to hearing God's word is the overriding concern.

* * * * *

Sunday Sermon Series after Jonah

I hope to produce some notes on both these series.

The Ten Commandments

We are looking at the first 4 commandments this autumn and the remaining six commandments in 2024.

Oct 22 1st Commandment Undivided Allegiance Deuteronomy 4:32-40; 5:1-7

Oct 29 2nd Commandment Undivided Worship Exodus 19:16-20:7

Nov 5 3rd Commandment Unslandered Name Exodus 20:1-7

Nov 19 4th Commandment Unhindered Rest Exodus 20:1-11

(Nov 26 is Kingdom Sunday on the feast of Christ the King – Ministry Fair: ways we can be involved...)

Luke's Christmas Chronicles

Dec 3 Luke 1:1-38 The Tale of Two Angels

Dec 10 Luke 1:39-56 Mary Magnifies

Dec 17 Luke 1:57-80 A Birth and a Blessing

Dec 24 Luke 2:1-21 The Divine Delivery

Dec 31 Luke 2:22-40 The One we're Waiting for