

Jonah

1. Perhaps the most well-known of all the “minor prophets”
2. This book doesn’t focus as much on the prophecy, but upon the story of the prophet himself.
3. We don’t know much about Jonah beyond the account given here. But other writers of scripture give credence to the account.
 - A. A prophet during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel (**2 Kg. 14:25**)
 - B. From Gath Hopher (**2 Kg. 14:25**)
 - C. Jesus makes reference to the sign of Jonah (3 days and 3 nights in the belly of the great fish and to Nineveh and their response (**c.f. Matt. 12:39-42**))
4. One of the books where the chapter divisions seem to break up the story nicely.
 - A. Chapter 1 – **Running Away From God**
 - B. Chapter 2 – **Running To God**
 - C. Chapter 3 – **Running With God**
 - D. Chapter 4 – **Running Ahead of God**
5. Consider the story of Jonah and draw some observations and lessons for us today.

Discussion:

I. RUNNING AWAY FROM GOD

- A. Outline of the Chapter:
 1. Jonah receives a commission from God (1:1-2)
 2. Jonah attempts to flee from the presence of God (1:3)
 3. The Lord responds to Jonah (1:4-17)
 - a. The Lord sent “a great wind” on the sea (:4-16)
 - b. The Lord prepared “a great fish” to swallow Jonah (1:17)
- B. Observations/Lessons
 1. (**1:1-2**) Jonah’s commission – go to Nineveh and cry out against it (we see later the purpose was to give them a chance to repent and escape the wrath of God)
 2. Nineveh – capital city of Assyria, roughly 500 miles NE of Joppa/Gath Hopher
 3. (**1:3**) Tarshish = located somewhere in Spain on the opposite side of the Mediterranean Sea – Jonah went in the complete opposite direction to flee
 4. (**1:4**) We cannot flee from the presence of God (**c.f. Ps. 139:7-12**)
 5. (**1:5-16**) Both Jonah and the sailors come to realize that it is God’s hand which caused the storm due to Jonah’s disobedience
 - a. Jonah realizes what is happening (**c.f. 1:9, 12**)
 - b. The sailors soon see the power of God and end up worshiping Him (**c.f. 1:5-6, 10, 14-16**)
 6. (**1:17**) God has a purpose for Jonah and He makes provision to save Jonah that it may be accomplished – sends a great fish to swallow Jonah
 - Jonah there for 3 days/nights used as a “sign” by Jesus concerning what would happen to Him (**c.f. Matt. 12:39-40**)

II. RUNNING TO GOD

- A. Outline of the Chapter:
 1. Jonah’s Prayer to God (2:1-9)
 2. The Lord’s response: deliverance (2:10)
- B. Observations/Lessons:
 1. (**2:1-2**) Jonah recognizes the Lord is the only one He can turn to to hear him

2. (2:3) He recognized the Lord had cast him into the deep
3. (2:4-7) Jonah turned to the Lord and the Lord had responded
4. (2:8-9) Jonah's prayer is marked by thanksgiving, even more than petition
-Even in distress, our prayers, too, should be those of thanksgiving to God (c.f. Phil. 4:6-7)
5. (2:10) The Lord spoke to the fish He had prepared and it delivered Jonah to dry ground

III. RUNNING WITH GOD

A. Outline of the Chapter:

1. The Lord repeats His commission to Jonah (3:1-2)
2. Jonah chooses to obey this time and goes to Nineveh (3:3-4)
3. The people of Nineveh from the least to greatest repent (3:5-9)
4. God acknowledges their repentance and spares them (3:10)

B. Observations/Lessons:

1. (3:1-2) God's command remains unchanged. Jonah's disobedience did not alter God's message/plan (c.f. 1:1-2)
2. (3:3-4) The simplicity of Jonah's message, yet urgent
3. (3:5-6) From the greatest to the least, they responded to the message in a genuine way, even the King
4. (3:7-10) Another lesson in repentance
 - Repentance is seen through their works (actions), not just their words (:10a) (c.f. Mt. 3:8 (John the Baptist to the Pharisees); Acts 26:19-21 (Paul concerning His preaching))
 - They responded with:
 - Fasting (:7)
 - Putting on sackcloth (:8a)
 - Praying to God (:8b)
 - Turning away from their sins (:8c)
 - If perhaps God might turn away from His wrath (:9) (c.f. Joel 2:12-14)
 - The Lord upholds them as an example of repentance and those who will stand to condemn the unfaithful in the judgement (c.f. Matt. 12:41-42)
5. (3:10) even the most wicked of men can repent and turn to the Lord (c.f. 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Saul/Paul;) – we see what happens when Jonah got out of his own way and went to declare God's message to this wicked and cruel nation – they turned to the LORD!

IV. RUNNING AHEAD OF GOD

A. Outline of the Chapter:

1. Jonah's Anger and God's rebuke (4:1-4)
 - a. Jonah so angry he would rather die (4:1-3)
 - b. God's rebuke: "Is it right for you to be angry?" (4:4)
2. The Lord Teaches Jonah a Lesson Using a plant, a worm, and an east wind (4:5-11)

B. Observations/Lessons:

1. (4:1-3) Jonah fled because he didn't want God's message to work and Nineveh to be spared – he was exhibiting a sectarian spirit (schismatic, clannish, racist) and didn't want these foreigners to receive God's mercy.
 - Had a similar reaction to the older brother of the prodigal son (c.f. Lk. 15:11-32)
 - How the Pharisees responded to Jesus' eating with sinners (Mt. 9:10-11)
 - His prayer here is really the opposite of his prayer in ch. 2 – there requesting and thanking

God for His lovingkindness and saving His life – here wishing God would take his life because of that same loving kindness shown this time to Nineveh!

2. (4:4) Lord's simple response – Jonah should have known answer
3. (4:5-11) God uses a plant, worm, and wind to rebuke Jonah
 - a. (4:5) Jonah goes just outside the city to see what happens to the city – perhaps hoping for it to fall
 - b. (4:6-8) God sends a plant as shade, and then removed it with a worm and sends a strong east wind – Jonah a second time wishes death for himself
 - c. (4:9) God asks again if its right for him to be angry and a third time he wishes for death
 - d. (4:10-11) God shows Jonah that he had more pity on a plant than for a nation and its children and livestock.

Conclusion:

1. Hopefully we learn some important lessons from the account of Jonah's commission to Nineveh
2. Beware of prejudice toward our audience and don't allow petty reasons to keep us from our responsibilities as God's people!
3. Don't be selfish and narrow-minded in sharing the gospel.
4. Be concerned for all souls, even those of wicked men that might turn to the Lord (again consider Saul and the Corinthians)
5. Just as with Nineveh, judgement will come, and we must be ready. Repent of sin and turn to God.
6. Consider once more the words of Jesus: ***"The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgement with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here."*** (Matt. 12:41)