



Resurrection

JONAH'S PREACHING

Jonah 1-4

Teaching Notes

INTRO

While the minor prophets' writings are shorter than the major prophets, the minor prophets have powerful messages. Jonah is one of the better-known minor prophets, and his book contains a lot of valuable insight for us. All of us have probably felt like Jonah at some point.

Jonah's name means "dove." In Jonah's case, he was a dove that flew away and refused to be obedient to its master at the beginning of the book. Throughout the book, Jonah referred to himself in the third person. MacArthur shares this practice was not uncommon in the Old Testament.¹

Jonah was mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25: "He restored Israel's border from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, had spoken through His servant, the prophet Jonah son of Amittai from Gath-hepher." Gath-hepher was near Nazareth and was established during the reign of Jeroboam II from 793–753 BC. According to MacArthur, Jonah would have been a prophet to the northern tribe of Israel just prior to Amos coming on to the scene. Jewish tradition holds that Jonah was the son of the widow of Zarephath that Elijah raised from the dead (1 Kings 17).²

During Jonah's ministry, Syria and Assyria were relatively weak, which allowed Jeroboam II to expand the borders of Israel to where they had been during David's reign. This was a time of peace and prosperity in the kingdom. However, the people were in spiritual poverty. MacArthur observed: "Religion was ritualistic and increasingly idolatrous, and justice had become perverted. . . . As a result, God was to punish her by bringing destruction and captivity from the Assyrians in 722 BC."³ Jonah can be considered the first part of a larger story with Nahum serving as the second part.⁴

Eventually in Jonah, we will see Nineveh repent of its sin after Jonah was obedient to God's command. Because of the success of his ministry in Nineveh, Jonah is not remembered primarily as a prophet of Israel. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. As MacArthur observed, Nineveh was "infamous for its cruelty" and was a "historical nemesis of Israel and Judah." Nineveh had been founded by Nimrod, the grandson of Noah, and was possibly the largest city in the ancient world.⁵

TEACHING

Jonah 1:1-12: God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh and "preach against it" (v. 1-2). Jonah knew that the Ninevites might repent if he went and preached to them, so he "got up to flee to Tarshish from the LORD's presence" (v. 3). Jonah paid to sail on a boat, away from God's commandment to preach to Nineveh. The text makes it clear, that Jonah did so to flee "from the LORD's presence," by using the phrase twice in verse 3.

MacArthur notes four divisions of Jonah's story in chapter 1:

1. "The Commission of Jonah (1:1-2)"
2. "The Flight of Jonah (1:3)"
3. "The Pursuit of Jonah (1:4-16)" — Jonah fell asleep on the boat. A storm began to rage on the sea. Jonah confessed to the sailors that the storm was because of his disobedience to God and told them to throw him overboard.
4. "The Preservation of Jonah (1:17)"⁶ — Jonah was swallowed by a "huge fish" and was in its belly for three days and three nights.

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), p. 1006.

² MacArthur, p. 1006.

³ MacArthur, p. 1007.

⁴ MacArthur, p. 1008.

⁵ MacArthur, p. 1007.

⁶ MacArthur, p. 1008-1010.



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Jonah 2: MacArthur observed Jonah "Submitting to God's will" in chapter 2 in four stages:

1. "The Helplessness of Jonah (2:1-3)"
2. "The Prayer of Jonah (2:4-7)"
3. "The Repentance of Jonah (2:8-9)" Jonah finally acknowledged his need for the Lord and his commitment to Him.
4. "The Deliverance of Jonah (2:10)."⁷

Jonah 3: After Jonah submitted to God's will, he was given a second chance to be obedient by preaching to Nineveh (vv. 1-3). Jonah had to travel 500 miles from Joppa just to get to Nineveh. Nineveh itself was so large it took three days just to walk around the entire city. Jonah proclaimed that Nineveh would be destroyed in 40 days. The people of Nineveh believed the obedient prophet as he proclaimed God's message, proclaimed a fast, and dressed in sackcloth in repentance (v. 5).

Jesus used the Ninevites' response to Jonah's message as a critique of his generation: "But He answered them, 'An evil and adulterous generation demands a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish three days and nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at Jonah's proclamation; and look—something greater than Jonah is here!'" (Matthew 12:39-41). Jesus used Jonah's time in the belly of the fish as a way to prophesy that He would rise from the dead. That's why our word for Jonah is *Resurrection*. "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live'" (John 11:25). The message of the book of Jonah preaches the gospel.

Nineveh's repentance was so thorough that even the king "took off his royal robe, put on sackcloth, and sat in ashes." (v. 6) He issued a decree that everyone, including animals, was to fast from food and water. God gave Jonah a second chance after Jonah messed up, and God used Him to lead a great city to repentance. The Ninevites "turned from their evil ways—so God relented from the disaster He had threatened to do to them" (v. 10).

Jonah 4: The Ninevites' repentance "greatly displeased" Jonah (v. 1). After Jonah performed the Lord's will, he began to question whether or not he had done God's will. Jonah was then rebuked by the Lord (vv. 6-11). God cared about the Ninevites and desired their repentance.

CLOSING

Jonah reveals the gospel. Lemuel Young highlighted six ways Jonah reveals the gospel:

1. "Like Jonah, our sin separates us from God's presence."
2. "A life of sin brings storms that are too great for us to handle."
3. "The domino effect."—Our sin impacts others. Jonah's sin caused problems for the sailors on the ship.
4. "The story of Jonah shows the love of God."
5. "Jesus is greater than Jonah."
6. "Faith comes from hearing the Word of God."⁸

⁷ MacArthur, p. 1011.

⁸ Lemuel Young, "6 Ways Jonah Reveals the Gospel"; available at <https://www.grace.one/blog/6-ways-jonah-reveals-the-gospel>.