

**A PERSONAL
VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY**

JONAH

**BY
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Jonah 1:1 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

Jonah 1:2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

Most of the commentators date Jonah's ministry between 750-800 BC, after the time of Elijah and Elisha, but around the same time as Hosea and Amos. Jonah was a prophet from the northern kingdom of Israel.

We are not told how Jonah received the word of the Lord, but Jonah had no doubt that the words were from YHWH, the God of Israel. The amazing thing about this word from the Lord was that He was directing a prophet to go to the people of Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria. Other prophets were given messages concerning other nations, but they weren't sent to those nations to deliver the message in person. The wickedness being practiced in the city of Nineveh had reached the point that God was going to intervene personally as He had at Sodom and Gomorrah.

I can't help but wonder what the key is to crossing that point in the eyes of God, and how much worse it can get in America before we reach that point. I don't even like to think about it, because I believe it is going to get much worse.

Jonah 1:3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

In contrast to most of the prophets we read about, Jonah did not immediately step up to obey. He ran away; he actually thought he could hide from God. He must have forgotten the words of King David:

Psa. 139:7-12 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. If I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee...

The statement is made that he went down to Joppa to buy passage on a ship to Tarshish. Point could be made that when we are running away from the Lord, we are headed down—not up. Tarshish was probably the furthest point he could identify to which to run.

Thought from Pastor Fidel re “paid the fare” – “There is a price to pay when we run from God.”

Jonah 1:4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

Jonah 1:5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that *were* in the ship into the sea, to lighten *it* of them.

But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

The Lord had a mission for Jonah and proceeds to intervene in such a way as to cause Jonah to choose to complete that mission. God sends a great wind (i.e., a hurricane) that threatens to break the ship apart. The sailors on the ship's crew were afraid and were making petitions to their gods for help—but we know their gods could offer no help. They also acted practically by throwing as much as possible off the ship to relieve the stress on the wood. Amazingly, Jonah had found a spot in a lower part of the ship and was sleeping through the whole thing. The word for *sleep* indicates to “stun or stupefy”--maybe Jonah had passed out from fright.

Jonah 1:6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

The pilot or captain of the ship went to Jonah and woke him up. (“What meanest thou O” is not in the Hebrew.) He tells Jonah to pray to his God; maybe his God is the God who can rescue them from this awful storm.

Jonah 1:7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

Jonah 1:8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?

Eerdman's Dictionary has this to say about casting lots: “In the Bible, however, the casting of lots was one of the few legitimate means of divine revelation (as were dreams and direct communication with the deity). Lot casting is not among the condemned mantic or divinatory practices such as soothsaying, magic, and necromancy (cf. Deut. 18:10-12). Lot casting, therefore, had divine sanction and control. Though the throwing of the lots was a human action, the revelation was a direct message from God. (Proverbs 16:33 - The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.)”

Obviously, these men weren't looking to YHWH for the answer, but YHWH chose to accomplish His purpose by causing the lot to fall upon Jonah. It's interesting to me that they want to know about Jonah before they make a decision regarding what to do.

Jonah 1:9 And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.

Jonah answers with the truth. He identifies himself as a Hebrew, a descendent of Shem through Eber, eventually more commonly identified with the descendants of Abraham, specifically the Israelites. Interestingly enough, he also identifies himself as one that fears YHWH, the God of Israel, the Creator of sea and land. If he truly feared God, it does not seem that he would have chosen to disobey Him. His actions do not reflect his words.

Jonah 1:10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

Jonah 1:11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.

The men were extremely afraid but really didn't want to harm Jonah. They seemed to be even more afraid to know that he had run away in disobedience to his God whom he credited as the Creator of sea and land. (I'm not sure whom they identified as YHWH.) It's interesting that they trust Jonah to tell them what to do to appease his God and cause the sea to be calm.

Jonah 1:12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.

Jonah doesn't hesitate. He tells them to throw him off the boat and into the sea. It is his fault that they are in such danger.

Pride is a very strange character trait. Jonah obviously knows the power of God, yet he chooses to disobey Him. He is not a coward, and he is not uncaring of other people. He is ready to be sacrificed to save these men, but he is not willing to share God's message with the people of Nineveh. In his mind, he knows better than God on that issue.

Jonah 1:13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring *it* to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

Jonah 1:14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.

Jonah 1:15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

The ship's crew fought valiantly to bring their ship to land, but they could not; the wind was just too strong against them. They cried out to Jonah's God, YHWH, and begged Him not to hold them accountable for the death of Jonah. If He is the Creator, He surely must have caused this storm to accomplish His own purposes. After absolving themselves of responsibility for Jonah's death before God, they threw Jonah into the sea.

It's always interesting to me that men think they can absolve themselves from guilt. Pilate did the same thing when he turned Jesus over to be crucified. That act in and of itself recognizes a higher authority in existence. God has revealed Himself through creation, and our spirit has an innate knowledge of His moral standards, even though we may refuse to acknowledge those facts.

Psa. 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

Psa. 19:2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

Psa. 19:3 *There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.*

Rom. 1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them.

Rom. 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Rom. 2:14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

Rom. 2:15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

(1/10) As I was reading through this section again, it stood out to me that these men valued life. They didn't want to be the cause of Jonah's death even if he was responsible for the danger they were in. Think they were they familiar with the commandments of the God of the Jews?

Jonah 1:16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

As is the tendency when we are desperate, the sailors showed their fear of YHWH by offering up a sacrifice to Him and making vows/promises to Him. You know the type—Lord, if you will _____, I promise to _____.

Jonah 1:17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

The Lord was prepared; He already knew what was going to happen and when and where. He had a great fish (maybe a whale) ready to swallow up Jonah. I'm sure Jonah thought he was dead. Instead, he lived in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

Already the types or pictures of events to come in Jesus' life are depicted in the life of Jonah.

- Jonah was willing to give his life to save others, as was Jesus.
- Jonah was kept in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights just as Jesus was kept in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights—and both were miraculously given new life.

The major differences being:

- Jonah was punished for being guilty of sin; Jesus was sacrificed as the sinless Son of God.
- Jonah was being disobedient to God; Jesus was being obedient to the Father even unto death.