



(For the entire commentary on the book of Jonah click [HERE](#). For other commentaries of Charlie's click [HERE](#))

Jonah

JONAH 1:1-3 (FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD)

Most of us have either read the book of Jonah, or we're at least familiar with the remarkable aspects of the book. The first question we have to ask is, "Is this story literally true?" The answer is "Yes, we are to accept it as such." It is to be taken as a literal and historical account of what occurred.

There is no hint in the Bible that it is to be taken as an allegory or a myth, although parts of it can be applied allegorically to events later in redemptive history. Jesus makes this perfectly clear. The person Jonah is mentioned 19 times in the Old Testament, once in the book of 2 Kings, and 18 times in this book.

That he was mentioned in 2 Kings, establishes the fact that he was as real as any other figure mentioned in the Bible. There it records this, which occurred during the reign of Jeroboam, king of Israel –

"In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, became king in Samaria, *and reigned* forty-one years. ²⁴ And he did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. ²⁵ He restored the territory

of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who *was* from Gath Hepher.” 2 Kings 14:23-25

In these three verses, six individuals are named, six locations are named, and a precise dating is given. Therefore, Jonah is to be considered a real person according to judicial law which states that

“Every document, apparently ancient, coming from the proper repository or custody, and bearing on its face no evident marks of forgery, the law presumes to be genuine, and devolves on the opposing party the burden of proving it to be otherwise.” Simon Greenleaf

The record meets these requirements and it thus establishes Jonah as a true historical figure. Further, Jonah and his account, including the remarkable aspect of his time in the belly of the great fish, is referred to by Jesus nine times in seven verses of the books of Matthew and Luke.

Therefore, to question the account of Jonah in the Old Testament as literal and historical, is to then question the integrity of the Lord Jesus and the word of God itself. And so, with the exception of some flowery verses in his prayer which match those of the psalms and are therefore probably not literal, but rather applied to his mood at the time, there is no excuse that the account should not be taken as having actually occurred. The answer again is, “Yes, we are to accept the story of Jonah as literal, historical, and true.”

As we have noted and will see again as the verses begin, Jonah was the son of Amittai. He was from Gath Hepher which was located within the tribe of Zebulun in Israel, and his prophetic office occurred during the reign of Jeroboam the son of Joash.

This means that he was a prophet just after Elisha and just before Amos and Hosea. He was called to preach repentance to the people of Nineveh. This was somewhere between 793-753 B.C.

Nineveh was a great city, taking three days to walk around, and it was the capital of Assyria which is in current day Iraq. This was the same people who later conquered and took into exile the northern tribes of Israel. It's also the same people who later came against the southern tribe of Judah. When they surrounded Jerusalem, the Angel of the Lord killed 185,000 in a single night.

The book is written in the form of a third-person narrative and it's also written in a chronological order. Along with Ruth, several passages of Isaiah, and a few other examples interspersed throughout the Old Testament writings, Jonah tells us that God's love and purposes are not only for the Jewish people, but all the people of the world who call on the name of the Lord. Within the book itself are an amazing number of chiasms. They can be reviewed at [HERE](#) (link to PDF)

There is more to this book than that though. What occurs in Nineveh will be used by the Lord as a valid excuse for judgment against His own people, showing that He is perfectly just and fair in what occurs to them for their willful disobedience towards Him.

The prophecies of the book only concern Nineveh. Israel is never mentioned in it in this regard. The other prophets mention either Israel the land, or Israel the people, in some way concerning their prophetic utterances, but Jonah does not. This then makes the book both unique and a tacit rebuke against them.

The actions of the pagan people of Nineveh, from the greatest to the least, are set in contrast to those of Israel. From the first call for them to repent, the people hurriedly and decidedly did so. On the other hand, the prophets' call for Israel to repent went on year after year and generation after generation.

The mouths of countless prophets, both those who are recorded in the Bible and many others who are not, called to the people to repent, and they failed to do so. Instead, they willfully and constantly turned their necks to the Lord, and they trampled His glory underfoot, even with relish as they did so.

They, the people of Israel, were the stewards of God's oracles and His law. They gloried in this fact, and they wore it as if it were a cloak of honor to them. But they could not see that the grace that they received under the law, which set them apart as a people, was also intended for the Gentile people of the world.

Instead, they stood opposed to this fact. The story of Jonah will be used as a testimony against them by the Lord Jesus, and it will find its fulfillment during the their second exile, which is the time of the Gentile-led church age. This is witnessed in the words of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2 –

“For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they *did* from the Judeans, ¹⁵ who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, ¹⁶ forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up *the measure of* their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.” 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16

Israel was supposed to be a light to the nations, showing them the nature, character, and expectations of the true God. But instead, they turned inwards, treating the Lord in their midst as a badge of righteousness which was because of who they were in relation to Him, not who He was in relation to them. They failed to see the need for imputed righteousness. As John Darby says concerning the book of Jonah –

“Israel failed even in maintaining their own faithfulness, and consequently therefore in that which was the only means of making the world, as such, to understand the true character of God. Instead therefore of being made a blessing

to others, they only involved them in the divine judgments that were to fall upon themselves.” John Darby

Jonah the man will be used in a delightful number of ways to draw out the Lord’s intent for Israel, for the Gentile nations, and for an understanding by all of the workings of God in the process of redemption. Jamieson-Fausset-Brown make the following observations about him –

“Jonah is himself a strange paradox: a prophet of God, and yet a runaway from God: a man drowned, and yet alive: a preacher of repentance, yet one that repines at repentance. Yet Jonah, saved from the jaws of death himself on repentance, was the fittest to give a hope to Nineveh, doomed though it was, of a merciful respite on its repentance. The patience and pity of God stand in striking contrast with the selfishness and hard-heartedness of man.”

In addition to the literal and historical nature of the book, it is also a book of morals. These will be evidenced throughout the story. There are the fixed, firm, and eternal moral standards of God, and there are also the expected moral standards of man in relation to God. These will be drawn out for us to see and consider.

And there is also the prophetic aspect of the book of Jonah. This is not merely realized in the immediate prophetic words of the Lord to and through Jonah, but also in the prophetic implications of the story itself. There is hidden in this story a marvelous prophecy which is realized in the later writings of the word of God.

Jonah proves himself to be a true prophet then, not only by the events which he participates in, but also in the greater prophecies which he and his actions point to.

Jonah is the 32nd book of the Bible, but chronologically, it comes before many of the earlier books in the Christian Canon. It is the 5th book of the 12 Minor Prophets and the 10th book of all 17 prophetic books. It is one of what are known as the “pre-exilic” books, because it occurs before the exiles of the people.

If Jonah wasn't included in the Bible, we would have a much narrower Old Testament view of God's intent for Gentiles. Ruth brings only one Gentile into the picture, and she became part of the Jewish people through marriage.

Isaiah refers to the Gentiles quite a few times, but these are interspersed throughout the book and could easily be dismissed by an unsympathetic audience. However, it's very hard to imagine anyone seeing Jonah's purpose in any other light than that God is merciful to the Gentile as well as the Jew. What else would be missing if Jonah wasn't in the Bible? Well... a fairly fantastic and fun fish story!

Text Verse: "Where can I go from Your Spirit?

Or where can I flee from Your presence?

⁸ If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there;

If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there*.

⁹ *If* I take the wings of the morning,

And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

¹⁰ Even there Your hand shall lead me,

And Your right hand shall hold me." Psalm 139:7-9

It is actually quite appropriate that we decided to come to this small book between our journey from Exodus to Leviticus. In it, we will see a contrast between the Pharaoh, king of Egypt and that of the king of Nineveh. Countless times in Exodus, we read the words, "Pharaoh's heart grew hard," or something very similar to that. Chapter 3 of Jonah will show us a complete contrast to this in the king of Nineveh.

One of the things we have to ask concerning this book is, "Why is Nineveh selected for this word from the Lord?" There were numerous countries around Israel that were wicked and which were to be destroyed for their wickedness. Why has the Lord selected this one nation to have a prophet go and proclaim repentance to them?

When looked at from this perspective, it is obvious that the Lord is going to use this account for moral purposes, prophetic purposes, and pictorial purposes of Christ to come. These, along with the historical account, will become an integral part of the word of God. They will help us to understand the redemptive process in a much greater way.

As far as an introduction, we could go on and on, almost endlessly, as to facts and figures, and dates and locations concerning the details of the book, but there are many resources which can be obtained to tell us those things. What we need to do now is to get into the word, because this is where the heart of God is to be found. Yes, it is there in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

The Word of the Lord

Now (Note: I will be reading each verse in Hebrew and giving my translation of it throughout the book) *vai'hi* – “and now.” In the Hebrew, the book opens with the words - *vai'hi debar Yehovah el yonah ben amittay lemor* – “And came the word of Yehovah unto Jonah son of Amittai saying...” A book beginning with the word “and” may seem out of place to us. It is as if we read the Bible and come to the book and find it is merely a continuation of the same story we have been reading.

And for all intents and purposes it is. God is revealing to us wonders, unfolding them in a logical sequence which may or may not be chronological, but they fit in a fashion as orderly as if they were chronological. It is like a string of precious pearls which are connected together. Each is separate, and yet they are united as one grand whole.

This same “And” begins the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Ezekiel, Esther, and Ezra. Beginning this way is certainly intended to show us an unraveling of a thought process which had already begun elsewhere.

The beginning of the book with “And” shows that the writer is referencing in his own thoughts a set of national records, the oracles of God, which had begun before. He is willingly and consciously taking up this same thread of history and placing himself and his narrative into it. It is thus a claim to the divine inspiration which guides him, and which has guided all of the oracles of God to this point.

¹ **Now the word of the LORD came**

devar Yehovah – “word Yehovah.” This same phrase is used 102 times in the Bible. All are in the Old Testament and it is used to indicate that the LORD is speaking something that was to be understood, often prophetically, and usually to be re-transmitted to others. The phrase is mentioned twice in the book of Jonah, once now and once again after Jonah is taught a lesson about God’s sovereignty and His purposeful will in His selected prophets.

Four of the other people who “the word of the Lord” came to are also key figures in other ways – Abraham, Samuel, David, and Solomon. Abraham is the father of the Hebrew nation. Samuel was the last Judge of Israel, and David and Solomon were both kings. Other than these four, the rest of them were common people called to be prophets, or those who were designated prophets from birth.

The “word of the Lord” coming to someone is an indication of the prophetic office. He has received either a revelation, an audible word, or an internal impulse which signifies the will of the Lord. As the Lord has come to him directly, it implies that he would then take the word of the Lord and act upon it.

^{1 (con’t)} **to Jonah**

el yonah – “unto Jonah.” Here, while still in this first verse, it says that “the word of the Lord came to Jonah.” From 2 Kings, we already know that he is a prophet, but if we didn’t know this, it is now made perfectly clear.

In order to understand the underlying thoughts which are being conveyed in the book, Jonah's name needs a rather lengthy study. The name Jonah is agreed by all onomastic scholars to mean "Dove," a symbol of peace. However, there is actually more to the name than simply "Dove." To a Hebrew hearing the name and contemplating it, there would be the semblance of a pun to the name. It would mean "Dove," but also a "Vexer."

The root of the name Yonah is the word *yanah*. It is a word in the Bible which generally signifies doing wrong to someone. In Leviticus 19:33 we read this –

"And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not **mistreat** him."

This then stands in opposition to the phrase "Love him as you love yourself" of the next verse of Leviticus. As you can see, the root is needed to understand Jonah's actions as they unfold in the story. But there is still more. A word closely associated to *yanah* is *yayin*, or wine.

Without going into all of the amazing details of grapes to vineyards to wine, it will be enough to say that vineyards represent the cultural side of humanity. There are various vineyards which are various cultures. Vineyards produce grapes, or cultural expressions, and these are mixed together through a mashing process to produce wine.

In the Bible, wine then symbolizes the merging together of these expressions into a result. The thing that ought to happen can happen, symbolized by wine. It is as if an act of reasoning is occurring, and an intended result is realized. Solomon uses wine in Proverbs 9 as a result of the workings of Wisdom. It is as if we are "seeing wisdom as wine drawn from the grapes of observations and deductions" (Abarim). Wine then represents our reasoning and that which will change our mind. A perfect example of this is found in Jesus' words of Matthew 9 –

“Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” Matthew 9:17

Jesus was speaking of the law and grace. The new wine is the new dispensation of grace to come. The old wine was the dispensation of the law. If one were to introduce the new concept into the old, it would not work because the two were incompatible. Only if one put the new wine in the new wineskin and received the new wine would the mind be changed.

Likewise, in His first miracle, Jesus changed water into wine. But he did it with water in jars used for purification. This was what was used to wash the feet. It wasn't intended to be drunk. But in one stroke, He changed the water to wine, and the function of the jar and the applicability of its contents.

So what does all this have to do with the name Jonah? Well, the connection between the flight of the dove, and the effects of wine as taken from a biblical perspective, shows us. The dove flies erratically, but it flies with purpose and with an intended location.

So Jonah's coming trip will vacillate, but the final location will be realized. The minds of the people will be changed, and the redemptive process of God will be revealed. Jonah is being equated with what his name means, "Dove." But the root of his name, and the variations of it, are being drawn together by God to tell us a story.

In the ultimate example of these things, we read of vineyards, grapes, and wine directly in relation to Jesus and His words. He equates His people to a vineyard, and then He speaks of the vinedressers of that vineyard. He speaks of Himself as the true vine, and He speaks of the fruit of the vine.

As far as the dove, the greatest of the many uses of the dove in Scripture is found in the Holy Spirit descending upon Him as a Dove.

“The functions of the Holy Spirit are legion of course but possibly He chose the appearance of a dove to indicate that God brings people together by their weaknesses and not by their strengths, and the fabric of Truth is uncertainty, contrary to deterministic certainty. The mind of Christ is not about knowing all things down to the minutest facts, but being alive in a whole new way. Being able to waver is a quality of life; lifeless objects travel by straight, predictable lines.”
Abarim

In the end, and taking all of the uses of the dove in Scripture together, its symbolism can be summed up with the words, “mourning love.” When the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ, it was certainly with the thought of mourning in mind. He was about to begin His earthly ministry, one which would be fraught with sadness, pain, punishment, and death.

Jonah’s mission will prefigure Him in this as the love of God, which mourns for the people of the world – the work of His hands, and the objects of His love – goes to a foreign land in order to bring them back to Himself, just as Jesus did.

Jonah himself will stubbornly fill this role in contrast to Christ who will willingly take on this same role some 700-800 years later. Yes, these things are all being pictured, believe it or not, in the simple name of Jonah, and how he conducts his affairs in the book which bears his name.

¹ (con’t) **the son of Amittai, saying,**

ben amittay lemor – “son Amittai saying.” The name Amittai is a derivative of the word *emeth*, or truth, and so it means either “True,” “My Truth,” or “Truth of the Lord.” The final letter, *yod*, most likely is given to indicate “Truth of the Lord.” He

is mentioned only twice in the Bible, and both times are in conjunction with his son Jonah.

As we have already seen, Jonah is from Gath Hepher. Although that is not recorded in the story, but only in 2 Kings 14, it is still significant enough to note again with its meaning. *Gath* means a winepress. The word *khepher* comes from a word which means “to dig,” but it is also connected to a word meaning “shame.”

And so *Gath-ha’khepher* literally means “Winepress of the Pit” or “Winepress of Shame.” Both meanings meet in intent. A pit is that which is dug out, and shame is something which when it is uncovered exposes that which is shameful.

And so a picture is formed. The Lord is using Jonah, picturing “mourning love” who is from the Winepress of Shame to effect a change in the minds of a Gentile nation, which in turn is intended to bring the same change about in His own people Israel.

If we were to look for a single passage from the Bible which this story will then picture, it is to be found in the book of Romans –

““But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “LORD, who has believed our report?”¹⁷ So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

¹⁸ But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed:

“Their sound has gone out to all the earth,
And their words to the ends of the world.”

¹⁹ But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says:

“I will provoke you to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation,
I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.”

²⁰ But Isaiah is very bold and says:

“I was found by those who did not seek Me;
I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.”

²¹ But to Israel he says:

“All day long I have stretched out My hands
To a disobedient and contrary people.”” Romans 10:17-21
Without understanding why names are given, and what those names mean, we
miss so very much of what the Lord is telling us!

²“Arise, go to Nineveh,

qum lek el nineveh – “Arise, go to Nineveh. Nineveh, as a city, goes all the way
back to the Table of Nations in Genesis 10. It was founded by Nimrod, a
descendant of Noah’s youngest son Ham. It was located on the east bank of the
Tigris River. In and shortly after the time of Jonah, it was at its zenith in power and
glory.

The name Nineveh may be a word of foreign origin, but if connected to Hebrew
its meaning is “Offspring’s Habitation.” As the Bible is written from a Hebrew
perspective, the Hebrew name is what we are to consider.

Without getting too far ahead, they are a group of people who are being called to
repentance by the Lord. Thus, they are to be considered His offspring, even in this
habitation which is removed from Israel. And so we can go to the New Testament
to find a parallel to Jonah’s mission and to that of Paul. In Acts 17, Paul went on a
mission to Athens, another great Gentile city, just as was Nineveh. There we read
the following –

“And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of
the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of
their dwellings, ²⁷ so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might
grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ for in Him
we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said,
‘For we are also His offspring.’ ²⁹ Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we
ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something
shaped by art and man’s devising. ³⁰ Truly, these times of ignorance God
overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, ³¹ because He has

appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” Acts 17:26-31

Like Jonah, another person got a similar call to “Arise” in the New Testament. A young girl, only 12 years old, was sick and had died. She was the daughter of Jairus the ruler of a synagogue. Jesus was called to heal her but as He was on His way, they told Him she had died. We read about it in Mark 5 –

“While He was still speaking, *some* came from the ruler of the synagogue’s *house* who said, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?” As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not be afraid; only believe.” Mark 5:35, 36

When he entered her room with the family, Peter, and John, He took her by the hand and made His tender call –

“Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, ‘Talitha, cumi,’ which is translated, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise.’” Mark 5:41

A dead girl responded to the same call of the Lord – *qum* – that was given to Jonah, but as we’ll see, Jonah wasn’t so ready to respond to His word. The power of the word of the Lord stands though and Jonah would eventually respond.

In the book of John, we read another account about the power of the word of the Jesus. In chapter 11, we learn about one of the signs which validated Him as the Messiah, calling the dead to life. However, unlike the prophets Elijah and Elisha who did the same thing in the name of the LORD, Jesus did these things under His own authority.

“He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!” And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Loose him, and let him go.” John 11:43-44

Jesus called to life that which was dead. Jonah was directed to do the same thing. He was to call the spiritually dead to life, and to bring them from that pit of darkness to the light of the Lord.

² (con't) **that great city,**

ha'ir ha'gedolah – “the city, the whopping.” The greatness of Nineveh is highlighted twice more in the book of Jonah. Its large size is also mentioned. It was both large and a powerful city. It is so termed “the great city” in order to show Jonah the importance of the mission that he was being called to fulfill.

It was a city of great prominence in the known world, being the capital of the Assyrian empire. As I said earlier, this great force would eventually come against the northern ten tribes of Israel and force them into exile. It would also make a challenge against the southern tribes in Judah in the future as well.

² (con't) **and cry out against it;**

u-qera aleha – “and cry against it.” The term *qara*, or “cry” is a rather common word in Scripture which is intended to imply a proclamation by either a prophet or a herald. In English, this same terminology lingers on in the idea of a public crier, a form of communication which, although almost extinct, is still well known to us today.

Jonah is not told to just cry out *concerning* Nineveh as other prophets were known to do. He could have stayed in Israel and cried out concerning Nineveh like Nahum. He is also not told to cry out *to* Nineveh, as if he could make his

proclamation from the top of a mountain outside of the city. Rather, he is told to cry out *al*, or against, the city. It is a cry of determination directed at them personally, and one which exposes their very secrets.

What will happen to Nineveh because of Jonah's ministry will be used as an example by Jesus as a means of rebuking Israel. Likewise, Jonah's mission was to do the same for Israel of his time. This *modus operandi* was explained to them at their very beginning, and yet they failed to heed –

“They have provoked Me to jealousy by *what* is not God;
They have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols.
But I will provoke them to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation;
I will move them to anger by a foolish nation.” Deuteronomy 32:31

The specific message he is to cry was relayed to him, but we won't actually be told what it is until verse 3:4. However, the reason for it is now revealed...

² (con't) **for their wickedness has come up before Me.”**

ki aletha raatam lephanay – “...for has arisen their wickedness to My face.” Here wickedness is personified. It is as a living force which rises from earth to heaven where it stands before the Lord, the Supreme Judge. There he stands and bears witness against himself, and of those he has seduced to follow after him.

The idea of wickedness arising to the Lord is seen time and again in Scripture. In Genesis 4, the voice of Abel's blood was said to rise out of the ground, calling to the Lord. In Genesis 18, the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah came to the Lord because their sin was very grave.

This then isn't the standard sin which infects the whole human race. Instead, it is a working of evil against others in a vile and unrepentant way. In Nahum 3, these words are recorded against Nineveh some years later –

“Your injury *has* no healing,
Your wound is severe.
All who hear news of you
Will clap *their* hands over you,
For upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?” Nahum 3:19

Jonah has been called to inform them that their wickedness is at an end. It will either be in personal restraint or in divine judgment, but one way or another, it was at an end. Justice could no longer be deferred. But, there is more than a call to Nineveh being made.

I said earlier that Jonah's call is unique in that it is directed to Gentiles and Israel is never mentioned, but this is only explicitly so. Israel would be taught a lesson through Jonah which would point right back to themselves.

They trusted in their lineage and their heritage and ignored the very warnings directed to them in their own writings which established them and bound them to the Lord. They were living in a land of self-delusion, and the call to Nineveh to repent was also a call to them. Nineveh did not have the oracles of God, and yet a call was made to them. Israel did, and the call was long and vocal for their own turning –

“And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare *himself* or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*.⁴⁸ But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.” Luke 12:47-48

This book is seen as a complete contrast to Israel who was given much, and who failed to heed the words of countless prophets, to that of Nineveh who had little and yet responded quickly and willingly. Why was Jonah selected for this call? The answer begins to be seen in the book of Hosea –

“Ephraim also is like a silly **dove**, without sense—

They call to Egypt,

They go to Assyria.

¹² Wherever they go, I will spread My net on them;

I will bring them down like birds of the air;

I will chastise them

According to what their congregation has heard.” Hosea 7:11

There in Hosea, Ephraim is shown to be like a silly *yonah*, a silly dove; one without sense. Jonah was selected because he and his mission are being used as an indictment against the very people who received and maintained the Lord’s prophetic utterances.

³ But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish

va’yaqam yonah livroakh tarshishah – “and rose up Jonah to flee to Tarshish.” The Lord told Jonah to arise, and arise he did – quickly and with determination. But it was not in obedience to the Lord, it was to renounce his position and his commission. Instead of Nineveh, he chose Tarshish.

The meaning of the name Tarshish is debated, but to a Hebrew audience, it might have appeared to indicate two words which together mean “white dove,” or “dove white.” If this is so, it is more than coincidence that a lesser used word for dove, a turtledove, is found in the story about a fleeing dove. It is as if he were flitting about to find a place to flee to and his eyes alighted on a place which bears the traits of who he is.

Tarshish also goes all the way back to the Table of Nations in Genesis 10. Tarshish is listed as a son of Javan, who is a son of Japheth the eldest of Noah. There it says of him and his brothers –

“From these the coastland *peoples* of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.” Genesis 10:5

And so, in this story, all three sons of Noah are involved: Shem/Israel; Ham/Nineveh; and Tarshish/Japheth. And this is in the order as listed in Scripture.

The location of Tarshish is generally thought to be where Spain or Cyprus is today, although that is widely debated. It was a trading city well known in Scripture. Jonah wasn't willing to go to Nineveh to cry out to them about their wickedness, but he was willing to go to another Gentile land in order to keep from doing what he was called to do.

There is a moral lesson for us here. Jonah was directed to go to a location north and east of Israel. It is where the lands of his past were located, and of which his forefathers had departed from in order to go to Canaan. Rather than go there, he goes in the opposite direction, heading to the land north and west of Israel.

With sin and rebellion, there is no middle ground. If one is disobedient to the Lord, they are as far removed from Him as they would have been near Him in obedience. One is either in His favor and near to His throne, or they are out of His favor and nearer to hell. Like the rich man who went sorrowfully away from the Lord, and like the disciples that turned and no longer walked with Him, Jonah also turned from Him in rebellion. The actual reason for his flight is given by himself in chapter 4 –

“Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You *are* a gracious and merciful God, slow

to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.”
Jonah 4:2

He knew that the turning of the Gentiles would lead them from enmity with the Lord to a position of favor with Him. He determined that he would not be a part of that, knowing that their favor would infringe upon the privileges which Israel had above them. He thought it would mean that they were no longer the elect, chosen nation of God. Is anyone seeing foreshadowing's of the church and Israel here? It is exactly what we should be seeing.

In what is an ironic twist, he was willing to cut himself off from the Lord in order to not allow someone else to participate in the Lord's favor. And this is exactly how history repeated itself in the Jews of Jesus' time. They were so unwilling to accept that Gentiles could share in His grace, that they willingly cut themselves off from His favor.

And this same pattern continues to this day with many Jews and Judaizing sects of Christianity. They willingly cut themselves off from the Lord's favor by inserting the law where the law does not belong. It is the main theme of the book of Galatians, and the poison that Paul warns against there still permeates the lives of countless souls who would rather be cast into hell than simply accept that the grace of God has gone forth to the undeserving.

One theme of the book of Acts is that of getting the Jews to realize that Gentiles were to be considered just as much the people of the Lord as are the Jews. Many rejected this; many continue to do so.

³ (con't) **from the presence of the LORD.**

mi-liphne Yehovah – “from toward face Yehovah.” There are at least three main interpretations for these words. The first is an actual belief that one can hide from the presence of the Lord. It is what Adam and Eve did in the Garden. Such a belief

would be wholly inconsistent with the general Hebrew view of the Lord, and contrary to the writings of the psalms and other historical authors. As today's text verse said –

“Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?” Psalm 139:7

The question is rhetorical and the psalm goes on to show that there is no such place. The author of Chronicles speaks along the same lines as well in 2 Chronicles 16:9 –

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose heart *is* loyal to Him.”

The second view is that to flee the face of the Lord is to renounce his calling as a prophet. The Levites were said to “stand before the Lord” as ministers to Him. And so if they rejected this duty, they would no longer stand before Him.

The third view is that of leaving the Land of Promise where the Lord dwelt. His special presence was there, and so to leave the land would mean fleeing from His presence.

The first seems wrong on the surface. With all of the history of who the Lord was to them, and with all of the oracles speaking against this notion, it appears that Jonah would know he could never flee from His face.

The second seems wrong as well. If he could not flee from the Lord, then he could not flee from his commission by the Lord. And the third seems obviously wrong as well. If he was instructed to go to the far land of Nineveh to cry out against it, then how could he expect to flee to another far land, which was maybe just a bit farther, in order to hide from his calling?

The fact is that he probably wasn't thinking rationally at all. The sin of rebellion had clouded his mind so that he thought that any and all three of the options were available to him and possible. When we sin, we push the word of God out of our mind, we sear our conscience to the obvious, and we deny that which is evident before our eyes.

We see this everyday among cosmologists, evolutionists, biologists, archaeologists, and even among Christians scholars, ministers, and lay people who strive against the literal reading of the Bible, which is God's word handed to us for our knowledge, wisdom, guidance, and acceptance. Jonah is simply us in narrative form to laugh at and wonder over as we pursue the same flight to Tarshish that he took. Apparently for Jonah, as we will find out, no place is far enough – either in distance, or in irrational thought, to thwart the will of the Lord.

3 (con't) He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish;

va'yered yapho va'yimtsa aniyah baah tarshish – “And went down to Joppa and found ship going to Tarshish.” The word “went down” is *yarad*. It means “to go down” or “descend.” In this case it is from the place of his calling to the place of his disobedient flee. He had descended from a place of favor, to a place out of favor. In this case and for him, it is Joppa.

Joppa, or *Yapho*, means Beauty, or Beautiful. Today in English it is known as Jaffa. It is the nearest port to Jerusalem on the Mediterranean Sea. It is right next to Tel Aviv, and it is mentioned four times in the Old Testament and 10 times in the New – all in Acts. Interestingly, the accounts in Acts revolve around Peter, who is also known as Simon bar-Jonah, or Simon, Son of Jonah. This is not by chance. He, the apostle to the Jews, is used like Jonah to call the people of Israel to a right understanding of the Lord.

3 (con't) so he paid the fare,

va'yitten sekarah– “So paid fare.” These words help us understand that there was common sea-traffic between the two locations which included accepting passengers. As there was a fare, it implies that there was a set arrangement for people to make such a journey. The details come in an ordinary manner, as if it was just another passenger paying just another fare to make just another journey.

^{3 (con't)} **and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish**

va'yered bah lavow immahem tarshishah – “...and went down in to go with them Tarshish.” From his low spot of Joppa, the Bible now repeats the word *va'yered*. He went down and he goes down further still. He is the addict who has first run himself out of a job, and now he has run himself out of a home. He is the adulteress who first lost her husband, and found that she next lost her lover.

Jonah went down, into the hold of the ship, in order to flee further from the presence of the Lord. If he could just hide under the bales of fig leaves leaving Israel and heading to Tarshish, the Lord would never find him. It was safe and secure down... down below where the Lord never could find him, far away...

***3 (fin) from the presence of the LORD.**

milliphne Yehovah – “...from toward face Yehovah.” The same phrase is repeated again from this same verse. And so the verse forms a chiasm which reveals to us the true cost of rebellion. It also reveals to us that it is a cost that we willingly pay.

Jonah 1:3 – Fleeing from the Face of the Lord

Rebellion carries a high cost (11/14/2016)

a. from the presence of the LORD

b. and he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish

x. so he paid the fare

b. and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish

a. from the presence of the LORD

When we rebel against the Lord, departing from His word, it is a trek downward for us. And with each place we move to in hopes of finding security from His frowning countenance, we pay another wage in our already long expense account. Israel has paid their wages for years seemingly without end.

And they are still paying them. They will next pay the wages of a return to temple worship, of which they will derive a payment in kind which is entering into the tribulation period and being blown about by the horrifying chaos of the stirred-up seas of humanity.

Their blind and senseless unbelief in the Redeemer of the world and His righteous judgment will swallow them up like the great fish that lies ahead of Jonah. And with them, the whole world will likewise be swallowed up.

However, God will intervene, just as He did for Jonah, and He will restore life to His disobedient child. Jonah will have to go through much trouble before he acknowledges his Lord's sovereignty, and Israel will suffer likewise.

For Jonah of Israel, and for each of you here today, I will leave you with the thoughts of John Darby concerning our responsibilities to God and towards others concerning the grace which has been bestowed upon us –

“If those to whom God in His grace has committed a testimony, do not employ this testimony in behalf of others according to the grace that bestowed it, they will soon become unfaithful in their own walk before God. If they truly acknowledged God, they would feel bound to make known His name, to impart this blessing to others. If they do not own His glory and His grace, they will assuredly be unable to maintain their own walk before Him.” John Darby

If you are here, as yet unsaved by the Lord Jesus, or if you are saved and yet running from the Lord, the Bible tells us there is no place where we can hide from Him. It is our responsibility to honor Him through obedience to Him. For the unsaved, that is by calling on the name of Jesus and being cleansed by His shed blood. For the saved, it is by applying the precious, superior word of God to our walk in Him. Let us make every effort to be obedient to Him and to His call in our lives.

Closing Verse: So I said, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove!

I would fly away and be at rest.

Indeed, I would wander far off,

And remain in the wilderness. Selah” Psalm 55:6, 7

Next Week: Jonah 1:4-7 *Wake up and don't be such a clod...* (Arise! Call on Your God) (2nd Jonah Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean rages against you and is ready to swallow you up, He can send delivery to you in the most remarkable of ways. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

So He Paid the Fare

Now the word of the LORD came, as I am now relaying
To Jonah the son of Amittai, saying

“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city
And cry out against it
For their wickedness has come up before Me

But Jonah arose to Tarshish to flee
From the presence of the LORD
He went down to Joppa, yes Joppa by the sea
And found a ship which was to Tarshish heading toward

So he paid the fare
And went down into it, yes, he got on board
To go with them to Tarshish
From the presence of the LORD

Lord God, we are prone to run away from You
When we don't want to do the things you ask of us
Even though it is always the right thing to do
Give us strength to comply, and to not put up a fuss
Grant that we will not flee from You
But that we would be willing to go when You call to us
And to do what we ought to do

To be obedient to Your will, just as did our Lord Jesus

Help us in this Lord God Almighty, surely this is right

May our hearts be obedient to what You desire of us

Help us to live for You, and be pleasing in Your sight

May we glorify You as we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus

And may the lives we live give to You oodles of praise

Now in this earthly walk, and in heaven's eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...