

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 9-9-12 PM NOTES  
JONAH  
#34 in Series, "The Glory of God in the Old Testament"

**2 Kings 14:25 (NKJV)** "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 Hopher."

**Matthew 12:40-41 (NKJV)** "40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah *is* here."

I. Rebellion—Running from God's Will (1:1-16)

A. The Cause of the Rebellion (1:1-3)

**Jeremiah 29:11 (NKJV)** "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."

**1 Samuel 15:23a (NKJV)** "For rebellion *is* as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is* as iniquity and idolatry."

B. The Course of the Rebellion (1:4-5)

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JONAH

#34 in Series, "The Glory of God in the Old Testament"

I heard about a quiet unassuming elderly lady who was reading her Bible as she sat on a bus. An arrogant, loud-mouthed man was sitting next to her. He sarcastically asked her if she believed everything in the Bible. She answered that she did believe all of it. The man sneered at her and said, "Then explain to me how Jonah lived for three days in the belly of a whale." The woman answered in a kind voice, "I really don't know how, but I believe that he did." The man began to berate her and said, "Lady, you ought to be able to explain what you believe." She replied, "When I get to Heaven, I will ask Jonah". The obnoxious man said, "Well what if Jonah didn't make it to Heaven?" She said, "Then you ask him".

It is sad that so many think of the book of Jonah as a tall tale sort of like Paul Bunyan and his blue ox, Babe or as being like the Greek or Roman mythology. The Bible presents Jonah as an historical person. **2 Kings 14:25 (NKJV)** "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 Hopher." Compare that to Jonah 1:1. The timing of the message of Jonah in this book called after his name fits well with 2 Kings 14:25 when Assyria was a rising power. In addition to the references in the Old Testament, Jesus believed that Jonah was a real person. **Matthew 12:40-41 (NKJV)** "<sup>40</sup>For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. <sup>41</sup>The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah *is* here." Make no mistake, Jonah was an historical character. He lived in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC in the northern kingdom of Israel. He was from a little town close to Nazareth called Gath Hopher. He prophesied just prior to Amos whose prophesy we looked at a few weeks ago.

Not only is it sad that Jonah is often looked at as a parable or a tall tale, it is also sad that many who believe that Jonah was an historical character see this book as no more than an account of a man who was swallowed by a giant fish and survived. In reality, this isn't primarily a book about Jonah; it is a book about God and His mercy and compassion upon all people – not just the Jews. Let's examine the message of Jonah.

I. Rebellion – Running from God's Will (1:1-16)

In chapter one, we see that Jonah has resigned his prophetic office and in effect tells God to get someone else because he is not going to obey God's directive to go preach to Nineveh. Why was he so dead set against going with God's message to Nineveh?

A. The Cause of the Rebellion (1:1-3)

From Jonah's home, it was about 500 miles east to the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. Tarshish was about 2,000 miles to the west in southern Spain. It was at the western most point in the known world. In other words Jonah went the opposite way that God told him to go. Why did Jonah react this way to God's directions? It was not because he was afraid to go to Nineveh. Jonah doesn't seem afraid to die as we will see later. Did he refuse to go to Nineveh because he did not understand God's call? No, he understood God's call all too well! He knew that God was full of compassion and rich in mercy. He was afraid that Nineveh would repent and that God would spare them. **Jonah wanted to see God's vengeance, not His mercy.** Why did Jonah hate the Assyrians so much? It was because he loved Israel and the Assyrians were Israel's enemy and their biggest threat. The Assyrians were known for their cruelty. They had a long history of extreme aggression and violence. They were known to skin their enemies alive, impale them on poles, and make pyramids of the heads they had severed. **Jonah did not want them to be forgiven; he wanted them to be judged by God.** Jonah's greatest fear was not the aggressive Assyrians; his greatest fear was that they would repent and experience God's mercy and forgiveness. Jonah wanted them to suffer and then be annihilated.

Jonah's rebellion was a very serious matter. Look at the three imperatives in verse 2: "Arise", "go", and "cry out". The Hebrew word translated "cry out" meant to summon to court. Jonah was to summons them to repentance toward God and to turn from their wickedness. The bottom line is that Jonah rebelled because he didn't like the way God was doing things. Does that describe any of you? Have you turned away from God or become miffed at God because you don't like the way He has done things? Perhaps He did not "come through" for you in a tough situation. Perhaps He didn't give you something you desperately wanted. Learn from Jonah that God is God. He doesn't have to have our permission to do what He does. He doesn't even give us a vote or ask our advice. His ways are perfect whether we understand them or not!

Sometimes God calls us to some very tough and unpleasant things. Don't run away. His plans for us are always best. One of the verses that I often pray for the children of our church is **Jeremiah 29:11 (NKJV)** "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." Rebellion causes us to miss God's plans that provide a future and a hope. Instead of a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11) we have no future and no hope. Do not rebel against God's calling, God's guiding, or God's allowings in your life.

#### B. The Course of the Rebellion (1:4-5)

The course of rebellion is always down.

- Verse 3 "down to Joppa"
- Verse 3 "down into [the ship]"
- Verse 5 "down into the lowest parts of the ship"

Later, he went down into the waters and then down into the stomach of the giant fish. The way of rebellion and sin is always down, no matter the enticements of the enemy or the promises of fulfillment in sin and rebellion against God.

God loves His children too much to just allow them to continue in rebellion. We see in **Jonah 1:4a (NKJV)** "But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea..." The phrase translated "sent out a great wind on the sea" is literally "hurled a great wind on the sea". This wasn't a natural storm. These sailors were likely very experienced sailors and they were scared. They knew that this wasn't natural.

If you are running from God in rebellion, you're going down and the God who loves you has storms He is going to hurl into your life if you refuse to repent and obey His leading.

#### C. The Consequences of Rebellion (1:6-16)

Before his rebellion, God spoke to Jonah personally; after his rebellion, God speaks to him through a storm and through pagan sailors and a giant fish. The most horrible consequence of rebellion is that there is no more intimacy with God. The sweet communion is gone. There are no more promptings and guidance from the Spirit of God – all of that is gone in our times of rebellion. Prayer, if even attempted is just a dry ritual without life or results. Worship is dead; fellowship with God's saints is no longer even appealing. Here is perhaps the saddest consequence of all; you lose all your influence for God and good on those who do not know God (Jonah 1:6-10). The pagans who did not even know the one true God had a greater fear and respect for God than Jonah had.

Instead of repenting in the storm, Jonah was even more hardened in his rebellion. Instead of confessing his sin to God and asking the sailors to drop him off at the next port to go to Nineveh, Jonah basically said, "I'd rather die than preach to Nineveh (Jonah 1:12, 15-16). What a sad situation; The ship was in immanent danger, unbelievers were searching for the answer and the only man on board who knew God wasn't on speaking terms with Him! We live in a world where even honest unbelievers are saying "nothing is working". The bankruptcy, hypocrisy, and inconsistencies of postmodernism are quickly becoming evident. Our culture has destroyed the foundations and now we are reaping the consequences. In what ought to be the greatest hour of biblical Christianity, most professing Christians are not on speaking terms with God. We are asleep in the ship while the storms are raging and like Jonah, most aren't on speaking terms with God because of our rebellion against Him.

## II. Repentance – Submitting to God’s Will (1:17-2:10) (Read V 17)

There has been way too much debate over what kind of fish it was that swallowed Jonah. Some say it was a whale, some say, “No, it was a large fish”. I find that a totally unnecessary debate that distracts us from the main point of the account. **Jonah 1:17a (NKJV)** “Now the Lord had **prepared** a great fish...” That word translated “prepared” literally means to appoint or assign. The sense is that God had prepared the fish for this purpose. Remember that this God created the world. If He so chose, He could have created a fish with three furnished bedrooms, two baths, electric lights, and a two car garage! It is likely that God used a large fish that was common at that time. In Dr. Harry Rimmer’s book *The Harmony of Science and the Scripture*, he tells of an English sailor who fell overboard and was swallowed by a fish. A day or two later the fish was found floating on the surface of the water and was taken ashore. When the fish was opened up, to the sailor’s amazement they found their shipmate alive inside the fish. The sailor survived, but his skin had been turned a chalky white and remained so for the rest of his life. Dr. Rimmer later had an interview with the sailor and he verified the story. There have actually been several other accounts such as this, but these experiences of others do not make me believe the biblical account. I believed it before I ever heard of these accounts.

Let’s examine how Jonah’s repentance came about.

### A. Desperation (2:1-5)

I think that it would be safe to say that God now has Jonah’s undivided attention. There in the fish’s belly, Jonah has a serious prayer meeting. Adversity has a way of getting our attention. The first thing that Jonah acknowledges is that he is there by God’s design (2:3). He sees a sovereign God at the helm, steering his life and the circumstances of his life. That is the first step in repentance – it is coming to the realization that God has brought you here because of your rebellion against Him.

### B. Adoration (2:6-7)

Have you ever just stopped to praise God in a time of adversity – especially adversity that God in His love allowed to come into your life to bring you back to Himself? The chastening of God is not pleasant, but it is always rooted in His love for the one He is chastening. **Hebrews 12:6 (NKJV)** “*For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.*” In Jonah 2:7, the word “remembered” means to reflect on. When you are experiencing the chastening of God, reflect on this painful manifestation of His love and praise Him for it. If Jonah could praise the Lord in the Fish’s belly, you can also in the circumstance in which you find yourself.

### C. Affirmation (2:8-10)

This is Jonah’s point of total surrender. He is confessing his sin and saying, “Lord, when I forsook you, I forsook the very source of the mercy that I so desperately needed.” In verse nine Jonah affirms his vow as a prophet of God. This is a “nothing held back surrender”. Now he is willing to go anywhere, go through anything, and do anything that God tells him to do. He affirms that he has stopped running and is now ready to obey.

Verse 10 is brutally blunt. God touched the fish’s guidance system and directed it to shore. Then God made the fish sick of Jonah and up Jonah came. Though I cannot be dogmatic, I believe that the fish vomited Jonah up back at Joppa where he has gone down into the boat to run away from God’s calling. Here is why I say this. The Lord brings us back to the place we departed from Him and says “Now let’s do this once again”. He brings you back to where you got off track. This proves whether or not your repentance is real. If you still refuse to obey it gives evidence of your phony repentance.

## III. Results – The Fulfilling of God’s Will (3:1-10) (Read 3:1-2)

Aren’t you glad that the Lord comes to us a second time? He is so merciful and filled with grace. Let’s take this opportunity to describe the mega-city of Nineveh. In verse two, God calls it “that great city”. It was certainly not great in morals and mercy, but it was in size and worldly influence. It is estimated that Nineveh was about the size of Philadelphia today. The ruins of the ancient city of Nineveh are located at the edge of the city of Mosul, Iraq. In Jonah’s time the city covered 1,850 acres. There were many smaller towns on the outside of Nineveh. The town itself had massive embankments, extensive irrigation canals, a

50 mile aqueduct that brought water to the city, and huge impressive gates. Archeologists tell us that its high walls were so wide that several chariots could drive side by side across its top. The circumference of the city was about 60 miles – a three day journey.

When Jonah repented, two things happened.

#### A. Nineveh Repented of Sin (3:1-9)

Jonah's message was "Repent or perish" and they repented! This was an amazing work of God. These were not backslidden Jews. They were pagans who worshipped multiple gods! Yet from the King to the lowest citizen God granted to them repentance. Notice what happened that brought about this great move of God in Nineveh.

1. The Word of the Lord was Proclaimed and Heard – That is always the first step to see a mighty move of God.

2. God Was Believed – The Assyrians were convinced that God meant what He said.

3. There Was Fruit from Their Repentance – They repented in sackcloth and ashes. They turned from their sin.

4. Their Sin Was Named and Forsaken – As was stated earlier, the Assyrians were known for their violence. They openly repented of that sin and evidenced repentance by naming the sin. Vague repentance is not true repentance at all. Example: "Lord if we have sinned, would you please forgive us?" No! We have sinned. Name the sin. Be specific! All too often we sin specifically and want to repent vaguely. Our repentance is to be as specific as our sin.

What an amazing miracle. One man proclaims God's message of repentance to a huge city (even by today's standards) and God grants repentance to the whole city.

#### B. God Relents from Judgment (3:10)

It is not that God "repented" as the KJV says or changed His mind. This verse uses the language of man to describe the action of God. God knew the outcome of Jonah's preaching before He even called him to go to Nineveh. The promise of judgment was conditional all along.

God granted repentance and that generation of Assyrians escaped God's judgment. Unfortunately they did not pass it on to the next generation and Nineveh was ultimately destroyed. In the book of Nahum we will see how their destruction came about.

### IV. Resentment – The Questioning of God's Will (4:1-11)

While Jonah totally surrendered to God's call, we see in this chapter that his heart was not changed toward the people of Nineveh.

#### A. Jonah's Complaint (4:1-3)

Jonah said, "Lord, I knew this is what would happen! You are gracious and merciful and full of loving kindness. I knew you were not going to judge them!" Notice how Jonah's heart that was hardened toward the lost manifested itself. He is complaining about the God He described in **Jonah 4:2b (NKJV)** "...for I know that You *are* a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm." You want to say, "Jonah, you hardhead! Don't you realize that those same attributes is the reason you were saved out of the fish." Oh what sinful pride filled Jonah. Jonah is so distraught that God didn't judge Nineveh that he prays for God to take his life.

This would be a good time to deal with the false view some have that the God of the Old Testament is not the same God as the God of the New Testament. This erroneous view says that the God of the Old Testament is a God of judgment and wrath while the God of the New Testament is a God of love, mercy and grace. The truth is that there is only one God. He is the God of love, wrath, mercy, justice, and grace.

#### B. God's Curriculum (4:4-11)

In this section, God cuts Jonah down to size. It is reminiscent of how God dealt with Job at the end of the book. God uses as His curriculum to teach Jonah a plant and a worm. Jonah goes up on a hillside that overlooks Nineveh to see if just maybe God will destroy them even though they repented. God causes a plant to spring up to give Jonah shade. Jonah really enjoyed the shade. Then God caused a worm to chew the plant in a strategic place that caused it to die. God then caused a scorching wind to come and make

Jonah miserable. Jonah starts complaining again (4:8-9). God has now exposed Jonah's pettiness and self centeredness. I am reminded over God's people today who get more upset over some temporal decision made at church or getting their car dinged in the parking lot that over an unreached people group going to hell.

In verses 10, 11 we see God's compassion for the lost. He especially mentions the children – 120,000 of them. What about the children? One of the indicators that you have grown cold and have gone far from God is that you get extremely self-centered and get upset over petty things while caring not for the millions that are perishing without Christ, especially the children.

#### CONCLUSION

Are you running from God? Have you surrendered to His sovereignty? Watch out, your heart will become hard. Remember Jonah.