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## Lessons from the **Book of Jonah**

By Ken Raggio

### **Jonah - Running From The Call Of God**

What would YOU do if God told you to go to the largest, most evil city in the world and march through the streets announcing their destruction from the hand of God? Jonah tried to run away, but found that it was impossible to escape the call of God.

Jonah 1:3 - "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."

### **The Prayers Of Godless Men**

The mariners on board Jonah's ill-fated voyage were frightened and called on their many gods. They urged Jonah to call on his God, but there is no record that Jonah did so. Maybe if Jonah had taken their good advice, he could have saved himself and his fellows the nightmarish experience.

Jonah 1:5-6 - "Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, ...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."

### **Rebels Cannot Answer The Hard Questions**

A mighty tempest nearly broke up their ship, and the mariners were afraid. They decided that Jonah was the cause of their misfortune. The shipmaster

woke Jonah from his sleep and asked, "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" The other mates had questions, too. "Tell us... 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?" Jonah said, "I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven." Then came their BEST question:

Jonah 1:10 - "Why hast thou done this?"

### **When Saints Fail, Ungodly Men Fear And Pray**

The men onboard ship with Jonah cast lots to determine who was causing their misfortunate storm. (Casting lots was a factor in several Bible stories.) The lot fell on Jonah. Jonah admitted that he was running from God.

Jonah 1:13-15 - "Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, ...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. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging."

### **The Whale Of God**

The LORD "prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah." (Jesus called it a whale in Matthew 12:40 KJV). God sent the whale at the perfect moment, because He was preaching Jesus' death, burial and resurrection centuries in advance. God pre-ordains all your trials, and every detail has divine purpose.

Jonah 1:15,17 - "They took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. ...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."

### **Then Jonah Prayed**

Nothing is more typical of people's relationship with God. Like Jonah, they run from God, avoiding and evading all responsibility and obedience to Him - until calamity strikes. Jonah ran full-speed ahead in his own direction until God arrested him, and his fellow shipmates threw him into the sea. God had prepared a great fish to swallow him. He knows how to get you on your knees.

Jonah 1:17-2:1 - "Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly."

### **I Cried By Reason Of My Affliction**

God cast Jonah into the deep, stormy billows. Encompassed by waters, with weeds wrapped about his head, Jonah promised to seek toward the holy temple. From the bottoms, as his soul fainted, Jonah's prayer came up with a sacrifice of thanksgiving and renewed vows. God heard Jonah's desperate prayer and saved him. "The LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land."

Jonah 2:2 - "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice."

### **Jonah's Return From Death**

Did Jonah die in the whale? "Out of the belly of hell (sheol - place of the

departed) I cried," he said. "The waters compassed me about, even to the soul. ...the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption. ...My soul fainted within me." If he was to be a type of Christ, he must have died, and been miraculously raised.

Jonah 2:1,10 - "Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, ...And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah."

### **Jonah - First Of The Major And Minor Prophets**

Chronologically, Jonah was the first of the four major and twelve minor prophets who appeared at the end of the Old Testament. That is significant, because it illustrates God's priority in dealing with the people of Nineveh - the Assyrians - ahead of all the other prophecies of all the other prophets. Assyria later destroyed ten tribes of Israel. Punishing the Assyrian Antichrist will be Jesus' first priority at Armageddon.

Jonah 3:1-2 - "The word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."

### **The Prophet Is God's Messenger And Intercessor**

Jonah exemplifies countless men who have delayed to do the will of God. Even Jesus Christ prayed that He might be released from drinking the bitter cup assigned to Him. God nevertheless extracted the ultimate obedience from Him. In His sovereign purpose, God must have a man - an intercessor. How can they believe upon Him of whom they have not heard? How can they hear except it be preached? Even if he cannot understand what God is doing, the prophet must preach the Word.

Jonah 3:2 - "Arise, go... and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."

### **God Gives A Warning Before His Worst Judgments**

Why was Nineveh on God's "Hit List"? From ancient days of Nimrod and Asshur, Nineveh was a stronghold of pagan idolaters - Ishtar worshippers. God called Jonah to warn them of coming judgment. They repented at that time, but a century later, ca. 740BC, Sennacherib, the Assyrian of Nineveh, captured the northern ten tribes of Israel, and tried to destroy Judah, too. King Hezekiah prayed, and an angel of the LORD killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. But the record shows that they had been warned.

Jonah 3:3 - "So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD."

### **Nineveh Repented With Fasting When Jonah Preached**

The second time God commanded, Jonah went quickly to Nineveh and preached the word of the LORD. "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." He gave no call to repentance, no call to action - just a warning. But "the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them."

Jonah 3:10 - "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."

### **Jonah Prays To Die, Scorns 120,000 Souls**

Jonah was very angry because God forgave Nineveh, because he originally argued that God would be merciful to Nineveh, and claimed that was the reason he did not want to go preach there. Jonah angrily asked God to take his life. Interestingly, God grew a gourd to provide a shade over Jonah's head. As soon as Jonah enjoyed the shade, God smote the gourd and it died. Jonah again wished to die. God rebuked Jonah for loving the gourd more than the 120,000 inhabitants of Nineveh.

Jonah 4:10-11 - "Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city?"

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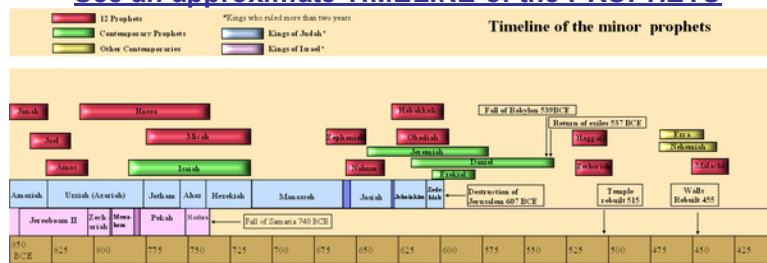
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