

TITLE PAGE

The Book of Jonah

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this course is for students to grow in their knowledge of the Scriptures and in particular the book of Jonah. Each lesson looks at Jonah from a literary, exegetical and practical perspective. The book of Jonah is a highly compact literary unit, using parallels and chiasm throughout. Understanding the literary style is an important aid to correctly understand the message of the book. The exegesis, the content follows. Once students have understood the contents then they will seek to apply God's words to their lives. The book of Jonah develops a number of important biblical themes-Israel's responsibility to the nations, compassion, obedience, chastening, repentance and restoration.

COURSE CONTENT

The course is divided into 8 lessons. The first lesson lays a foundation for the book and introduces Jonah chapter one. The subsequent lessons examine Jonah chapters 1-4. The final lesson looks at Jonah as a sign or type of Christ.

COURSE MATERIALS

The lecture notes are a full exposition. The students are required to read them thoroughly along with the Scriptures. Students are also required to read *Jonah, Man Overboard* by Sinclair Ferguson and the book *Jonah, A Study in Compassion* by O. Palmer Robertson.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To study Jonah with other students;
- To acquire a detailed exegetical and literary analysis of the book;
- To deepen their understanding of Israel's role in the Old Testament;
- To deepen their understanding of mission;
- To grow in knowledge of how God deals with His children;
- To master the book of Jonah in order to use it in preaching, teaching and in pastoral counseling

STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

This course has been organized into eight consecutive lessons. The lessons follow the book of Jonah; and therefore, should be studied in order. The final lesson focuses on the typology or sign of Jonah.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Participate in 15 hours of common teaching time.
2. Complete the Bible study exercises as contained in the 8 lessons.
3. Read either O. Palmer Robertson's *Jonah* or Sinclair Ferguson's *Man Overboard*.
4. Write a sermon or study lesson plan on a theme from Jonah using 1.5 font with no more than 7 pages at the BA level and 12 pages at the MA level.
5. Preach or teach the theme that was developed.

COURSE EVALUATION

1. Student Participation (15%): One point given for each class hour attended.
2. Student Homework (20%): Five points for completing the questions at the end of each lesson.

3. Student Exam (20%): Students will take an exam in the final week of the course. The exam is based upon the student homework.
4. Student Readings (15%): Students will be given credit for completing the required reading.
5. Student Exegesis (15%): Students are to prepare exegetical notes for a sermon/teaching.
6. Student Preparation (15%): Students are to preach the sermon prepared.

BENEFITS OF THIS COURSE

The course will provide training in preaching, teaching and biblical counseling. It will also introduce the students to common Hebrew literary structures and explain how they are useful in exegesis. Students will develop a basic understanding of the course.

Lesson One. Jonah, Israel, Typology and Jonah's First Call

1. Introduction

This lesson sets the scene of the book of Jonah and expositors Jonah 1:1-3. As Jonah was from Israel, we will start by looking at Israel's role in the world. We will then offer a brief look at biblical prophecy, particularly direct verbal prophecy and typology. Jonah's "three days in the fish" is one of the most well known types of the Old Testament. We will look at the basic literary structure of Jonah and then begin our exposition of Jonah 1:1-3.

1.1. Israel and the Nations

To properly understand Jonah we need to understand the role of Israel in the Old Testament. Israel was chosen, elected, set apart by God to be a witness to the nations. Through Abraham she was called to be blessed and to be a blessing (Gen. 12:1-3). Israel was God's witness amongst the nations. Through Israel He revealed Himself and His works to the nations. The nations were to see Israel's witness and to come to worship her God. Israel's witness and message are centripetal; they are the center and the other people and nations are to be pulled into her orbit. Two examples are the Queen of Sheba and Ruth.¹

Jonah is a unique Old Testament prophet as he is sent from Israel to the nations, specifically to Nineveh. Jonah's unique position stresses several points. First, Jonah's call to the nations challenges Israel concerning her attitude to the nations and her need to seek their salvation. Israel is reminded that God's love is not just for her. Second, Jonah is a type. He points to Christ the antitype, one greater than Jonah, and the final great witness of Israel, who will change Israel's relationship to the world. In Christ, Israel will witness to the world in a new way. Her witness will be a true reflection of her calling as God's representative, rather than the nations coming to her, in Christ, Israel will go to the nations (Matt. 28:18,19).

1.2. Prophets and Prophecy

Jonah was a prophet. The prophets were generally sent to Israel by God to remind them of their covenant with Him. They were to keep Israel faithful. The prophets *forth-told* (spoke God's word) and *foretold* (told the nations what God would do in the future). Most commonly, the prophets forth-told God's word to Israel when He sent them to challenge the nation as to her conduct. They identified Israel's sins and called her to repentance.

¹ Elijah's and Elisha's ministries to individuals-the widow and her family and Naaman-who are outside Israel are two exceptions that prove the rule.

Jonah has aspects of both. He *forth-tells* to the Ninevites, (Jonah used direct verbal prophecy when speaking to the Ninevites: “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”). Jonah’s life is also a *foretelling* of the coming of Christ. His own life is typological. O Palmer Robertson observes, “The book is given over almost exclusively to narrative about the life of the prophet” (The Christ of the prophets,250). Jonah's life points us to the person and work of Christ.

1.3. Typology

Jonah is a type. Jesus states that the three days and three nights Jonah spent in the great fish were a sign pointing to Himself (Matt. 12:39,40). What is typology? Typology is a person, object or an event in the Old Testament ordained and intended by God to point to a person or event in the New Testament. We speak of the type and the antitype. The type is found in the Old Testament; the antitype is the New Testament fulfillment.

The Greek word for *type* (*tupon*) is used 16 times in the New Testament. It means to mark with a blow, to make an image or it refers to an impression left by a thrust or blow. Thomas alludes to this in referring to the marks left on Jesus’ body by the nails and the spear thrust. “*Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark, (tupon) of the nails and place my hand into his side, I will never believe*” (John 20:25).

Type is given a broader meaning in Romans 5 and Philippians 3. In Romans, Paul refers to Adam as a type of Christ, “...*not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come*” (Rom. 5:14). Paul also refers to his life as a type that the Philippians are to follow, “*Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example (tupon) you have in us*” (Phil. 3:17). Jonah is the shadow, the impression; Christ is the reality.

Typology can be divided into persons, events or things. There are many Old Testament types that prefigure or foreshadow a New Testament truth.

1. People as Types: Matthew 12:39-41 (Jonah); Romans 5:14 (Adam); Matthew 12:42 (Solomon); Luke 6:3-4 (David); Hebrews 3 (Moses). Each is seen as having a greater meaning than his own life. They are seen as types of Christ, pointers to Him. Melchizedek and the other priests were a type, both pointing to Christ’s high priestly work. Old Testament figures can also be types pointing to other figures in the New Testament. Elijah points to John the Baptist and David’s betrayer in Psalm 41 points to Judas.

2. Events as Types: Many Old Testament events point forwards to the New Testament. Paul uses the word (*tupos*) in 1 Corinthians 10:6,11. He stresses that the pattern of the events concerning Israelite in the wilderness is a type and example to warn New Testament believers.

3. Places as types: There are a number of places that are types in the New Testament. The Temple (John 2, Mark 14) and the Tabernacle (John 1:14) are both types pointing forwards to Christ. Manna is also a type of Christ (John 6).

Five characteristics of Typology:

Exactly how we define a type is difficult. Currid suggests that a type has five characteristics (Currid John, Poets, Reformed Theological Seminary, 2000). We will examine each of these. To explain the five types we will use the typology of the Passover as a test case. Passover typology is implied in a number of places and the link is made explicitly in 1 Corinthians 5:7: *“Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”*

The Characteristics

1. It must be grounded in history – both type (Passover) and anti-type (Christ's death) must be historical events.
2. It must refer to historical persons, events or institutions in the Old Testament.
3. There must be a notable correspondence between the type and anti-type. In Matthew 26:28 and Luke 22:20 Jesus explains the new covenant and His death in the context of the Passover. This provided one of the links between His death and the Passover.
4. There must be intensification – The Exodus/Passover of the Jews points to the greater salvation of Christ in the New Testament.
5. There must be evidence that the type was appointed/designed by God – there must be a Scriptural purpose behind the type. This is the most difficult requirement. Fairburn states, “(types were) such only as had their ordination of God, and were designed by Him to foreshadow and prepare for the better things of the Gospel. The former must not only resemble the latter, but must have been designed to resemble the latter. The type, as well as the antitype, must have been foreordained. It is this previous design and this preordained connection” (46 of Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 2).

There is much debate as to what constitutes “divine intent” or “Scriptural evidence” for typology. Some suggest only that which is specifically designated in the New Testament is to be regarded as typical – e.g. specific teachings of Jesus. In the light of Hebrews 9:1-5, which identifies but does not develop other types, this seems unduly narrow.

Typology must be handled with care. Typology can easily run off into straight analogy, allegory or an incorrect spiritualizing of the text. In this regard, a type is a more restricted form of analogy. The five indicators above help control our exegesis so we are not lead astray.

Jonah is a typological figure. He fulfills the requirements. Jonah and Christ are both historical persons. Jesus draws the link between Himself and the “sign of Jonah”, Matthew 12:38-42. There is also intensification: Jesus says He is greater than Jonah. In lesson 8 we will see that it is not only the “three days and nights” that points to Christ, but the whole book of Jonah points to Him.

1.4. Literary Structures in Jonah

Jonah is a highly structured book. Although short, the author used great care in developing its themes, drawing on both parallelism and chiasms.

1.4.1. Parallelism

On a macro level the book divides into two halves with a final climax. Each part in the first section is mirrored by a part in the second section. There is a parallel. The exception is the last section at the end of the book. It is unique, a uniqueness that points to its importance.

A. Jonah Disobeys Commission to Go to Nineveh (1:1-3)	A'. Jonah Obeys Re-commission to Go to Nineveh (3:1-3)
B. Jonah and the Pagan Sailors (1:4-16)	B'. Jonah and the Pagan Ninevites (3:4-10)
C. Jonah's Grateful Prayer (1:17-2:10)	C'. Jonah's Resentful Prayer (4:1-3)
	D. CLIMAX: The LORD's Lesson for Jonah (4:4-11)

(Baker, Lesson 1, 2)

By using this structure, God emphasizes the key lessons. (A) Jonah is called but (B) Jonah disobeys, fleeing to the pagan nations. God chastens; Jonah is then restored and (C) he offers a prayer of thanksgiving to God.

(A') The restoration leads to the call, or the recall of Jonah. (B') This time Jonah obeys; he goes and preaches to the pagan nation. His commission is successful; however, (C') this time Jonah offers a resentful prayer to God.

The final section (D) is unique because it is not a parallel. In this section, as God interrogates Jonah, He gets Jonah to confess his own heart and failure. This is the crux of the book. The section ends with a question to which we are not given an answer. By leaving the question open, it is as if God is asking Israel or the church today if this is her attitude.

Practicum: The literary structure has identified Jonah 4 as the climax of the book. What is the message of Jonah 4? How does understanding this message help us interpret the rest of Jonah?

1.4.2. Chiasms

Chiasms are a type of parallelism. Almost every chapter in Jonah has a chi-

asm. Chiasms take a number of forms.

A typical form is:

A
 B
 B'
A'

In the parallel above, the A and A' and B and B' match each other. They can be identified through the repetition of key words or concepts. This occurs once in Jonah 3:6 with the king's repentance. We will look at this in lesson 5.

Another common type is

A
 B
 C
 B'
A'

In the above A, A' and B, B' are paralleled but C is not. C's isolation indicates that it is the key—the central point in the narrative. Chiasms are a way that God highlights key texts.

In using chiasms we are to especially focus upon the introductions (A/A') and the center points (C above). By looking at these two key indicators, we can identify the main points in the passage. Whatever other things we might preach from the passage, this is the central point. We will identify and exposit a number of chiasms as we go through the book.

Practicum: Identify a chiasm in Jonah chapter 1:3b-16. What is the center of the chiasm? By looking at the introduction and conclusion, as well as the center, what can we learn about God in this chapter?

2. Jonah One - Jonah's Commission (Jonah 1:1-3)

Jonah 1:1-3 sets the scene for the book. It introduces Jonah, the LORD-Yahweh, and His task for Jonah. Jonah's response sets the scene for God's recovery of Jonah as well as the completion of the original task, to go and preach to the Ninevites.

2.1. Literary Markers: Text, Genre, Structure, Parties, Location

Jonah 1:1 *Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,*² *“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.”*³ *But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD* (English Standard Version).

Genre: Succinct Narrative, Structure: Macro Structure (A), local structure: Chiasm, indicated by the repetition of the key words “Tarshish” and “the presence of the Lord”, Parties: Yahweh and Jonah, Location: Israel.

2.2. The Call of Jonah

In the opening section we are introduced to the LORD (ESV) and to Jonah. We will begin with Jonah.

Jonah's name means “Dove” or “son of Truth”. The opening formula, “the word of the LORD came”, is prophetic, a formula that God uses to instruct His prophets. It indicates that Jonah is a prophet of God (Gen. 15:1; 2 Sam. 7:4; 1 Kings 6:11; 1 Kings 13:20; 16:7, etc). God brings His word to the prophet who then speaks to Israel or in this case to Nineveh. In 2 Kings 14:23-25 we are told:

*“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 Hopher.”*

We are told that Jonah is a prophet, a servant whom God has used in Israel in the past. Jonah was from Gath Hopher, which was in Zebulun, in the Northern Kingdom. Jonah prophesied in the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel. We are told that the king was evil, continuing in the religious sins of Jeroboam I; and yet, we are also told that God blessed him with a long, stable and prosperous reign. Hendrickson calls the whole period from 786-736 (within which Jeroboam II was king) the “glamour age” of Israel. Israel was like a beautiful polished piece of furniture, but inside the termites were at work. It was a time of wickedness and plenty. On the outside all was well, but on the inside everything was rotten and ready to collapse. Thirty years after Jeroboam's death the nation of the Northern Kingdom went into Assyrian captivity (111,112).

We are told that Jonah had prophesied concerning Jeroboam II's reign. Jonah had declared a message of victory and prosperity. The proper response to God's goodness should have been repentance, but Jeroboam and the nation did not turn from their evil ways.

The second player is the LORD or Yahweh. ²The Hebrew term for "LORD" is "Yahweh". In Scripture, the LORD has many names, each describing an aspect of His nature. Yahweh is the covenant name for God. This name stresses His faithfulness to His promises and that He is in covenant with Israel. God's covenantal name is important in Jonah as God is asserting His Covenant lordship, as well as His rule and care, over all the nations (Nineveh) and over His own prophet. When God's own prophet breaks Yahweh's covenant, it is the faithful covenant God, Yahweh, who pursues him and who will not let him go. The covenantal pursuit by Yahweh of His disobedient prophet is a key theme in Jonah. Due to the importance of God's covenantal name in Jonah, we will use the Hebrew covenantal name "Yahweh" for "LORD" where appropriate. I will retain the form "LORD" when directly quoting the English Standard Version of the Scriptures.

2.2.1. Yahweh's Command

"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me" (Jonah 1:2).

Yahweh commissions Jonah for His work. He is to leave Israel and go to Nineveh to fulfill Israel's witness to the nations. Baker describes Nineveh as follows: "Nineveh was located on the east bank of the Tigris River opposite modern day Mosul in northern Iraq, 600 miles from Israel. It was large and prosperous, filled with palaces and wealth. Although it was not the capital city of Assyria in Jonah's day, Sennacherib (705-681 BC) would later make it the chief royal city of the Assyrian Empire" (2 Kings.19:36), (Lesson 4, 31).

Yahweh's command is a new ministry for Jonah. Jonah had been working in Israel; now he was called to preach against a great, foreign city, a long way from home. This was a huge task—he had to travel and preach to a nation who did not know God at all. Nineveh was also a wicked city. The words "their wickedness has come up before me" echo the world's wickedness in the time of Noah before the flood and the wickedness of Sodom itself (Gen. 18:20-21). Like the earth before the flood and Sodom, Nineveh was a symbol of "the essence of human self-exaltation and anti-God power" (Allen 203).

² In the English Standard Bible (ESV) the word is "LORD" with capital letters. The introduction to your Bible will tell you how the various names for God have been translated. This will aid your interpretation.

Yahweh assumes that His servant Jonah owes Him obedience. He does not ask Jonah *if* he wants to go, He tells him. Even if the task is hard, Jonah must obey.

In his role as a prophet, Jonah represents Israel. Jonah is the focal point of Israel's witness to the nations. We also see that Nineveh owes Yahweh obedience. Yahweh has the right to judge Nineveh as the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; all the nations are before Him (Ps 24:1). If Nineveh, that great city, is under Yahweh's Lordship, then all nations are under Yahweh's Lordship. Nineveh represents all the wicked nations of the world.

2.2.2. Jonah Disobeys

"But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD" (Jonah 1:3).

There are a number of textual markers that stress Jonah's call and subsequent disobedience. First, Jonah is called "to arise", "to go"; instead he arises "to flee". Second, "Tarshish" is repeated three times to contrast it to Nineveh. The point is simple: Tarshish is not Nineveh. Third, Jonah is called to "rise up", instead he keeps "going down": first, he goes "down to Joppa" (1:3), then he "goes down" into the ship, and later we will see Jonah "going down" further as he is thrown over the side (1:15), and "goes down" to the deepest part of the sea (2:6). At that point, Jonah has physically "gone down" as far as he can go.

Alexander identifies the following Chiastic structure:

- A. But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.
- B. He went down to Joppa,
- C. and found a ship
- D. going to Tarshish;
- C'. so he paid the fare,
- B'. and went down into it,
- A'. to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD (Jonah 1:3).

(Alexander 101, qtd. in N. Lohfink, 'Jona ging zur Stadt hinaus (Jon 4,5)', *BZ* 5 (1962), p. 200.)

Both the repetition in the text and the structure indicate Jonah's disobedience.

From Israel, Nineveh is 600 miles northeast. Jonah rebels and flees from the word of the LORD and goes to Joppa, a Phoenician-controlled port (modern

Jaffa), to board a ship heading west for Tarshish. Although no one now knows exactly where Tarshish was located, most commentators believe that it was Tartessos, a Phoenician colony located at the mouth of the Guadalquivir River in southern Spain. Tarshish is one of the names mentioned in the Table of Nations (Gen. 10:5). Tarshish (meaning “smelter”) is mentioned several other times in Scripture (e.g., Ps. 72:10; Jer. 10:9; Ez. 27:12) as a faraway place and the source of precious metals. Isaiah describes it as one of “the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory” (Is. 66:19). If you were foolish enough to try and run away from Yahweh, at least Tarshish seems like the right place to go – far, far away (Baker, Lesson 4, 32).

Jonah is fleeing from Yahweh. Determined to flee, he pays for passage to get on the boat. His physical fleeing represents the state of his heart. His “going down” indicates a spiritual decline. Instead of “standing up”, a man on God’s mission; we are given a picture of flight, one that shows rebellion and disobedience. Jonah is a spiritually blessed man: he had Yahweh’s word but he is running from Yahweh’s blessing (Robertson, *Jonah, Compassion* 8).

2.2.3. Jonah loses Yahweh’s Presence

By going to Tarshish, Jonah was not just disobedient; he also lost Yahweh’s presence. This is stressed twice in 1:3: Jonah fled from the presence of the LORD.

What does this mean? Can we ever escape from God’s presence? God is omnipresent and the Psalms tell us we can never escape from Yahweh’s presence. Psalm 139 states: “Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, 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” (7-10).

Jonah would have known this psalm, yet Jonah still tried to run from God. “The presence of the LORD” in these verses means Yahweh’s favor and blessing. When we are obedient we have His presence and favor. When we are disobedient, we lose His presence and favor.

Keddie describes the presence of the LORD in the following manner: When Cain, for example, “went out from the Lord’s presence” (Gen. 4:16), what is clearly signified is that Cain, as a rebel and a fugitive, was no longer in the service or the favor of his God. On the other hand, to “stand before the Lord” is always, in Scripture, equivalent to serving Him (1 Kg. 17:1; 18:15). The person who chooses to flee from the presence of God, therefore, is refusing to serve God in the task he knows that the Lord has given him to do. The matter is primarily spiritual and only secondarily geographical (17-18).

Jonah’s disobedience is rebellion. As a fruit of that rebellion he is no longer enjoying Yahweh’s presence and favor. Jonah was trying to block Yahweh out of his life. He was trying to keep Yahweh, His words and His commands at arms-length. Jonah was seeking his own will. Although we may try, we cannot do this.

All our blessings, spiritual and material, in this life and the next, are linked to the presence of Yahweh. Jonah finds this out. The relationship between *obedience* and *presence* is a key theme in the book. To be disobedient and away from the presence of Yahweh has terrible consequences.

3. Why did Jonah Flee?

Why did Jonah flee? Did Jonah really believe he could flee? What was his motive? Was he afraid? There are a number of reasons why Jonah would have fled. It might have been that he misunderstood Yahweh's call upon his life. Ferguson (*Man Overboard* 12) points out that while there are times when we get into trouble because we do not understand Yahweh's call upon our life, Jonah knew Yahweh's will. Was it because Jonah was young and inexperienced? No, Jonah had already had a prophetic ministry in Israel and was a successful prophet there. Was it because Jonah didn't understand the power of God? No, he understood God and His nature. Jonah is knowledgeable and orthodox. Jonah will confess: "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the Yahweh of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land" (Jonah 1:9). We see his orthodoxy throughout the book (2:8,9; 3:4 and 4:2). Jonah is not a heretic. There is another reason behind Jonah's disobedience, but at this stage of the story we are not told *why* Jonah fled. The delay is a literary technique. By not telling us, the author is keeping us in suspense. The true reason will be disclosed in chapter 4 (Lesson 6). Since we are not told at this stage, we must be careful not to speculate.

Conclusion

The book of Jonah is a highly structured literary unit. The structure drives home the point of the story. In the opening chapters we see Yahweh commissioning Jonah and Jonah, for reasons we do not yet know, fleeing from Yahweh and His commission.

Summary

The principle structures in Jonah are parallels and chiasms. In a chiasm the main point is made at the center. In 1:3 the key stress is Jonah fleeing to Tarshish—away from his calling and the presence of Yahweh. Jonah is called to preach in Nineveh but he does not want to the people of this nation. Jonah warns us that we can have successful ministries, be orthodox and believe, but we can still be hard-hearted and flee from God. When we do this, we lose the blessing and presence of the LORD.

DO YOUR OWN BIBLE STUDY ON A PORTION OF JONAH 1:1-3

<p>INDUCTIVE METHOD: [Draw Information from the Biblical text]</p> <p>Reference texts. How do other texts influence our reading of the text? 1.1. (etc.)</p>
<p>Explanation of important information in the text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -key words and definitions: -grammatical observations: (sentence structure, variant readings) -figures of speech: (comparisons, associations, representations) -does the text explicitly or implicitly say anything about God, about salvation? -translation method used: - are their differences between Bible versions? What are they? -human author. How do we know? -what occasion prompted human author to write? -original audience for reading. Why would they read the text? -geographical context: -cultural, social context: -historical context: -religious context: -in your own words, what does the text say and mean?
<p>Commentary notes</p>
<p>EXPOSITIONAL EXPLANATION. Identify the main teachings of the text under study in chronological order</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. <p>(other)</p>
<p>LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -literary genre: (gospel, history, legal, parable, poetry, prophecy, proverb, etc). -how is the text related to its surrounding texts? -how does the text relate to the theme of the chapter and book it's in?
<p>ANALYTICAL METHOD. What are the main thesis, antithesis, synthesis and syncretism in the text?</p>
<p>DEVOTIONAL METHOD OF STUDY. How does the text help you to adore God, confession your sins, give thanks to Him and serve Him?</p>

Lesson One Questions

1. What is the role of Israel in the Old Testament?
2. Name two types of prophecy.
3. Was Jonah a prophet before this book was written?
4. What is the macro structure of the book of Jonah?
5. What is a chiasm?
6. What are we to learn from chiasms?
7. What is the Hebrew name for the word “LORD”? (ESV)
8. What does the name in Question 7 mean?
9. Where did Yahweh send Jonah?
10. What is the link between *obedience* and the “presence of Yahweh” in the opening verses?

Lesson Two. A Contrast in Compassion, Jonah and the Sailors

1. Introduction

The next section is 1:4-16. Yahweh actively pursues Jonah by throwing a violent storm at the boat. Yahweh will not let Jonah flee. The text uses irony to show Jonah—orthodox, compassionless, and disobedient—and the sailors—pagans, compassionate and eventually obedient. Despite Jonah’s bad witness, the gentiles convert and Yahweh’s grace extends to them.

2. Literary Analysis: Text, Genre, Structure, Parties, Location

Jonah 1:4 *But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.* ⁵ *Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.* ⁶ *So the captain came to him, and said to him, “What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your Yahweh; perhaps your Yahweh will consider us, so that we may not perish.”* ⁷ *And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.* ⁸ *Then they said to him, “Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?”* ⁹ *So he said to them, “I am a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the Yahweh of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”* ¹⁰ *Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, “Why have you done this?” For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.* ¹¹ *Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?”—for the sea was growing more tempestuous.* ¹² *And he said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me.”* ¹³ *Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them.* ¹⁴ *Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said, “We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You.”* ¹⁵ *So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.* ¹⁶ *Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows.*

Genre: Extended narrative, Structure: Extended Chiasm, Parties: Jonah and the Sailors, Location: The Boat.

The section is a highly structured chiasm. (Dorsey, 239)

- A. Yahweh hurls a great wind upon the sea (1:4)
- B. Sailors cry out (in vain) to their gods (1:5a)
- C. Sailors' frantic and futile efforts to save ship by throwing cargo overboard (1:5b-c)
- D. Jonah does nothing to save the ship: he remains down in the hold, uninvolved; Captain pleads with him to help save the ship (1:6)
- E. Sailors' efforts to ascertain what to do: inquiry by lots—Jonah is guilty (1:7)
- F. Sailors demand an explanation from Jonah (1:8)
- G. CLIMAX: Jonah's testimony (1:9)
- F'. Sailors demand an explanation from Jonah because of what he had told (1:10)
- E'. Sailors' efforts to ascertain what they must do: inquiry of Jonah—the guilty party (1:11)
- D'. Jonah finally acts to save the ship: he proposes that he be thrown overboard (1:12)
- C'. Sailors' frantic and futile efforts to save ship by rowing harder (1:13)
- B'. Sailors cry out to Yahweh (1:14)
- A'. Sailors hurl Jonah into the sea and the sea becomes still (1:15)

A and A' both stress Yahweh's sovereign activity. The words in the chiasm are: "the sea", "to throw", to "hurl", and "fear". These words stress the intensity of the action. The heart of this chiasm is Jonah's confession, G (1:9). The key message is the true God and His nature is revealed. Verse 16 is not a part of the chiasm; it is an important postscript stressing how the sailors respond to the revelation of Yahweh. The word "throw" is stressed. Yahweh *throws* the storm at the boat (1:4) in response the crew *throws* out the cargo to lighten the ship (1:5). Finally, the word is used again when Jonah is *thrown* overboard (1:15). The repetition not only stresses the intense activity by Yahweh and the sailors, but also keeps the unit together and highlights Jonah being thrown overboard.

3. The Storm (1:1-6)

Whereas verse 3 started with "But Jonah", this section begins with Yahweh's answer "but Yahweh". Jonah has made his play, now Yahweh will make His. The covenant God will not allow His servant to run. He pursues him through an intense and violent storm. Yahweh, Jonah's covenant God, will not allow His

prophet to escape. He will tear the sea, the boat and the lives of the sailors apart to get to him.

Jonah's disobedience affects not only himself, but all those related to him. Our sins have consequences upon others, not just ourselves. The greater our responsibility, the greater the effects of our sin will be. King David's sin with Bathsheba affected the whole nation. Jonah's sin affected the whole boat and if he had not gone to Nineveh, he would have affected the whole city.

The passage uses irony to contrast Jonah's sinful actions with the sailors' actions. In the storm, they call upon their gods; Jonah sleeps. The captain must wake him. Jonah is in the deepest part of the ship. His physical location and mental state (sleeping) indicate the reality and depth of his spiritual unconsciousness. Jonah has fallen so low that the pagan sailors are showing more spiritual insight than Jonah is. The sailors try to save Jonah's life. Jonah does not care about them. The story ends with the pagan sailors worshiping Yahweh and Jonah thrown over board in judgment.

3.1. The Casting of Lots (1:7,8)

In order to identify who is responsible for the storm, the sailors cast lots. We don't know how the sailors understood the casting of lots, but the casting of lots was used in Israel in the Old Testament—"The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD (Proverbs 16:33). The lot identifies Jonah. The lot stresses that everything is under God's control, even what we call chance.³

3.2. Jonah's Great Confession (1:9)

The Captain questions Jonah as to who he is and what he is doing. Jonah confesses who he is and whom he serves. "*I am a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.*" This is the first time Jonah's words are recorded for us. We have seen Jonah's actions but we have not been told what he is thinking. This verse shows us something of Jonah's heart and mind. His confession is faithful, creedal and orthodox. It is a full and faithful witness to the pagan sailors.

³ "Lots were often used to make selections for service (cp. Jdg. 20:9; 1 Sam. 10:19-21; 1 Chr. 24:5, 21; 25:8; 26:13-16), inheritance (cp. Num. 33:54; Jos. 18:6-10; Neh. 11:1) or judgment (cp. Lev. 16:8-10; Jos. 7:13-22). Casting of lots was never to be used in an attempt to foretell the future. Apart from the special selection of a replacement for Judas in Acts 1:26 that according to Peter fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (Ps. 69:25; 109:8), the use of lots disappears in the New Testament. Instead, as Keddie points out, "in the post-Pentecost church offices were filled by popular choice, not lots (Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3). There is no warrant for using lots today as acts of piety for the purpose of discovering the will of God" (40).

I am a Hebrew and an Israelite

Jonah begins by stating who he is and where he comes from. He is not merely a Hebrew and an Israelite, he serves the one true God.

I fear the Lord: Yahweh

Yahweh is the covenant name for God. This is the name God used to reveal Himself to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:14-15). It is the name identified with His delivering His people from Egypt. The covenantal name stresses the faithfulness of Yahweh: one who did not forget His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is always faithful. He will always keep His covenant and He will save His people even from themselves. It is Yahweh Himself who pursues Jonah (see 1:1 above).

The Yahweh of heaven

This is the true God. He is in heaven—high, mighty and holy. Heaven is the place from which He rules (Isa. 66:1,2). This sets Jonah's God apart from those of the sailors.

Who made the sea and dry land

The contrast of sea and dry land is a Hebrew figure of speech, a *merism*. A *merism* stresses two poles, the sea and the dry land, and it is understood to include everything in between. In this context it would include the storm. Jonah's Yahweh is the Creator, Sustainer and Provider of the world.

I fear the LORD

This is a play upon the word *fear*. The sailors *feared* the storm, Jonah *fears* the true and living Yahweh. The sailors look at the water and *fear* but Jonah knows the only one *to fear* is Yahweh, the one who sent the storm. To fear Yahweh in Scriptures means to reverently and humbly worship Him (Prov.1:9). The book of Proverbs calls fearing God “the beginning of wisdom.” In Proverbs, the opposite of fear is to be self-sufficient, arrogant and wise in your own eyes. Self-sufficiency is denying His authority in our lives and the honor and respect due Him.

Jonah's witness before the sailors cannot be called gracious or compassionate. Jonah has only borne witness because he was forced to do so. He did not volunteer the confession; the lots exposed him. Were it not for the lots, he might not have spoken at all. Jonah is depicted as an ungracious, self-centered and compassionless man. Jonah does not care about the sailors.

Jonah's whole testimony is a disgrace! Jonah has defiled his witness and not brought glory to God. It is interesting to speculate what the sailors would have thought of Yahweh's name if He had not stepped in with the calming of the storm.

Jonah's conduct calls us to examine our own conduct and to ask ourselves, what our witness is. Do we confess a good confession? We might be orthodox, but are we honoring God. Do our lives reflect our witness?

3.3. Fearing the Fear (1:10-12)

Jonah's confession leads to greater fear, not peace. The text says the men were exceedingly afraid. A more literal translation is, "They feared an exceedingly great fear." Why is this? Instead of looking at the waves, Jonah had pointed the sailors to the true source of the storm: Jonah's God. It was Jonah's God who was angry with him and He was all-powerful. They faced a greater problem than a terrifying storm. The sailors realized that the *only true and living God, maker of heaven and earth* was angry with Jonah and they shared a boat with him. Baker states: "The sailors were afraid that they were about to become collateral damage in the battle between Yahweh and Jonah (Baker, Lesson 4, 35). Jonah then tells them how to stop the storm. He and the ship must separate: he must be thrown overboard (1:12). It is unclear what Jonah was thinking. What did Jonah understand would happen? Some commentators suggest that Jonah knew he was guilty and he knew he deserved to die, But why does he have to be thrown over the side? Other commentators argue that Jonah saw this as a sacrifice—a substitution of Jonah for the lives of the sailors. The text does not say.

3.4. The Sailors' Compassion (1:13-14)

Ironically the sailors do not want to implement the solution. Jonah does not care about the sailors; he was asleep. He does not care about Nineveh; he did not want to go there. He does not care about the multitudes who are under Yahweh's judgment; but the pagan sailors who do not fear Yahweh care about him, one man. Trying to save him, they row but it is futile. They begin to pray, not to their pagan gods as before, but to the true and living God.

The sailors pray that Yahweh would not hold them accountable: "*We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You*" (1:14). While Jonah is the cause, the sailors recognize they do not have the right to take his life—that belongs to Yahweh alone. The prayer ends with an affirmation that Yahweh is the *true God*; their idols are nothing, and Yahweh is *king over creation*. They state: "for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You." This phrase occurs three times in the Old Testament: Isaiah 46:10; Psalm 115:3; and Psalm 135:6. The phrase combines two ideas: the futility of idol worship and the extent of Yahweh's rule over creation. The sailors have now come to a full realization that this "god" is the one true living Yahweh.

4. Yahweh, the Sailors and the Storm (1:15-16)

15 So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows (Jonah 1:15-16).

In verse 15 the sailors threw Jonah overboard and as Jonah said the storm stopped. Verse 16 leaves Jonah and turns to focus upon the sailors and their fear.

Initially the sailors were afraid of the storm. After Jonah's confession they began to fear Yahweh. They realize that the true problem is Yahweh. Then Yahweh takes the storm away and the Scriptures say, "then they feared even more". Young's Literal translation reads, "the men fear Jehovah — a great fear." Why were they not happy, rejoicing and celebrating? What had happened to the sailors? Yahweh's claim to be the true creator of heaven and of earth has been confirmed. The disobedient prophet's words have come to pass. They now recognized Jonah as a true prophet and Yahweh as the one true, living God. Now the sailors know that they have been in the presence of the *one true, living God*. This makes them fear in the true biblical sense. A number of parallel passages point to the reality of their conversion. In Mark 4:35ff the disciples are afraid of a storm. Jesus awakes and calms the storm. The disciples having seen Jesus' power, then "feared exceedingly". In Luke 5:8 we see a similar event with Peter. After Peter has seen the Lord's power it states: "But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'" Like the fear of the disciples and Peter, the worship and vows of the sailors were sincere. They have been converted and now begin to walk humbly before Yahweh.

The sailors fear and worship, they offer sacrifice and made vows to the Lord. Exactly how they did this and what they said in their vows we do not know. Many make foxhole promises and vows—vows made when they are in trouble. They pray to God and make promises only to forget them after they have been delivered. The sailors are not like this. They did not make promises in the middle of the storm; they made promises at the end of the ordeal, after Yahweh had sent the storm. This is a true worship and fear of God.

This is the final irony of chapter one. Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh to preach to the wicked, and yet in running away, Yahweh used His poor witness to convert the pagan sailors. No matter what Jonah does, no matter how disobedient, Yahweh will use him to accomplish His purpose: to bring blessing to the gentiles. At the close of this chapter, we are left with the sinful sailors worshipping Yahweh and Jonah thrown overboard in judgment.

This episode leaves us with questions. What is our spiritual state and witness? Are we orthodox but not practicing? In this chapter Jonah's conduct is meant to disgust us—he is worse than the gentiles—but it also challenges us. What about us, are we Jonahs? How are we living? We need to re-evaluate our lives and ask God to help us grow in compassion.

Conclusion

The center of this section is Jonah's confession. The beginning and the end of the chiasm indicate that the revelation of God to the sailors is key. The use of "throw" and "fear" show the intensity of the revelation. The use of irony indicates Jonah's poor witness and lack of compassion. The conversion of the sailors shows Yahweh's purpose is to bless the gentiles. In spite of Jonah's witness the word of God is going out from Israel. It is a sad truth that Israel and even the church have less compassion than the world outside. In all this we see that Yahweh is still working, he is still bringing his grace to sinners. His church should reflect him but it often does not; his church should follow him, but it often does not - because of its weakness and hardness of heart.

Summary

Jonah chapter one stressed Yahweh's call and Jonah's disobedience. It shows the folly and consequence of sin. You cannot hide from the Creator, the covenant God. If you try to hide, it will be to your own hurt. Chapter one also points to the nature of Yahweh. The chapter begins with Yahweh's justice: He has issued a righteous and holy judgment against Nineveh. When He is disobeyed, we see Yahweh's justice in dealing with Jonah. At this stage, judgment seems to be all it is. Jonah is thrown overboard and forgotten; but in the conversion of the sailors, we also see a hint of Yahweh's grace and covenant love to the nations. In the next chapters we will see more of Yahweh's covenant love and faithfulness in pursuing Jonah and in giving hope to Nineveh. We should be grateful that the sovereign dominion of the creator Yahweh is so great that there is nowhere we can run from Him.

DO YOUR OWN BIBLE STUDY ON A PORTION OF JONAH 1:4-16

Text: _____ TITLE: _____
INDUCTIVE METHOD: [Draw Information from the Biblical text]
Reference texts. How do other texts influence our reading of the text? 1.1. (etc.)
<p>Explanation of important information in the text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -key words and definitions: -grammatical observations: (sentence structure, variant readings) -figures of speech: (comparisons, associations, representations) -does the text explicitly or implicitly say anything about God, about salvation? -translation method used: - are their differences between Bible versions. What are they? -human author. How do we know? -what occasion prompted human author to write? -original audience for reading. Why would they read the text? -geographical context: -cultural, social context: -historical context: -religious context: -in your own words, what does the text say and mean?
Commentary notes
<p>EXPOSITIONAL EXPLANATION. Identify the main teachings of the text under study in chronological order</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. <p>(other)</p>
<p>LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -literary genre: (gospel, history, legal, parable, poetry, prophecy, proverb, etc). -how is the text related to its surrounding texts? -how does the text relate to the theme of the chapter and book it's in?
ANALYTICAL METHOD. What are the main thesis, antithesis, synthesis and syncretism in the text?
DEVOTIONAL METHOD OF STUDY. How does the text help you to adore God, confession your sins, give thanks to Him and serve Him?

Lesson Two Questions

1. Yahweh answers Jonah's flight by _____
2. Discuss the significance of the word 'hurl' or 'throw' in this section.
3. Does Jonah's disobedience affect just himself or does it affect others?
4. What is the irony in this section?
5. Do we use lots today?
6. Write out Jonah's confession.
7. What does it mean to fear God?
8. The sailors were converted by Jonah's excellent testimony. True or false.
9. The sailors learned not to fear the storm but to fear the _____
10. Was the conversion of the sailors real? Give textual support.

Lesson Three. A Three–Day Journey from Death to Life

1. Introduction

This lesson introduces the great fish. Yahweh does not abandon Jonah; instead He sends a fish to swallow Jonah, preventing him from drowning. Christ refers to it in Matthew 12.

The story has another important literary function. The story of the fish is before the prayer, then resumes after the prayer. The fish is bread of the sandwich; the prayer is the meat in the sandwich. As we all know, it is what is in the sandwich that is the most important, not the bread. This is true here. The fact that the fish frames Jonah's prayer indicates that the author wants us to focus upon the prayer, not the fish. Having said that, let us start with the fish and Jonah's journey from death to life. We will look at the prayer in the next lesson.

2. Literary Analysis: Text, Genre, Structure, Parties, Location

Text: Jonah 1:17 and 2:10; Jonah 1:17: *Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights....* 2:10 *So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land* (Jonah 1:17; 2:10).

Genre: Narrative, Structure: The fish is an *inclusio* framing Jonah's prayer (1:17-2:20), Parties: Yahweh, Jonah, the great fish, Location: The water and the fish. Key word: Appoint.

3. Yahweh's Sovereignty and Covenantal Pursuit

Almost everyone knows about Jonah's fish, yet the reality is that we are not told much about it. The Hebrew word used to describe it is not specific; it could either be a big fish or a sea creature. Jonah only saw it from a very limited angle—from the inside of its stomach—so Jonah would know very little (but we can be sure that after three days Jonah knew more than he wanted to know). The fish only has a walk on (or swim on) part. After Jonah and the fish separate, the fish is not mentioned again. The fish is not important but the fish does point us to a number of important things.

The fish demonstrates Yahweh's sovereign rule over all things. Yahweh is sovereign over men (Jonah, the sailors), nations (Israel, Nineveh), and the created world (the storm and the fish). His sovereignty is indicated by the repetition of the key word, "appoint" (some versions use the word "prepared"). The word "prepared" or "appoint" is used in 1:17 and three times in chapter 4. Yahweh ap-

pointed the plant (4:6), He appointed the worm (4:7) and the wind (4:8). The word stresses that Yahweh, the LORD of heaven and earth, is actively intervening in creation to bring about His ends. It demonstrates that in every part of the created realm God is Sovereign. God tells the fish to swallow Jonah; and He tells him to throw Jonah up. He causes a gourd to grow and a wind to blow. Yahweh is in absolute control and He has resources that we could never even guess. When you are without hope, when circumstances seem impossible, remember that God can use anything to deliver His servants.

3.2. Yahweh's Covenantal Pursuit

The fish also demonstrates His covenantal faithfulness. The sovereign God is also the covenant God. In the appointing of the fish, Yahweh is using His power for Jonah's and Nineveh's good. It is a comfort that Yahweh's absolute sovereignty is linked to His covenantal faithfulness and grace to His people. What was Jonah thinking when he was thrown overboard? What was going through His mind? Did he think, "I have sinned; I have run from Yahweh's presence and now I will die?" Yahweh has not abandoned Jonah or His covenant: it is still His purpose to bless Jonah and send him to Nineveh. Yahweh sends the fish so that He can save His prophet and continue to teach him.

3.3. The Chastening of Jonah

Yahweh's pursuit is coupled with His chastening Jonah. Yahweh pursues and chastens; He waits until Jonah has been thrown overboard before He sends help. He could have stopped Jonah from getting on the boat; He did not. He could have delivered Jonah at any time; instead He waited until all seemed lost. Yahweh waits until Jonah has been thrown overboard and has tasted the bitterness of sin. In a strange way He waits that He might be gracious.

Nixon makes this comment:

"The Lord could have appointed a great bird to transport him to dry land, instead He appointed the great fish. The Lord does not usually protect us from the consequences of our own choices and actions. In His faithfulness and graciousness towards us, Yahweh comes with us into the consequences of our choices in order to save us there. Jonah had chosen the sea as his escape route; it is there that the Lord awaits him. Jonah was to discover for himself the impossibility of escaping God's presence. To learn this, he needed to be in the place of human powerlessness—ultimately the place of death. Salvation is *not*, in the first instance, the Lord God taking us "out" of our mess, but God meeting us "within" it. Jonah will find salvation within his watery grave, for there, in the place which eloquently speaks of death, God will meet him" (127).

It is common to think of the great fish as Jonah's punishment. It is not. The fish is Jonah's deliverance; it is a blessing to him. Jonah was thrown overboard and sank to the bottom of the ocean. The fish saved Jonah from drowning (2:5).

If this was hard, how bad must the drowning have been? The suffering of Jonah is horrible—He is chastened unto death!

The deliverance is not easy. The three days inside a fish are difficult. The fish is deliverance but it is also a means of chastening. Moreover, the fish is a part of the learning process, one that Yahweh puts His prophet through so that he might grow.

Let us also consider the matter from Yahweh's side. Consider how far Yahweh must go in order to humble and chasten His servant. Look at the lengths He has to go in order to save Jonah. It is due to the hardness of Jonah's heart that Yahweh used these extreme measures. It is not that Yahweh delights in making him suffer, but He has to do it, as Jonah was determined not to listen. Let us learn this lesson: if we see Yahweh's chastening hand upon others, let us learn from them and humble ourselves and repent. Let us try to learn the lessons the easy way—that is why we have the Scriptures.

3.4. Jonah's Judgment - We Reap What We Sow

Jonah is an illustration that we reap what we sow (Gal. 6: 7-9). At the beginning of the book of Jonah, Jonah seeks to flee from the presence of the Lord, the place of blessing; yet, in sinful rebellion Jonah has run from the LORD. Jonah has chosen to separate himself from Yahweh.

Sin separates. In the garden Adam was blessed by the presence of God. Adam sinned by choosing not to obey God; as a consequence, he found himself hiding— separated from God's grace and favor. He chose to separate himself from God and he found that he was separated from God's blessing. He found himself hiding from God (Gen. 3:8) and later cast out of the garden by God. Adam illustrates that the blessings of God are linked to His presence. It is the judgment of Yahweh to separate from him. When we do separate ourselves from God to pursue our own way, it leads to more and more trouble and death. Jonah began by separating himself from the presence of Yahweh by going to Tarshish and Jonah ends up drowning at the bottom of the ocean. Jonah, like Adam, is in the place of judgment and death. Jonah tastes the bitterness of living away from the presence of the Lord (2:2).

We must be careful not to flee from God. If we flee, Jonah warns us that we cannot control the outcome. A small step on the path to disobedience can lead to us bringing great evil upon ourselves.

3.5. Jonah's Death and the Three-Day Journey

Jonah is almost dead. His experience is as close to death as could be without actually dying. In his prayer (Lesson 4) he states, "out of the belly of Sheol I cried out to you." *Sheol* is the Old Testament word for death and the grave. Jonah himself says it was "like dying when I went down in the flood, I died in the waters and I was buried in the tomb of the fish's belly." By the way, the metaphor is not

an actual event, but the process was so severe, so harsh, so bitter, so hopeless that to Jonah it was the closest parallel to death that he could experience without actually dying. Robertson suggests that he might even have died (*Jonah*, 29).

The time, three days and three nights, is important. In the Scriptures three days and three nights are symbolic. They point to a journey from death to life. There are a number of illustrations in the Old Testament but the supreme illustration is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Baker states: "In the Scriptures, journeys that last three days and three nights are often journeys from death to life. The classic example of this is the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. Abraham takes a three-day journey to the place of sacrifice (Gen. 22:3-4). Upon Mt. Moriah, Abraham prepares to slay his "only begotten son" in obedience to Yahweh's command. But at the final moment, Yahweh stays Abraham's hand, and Isaac was "resurrected" from the dead. That is the meaning of this event according to the writer of Hebrews:

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," 19 concluding that Yahweh was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense (Hebrews 11:17-19)"⁴ (Lesson 4, 40).

Jonah being vomited up from the dead after three days is an illustration of his restoration unto life. O Palmer Robertson states: "Jonah was discovering the power of the resurrection" (*Jonah*, 29). The clearest example of the three-day journey from death to life is in Christ. Jonah's ordeal points to the greater ordeal of Christ whose body would be in the grave for three days until it was resurrected into life and glory. We will develop the typology of Jonah in Lesson 8.

⁴ other references to three days: Joseph's prophecy (Gen. 40:1-23); Moses asking Pharaoh to allow the people a three-days journey into the wilderness to worship God (Ex. 5:1-3); three days preparation at Sinai before meeting God (Ex. 19:1-25); Joshua takes three days to cross the Jordan river (Jos. 1:11, 3:2); the two spies wait three days before returning to camp (Jos. 2:16, 22); King Hezekiah is raised up on the third day (2 Ki. 20:5-6); Esther prepares herself for three days before going before the king (Es. 4:12-5:8); following Solomon's death, the kingdom of Israel splits in two after a three-day wait (1 Ki. 12:5, 12), a negative example, where they go from life to death instead of the other way around; another negative example is the three-day plague following David's census sin (2 Sam. 24:13; 1 Chr. 21:12) (Baker, Lesson 4, 40).

Conclusion

The story of the fish is important but we must not over emphasize it. More importantly, the fish is Yahweh's agent doing His bidding: the fish delivers, the fish chastens. Jonah's suffering is terrible, but in covenant faithfulness, Yahweh is disciplining and saving His servant.

Summary

The fish is introduced in Jonah 1:17 and leaves in Jonah 2:10. Its function is to deliver and chasten. On a literary level, it is used to frame Jonah's prayer. The great fish re-emphasizes Yahweh's sovereign power over the creation. The throwing overboard, the drowning and being swallowed by a fish are all aspects of Yahweh's chastening hand. The three-day period is typological, pointing to Christ's later three-day burial and journey from death unto life.

DO YOUR OWN BIBLE STUDY ON A PORTION OF JONAH 1:17,2:10

Text: TITLE:
INDUCTIVE METHOD: [Draw Information from the Biblical text]
Reference texts. How do other texts influence our reading of the text? 1.1. (etc.)
Explanation of important information in the text -key words and definitions: -grammatical observations: (sentence structure, variant readings) -figures of speech: (comparisons, associations, representations) -does the text explicitly or implicitly say anything about God, about salvation? -translation method used: - are their differences between Bible versions? What are they? -human author. How do we know? -what occasion prompted human author to write? -original audience for reading. Why would they read the text? -geographical context: -cultural, social context: -historical context: -religious context: -in your own words, what does the text say and mean?
Commentary notes
EXPOSITIONAL EXPLANATION. Identify the main teachings of the text under study in chronological order 1. 2. 3. (other)
LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS -literary genre: (gospel, history, legal, parable, poetry, prophecy, proverb, etc). -how is the text related to its surrounding texts? -how does the text relate to the theme of the chapter and book it's in?
ANALYTICAL METHOD. What are the main thesis, antithesis, synthesis and syncretism in the text?
DEVOTIONAL METHOD OF STUDY. How does the text help you to adore God, confession your sins, give thanks to Him and serve Him?

Lesson Three Questions

1. What is the literary significance of the fish?
2. How much do we know about the fish?
3. What is the significance of the word “prepared” or “appointed”?
4. Yahweh will go to any lengths to recover His servants. True or false?
5. Why did God wait before delivering Jonah?
6. Why, according to Nixon, did God use a fish to deliver Jonah?
7. Explain “we reap what we sow” in the context of Jonah.
8. Did Jonah actually die?
9. What is the significance of “three days and three nights”?
10. The *sign of Jonah* points to _____

Lesson Four. Jonah's Repentant Prayer

1. Introduction

Jonah 2 is one of the great prayers of Scripture. Despite his sin and his terrible circumstances, Jonah cries out to Yahweh from the depths and is heard. This lesson will focus on the prayer.

2. Literary Analysis: Text, Genre, Structure, Parties, Location

Jonah 2:1 *Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, ² saying, "I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. ³For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; ball your waves and your billows passed over me. ⁴Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; Yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.' ⁵The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me, weeds were wrapped about my head ⁶ at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. ⁷When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. ⁸Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. ⁹But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!"*

Genre: Prayer, Poetry, Psalm of Praise; Structure: Extended Chiasm; Parties: Jonah and Yahweh; Location: Fish's belly.

Extended Chiasm

- A. Jonah cries out to the LORD because of his affliction (2:2a)
 - B. Jonah cries out to Yahweh from Sheol and is heard (2:2b)
 - C. Jonah is cast into the sea by Yahweh (2:3)
 - D. Jonah is cast out of Yahweh's sight, from His temple (2:4)
 - E. Jonah's soul is surrounded by water (2:5a)
 - F. Jonah goes down to the deeps (2:5b)
 - G. Jonah's lowest point (2:6a)
 - F'. Yahweh raises Jonah from the pit (2:6b)
 - E'. Jonah's soul faints; he remembers Yahweh (2:7a)
 - D'. Jonah's prayer reaches Yahweh in His holy temple (2:7b)
 - C'. (Jonah cast into the sea by) idol worshipers (2:8)
 - B'. Jonah worships Yahweh with sacrifices and vows (2:9a)
 - A'. Jonah rejoices that salvation is from the LORD (2:9b) (Whose chiasm is this).
- Key points: Jonah is as good as dead, Jonah cries to Yahweh and is saved.

The key points of the prayer are developed through an extended chiasm. The three key points are: (G) Jonah's suffering and (A) (A') Jonah calls upon the LORD and the Lord saves him.

3. Interpreting Jonah's Prayer

The section opens with Jonah crying to the Lord his God from the fish's belly. From the beginning of this book, we have seen Jonah on the run from Yahweh. Jonah is disobeying and there is no indication that Jonah has been praying or worshipping God. Jonah is estranged from his covenant Lord. This prayer is the first time we see Jonah turning towards Yahweh, not away from Him. Jonah is repenting. Jonah is finally praying. He calls upon 'His' Yahweh indicating that Jonah has returned to the covenant and to Yahweh. Our obedience affects our prayer life. It is difficult to pray when we are running from God. If you are having trouble praying, look at your life. Is it because you are no longer walking with God?

This prayer shows us Jonah's heart. In these experiences Jonah is brought to the very depth of despair. He is cast into the depths of the sea, a position so low he was almost dead (2:6). From the depths he cried out to Yahweh and Yahweh heard him (2:2,7b) and brought him up as it were from the dead (2:9b).

Exegeting this prayer is difficult. The number of chiastic parallels varies from commentator to commentator. More importantly, some commentators see this not as a prayer of true repentance, but as a hypocrite's prayer. Dorsey points out that the last verse in this prayer talks of how Jonah will pay his vows and make his sacrifices. Jonah is contrasting this with the gentiles who worship vain idols. Dorsey takes this as a reference to the sailors, noting that in the preceding chapter they only worshiped Yahweh after Jonah was thrown overboard. Jonah does not know their change of heart. If this is correct Dorsey says that Jonah is really still self-righteous. He is still clinging to his own privileged position as a Jew and he still has no compassion for the nations. His worship and privilege as a Jew is still his boast. Dorsey supports this by pointing to Jonah's second prayer (his complaint in chapter 4) which exposes the true condition of his heart. He believes that Jonah is still not really repentant (294). If this is correct, Jonah is self-righteous, judgmental and still mocking the pagans who are at this very time worshipping and serving Yahweh. Jonah is a Jew with a gentile problem. Jonah has not yet learned.

Other commentators take this as a genuine prayer of praise and thanksgiving to Yahweh. Although Jonah's heart will be challenged again in chapter 3 and 4, at this stage of his spiritual journey he is grateful for Yahweh's deliverance. Even though Jonah is still in the fish's belly, he recognizes that Yahweh has not let him drown. Yahweh is not finished with Jonah. This encourages Jonah and gives him

hope. On this interpretation, this is a psalm of gratitude and thanksgiving for Yahweh's mercy. Jonah has undergone something of a change of heart.

I have introduced the issue of multiple interpretations for a number of reasons. First, it shows how one part of the book can be read in the light of other parts. Dorsey stresses the continuity between chapters 2 and 4. His argument is particularly powerful if we understand that chapter 4 is the climax of the book in which the true state of Jonah's heart is exposed. Other interpreters do not place as much weight on chapter four. They prefer to understand that Jonah is on a journey. The prayer in chapter 2 is part of that journey. The prayer in chapter 4 is another part. This way of reading Jonah makes it easier to read the two prayers in isolation.

Second, multiple interpretations pose difficulties in preaching and teaching. What is a teacher to do if he does not know the correct interpretation or if he is faced with two equally possible alternatives? If he feels strongly, he can choose one or the other, or he can tell his audience that there are a number of options and develop each in turn (as I have done above). I see the merit in Dorsey's position; however, I favor the interpretation that while the root of Jonah's problem remained, at this stage Jonah is truly thankful for being saved from drowning.

4. Jonah's Restoration - A Psalm of Praise to "His" Yahweh

Jonah's disobedience brought great trouble. Jonah's response is to cry out to Yahweh in his hopelessness. Jonah's action makes a vital point: the only remedy for our sin is to return to the God against whom we have sinned. In each and every situation our only hope is to return to the God we left. Things might indicate that we have sinned so badly that there is no longer hope. The devil, our conscience and Yahweh's chastening might do the same. Jonah teaches that sinners under God's judgment, those reaping the fruit of their sin, can still cry out to God for mercy. Jonah had no merit; he has no good works to point to; yet he calls upon the covenantal faithfulness of Yahweh. Yahweh is compassionate. Yahweh is faithful when we are faithless. "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). This is an important pastoral lesson that needs to be constantly reinforced.

Secondly, Yahweh's compassion is linked to repentance. This is a major theme in the whole book. These sailors repent and are blessed. The Ninevites repent and are blessed and Jonah, the prophet from Israel, is blessed when he turns from his sin. Repentance and blessing are linked; without repentance there is no blessing, with repentance Yahweh's favor will be upon us. We will take up the theme of repentance in Lesson 6.

5. The Breakdown of the Prayer

Following the chiasm, the prayer has three parts. First, Jonah is cast into the

sea and goes down. Second, the center of the chiasm, (G), shows the depths of Jonah's distress—he had given up on life. Third, we see Jonah's salvation—he is brought up. Baker labels them as “going down” in 2:2-4, “bottomed out” in verses 5-6 and “coming up” in verses 7-9 (Baker, Lesson 4, 41).

5.1. Going down (2:2-5)

Jonah begins by stating that he is “in the belly of Sheol”, or he cries out “from the fish's belly”. The prayer reflects Psalm 18:4-6. It contains many of its key themes.

The cords of death encompassed me, the torrents of destruction assailed me, the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears (Ps. 18:4-6).

Sheol: The concept of Sheol refers to being in the grave, to be dead. The Old Testament uses a number of words to describe death: Sheol, Abaddon, the Pit, the Grave (Wright 88).

For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. (Ps. 16:10) For Sheol does not thank you; death does not praise you; those who go down to the pit do not hope for your faithfulness (Is. 38:18).

In the Psalm Jonah is not dead, but he might well be. He is as good as dead; yet even in death, Jonah believed that he is not free from Yahweh's presence. Yahweh can still save him. Jonah professes that there is no situation, no place, no circumstance so bad that Yahweh cannot save him.

Sovereignty: Jonah also stresses Yahweh's sovereignty in his plight. It is Yahweh that has brought him to this place. Even though it was the sailors who threw Jonah overboard, Jonah still ascribes the action to Yahweh, “for you cast me into the deep.... all your waves and billows passed over me.”

Jonah understands that it is Yahweh who brought the storm and Yahweh who used the sailors to accomplish His will. Jonah proclaims that all things are under Yahweh's sovereign control. The sovereignty of God is Jonah's anchor. As Yahweh is the one who is in control of all things, Yahweh can also change things. Jonah cries out to Yahweh to save him.

Sight—looking to Yahweh: Jonah's greatest problem is that he has been “driven from Yahweh's sight” (v.4). Like Adam being driven from the garden, Jonah has been cast from Yahweh's sight. The only way he can be restored is to enter again into His presence. Jonah expresses this through the image of sight: “I will look again towards your holy temple” (4b).

The concept of looking to Yahweh's temple draws upon 1 Kings 8:22ff, Solomon's great prayer. Solomon's prayer stresses that Yahweh has put His pres-

ence and name upon the temple and although one should be driven out of Yahweh's presence due to his sin, if he turns and prays to the temple, Yahweh will forgive and restore him (1 Kings 8:46-53). Jonah is following Solomon's prayer. Jonah's "looking to the temple" is a *looking towards Yahweh*. This is repentance in Old Testament language. Since Christ is the temple, looking to Christ for His restoration would be the New Testament fulfillment. *To look* and *to see* are ways of speaking about the presence of Yahweh. Our great need is to be back in His presence (Ferguson, 33). Ferguson also notes that Jonah's prayer seemed to draw upon Psalm 18 and Psalm 42. He makes the point that Jonah has not only returned to Yahweh's presence, he has also returned to His word (34).

5.2. Bottomed Out (2:5-6)

Jonah's reaching rock bottom is the heart of the chiasm.

- E. The waters closed in over me to take my life (2:5a);
 - F. the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head (2:5b)
 - G. at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever (2:6a);
 - F'. yet you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God (2:6b).

Verses 5b and 6 show the depths of Jonah's plight. Mackay states the phrase "*the earth with its bars*" is equivalent to saying the "gates of the underworld" or the "gates of death" (Is. 38:10). He points out that this is the end of Jonah's downward journey: first he went down to Joppa (1:3a); then he went down into the bottom of the ship (1:5); and now he has arrived at the bottom of the sea (44). Yahweh's extreme disciplining of Jonah is complete. Jonah has reached rock bottom, but it is from the bottom that he can look up. Yahweh having completed His discipline, now begins to raise Jonah up. The process of recovery is slow and difficult—Jonah will spend three days and nights in the fish's belly. Yahweh has not given Jonah over to death; He is still working on him.

"Jonah teaches us something, first you have to be hopeless before Yahweh because of your sin, then you have to hope in Him alone without any other avenue open to you, to trust in Him alone, and then, you know what will happen, you will find new obedience built on gratitude. In Jonah's case he realized that the mercy shown to him removes the right of the self-righteous to complain about mercy or to withhold mercy given to others, so he starts out toward Nineveh" (Baker, Lesson, 5 40).

5.3. Coming up (2:7-9)

E' When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD (2:7a)

- D'. and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple (2:7b).
C'. Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love (2:8).
B'. But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay (2:9a).
A'. Salvation is of the LORD (2:9b).

The next section is full of hope and praise, ending with Jonah's great declaration of Yahweh's salvation, "Salvation is of the Lord". Jonah reaffirms Yahweh's sovereignty and rule. Jonah contrasts himself with those who worship false gods, idols, who will not know God's blessing. Only those who worship the true God will be blessed and receive His salvation. Jonah has repented, he has served the only true Yahweh and this Yahweh has had mercy upon him (Vv 2:7b-2:9a). Like the gentiles before him (1:17), Jonah goes on to affirm that he will worship and pay his vows. Finally, Jonah has been restored to Yahweh.

Conclusion

Jonah turns to Yahweh in his sorrow and difficulty and is restored. He chose to flee from Yahweh's sight and ends without His presence. By faith he prays to God's Holy Temple and Yahweh remembers His covenant with Israel and restores Jonah.

Summary

The story of the fish focuses us on Jonah's prayer. Jonah recognizes that everything that has happened to him was caused by Yahweh's hand. It is Yahweh who has cast him into the sea; it is Yahweh who caused him to drown. Since Yahweh is sovereign, Jonah calls upon Him for deliverance. When Jonah is without hope, he places his hope in Yahweh and Yahweh delivers him. When we have sinned, let us always return to God.

DO YOUR OWN BIBLE STUDY ON A PORTION OF JONAH 2:1-19

Text: TITLE:
INDUCTIVE METHOD: [Draw Information from the Biblical text]
Reference texts. How do other texts influence our reading of the text? 1.1. (etc.)
Explanation of important information in the text -key words and definitions: -grammatical observations: (sentence structure, variant readings) -figures of speech: (comparisons, associations, representations) -does the text explicitly or implicitly say anything about God, about salvation? -translation method used: - are their differences between Bible versions? What are they? -human author. How do we know? -what occasion prompted human author to write? -original audience for reading. Why would they read the text? -geographical context: -cultural, social context: -historical context: -religious context: -in your own words, what does the text say and mean?
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EXPOSITIONAL EXPLANATION. Identify the main teachings of the text under study in chronological order 1. 2. 3. (other)
LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS -literary genre: (gospel, history, legal, parable, poetry, prophecy, proverb, etc). -how is the text related to its surrounding texts? -how does the text relate to the theme of the chapter and book it's in?
ANALYTICAL METHOD. What are the main thesis, antithesis, synthesis and syncretism in the text?
DEVOTIONAL METHOD OF STUDY. How does the text help you to adore God, confession your sins, give thanks to Him and serve Him?
Hegamon (ibid)

Lesson Four Questions

1. What literary structure is used to develop Jonah's prayer?
2. What does A1 and G in the chiasm focus on.
3. Jonah's prayer mirrors which Psalm?
4. Is this the first time Jonah has prayed to Yahweh in the book?
5. How many times does Jonah pray to Yahweh in the book? Identify them.
6. Give two interpretations of Jonah's prayer in chapter 2.
7. How does Dorsey support his interpretation?
8. Explain the importance of 1 Kings 8 to an Israelite.
9. How does Yahweh respond to Jonah's prayer?
10. What is the New Testament equivalent of praying to the temple?

Lesson Five. Jonah's Second Call – (A Triple Repentance)

1. Introduction

Chapter 3 begins the second half of the book of Jonah. The pattern of the first half of the book—the call, the conversion of the gentiles and prayer—repeats itself. In the opening section “the word of Yahweh came to Jonah” and in this section *the word* comes a second time. Yahweh gives Jonah a second opportunity to serve Him. This time Jonah obeys. He preaches in Nineveh and Nineveh repents. Repentance is a central theme of Chapter 3. It stresses Jonah's repentance, the repentance of the Ninevites and the “repentance” of Yahweh who “relents” from bringing judgment upon them.

2. The Second Commission (3:1-3a)

2.1. Literary Analysis: Text, Genre, Structure, Parties, Location

Jonah 3:1 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ² “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” ³ So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD.

Genre: Narrative, Structure: a Parallel with 1:2, Parties: Yahweh and Jonah, Location: Outside Nineveh.

2.2. The Word of the LORD comes a Second Time (1:1)

Even though Jonah was disobedient and forfeited the right to Yahweh's blessing, Yahweh still wants Jonah to go to Nineveh. A chastened Jonah is now ready to obey. Yahweh gets the fish to vomit Jonah up and He re-commissions him for the work.

God speaking to a servant a second time occurs on a number of occasions; Jonah isn't unique. Yahweh has to speak to Moses twice (Ex 3:10-4:17). Elijah is recommitted at Mount Carmel (1 Kings 19:1-18) and Jeremiah needs to be spoken to twice (1:6). In the New Testament, Peter reminds us of Jonah. Peter, after denying the Lord three times, is later restored and re-commissioned as an apostle (John 21:15-19). We must be careful before we are too hard on Jonah. The re-commissioning of the saints above shows the grace and longsuffering of Yahweh. He does not throw His servants away. What a gracious God we have!

2.3. The Contents of the Commission (3:2)

The second commission is similar to the first. The thrust is the same. “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city and call out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me” (Jonah 1:2; 3:2).

2.4. Jonah’s Response (3:3)

Jonah obeys. Through discipline Jonah has grown in his obedience. It is because Yahweh would not let Jonah go that Jonah is now ready to go. It would have been easier if Jonah had been ready to go the first time, but he was not. Paul explains the general principle in Philippians 1:6: *“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* Yahweh had begun a good work in Jonah and He will continue to work with Jonah until it is finished.

3. Nineveh - That Great City before Yahweh

“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city...³Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent (Jonah 1:2a, 3bc).

The text describes Nineveh as a great city, powerful and numerically numerous. Baker argues that the text implies that Nineveh was a great, important city *to Yahweh*. Baker states: “Nineveh was a great city because it was important to Yahweh.” The city was important to Yahweh because HE was going to do a work in it (Baker, Lesson 5, 48,49). Whether his interpretation of this particular text is correct or not, it is clear that Nineveh was important to Yahweh.

Yahweh’s care for Nineveh raises a number of issues. First, Yahweh is king, not just over Israel but also over the nations. “The fact that God, the God of Israel, owns foreign cities and nations as well as Israel is a lesson that needs repeating” (Estelle 108).

Second, although Yahweh has covenanted with Israel, Israel is not the only nation that is important to Him. Yahweh cares for the pagan nations as well. Third, Baker (Lesson 5, 49) suggests that the fact that Yahweh would send His prophets to the nations implies that if Israel continues in her disobedience, Yahweh may judge her and begin to show His favor to others. This principle is suggested later by Jesus in Luke 4:23-27: His prophet Elijah was sent to the widow as Israel was under His judgment. Disobedient Israel must realize that she will not always receive His grace. Israel and the church must not presume upon God's favor in their life if they continue in disobedience.

The phrase the “three-day journey” is difficult. It could refer to the time it took to get to Nineveh, but it is more likely that it indicates the time that it took to preach in every part of the city. Jonah entered the city and preached for three days, thoroughly discharging his work throughout all areas. The three-day refer-

ence is also linked to the journey from death to life mentioned in Lesson 3.

Baker states: “The city of Nineveh was under a death sentence from Yahweh because of its wickedness. But just as Jonah experienced a journey from death to life in the belly of the fish, Nineveh is about to undergo a spiritual transformation of its own. Under the death sentence of Yahweh, the people of Nineveh are going to repent and believe on Yahweh. And Yahweh will see their repentance, have compassion on them, and spare them. He is going to give them life instead of the death they deserve” (Lesson 5,49)!

4. The Repentance of Nineveh and Yahweh

4.1. Literary Markers, Text, Genre, Structure, Parties, Location

Text: 3:3b-10 (above), Genre: Concentrated Narrative, Structure: Chiasm (note the parallel with chapter 2), Parties: Jonah, Nineveh and Yahweh, Location: Nineveh.

Chiasm:

- A. Yahweh's judgment announced (3:3b-4)
 - B. People repent with fasting and wearing sackcloth (3:5)
 - C. Word reaches the king (3:6a)
 - D. CENTER: king repents (3:6b)
 - C.' Word goes out from the king to people (3:7a)
 - B.' People commanded to repent with fasting and wearing sackcloth (3:7b-9)
- A.' Yahweh's judgment canceled; He relents and spares the city (3:10)

The chiasm (Dorsey, 294) stresses two repentances. We have Yahweh’s judgment (A.); we have Yahweh relenting of His judgment (A.’). At the center of the chiasm (D.), we have the king, as representative of the people, repenting.

We will discuss this section under three headings: Jonah’s preaching, the People repenting and Yahweh’s relenting.

4.2. Jonah’s Preaching (4)

“And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day’s walk. Then he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (Jonah 3:4).

Jonah’s message is short and direct. It is a summary of Yahweh’s message to them. We do not know what else Jonah said; presumably, he also gave a clear statement of who Yahweh was (see 1:9, 10).

The word “overthrow” is significant; in Hebrew it has two meanings, *to destroy* (per Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. 19:25, Deut. 29:23, Isa. 13:19) or *to turn*

around or transform (1 Kings 22:34). Alexander states: “although Nineveh was not overturned, it did experience a turnaround.” (XXX)

Nineveh is given 40 days. Like the three day period previously discussed, 40 is a significant scriptural number. It indicates a time of testing or trial (Gen. 7:1-8:6; Ex. 24:12-18; Num. 13:1-14:35; 1 Sam. 17:1-51; 1 Kings 19:1-18, Mt. 4:1-11). The trial will either lead to judgment and death (Num. 14:33-35) or justification and life (Mt. 4:11). The trials are linked to periods of humiliation and deprivation. Both Jesus and Israel suffer deprivation in their trials in the wilderness. Now Yahweh’s trial focuses upon the Ninevites. They are on trial for 40 days and while on trial, they deprive themselves by fasting and wearing sackcloth. How will they respond to Yahweh’s word?

4.3. The Repentance of People/King of Nineveh (3:5-9)

Jonah 3:5 And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. ⁶The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷ And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, ⁸ but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹ Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”

The repentance stresses the people’s and the king’s repentance.

4.3.1. The People Repent (3:5-6)

So the people of Nineveh believed Yahweh, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them

The repentance of Nineveh is remarkable for many reasons. First, Nineveh did not have the background or historical knowledge of Yahweh as Israel did. Second, Jonah’s ministry and message was brief and yet effective. Nineveh repented. We should note the link between the repentance of sailors in chapter 1 and that of Nineveh. In both cases the gentiles respond to Jonah’s message. The grace of Yahweh is flowing to the gentiles. Third, although Jonah is a man behind him stands the one true God. They hear the voice of a man and yet they realize they are dealing with God. The sailors and the Ninevites see Jonah, but they fear Yahweh (1:17, 3:5,8,9). A mark of true repentance is the realization that we are dealing with Yahweh himself. Although we may have injured others, the great offence is to Yahweh himself. King David illustrates this point: David sins against Uriah and Bathsheba, but his confession in Psalm 51 indicates that he under-

stands his sin as one principally against God. *Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight* (Ps. 51:4a). Fourth, the Ninevites' repentance is specific to their sin. Nineveh was known as a violent city (Nahum 3:1) and Nineveh specially repents of this sin: *"Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands"* (Jonah 3:8b). Fifth, the wickedness of Nineveh did not stop the power of Yahweh in the gospel from changing their hearts. There is no person or nation to whom Yahweh cannot give repentance. Sixth, their repentance manifests itself in true godly sorrow. It is possible to believe and yet not repent *"You believe that Yahweh is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!"* James 2:19. Paul warns of sorrow of this world, a sorrow that falls short of true repentance. This is a sorrow that things are not working out or we have been caught. It is a sorrow that falls short of a deeper sorrow that we have sinned against God, *"For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death"* (2 Cor. 7:10). Paul describes this true sorrow and the actions that demonstrate its reality in 2 Cor. 7:11. Godly sorrow leads to diligence, activity, a change of conduct, indignation, an acknowledgement that the action was wrong. It will lead to a zeal for and a fear of God. Nineveh shows this evidence of repentance: they flee specific sins, as well as fast and put on sackcloth. They show the fruit of repentance. Seventh, the king leads this repentance. He acts and issues a decree to his people.

"By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, ⁸ but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to Yahweh. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹ Who knows? Yahweh may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish" (7b-9).

6 Then word came to the king of Nineveh:

- A. and he arose from his throne
- B. and laid aside his robe,
- B.' covered himself with sackcloth
- A.' and sat in ashes (Jonah 3:6).

B. and B.' both stress his repentance.

Those who are in positions of responsibility should take the lead in spiritual matters. The king is the head; it is his responsibility to lead in the repentance.

Eighth, the whole city repents. The king's decree is an official public and universal statement of Nineveh's repentance before Yahweh. The king, the people and even the animals are included. The repentance of Nineveh is a rebuke to Israel. Israel has had Yahweh's word for generations and yet she has not repented. Yahweh has given her kings and they have not led her. She has failed and she will not repent and she will be judged.

Nineveh's repentance is startling when we realize that Jonah's message is

one of judgment alone. It did not offer hope. Jonah did not preach, “if you will repent you will be blessed”. Jonah’s message was principally one of judgment. The idea that Yahweh had not promised the Ninevites any hope is understood by the Ninevites. Jonah 3:9 help us to understand what they were thinking: “Who knows? Yahweh may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish” (9). Alexander writes, “They realize only too well that pious actions and prayers can never merit or guarantee divine forgiveness (cp. Joel 2:13-14); God is under no obligation to pardon. There remains, however, the hope that He may look upon them with mercy and turn away His fierce anger” (124).

The Ninevites understand Yahweh’s sovereignty, His right to rule and His absolute right to judge. “The repentant recognize that they have no case to argue for acceptance. Their future well-being is dependant solely on divine grace” (Mackay 46).

Keddie points out that there were two implied grounds for hope in Jonah’s message. First, the time limit of forty days implies that destruction will occur if no change occurs. At the same time, it opens up the possibility for reconsideration if they would repent. If 40 days is the time of trial, then they might still succeed.

Second, the fact that Yahweh went to so much trouble to bring this message of judgment to Nineveh demonstrates His care and concern for the Ninevites. If there was no chance of reversing the judgment, why bother to send Jonah in the first place? Baker offers a third reason: Jonah himself is an example of Yahweh’s grace and mercy. If Yahweh would restore the wayward prophet, would He not also have mercy upon repentant sinners (Lesson 7, 51)?

The great lesson for us is that even in judgment, Yahweh is merciful. He desires that none will perish and that all will come to repentance (1 Peter 3:9). It is an important principle that as long as Yahweh is talking to us, there is hope. Even if the message looks harsh, Yahweh is still speaking to them. Only if Yahweh is silent is there no hope.

Finally, we are to remember that there was a time limit, 40 days. This indicates that Yahweh’s grace and longsuffering with sinners is not unlimited. There is an end to His grace. Today if we hear His voice, we are to repent as tomorrow might be too late (Hebrews 4:6).

4.3. Yahweh’s Repentance (or Yahweh Relents)

Jonah 3:10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

Yahweh in His grace spared the Ninevites. He saw their repentance and turned His just anger away.

There are a number of important points to make concerning Yahweh’s action.

First, Yahweh's repentance, His turning away from His wrath, is not an automatic formula that must happen. What do I mean? Well, just because someone repents, it is not automatic that Yahweh will bring a blessing. How can I say that? Surely if Yahweh sees repentance He automatically will bless it? Well no, not really. There is both a textual and theological justification for this. Consider verse 9. Do it say, "We will repent; therefore, Yahweh must bless us"? No, it does not. They say, "Who can tell *if*, Yahweh will turn and relent?" In the classic passage concerning repentance it states. "Who knows? Maybe He will return and have pity and leave behind a blessing." (Joel 2:14) (Davis, Ralph, Minor Prophets, Reformed Theological Seminary, Lecture, 2001).

The Ninevites repentance is important, but the more important fact is that Yahweh shows them grace and this grace precedes any of their actions. It began in chapter 1 when the call came to Jonah, well before they knew anything about Yahweh. Then again the call of grace was pursuing them across the ocean when Jonah was running, and again in the second call to Jonah. The grace of Yahweh has been pursuing them far before their repentance. The story of Nineveh is one of grace alone. Yahweh's gracious nature is the key to the book (see 4:2).

4.4.1. The problem of the mercy of Yahweh

What do we do with a God who changes His mind? Does Malachi not say: "I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6)? How are we to understand Yahweh's repenting or relenting?

One solution is to suggest (as Keddie and Baker have done) that God's implied repentance in the message of judgment has already been made. Others have suggested that Yahweh is unchanging and that He changes His mind to people who respond in certain ways. In 1 Samuel the writer states: "*he who is the glory of Israel does not lie and change his mind, for he is not a man that he should change his mind.*" (1 Sam. 15:29) The word for "changing His mind" in the Hebrew are the same words used in Jonah 3:9-10 and 4:2. The use of these words in these passages shows that Yahweh does change his mind. An important text in this discussion is Jeremiah 18:7-10. When Yahweh said that judgment was to come upon the sinful, it was a conditional statement. He is not lying; rather, He is saying that if they continue in this course of conduct, this will happen; but, if they change something else will happen. This teaches us that Yahweh is a God of principle and as we said, the fact that Jonah was sent holds the implicit promise that He will have mercy.

It is important to note that this logical problem is not a problem for Jonah. We have no indication that he spent a great deal of time and energy upon it. Rather, Jonah knows that Yahweh can turn and have mercy, and as we shall see, this is why he is so upset. The thrust of the passage is *are you repenting and do you believe that Yahweh has purposes of grace to the wayward*. If so, are you seeking the good of those around you, even the hard ones and the wicked? The section is one of hope. The repentance of Nineveh is a ground for hope; because in Nineveh, God's grace extends to the wicked and to all nations.

In the repentance of Nineveh is a reaffirmation of God's mercy to all gentiles. In chapter 1:4-16, Yahweh showed mercy to the sailors, in chapter 3 he shows mercy to the Ninevites. The two events are linked linguistically and structurally to stress God's grace to the nations. Yahweh's salvation is to the ends of the earth and Israel is to bear witness to that salvation. She may do so willingly as in chapter 3 and unwilling as in chapter 1, but she must and will bear witness to the nations.

Conclusion

Jonah 3 outlines the blessings of a triple repentance: Jonah repents and goes to Nineveh, Ninevites repent and God relents. The repentance of Nineveh is a wonderful example of true repentance and the grace of God.

Summary

Jonah 3 begins the second half of the book of Jonah. In His mercy God calls Jonah a second time. Jonah obeys. He enters Nineveh and faithfully preaches God's message. The Ninevites have 40 days to repent. The Ninevites fear God and repent. The truth of their repentance is indicated by their conduct. In response God relents of the judgment He will bring upon them. Nineveh responds to the grace of God; even as Israel refused to repent. The great city, the gentile city that was important to Yahweh, has been saved.

DO YOUR OWN BIBLE STUDY ON A PORTION OF JONAH 3:1-10

Text: _____ TITLE: _____
INDUCTIVE METHOD: [Draw Information from the Biblical text]
Reference texts. How do other texts influence our reading of the text? 1.1. (etc.)
<p>Explanation of important information in the text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -key words and definitions: -grammatical observations: (sentence structure, variant readings) -figures of speech: (comparisons, associations, representations) -does the text explicitly or implicitly say anything about God, about salvation? -translation method used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are their differences between Bible versions? What are they? -human author. How do we know? -what occasion prompted human author to write? -original audience for reading. Why would they read the text? -geographical context: -cultural, social context: -historical context: -religious context: -in your own words, what does the text say and mean?
Commentary notes
<p>EXPOSITIONAL EXPLANATION. Identify the main teachings of the text under study in chronological order</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. <p>(other)</p>
<p>LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -literary genre: (gospel, history, legal, parable, poetry, prophecy, proverb, etc). -how is the text related to its surrounding texts? -how does the text relate to the theme of the chapter and book it's in?
ANALYTICAL METHOD. What are the main thesis, antithesis, synthesis and syncretism in the text?
DEVOTIONAL METHOD OF STUDY. How does the text help you to adore God, confession your sins, give thanks to Him and serve Him?

Lesson Five Questions

1. Name some other biblical characters that had to be called twice.
2. According to Baker, how was Nineveh a great city before God?
3. What was the significance of 40 days in Jonah's preaching?
4. Should our repentance lead to a change in conduct? Illustrate from chapter 3.
5. Should our repentance be specific? Illustrate this from chapter 3.
6. Give an important parallel passage for repentance.
7. Did God have to forgive Nineveh?
8. Does God change His mind?
9. Explain Keddie's two reasons for Nineveh finding hope in the harsh message.
10. When did Yahweh begin to show His grace to Nineveh?

Lesson Six. Jonah's Heart Exposed by an Angry Prayer (4:1-4)

1. Introduction

Nineveh repents and to our surprise, Jonah is upset. How strange! This lesson focuses upon Jonah's real problem and the real reason why he acted the way that he did. As we will see, Jonah is angry that Yahweh is showing mercy to other nations outside Israel.

2. Literary Analysis: Text, Literary Structure, Genre, Parties, Location

Jonah 4:1 *But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry.* ² *And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.* ³ *Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live."* ⁴ *And the LORD said, "Do you do well to be angry?"*

Genre: Narrative, Structure: Section 7 (d) of the macro structure, the climax of the book, Parties: Jonah and Yahweh, Location: Nineveh.

3. The Key to Understanding Jonah

Chapter 4 is the key to understanding Jonah's heart. Jonah's preaching and ministry have been blessed but Jonah is not pleased. The Ninevites have repented but Jonah is angry. What an unexpected response! Why is Jonah acting in this way? Since it was Yahweh's purpose to bless them, how can Jonah be so far from Yahweh's heart and mind on the matter?

3.1. An Angry Evil Prophet (4:1)

Jonah 4 stresses Jonah anger. Jonah is angry at God. The intensity of Jonah's anger is even more startling. Young's Literal Translation reads: *"And it is grievous unto Jonah — a great evil — and he is displeased at it"*. The Hebrew stresses that Jonah felt that Yahweh actions were evil. It states that the act of Yahweh was *an evil, a great evil*, to Jonah. Jonah is so angry that he calls this work of Yahweh's grace "evil, a great evil". Since it is not Yahweh who is a great

evil, *the evil, great evil* lies in Jonah's heart. Something is very wrong with the prophet!

3.2. Jonah's Prayer – Opening Jonah's Heart (4:2)

Jonah prayed in chapter 2:1-9 and here he is praying again. The two prayers are similar as they repeat the key words, "my life" (2:6, 4:3) and "tender mercies" (2:9, 4:2), but they are also deliberately and strikingly different. In the first prayer Jonah was filled with thanksgiving (2:7-9); now Jonah is filled with bitterness. The first stresses Yahweh's mercy to him; the second complains of that mercy when it is given to others. The first ends with a promise of service; the second ends with a defiant statement of rebellion. These markers stress the contrast between the prayers.

Jonah's prayer exposes Jonah's heart. Jonah's true motivation is finally exposed. Jonah tells us the reason that he fled to Tarshish. For the first time in the book, we find out why Jonah was disobedient.

Jonah fled because he knew Yahweh would bless the Ninevites. Jonah understood the character of God. He understood that God was gracious: "...for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster." Jonah was not worried that Yahweh would judge them; he was worried that God would bless them.

The verse that Jonah quotes is from Exodus 34:6, one of Israel's great descriptions of God's character. The origin of the quote is from the incident of the golden calf (Exodus 32-34). The context is that Israel has just entered into covenant with Yahweh. Moses has gone up the mountain to receive the law. In Moses' absence, Israel turns to apostasy, breaking the covenant by worshiping the golden calf. Moses returns and intercedes for them. Moses prayer leads to Yahweh's gracious covenant restoration. After this, Moses asks to see Yahweh's glory and Yahweh reveals Himself to Moses in these words that Jonah later used.

Exodus 34:6 almost had the status of a creed in Israel. It is quoted in Numbers 15:17, 14:18; Psalm 86:15, 103:8, 145:8; and Joel 2:13. It is Israel's testimony that Yahweh is a gracious God. Its initial use at the time of the golden calf and its subsequent use in Israel's history show Yahweh's ongoing kindness to sinful Israel. Joel 2:12-13, a passage on repentance, is probably the specific source of Jonah's quote.

"'Yet even now,' declares the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;¹³ and rend your hearts and not your garments.' Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster" (Joel 2:12-13).

Jonah is worried that this same grace that he and Israel had received would be given to the Ninevites. Jonah knew Yahweh's nature; he knew that Yahweh's coming to Nineveh would bring repentance and Jonah does not want this. It is ironic that the basis of Jonah's dispute with Yahweh was that Yahweh would

show mercy—the very same mercy Yahweh had shown him. This is Jonah’s issue.

This still leaves us with a question: Why did Jonah not want Yahweh to show mercy? Opinions differ. Some say that he was afraid that Yahweh was showing mercy to a nation that would later destroy Israel. Some say that Jonah was angry as he wanted Yahweh to keep showing grace to Israel, to keep Israel’s favored position. Some say that Jonah would have read the prophets and known that judgment was coming upon Israel. Since Israel was going to be judged, why would God not also judge wicked Nineveh? We do not know the motive, but we do know that Jonah loved Israel and was jealous of that special relationship she had with Yahweh. He was concerned that if Yahweh showed grace to others that special relationship would be lost. If Yahweh was also the God of the nations, then Israel privileged position was under threat.

The last option seems to be the root cause of Jonah’s hostility. Israel is Yahweh’s firstborn, first and greatly privileged (Ex. 4:22). Jonah was afraid that if the gospel went to the nations, Israel would no longer be unique. He was jealous for Israel; jealous that they would lose their favored status. Israel had forgotten that they were blessed in order that they might be a blessing to the nations.

Paul develops this argument in Romans 9-11. The gospel is first sent to Israel. Israel sins and refuses to be blessed; therefore, the gospel is taken to the nations. This stirs up Israel to jealousy so she might repent. Paul’s preaching to the Jews in Acts mirrors this. The gospel goes to Jews first, but when they realize that the gospel means their privileged national position is taken away, they react with jealousy (Acts 13:44, 14:1).

It is important that the author left the reason for Jonah’s disobedience until the end. In the book of Jonah, Yahweh is teaching Israel and us today through a story, a story of Yahweh’s dealing with His people. At the beginning we see Jonah fleeing but we are not told why. Yahweh has kept us in suspense through all the twists and turns, the storm, drowning and fish, and only at this late stage is the underlying motive revealed. While there have been hints about Jonah’s selfish pride (see chapter 1- the sailors), it is only at this stage that the greatness of Jonah’s selfish sin is exposed. Jonah would rather the Ninevites perish than Israel lose her privileged position amongst the nations.

3.3. A Prophet’s Disgust (Jonah 4:3)

Jonah ends the prayer by asking that he might die. Jonah is so upset that he would rather die than live: *“Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life away from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.”* What a way to end a prayer! What does this say about Jonah?

Spiritually Jonah is back at square one. Jonah asking to die is like him running away in Chapter 1. Even though he seems to have made progress as he preached to Nineveh, Jonah’s heart was not right. He was externally obedient, but his heart did not match his conduct. Jonah’s heart issue, which we have covered, has resurfaced. Think about Jonah’s words. Jonah proclaims that his life is

so bad, now that God is showing mercy to the gentiles, that he does not want to live.

Jonah's heart raises a number of issues. First, we can have a successful ministry, yet our hearts might not be right with God. Second, success is no indication of a right life. Third, God reveals different things to us at different times in our lives. At this time in Jonah's life, he had been in ministry for some time and was successful and seemingly faithful in his work in Israel. God wanted to expose an area of sin in Jonah's life, so Jonah might begin to repent of it. Yahweh deliberately chose Jonah as this work would expose his heart and force him to deal with his sin. Dealing with sin is an ongoing process in all our lives. No matter who we are or how long we have followed Him, there are areas in our lives that Yahweh will expose so that we might deal with them. Our sanctification is progressive; it occurs over time. Fourth, Jonah's sin shows how hard and stubborn our hearts can be—the sinfulness of sin. We all have this tendency.

Are our hearts like Jonah's? Do we care about the lost? Are we compassionate to those who do not know their right hand from their left? Are we happy when God blesses others or do we always want to be at the center of God's work? Are we only happy when God blesses us? Do we recognize that there are areas of sin in our lives that Yahweh has not yet exposed? How closely do our desires match those of the Lord?

Conclusion

Jonah's heart is exposed. Jonah is angry at the grace shown to the gentiles. Jonah is worried that Yahweh's grace might be taken from Israel and Israel might no longer have a central place in His purposes. Jonah still has not learned.

Summary

Jonah has seen Yahweh bless Nineveh and he is angry. This surprising response leads to an angry prayer. The prayer exposes Jonah's heart and we now see why Jonah ran in chapter 1. He did not run because he was afraid that God would judge the Ninevites; rather, he ran because he was afraid that Yahweh would be gracious to them and bless them. Jonah is so upset that he asks to die.

DO YOUR OWN BIBLE STUDY ON A PORTION OF JONAH 4:1-3

Text: TITLE:
INDUCTIVE METHOD: [Draw Information from the Biblical text]
Reference texts. How do other texts influence our reading of the text? 1.1. (etc.)
Explanation of important information in the text -key words and definitions: -grammatical observations: (sentence structure, variant readings) -figures of speech: (comparisons, associations, representations) -does the text explicitly or implicitly say anything about God, about salvation? -translation method used: - are their differences between Bible versions. What are they? -human author. How do we know? -what occasion prompted human author to write? -original audience for reading. Why would they read the text? -geographical context: -cultural, social context: -historical context: -religious context: -in your own words, what does the text say and mean?
Commentary notes
EXPOSITIONAL EXPLANATION. Identify the main teachings of the text under study in chronological order 1. 2. 3. (other)
LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS -literary genre: (gospel, history, legal, parable, poetry, prophecy, proverb, etc). -how is the text related to its surrounding texts? -how does the text related to the theme of the chapter and book it's in?
ANALYTICAL METHOD. What are the main thesis, antithesis, synthesis and syncretism in the text?
DEVOTIONAL METHOD OF STUDY. How does the text help you to adore God, confession your sins, give thanks to Him and serve Him?

Lesson Six Questions

1. What was Jonah's response to Yahweh saving the Ninevites?
2. Why does Jonah say he ran in Chapter 4:2?
3. What is the significance of this text?
4. What text does Jonah seem to be citing?
5. What is the real reason Jonah ran?
6. Why does the book make us wait until here before revealing Jonah's heart?
7. What does Jonah ask God to do?
8. Who else asked God to do the same as in Question 7?
9. Is Jonah's spiritual condition the same as in Chapter 1?
10. Name one thing that we are to learn from Jonah?

Lesson Seven. The Tender Mercies of Yahweh to Jonah

1. Introduction

Throughout the book, Jonah has shown us that he is worthy of death. We have also seen that Yahweh does not give up on His prophet; He keeps working with Jonah to bring him to repentance. In this last section, Jonah continues to resist God's teaching. In the last two verses of the book, Yahweh asks Jonah one last question to help him to repent. The question is unanswered. Did Jonah finally repent? We are not told. This is a question we should ask ourselves.

2. Literary Analysis: Text, Literary Structure, Genre, Parties, Location

Jonah 4:4 And the LORD said, "Do you do well to be angry?"⁵ Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city.⁶ Now the LORD God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant.⁷ But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered.⁸ When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."⁹ But God said to Jonah, "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?" And he said, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die."¹⁰ And the LORD said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night.¹¹ And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"

Literary Structure: D in macro structure, the climax of the book, Extended Parallelism, 7 units with C the climax, Genre: Extended Narrative, Parties: Yahweh and Jonah, Location: Outside Nineveh.

The literary structure of this section is important but also difficult. Dorsey (295) suggests the following:

Setting (4:5)

- a. Yahweh prepares a plant for Jonah (4:6a)
- b. Jonah's response: He rejoices: (4:6b)
- a. Yahweh destroys the plant and causes the hot wind to blow on Jonah (4:7-8a)
- b. Jonah's response: He is upset
- a. Yahweh asks: Should you feel so badly about the plant, Jonah?
- b. Jonah's Response: Yes I should feel badly (angry) enough to die! (4:9b)
- c. Climax: Yahweh's lesson (4:10-11)⁵

In this structure C is distinct, indicating it is the climax.

Another option is to use the key word "Anger" in verse 5 and 9b to frame the a,a' parallels. The center of the structure would be Yahweh's action of destroying the plant. A' would again focus us on Jonah's action. This structure was used in 1:17-2:10 with the fish. The postscript of 4:10-11 falls outside the sandwich structure and highlights Yahweh's final teaching.

Both options above stress Jonah's anger and Yahweh's final question. This is climax of the section and of the book.

3. Yahweh's Longsuffering towards Jonah

What would you do with Jonah? How far would you go? Would you give up on him? Was not the fish enough? In chapter one, we contrasted the compassion of the sailors with Jonah's compassion. In chapter two we saw the mercy of Yahweh in saving Jonah. In chapter 3 we saw Yahweh's mercy being extended to the Ninevites. This chapter continues to stress Yahweh's grace as He deals with His sinful prophet. Yahweh continues to extend grace to Jonah as He challenges Jonah as to his own heart. The section also demonstrates the state of Jonah's heart and the grace of Jonah's God.

Throughout the book of Jonah, Yahweh has been teaching him. The call, the storm, the drowning and salvation, and the second chance to preach are all part of His fatherly care. This last section, 4:4-9, is a series of actions in which He continues to teach Jonah. First, Yahweh prepares a plant (4:6); Jonah is grateful (4:6). Yahweh then destroys the plant (4:7); Jonah is upset and wants to die (4:8). Yahweh challenges Jonah as to his attitude (4:9).

3.1. Jonah's Angry Exit (4:4-5)

Yahweh questions Jonah. Yahweh asks Jonah if it is right for him to be angry. Jonah has no right to be angry and he continues to behave badly. In anger Jonah

⁵ For consistent formatting I have removed the "bold" in sections were Dorsey has used bold print.

leaves the city—going outside of it to sit—therefore, leaving the place of Yahweh’s blessing and grace. He left a place of comfort for the wilderness outside the city (he had to build a booth).

Leaving to the east is a literary marker. Baker states:

Often in Scripture, when men head east, they travel away from God and into trouble. Adam and Eve are driven out of the Garden and prevented from entering on the east side (Gen. 3:24). After Cain killed Abel, he dwelt in the land of Nod, east of Eden (Gen. 4:16). The builders of the tower of Babel traveled east (Gen. 11:2). When Lot left his uncle Abraham, he journeyed east towards Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 13:11). Conversely, to approach God, you travel from east to west, since the gate of the Tabernacle and the Temple was on the east side. So, it is not a good sign when Jonah leaves the city and camps on the eastern side (Lesson 6,59).

It is hot so Jonah builds a booth. The Hebrew text points us to the feast of booths, the great feast to celebrate Yahweh’s deliverance in the wilderness. Baker points out the irony. Jonah builds a booth, but not to celebrate deliverance. Quite the opposite! He builds his booth in silent protest of God’s salvation of Nineveh (Baker, Lesson 6,60).

Nixon comments: The three references to ‘the city’ in verse 5 remind the reader of the focus of attention. Inside the city walls, the king of Nineveh sits in great discomfort in sackcloth and ashes, hoping that, just perhaps, his city will be saved. Jonah, meanwhile, sits in silence outside the city walls, waiting for it to be destroyed (194).

3.2. Yahweh’s Plant (4:6)

Yahweh could have left Jonah but he does not. The sovereign LORD prepares (see 1:17) a plant for him. Like the fish, the plant is another miracle. Like the fish, the plant is to bless Jonah. Jonah is grateful for the plant even as he was grateful for the fish. When Yahweh provides for Jonah personally, he is happy. His actions in respect to the sailors show that He is not concerned about the physical or spiritual welfare of others.

3.3. The Worm and the Wind (4:7-9)

God follows the plant with a worm and a warm wind: these are also miracles. The worm destroys the plant and the wind beats down on Jonah causing him severe discomfort. In doing this, Yahweh’s actions bring Jonah’s anger and rebellion to the forefront once again. Jonah’s heart is exposed again.

4. Yahweh's Last Question (4:10-11)

The last section is the climax. In the preceding verses God has been called God and also Yahweh. In this last section, the covenant name for God, Yahweh, is stressed again. The covenant LORD is challenging Jonah one last time.

Yahweh questions Jonah for the last time. He questions him by contrasting the plant and the city of Nineveh. He challenges Jonah to look at the plant that Jonah had not planted nor made grow. He had no claim on it. It is a grace plant, one given to him freely. Yahweh gave it to him for his comfort. Jonah has done nothing. "The vine, therefore, preached grace to ungracious Jonah." (Keddie 122)

Yahweh then gets to the fundamental argument: You had pity on something as small as a plant; you were just looking after your own interests, but I am free to have mercy upon whom I like. My pity is upon something far greater than a plant; it is a whole city 120,000 and much livestock. They cannot discern between their right hand and their left. They do not even know their need. (This is an argument from the lesser to the greater.) Yahweh pulls Jonah away from his own small petty disputes and focuses him on the real picture.

Nixon gets to the heart of the matter: Jonah could not accept that the law of grace should work in favor of his enemies, but neither could he accept life without grace. God's graciousness to Nineveh was unacceptable. God's withdrawal of grace to Jonah was also unacceptable. He longed for a God who was partial like himself, instead of a God who was gracious, merciful and responsive to the cries of all creation. He wanted his own personal God rather than the God who made heaven and earth, the sea and the dry land (198).

What was Jonah's response? The book ends in a question. There are only two books in the Bible that end with a question—Nahum and Jonah. Jonah is being left with a question; the Israelites are left with a question; and the church today is left with a question. What is your response? Who will you be like? Will you be like Jonah or like God? Will you be compassionless or compassionate? Will you be like God our Saviour who wants all men to be saved and come to knowledge of the truth, (1 Tim 2:3,4)? That is God's desire and it is Christ's desire, but is it our desire?

Did Jonah repent? Did he soften his heart? Did he learn his lesson? Did he accept that God's grace is free and He can bless whomever He will? We are not told.

Jonah is given to us as an example. Instead of us having to go through his experiences, let us humble our hearts and ask Yahweh to lead and teach us so we do not have to go through the same experiences.

Conclusion

What a gracious God we have! Jonah's conduct throughout the book was disgraceful. His conduct in this last chapter is no different, but God has not finished dealing with him. Yahweh, the covenant LORD, continues to discipline and teach His servant.

Summary

Although Jonah was obedient in preaching the gospel, Jonah's heart was still not right. When he sees the Ninevites repenting, instead of staying with them, he leaves and sits outside. Yahweh blesses Jonah with shade and Jonah is grateful. Yahweh then takes the shade away and Jonah is angry. Yahweh does this to teach Jonah how self-centered he is. He needs Yahweh's blessing, but he does not want that same blessing to extend to others. The book ends with a question? Having taught Jonah, Yahweh then challenges him with a final question. We are not told Jonah's response.

DO YOUR OWN BIBLE STUDY ON A PORTION OF JONAH 4:4-11

Text: TITLE:
INDUCTIVE METHOD: [Draw Information from the Biblical text]
Reference texts. How do other texts influence our reading of the text? 1.1. (etc.)
<p>Explanation of important information in the text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -key words and definitions: -grammatical observations: (sentence structure, variant readings) -figures of speech: (comparisons, associations, representations) -does the text explicitly or implicitly say anything about God, about salvation? -translation method used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are their differences between Bible versions? What are they? -human author. How do we know? -what occasion prompted human author to write? -original audience for reading. Why would they read the text? -geographical context: -cultural, social context: -historical context: -religious context: -in your own words, what does the text say and mean?
Commentary notes
<p>EXPOSITIONAL EXPLANATION. Identify the main teachings of the text under study in chronological order</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. <p>(other)</p>
<p>LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -literary genre: (gospel, history, legal, parable, poetry, prophecy, proverb, etc). -how is the text related to its surrounding texts? -how does the text related to the theme of the chapter and book it's in?
ANALYTICAL METHOD. What are the main thesis, antithesis, synthesis and syncretism in the text?
DEVOTIONAL METHOD OF STUDY. How does the text help you to adore God, confession your sins, give thanks to Him and serve Him?

Lesson Seven Questions

1. What does the structure of Jonah 4:4-11 stress?
2. Does Jonah have a right to be angry?
3. Did Jonah leave the city? Why?
4. What is God doing in this section?
5. What is the significance of traveling east in the Bible?
6. What did Yahweh send Jonah to comfort him?
7. What was Jonah's response to the plant and its destruction?
8. What does Nixon say the real problem is?
9. How did Jonah respond to Yahweh's dealings with him?
10. What are we to learn from this ending?

Lesson Eight. The Sign of Jonah

1. Introduction

This lesson is an in-depth look at the sign of Jonah. The whole of Jonah's life is a sign. Jonah and the calming of the storm points us to Christ's divine nature; His being in the fish for three days points to Christ death, burial and resurrection; and Jonah's resurrection and preaching to the Ninevites points to Christ's and Israel's ministries in taking the gospel to the nations.

2. Jonah as a Sign

Jonah is a unique prophet. Most prophets have only a short section about themselves, the rest of the material being devoted to their prophecies. In Jonah this is reversed. The bulk of the book is about the life of the prophet with only two short prophetic statements, Jonah's confession (1:9) and Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites (3:2). A second unique feature is that Jonah is the only prophet with whom Christ directly compares Himself. When challenged by the Pharisees, Jesus states that He will give the Pharisees "the sign of Jonah" Matt. 12:39ff.

"An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For just 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 at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here."

These unique features occur because Jonah is a type. Jonah's life points forwards to the coming of Christ. Jesus specially identifies the period of three days and three nights, but we will see that the whole of Jonah's life points to Christ's person and work.

Jesus speaks of the "sign of Jonah" in Matthew, so what is that sign and why was it given? We will begin by looking at the sign as it is given in Matthew and then return to Jonah to understand how the whole of Jonah's life points to Christ.

3. The Sign of Jonah from Matthew

The *sign of Jonah* is spoken of specifically in Matthew 12:38-45. The context of the sign is Jesus' conflict with the Pharisees. The Pharisees challenge Him,

demanding that He validate His message with a sign from God. This is ironic. Throughout Jesus ministry He did signs that pointed to who He was and the works He was to do. In John 5, Jesus encouraged the scribes to look to the signs for they testify concerning Him. There was no shortage of signs. In addition, a few verses earlier in Matthew, the Pharisees had claimed that the signs that Jesus had done were from the devil. *“But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, ‘It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons’”* (Matt. 12:24). The Pharisees claimed that all the good He had done was done by the power of the devil. The request for a sign was unbelieving and wicked.

Jesus responds by calling them an evil and adulterous generation. He replies to them that no sign will be given to them “except the sign of Jonah”. This sign points to His death, burial and resurrection. Ironically, this sign will be a sign of the Pharisees own condemnation, as the sign (His death) is something they will bring about. They will cause His death. They will reject His word, (as Jonah rejected Yahweh’s word). They will reject Him and crucify Him. Rejecting God and His Messiah, their rejection leads to the sign being fulfilled. The sign occurs because of their wickedness.

The second and third parts of the sign point to their condemnation. Jesus rises on the third day. Jesus being raised from the dead is the Father’s formal affirmation that His Son is righteous (Rom. 4:25). Jesus did His Father’s will and since the Son was just in His actions, the Father raised Him from the dead. Had the Son been evil, the Father would not have raised Him.

The Son’s resurrection affirms, vindicates, and justifies the Son; at the same time, it condemns His enemies. The Pharisees had put the Son to death, condemning Him, but the Father raises Him up, vindicating Him. The Father’s acts condemn the Pharisees.

In Matthew’s gospel the sign of Jonah is a sign given to His enemies. It is a sign that they were wicked and unjust. It is a sign they will fulfill and in so doing, they will seal their own judgment. It is a sign of their unrepentant hearts.

Finally, Jesus gives them this sign as they came to Him with an evil heart. Instead of coming humbly, they came to challenge Him. This is important: as we come to Christ, we must come to Him in the right way. The right way is to come humbly and with the right motive.

4. Broader References to the Sign of Jonah

The sign of Jonah has a broader aspect. Although the heart of the sign of Jonah is the three days and three nights in the fish, all of Jonah’s life has typological significance. We will see that the storm in chapter 1 offers a picture that points us to Christ and the death burial and resurrection also points us to Christ. In addition, Jonah’s going to Nineveh, the wicked pagan nation, points us to Christ’s work in preaching the gospel to the whole world.

4.1. Jonah Chapter 1

We begin with the storm. Jonah is fleeing, Yahweh is pursuing, the Pagans are crying out to their gods and they are forced to throw Jonah overboard. As Jonah is thrown overboard, Yahweh stills the storm and the sailors repent. Mark draws upon this passage in Mark 4:35-41 to point to Christ's divinity:

"On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him.³⁶ And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion.³⁸ And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!"³⁹ And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.⁴⁰ He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?"⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?"

Edwards shows that Mark's account deliberately contrast this event with the storm in Jonah 1:4-16, (147-152). I have developed the parallels as follows:

1. Jonah sleeps	1. Jesus sleeps
2. A storm comes	2. A storm comes
3. The sailors are terrified	3. The fisherman/disciples are terrified
4. The captain rebukes Jonah	4. The disciples rebuke Christ
5. The captain challenges Jonah as to his attitude	5. The disciples challenge Christ as to His attitude.
6. Jonah calms the storm	6. Jesus calms the storm
7. The sailors fear Yahweh	7. The disciples fear Jesus (Yahweh)

I have developed the importance of these parallels below:
First, the calming of the storm in Jonah is put down to the Lord or Yahweh. In Mark's gospel it is Jesus who calms the storm. Mark is stating that Jesus is Yahweh. Both Yahweh and Jesus have the same attributes and do the same works. Yahweh ordered the events in Jonah and Mark to allow us to see who Jesus really is.

Second, this verse stresses the power and might of Yahweh and Jesus. Jesus, like Yahweh, has the power to command His disciples to cross over to the other side. He has the power to still the storm. He has the right to rule over Israel and the nations. When we see Jesus as Yahweh with all power and authority over the creation disciples and the nations, this should elevate our view of Christ.

Third, the verses stress the men's fear. After Yahweh and Jesus calm the storm both the sailors and the disciples fear. It was only when they realized the power of Jonah's God or in Mark's case, the power of Jesus who was with them in the boat, that they really began to fear. When the disciples saw Jesus' power "*then they feared exceedingly... even the wind and the waves obey him*" (Mark 4:41).

Fourth, Mark's great lesson is that Yahweh, Jonah's God, is in the boat with the disciples. The Creator and covenant God now dwells amongst them—God was in the boat. In Jonah, He was outside the boat—He sent the storm. In Mark, He is in the boat—He calms the storm. No wonder the disciples feared.

4.2. The Sign of Jonah in the Fish, Death and Resurrection

The second sign of Jonah is His dying, being buried and being raised from the dead. We will look at this under two headings: 4.2.1. Jonah and the sailors and 4.2.2. Jonah and the fish.

4.2.1. Deliverance of the Sailors

Jonah's death secures the sailors deliverance. Jonah's death is a type. It points to the deliverance Jesus will bring. The gentile sailors will drown. They are perishing, they will die and Jonah is the means of escape. Jonah's "death" means their salvation. The death of one saves many. Hebrews indicates that Jesus suffered outside the gate in order to bless His people. "*therefore Jesus also that He might sanctify the people, with His own blood suffered outside the gate*" (Hebrews 13:12). Jesus' suffering brings a greater deliverance. Jonah suffers for a few, Jesus for many. Jonah's death brings temporal deliverance. Jesus' death brings eternal deliverance.

4.2.2. The Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jonah/Jesus

The three-day and three night period is the heart of *the sign of Jonah*. In lesson 3 above, we note the sovereignty of Yahweh in ordering these events. The Lord specifically ordered Jonah's chastening and deliverance so that it would point to Jesus' death and resurrection. While Jonah did not die, the experience was the closest thing to death possible in order that it could point to the actual death and resurrection of Jesus. We will analyze this under three headings: his death, his burial and his subsequent resurrection.

Jonah goes down into the waters. The idea of descending into the waters is used in Psalms to point to death (Ps. 88:7, 69:1-2,14,15; Lam. 3:54). We saw that Jonah was separated from Yahweh. Separation is the essence of biblical death—an aspect of hell is that they will be permanently separated from his goodness. "*They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the*

presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might” (2 Th. 1:9). Those who do not want Jesus now will find that they cannot have Him later.

Mackay points out that Jesus underwent that terrible separation in the darkness on the cross for His people.

“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34)

The wonderful news is that Jesus has separated Himself for His own people in order that they do not need to be separated from Him.

The fish is Jonah’s chastening and deliverance. Jesus links the three days and night in the fish with His own lying in the earth. In Lesson 3 we developed the importance of three days. Jonah’s death and burial is central to his life and ministry. After this experience he goes to the gentiles.

Likewise, Jesus’ death and resurrection are central to His ministry. The burial of Christ is important as it confirms His death. In His death, the flesh is laid to rest awaiting the new spiritual resurrection of the body. On the third day Jesus rose from the dead in triumph. The resurrection also begins a new phase in the Messiah’s ministry. After the resurrection Jesus goes to the gentiles.

The death, burial and resurrection have important consequences for the church. The death, burial and resurrection of Christ are central to the believer’s life. Due to our union with Christ, we also die, are buried and raised with Christ (Rom. 6:3,4; Col. 2:11,12). Due to the mystical union between the church and Christ, we now are raised and reign and rule together with Him.

“and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:19-22).

The period also symbolizes the wait that those who are Christ’s will undergo in the tomb before their bodies are raised up. Christ is the first fruits of the resurrection. His body is raised and our bodies will lie in the grave until the general resurrection.

5. A Prophet to the Nations

After death and burial comes resurrection. Jonah is “raised” and then goes forth to preach the gospel. Jonah’s post “resurrection” ministry is very effective—

the gospel goes out to the gentiles. Nineveh is converted, 120 000 are saved. The sign of Jonah is not only his death and resurrection, it is also a sign of his later fruitful ministry.

We see the same pattern in Jesus' ministry. After Jesus resurrection the gospel goes forth with power and a great multitude are saved. Many were and are still being added to the church daily. Like Jonah, Jesus' ministry takes the gospel to the gentiles. The gospel goes out to Judea, Samaria, even to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). In Jonah's time the revival stopped, it ended, but Christ's ministry will go on until the end. The fields will always be white for harvest as Christ is still reigning and gathering in His elect.

6. Jesus own understanding of the Sign

What would Jesus have understood as He reflected upon the *sign of Jonah*? The *sign of Jonah* would have instructed Him as to His own work and ministry. This passage and passages such as the sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22 would have pointed to His own death. In the same manner, Jonah's "resurrection" and preaching at Nineveh would have pointed to Jesus' resurrection and later ministry to the gentiles.⁶

7. Jonah, Israel, Jesus and Israel's Witness to the Nations

We began this book by looking at Israel's witness. We note that in the Old Testament Israel was a witness to the nations. The nations were to come to her. Jonah is the exception that proves the rule. We also saw that Israel failed in their witness. Jonah is an example of that failure. All this changes with the ministry of Christ. Jesus is the final prophet, one greater than Jonah. Jesus is faithful Israel, the true witness of God. In Jesus, Israel fulfills her calling to be a light and witness to the nations.

The coming of Christ and the ministry of Christ changed the nature of redemption—it is no longer centripetal; it is centrifugal. The nations are not to come to Israel; now Israel is to take the message of repentance and the gospel to the nations (Jonah 3:2, Acts 17:30). Christ's ministry means that Israel is to call the gentiles to fresh obedience (Acts 14:14-16). Just as the king and the nations

⁶ There is a contrast between Jonah's ministry in Nineveh and Christ ministry in Acts. In Nineveh there is no mention of the work of the Spirit. In Acts the Spirit's work is a center of the book. The reason for this contrast is that the Spirit had not been poured out in Jonah's day. This only occurs at Pentecost. The Spirit is at work in Nineveh but in a hidden way. The hidden work of the Spirit is more marked after Pentecost.

humble themselves before Jonah's preaching; even so, kings and nations will humble themselves before Christ. The One Greater than Jonah has come.

Conclusion

The "sign of Jonah" is a sign of judgment to the unbelieving Jews, but to all who believe, the sign of Jonah is the ground of hope for all nations. In Christ's death, burial and resurrection, Israel's mission is fulfilled. In the Messiah she is the light to the nations she was called to be.

Summary

Signs marked Jesus' ministry. The greatest sign was the *sign of Jonah*. Jonah's near death pointed to Jesus' real death, burial and resurrection. Jonah's experience was due to Israel's sin. Jesus likewise suffered due to Israel's sin as they rejected Him and His word. The same rejection is the basis of the blessing of all who are Christ's. The whole of Jonah's life is a type pointing to Christ, His power and divine nature (Jonah 1), His death, burial and resurrection (Jonah 2) and His ministry to the nations (Jonah 3).

DO YOUR OWN BIBLE STUDY ON A PORTION OF MATTHEW 12:39-41

Text: _____	TITLE: _____
INDUCTIVE METHOD: [Draw Information from the Biblical text]	
Reference texts. How do other texts influence our reading of the text? 1.1. (etc.)	
<p>Explanation of important information in the text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -key words and definitions: -grammatical observations: (sentence structure, variant readings) -figures of speech: (comparisons, associations, representations) -does the text explicitly or implicitly say anything about God, about salvation? -translation method used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are their differences between Bible versions? What are they? -human author. How do we know? -what occasion prompted human author to write? -original audience for reading. Why would they read the text? -geographical context: -cultural, social context: -historical context: -religious context: -in your own words, what does the text say and mean? 	
Commentary notes	
<p>EXPOSITIONAL EXPLANATION. Identify the main teachings of the text under study in chronological order</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. <p>(other)</p>	
<p>LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -literary genre: (gospel, history, legal, parable, poetry, prophecy, proverb, etc). -how is the text related to its surrounding texts? -how does the text related to the theme of the chapter and book it's in? 	
ANALYTICAL METHOD. What are the main thesis, antithesis, synthesis and syncretism in the text?	
<p>DEVOTIONAL METHOD OF STUDY. How does the text help you to adore God, confession your sins, give thanks to Him and serve Him?</p>	

Lesson Eight Questions

1. Why was asking for a sign sinful?
2. By what power had the Pharisees accused Jesus of doing wonders?
3. How would *the sign of Jonah* condemn them?
4. What passage in Mark draws on Jonah 1?
5. Name three parallels between Jonah 1 and Mark 4?
6. What is the lesson of Mark 4?
7. What is the significance of Jesus' separation on the cross in Mark 15:34?
8. What does Jonah's ministry to Nineveh point to in Christ's life?
9. What would Jesus have understood when He read Jonah?
10. How does Jesus fulfill Israel's witness to the nations?

Appendix 1: Key Old Testament Dates and Events

Key Dates and Events (931-444 BC) –

931 BC Separation of Northern/Southern Kingdoms; Jeroboam I – King of Israel
885-841 BC Israel: The Dynasty of Omri (4 generations)
874-853 BC Israel: Ahab and Jezebel - ministry of Elijah
841-753 BC Israel: The Dynasty of Jehu (5 generations)
790-739 BC Judah: Reign of Uzziah
793-753 BC Israel: Reign of Jeroboam II
753-722 BC Israel: Reigns of six last kings of Israel
750-715 BC Judah: Reigns of Jotham and Ahaz (ministries of Micah and Isaiah)
734-732 BC Rebellion of Israel and Damascus; Siege of Jerusalem; Campaign of Tiglath-pileser III
728-686 BC Judah: Reign of Hezekiah (ministries of Micah and Isaiah)
724-722 BC Siege of Samaria by Shalmaneser V; Fall of Samaria; End of Israel
722-705 BC Deportation of Israel under Sargon II; Hezekiah's religious reforms; Submission to Sargon II
705-701 BC Alliance revolts against Sennacherib
701 BC Campaign of Sennacherib in Judah
697-642 BC Reign of Manasseh; Religious apostasy
648 BC Conquest of Babylon by Ashurbanipal
640 BC Assassination of Amon; 8-yr old Josiah made king of Judah
632 BC Josiah at age 16 begins to seek the Lord
628 BC Josiah's first public reform movement
627 BC on Death of Ashurbanipal; Weakening of Assyria
626 BC Babylonian independence under Nabopolassar
622 BC Discovery of the book of the law; Josiah's thorough reform movement
612 BC Fall of Nineveh to Medes and Babylonians
609 BC Fall of Haran to Babylonians; End of Assyria; Death of Josiah at Megiddo; Egypt in control of Judah
605 BC Nebuchadnezzar becomes king of Babylonian Empire; Battle of Carchemish; 1st Captivity of Judah (Daniel)
597 BC Siege of Jerusalem; Jehoiachin deported in 2nd Captivity (Ezekiel)
587 BC Siege of Jerusalem; Destruction of Temple and Jerusalem; 3rd Captivity - end of Judah
562 BC Death of Nebuchadnezzar
539 BC Fall of Babylon to Cyrus of Medo-Persia; End of Babylonian Empire; Return to Jerusalem begins
538 BC First return to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel; Erection of altar
536 BC Work on Temple begun and stopped
530 BC Death of Cyrus
522-486 BC Reign of Darius Hystaspes
520 BC Work on Temple resumes under ministry of Haggai and Zechariah

516 BC Work on Temple completed
 458 BC Second return to Jerusalem under Ezra
 444 BC Nehemiah rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem
 (Baker, Lesson 1, 7)

Appendix 2: The Kings and prophets of the 10 – 5th Century
Kings and Prophets – 10th-5th Century BC

Assyria Kings	Israel Kings	Judah Kings/Leaders	Prophets (rough dates)
	Jeroboam I 931-910	Rehoboam 931-913	
	Nadab 910-909	Abijam 913-911	
	Baasha 909-886	Asa 911-870	
	Elah/Zimri 886-885		
	Omri 885-874		
	Ahab 874-853	Jehoshaphat 873-848	Elijah 875-850
	Ahaziah 853-852	Jehoram 853-841	Obadiah? c. 850?
Shalmaneser III 859-824	Jehoram 852-841	Ahaziah 841	Elisha 850-800
Shamsi-adad V 824-810	Jehu 841-814	Athaliah 841-835	
Adad-nirari III 810-783	Jehoahaz 814-798	Joash 835-796	Joel c. 830-800?
Shalmaneser IV 783-773	Jehoash 798-782	Amaziah 796-767	
Ashurdan III 773-755	Jeroboam II 793-753	Uzziah 790-739	Jonah 785-750
Ashur-nirari V 755-745	Zechariah 753		Amos 785-750
	Shallum 752		
Tiglath-pileser III 745-727	Menahem 752-742	Jotham 750-731	Hosea 755-723
	Pekahiah 742-740	Ahaz 743-715	
Shalmaneser V 727-722	Pekah 752-732		Isaiah 739-680
Sargon III 722-705	Hoshea 732-722	Hezekiah 728-686	Micah 735-690
Sennacherib 705-681			
		Manasseh 697-642	Nahum 650-640
Babylon Kings		Amon 642-640	
Nabopolassar 626-605		Josiah 640-609	Zephaniah 630-612
		Jehoahaz 609	Jeremiah 627-585
Nebuchadnezzar 605-562		Jehoiakim 609-597	Habakkuk 608-605
Evil-Merodach 562-560		Jehoiachin 597	Daniel 605-535
Neriglissar 560-556		Zedekiah 597-586	Ezekiel 597-550
Labashi-Marduk 556	Persia Kings		Obadiah? c. 585?
Nabonidus & Belshazzar 556-539	Cyrus 550-530	Zerubbabel 538-?	
	Cambyes 530-522		
	Smerdis 522		Haggai 520
	Darius 522-486		Zechariah 520-500
	Xerxes 486-465	Ezra 458-?	
	Artaxerxes 465-424	Nehemiah 445-?	Malachi 432-424

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Web Resources

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Young's Literal translation: <http://www.ccel.org/bible/ylt/ylt.htm>

INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

LESSON ONE ANSWERS

Question 1: Israel is a witness to the nations; the nations were to come to her.

Question 2: Direct Verbal Prophecy and Typology.

Question 3: Yes.

Question 4: It is a parallel with 7 parts. The last section stands alone.

Question 5: A form of parallelism, typically A,B, C, A',B'.

Question 6: Chiasms identify the main point, "C" in the above illustration.

Question 7: Yahweh.

Question 8: It is the covenant name for God.

Question 9: Nineveh, a gentile nation.

Question 10: When we are disobedient we lose Yahweh's presence.

LESSON TWO ANSWERS

Question 1: Sending a storm.

Question 2: It is a key word indicating intensity of the action.

Question 3: Jonah's disobedience affects himself and the sailors.

Question 4: Jonah behaves worse than the sailors.

Question 5: No.

Question 6: *"I am a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."*

Question 7: To serve Him, to honor Him.

Question 8: False

Question 9: God who sent the storm.

Question 10: Yes, like the disciples they feared after God had stopped the storm
(Mark 4:35-41).

LESSON THREE ANSWERS

Question 1: It frames Jonah's prayer.

Question 2: Not much.

Question 3: It shows the sovereign power of God.

Question 4: True

Question 5: He waited so He could teach Jonah.

Question 6: He delivered him in his trial, so he would feel the bitterness of his sin.

Question 7: Jonah wanted to escape Yahweh presence; He was cast to the
bottom of the ocean.

Question 8: No.

Question 9: It is a journey from death to life.

Question 10: Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.

LESSON FOUR ANSWERS

Question 1: Chiasm.

Question 2: Jonah was in deep trouble and he cried to Yahweh.

Question 3: Ps 139.

Question 4: Yes.

Question 5: Twice, Chapter 2 and Chapter 4.

Question 6: It is an honest prayer of thanksgiving or it is a self-righteous hypocrite's prayer.

Question 7: He points to Jonah's final prayer showing his hard heart.

Question 8: Solomon's temple prayer says when they have sinned, Yahweh will cast them out but if they repent and pray to Him in the temple, He will restore them.

Question 9: He delivers him.

Question 10: Praying to Christ, as He is the new temple.

LESSON FIVE ANSWERS

Question 1: Moses, Elijah, Peter.

Question 2: It was great because it was important.

Question 3: It indicated a time of trial?

Question 4: Yes, the Ninevites fasted and put on sackcloth.

Question 5: yes, they repented of their violence.

Question 6: 2 Corinthians 7:8-12.

Question 7: No.

Question 8: No.

Question 9: He sent Jonah. He gave them 40 days before He would judge them.

Question 10: When He sent Jonah.

LESSON SIX ANSWERS

Question 1: He was angry.

Question 2: He was afraid that God would be gracious.

Question 3: It is key text explaining Yahweh's nature.

Question 4: Joel 2:12-13.

Question 5: He was jealous for Israel?

Question 6: To make us wonder at Jonah's conduct.

Question 7: Kill him.

Question 8: Elijah.

Question 9: Jonah's heart has not changed. It is still hard.

Question 10: We are to have compassion upon all.

LESSON SEVEN ANSWERS

Question 1: Jonah's anger.

Question 2: No.

Question 3: Yes. In his anger he would rather be outside than rejoicing with the Ninevites.

Question 4: Yahweh continues to teach him.

Question 5: It is used to show traveling into trouble.

Question 6: A plant.

Question 7: He was grateful for the plant and angry when it was taken away.

Question 8: He wanted God's grace but he did not want to see it extended to others.

Question 9: We do not know.

Question 10: We are to ask this question of ourselves.

LESSON EIGHT ANSWERS

Question 1: They had had many signs and they rejected them.

Question 2: The Devil's power.

Question 3: They would bring about the sign.

Question 4: Mark 4:35-41.

Question 5: The sailors/fisherman, Jonah and Jesus are asleep, the sailors and the disciples fear.

Question 6: Jesus is Yahweh.

Question 7: Jesus is separated for us, so we do not have to be separated from God.

Question 8: Jesus resurrection ministry goes out the Gentiles.

Question 9: His own death and future ministry.

Question 10: Israel was not faithful. Jesus resurrection takes the gospel to all the nations.

EXAM

The exam is administered in the final week. It is comprised of 20 questions taken from the questions at the end of each **lesson**. Students should be told that the exam will be based upon those questions. One point is given for each correct answer.

SUGGESTED EXAM

1. What is the role of Israel in the Old Testament?
2. What is the macro structure of the book of Jonah?
3. What is the Hebrew name for the word "LORD"? (ESV)
4. What is the link between obedience and the "presence of Yahweh" in the opening verses?
5. Does Jonah's disobedience affect just himself or does it affect others?
6. What does it mean to fear God?
7. The sailors learned not to fear the storm but to fear the _____
8. Why did God wait before delivering Jonah?
9. What is the significance of "three days and three nights"?
10. The *sign of Jonah* points to _____
11. **Is this the first time** Jonah has prayed to Yahweh in the book?
12. Give two interpretations of Jonah's prayer in chapter 2.
13. What is the New Testament equivalent of praying to the temple?
14. What was the significance of 40 days in Jonah's preaching?
15. Give an important parallel passage for repentance.
16. Explain Keddie's two reasons for Nineveh finding hope in the harsh message.
17. What was Jonah's response to Yahweh saving the Ninevites?
18. Why does Jonah say he ran in Jonah 4:2?
19. Why does the book make us wait until **here** before revealing Jonah's heart?
20. Name one thing that we are to learn from Jonah?

READING

Choose one of the following:

Sinclair Ferguson: *Man Overboard: The Story of Jonah*, Edinburgh, Banner of Truth, 2008

O Palmer Robertson: *Jonah, A Study in Compassion*, Edinburgh, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990.