

OT-OV

Lesson 131

1. Last week I taught in part an overview of the Book of Jonah; when time expired we were about to begin "The Message of the Book."

2. We need to review some of that learned before beginning a narrative of Jonah's message.

...3. Jonah was a prophet who did not want to take the Word to Assyria, God intervenes with a sea monster and Jonah takes the gospel to Nineveh where many are saved.

4. The book receives its name from the main character of the narrative. Jonah is identified as the son of Amittai (2Ki 14:23-26). Jonah was written by the rebellious prophet from somewhere around Nineveh in about 760 B.C.

5. Jonah had earlier predicted the successful conquests of Jeroboam II in the first half of the eighth century.

6. Historical Background

6.1 Taken as a historical narrative of a prophet active in the time of Jeroboam II, king of Israel, the events of the book would have occurred sometime between 780 and 750 B.C.

6.2 Jeroboam II had succeeded in re-establishing the power of Israel over most of the territory north of Judah earlier controlled by David and Solomon.

6.3 In the previous century the Assyrian empire had been a threat along the eastern Mediterranean coast, and had become well known as a cruel and ruthless oppressor.

CHART MAP OF ASSYRIA 671 B. C.

6.4 During the reign of Jeroboam II, though the power of Assyria had subsided, it was still to be reckoned with. Nineveh had not yet become the capital of the empire, but Calah, one of the parts of the old city-state complex that included Nineveh, was the capital between c. 880 and c. 701 B.C.

7. For us Jonah is a factual story. Important passages that support this view are found in the New Testament. (Mat 12:39-40; Luk 11:29-32)

7.1 Those of us holding this view use these references in a double sense: to verify the historicity of the story and to set forth its typical meaning. The position of this overview is that the story of Jonah is an historical account.

7.2 Clearly Jonah's being in the belly of the great fish for three days is a picture of Christ being in the grave for three days.

8. The Message of the Book

8.1 The narrative itself is uncomplicated, fast-moving, and touching. A prophet, Jonah, is told by the Lord to go preach to the Ninevites.

8.2 Instead, he flees and takes passage on a ship due to sail to the far edge of the world. He secludes himself and goes to sleep. Soon after the ship sets sail, a severe storm stirs up the sea into mountainous waves, and the sailors in terror throw the cargo overboard and frantically pray to their gods.

8.3 By the casting of lots Jonah is identified as the culprit who had offended their god, (little they knew). The storm ceases only after Jonah, at his own suggestion, is thrown into the sea. He is swallowed by a great fish.

8.4 Now truly penitent, he prays earnestly for salvation, whereupon God delivers him unhurt upon the shore. This time the prophet obeys the command to go to Nineveh, and cries aloud, throughout the city, his briefly worded message of woe.

8.5 The people of Nineveh, from king to lowest subject, respond with earnest repentance, even putting sackcloth on the cattle. The Lord hears their cry and lifts the threat of destruction.

8.6 Jonah, however, sees the deliverance of Nineveh only as a negation of his prophecy, and complains to the Lord in prayer.

8.7 In order to teach the prophet a lesson, God prepares a fast growing plant to shade him from the sun, but the next night allows a worm to destroy it. Then He sets a hot east wind blowing. As a result, Jonah faints in spirit and wishes for death.

8.8 The story closes with a declaration that whereas Jonah is concerned for gourds, God is concerned for the salvation of sinful men.

8.9 Some of the basic teachings of the book are:

8.9.1 When people are positive, the ball is in God's court and He will see to it that the glorious gospel arrives.

8.9.2 In the face of a difficult task, men are often inclined to evade responsibility.

8.9.3 God is powerful and can, at will, use the forces of nature for His own purposes.

8.9.4 The most unlikely mission fields are often the most responsive.

8.9.5 God is a God of love and grace and it is His desire for all men to come to a saving knowledge of Christ.

8.10 Jonah's message was for his audience, the Ninevites: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it." However, the written message was for Israel and Judah, not Nineveh.

8.10.1 The readers of the book were Jews who in their nationalistic zeal forgot that God had called them to be his conduit of blessing to the Gentiles (Gen 12:3; Isa 42:6 and 49:6).

Gen 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Isa 42:6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

Isa 49:6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

8.10.2 Today there is no racial advantage to being a Jew.

8.10.3 Any spiritual advantage today comes only through the salvation adjustment to the justice of God.

8.10.4 The Jew had certain advantages in the sense of a spiritual heritage.

8.10.5 Their forefathers had received much doctrine and therefore had great potential for salvation and growth.

8.10.6 Racially speaking they seem to have been blessed with an outstanding gene pool.

8.10.7 In the Age of Israel the Jews were special because they were the custodians of God's Word.

8.10.8 In the Tribulation and the Millennium Israel will regain many of their advantages.

8.10.9 The Jew has many establishment advantages i. e a history of sound establishment principles codified in the Mosaic Law.

8.10.10 The Jew had a cultural advantage because in the main they consistently rejected foreign cultural influences and when they didn't God disciplined them.

8.11 What we have in Nineveh would seem to be that which God promised in 2Ch 7:14.

2Ch 7:14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

9. Outline

I. Fleeing > 1:1-17

A. The Lord's command > 1:1-2

Jon 1:1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai:

Jon 1:2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

B. A ship to Tarshish > 1:3

Jon 1:3 But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

C. A storm at sea > 1:4-14

1. Asleep during the storm > 1:4-6.

Jon 1:4 Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up.

Jon 1:5 All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep.

Jon 1:6 The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us, and we will not perish."

2. The culprit found > 1:7-10

Jon 1:7 Then the sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity." They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.

Jon 1:8 So they asked him, "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?"

Jon 1:9 He answered, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land."

Jon 1:10 This terrified them and they asked, "What have you done?" (They knew he was running away from the LORD, because he had already told them so.)

3. Sailors in distress > 1:11-14

Jon 1:11 The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?"

Jon 1:12 "Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you."

Jon 1:13 Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before.

Jon 1:14 Then they cried to the LORD, "O LORD, please do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, O LORD, have done as you pleased."

D. Cast overboard > 1:15-17

Jon 1:15 Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm.

Jon 1:16 At this the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to him.

Jon 1:17 But the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights.

II. Praying > 2:1-10

A. Cast out > 2:1-4

Jon 2:1 From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God.

Jon 2:2 He said: "In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From the depths of the grave (Sheol) I called for help, and you listened to my cry.

Jon 2:3 You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me.

Jon 2:4 I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.'

1. There have been instances of men or large animals being swallowed whole by great fish, and in some cases of both men and beasts the victim has been removed from the fish's body, even after many hours. But usually the fish's digestive juices had taken a severe toll from the victim's skin and hair after each immersion.

2. This explains better perhaps Jonah's hyper sun sensitivity.

3. Related Scriptures:

Psa 120:1 In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.

Psa 130:1 Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.

Lam 3:55 I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit.

Lam 3:56 You heard my plea: "Do not close your ears to my cry for relief."

Lam 3:57 You came near when I called you, and you said, "Do not fear."

Lam 3:58 O Lord, you took up my case; you redeemed my life.

B. Brought up > 2:5-6

Jon 2:5 The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head.

Jon 2:6 To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you brought my life up from the pit, O LORD my God.

C. Paying vows > 2:7-9

Jon 2:7 "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple.

Jon 2:8 "Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.

Jon 2:9 But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. ~ Salvation comes from the LORD."

D. Delivered > 2:10

Jon 2:10 And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

III. Preaching > 3:1-10

A. The Lord's second command > 3:1-2

Jon 3:1 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time:

Jon 3:2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you."

1. In spite of the fact that three times in the OT Nineveh is called a "great city (Gen 10:11, 12 and Jon 1:2 and 3:3)," skeptical Bible critics long believed the statement to be greatly exaggerated.

2. When the walled city was excavated it was found to be less than nine miles in circumference. There were claims that the author, Jonah, did not know what he was talking about.

3. Later excavations have proved that Nineveh had many suburbs, three of which are mentioned in connection with it in Gen 10:11 and 12.

Gen 10:11 From that land Nimrod went to Assyria, where ö he built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah

Gen 10:12 and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.

4. One first century writer (Diodorus Seculus) justifiably says Nineveh was a quadrangle measuring about sixty miles in circuit. A "great city" indeed.

5. A city of three days refers to the time it took to walk around the city. The statement indicates the city was sixty miles in circumference. Surprise, Surprise!

B. Declaring the message > 3:3-4

Jon 3:3 Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city-- a visit required three days.

Jon 3:4 On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned."

C. Nineveh's repentance > 3:5-9

1. In sackcloth and ã ashes > 3:5-6

Jon 3:5 The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

Jon 3:6 When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.

2. The king's decree > 3:7-9

Jon 3:7 Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink.

Jon 3:8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence.

Jon 3:9 Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."

D. Judgment withheld > 3:10

Jon 3:10 When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

End Lesson Taught 3-5-2005