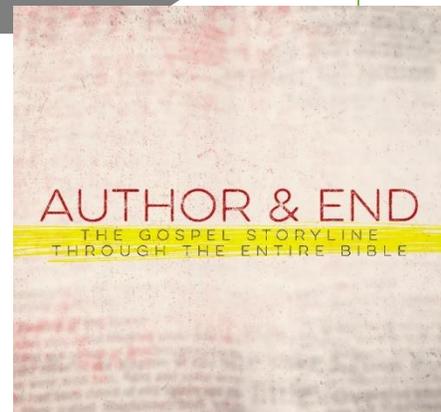


# SALVATION IS OF THE LORD

## Lesson 20 - God's Continued Pursuit of People - Jonah

Last week, we saw God's faithful love for unfaithful people displayed through Hosea. Hosea's message was directed toward the people of Israel and confronted their spiritual adultery against God. This week, we will look at another prophet named Jonah. Jonah is one of the more famous prophets of the Bible. He is a contemporary of Hosea that was an established prophet of God in the northern kingdom of Israel. However, **God gave Jonah a new message for a new people.** We often focus on Jonah's response to God's call, but we must also see God's heart and plan in His call on Jonah's life. Interestingly, Jesus compared His message and experience with that of Jonah. Why would that be the case? Jesus' message was the same as Jonah's message: **"Judgment is coming, but God shows mercy to anyone who will repent. Salvation is of the Lord."**



### THE BACKGROUND

1. Jonah is one of the earliest Old Testament prophets serving around the same time as Hosea, Joel, and Amos. (780-740 BC)
2. His ministry is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:23-27. Jonah was a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel during the evil reign of Jeroboam II. This was a unique circumstance in the history of Israel as God blessed His people even during the reign of a wicked king. Jonah saw firsthand the great mercy and patience of God toward His people. Jonah's message and ministry would have been loved by the people of Israel.
3. At the time of Jonah's ministry, Nineveh was the capitol of the Assyrian Empire and was probably the largest city in the world. Just a generation after Jonah's time, the Assyrians would come from Nineveh and destroy Israel taking many captives.
4. Nineveh was known as an almost lawless society of wicked living and idolatry.
5. Located near modern-day Mosul, Iraq, Nineveh was about 550 miles from Israel.

### THE NORMAL ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT JONAH

**There are some typical lessons about Jonah that are emphasized (not wrongly); however, there is so much more to this story.**

1. A story about a man and a big fish.
2. A story about disobedience and its consequences.
3. A presentation of moral choices and a lesson to "not be like Jonah."

Think about it: Sometimes the lesson of Jonah is that he went the wrong way and ended up in a storm, and if you go the wrong way, you'll end up in a storm. If you go the right way, you won't end up in a storm. This is simply not true. Can you think of any Biblical or personal examples?

### THE BOOK OF JONAH

**Like the rest of the Bible, this book is first about God.** As we look to Jonah, we can also learn some things about ourselves as people who follow God.

1. The complexity of Jonah's call.
  - a. As a prophet of God to God's people in God's land, Jonah is told by God to go to a pagan land on God's behalf because God wants to extend a warning of judgment and extend mercy. (1:2, 3:2-4)
  - b. Nineveh was known as exceeding wicked and is quickly becoming a direct threat to God's people.
  - c. Israel's prayer would have been for the destruction of the Ninevites not their conversion.
  - d. **Jonah knew before He went that God would show mercy and chose to flee instead.** In essence, Jonah was resigning his ministry as a prophet. He would rather quit than aid in the conversion of such a wicked people and the possibility of God's blessing on an enemy. (4:2)
  - e. In a way, this counters Jonah's prophetic message to this point which included the destruction of Israel's enemies and the expansion of Israel's borders. It didn't fit the political or national narrative of Israel.
2. The false message Jonah preached in running from God.

- a. **He thought the presence of God was escapable.** His rebellion was facilitated by circumstance. (1:3) If a man wants to rebel against God, he can always find a ship that will take him there and a way to pay the fare.
- b. **He thought God was localized and dependent on the worship of people.** He assumed God could not be where He was not worshipped.
- c. **He thought certain people were not worthy of the forgiveness or blessing of God.**
- 3. The counter-messages of God through Jonah.**
  - a. **The presence of God is not escapable, and He will continually pursue** His people to fulfill His purpose. (1:3-4) "...from the presence of the Lord. But the Lord..."
    - God moved Jonah to do what He had planned for Israel's purpose all along: to be "priests" to the rest of the world."
  - b. **God is everywhere. He hears and sees in all places.** (1:4, 9; 2:2-3)
    - God proved to Jonah that His presence is not dependent on any human.
  - c. **God will extend His mercy to anyone at any place in life.** (2:2, 5-8; 3:5-10)
    - If God would give mercy to Jonah in a fish in the bottom of the sea, why could He not extend it to a wicked people in a pagan land.
    - Jonah says he cried from hell (the grave) and God heard his plea.
  - d. **Salvation is of the Lord.** - It is His to give. (2:9; 3:9-10; 4:9-11)

God does not confine his mercy to a people or place. His plan all along has been to save people from all places, races, and nationalities. The salvation of people is to the glory of God not His servants.
  - e. **God is displeased when His people hate others or decide someone is unworthy of redemption.** (4:4-11)
    - Jonah experienced and enjoyed the mercy of God, but he resented that mercy when it was offered to others. (4:1-2)
    - God asked Jonah a pointed question. "Is it right for you to be angry?"
    - God grew a gourd for the purpose of showing Jonah his lack of concern and care for thousands of people. Jonah had declared, "Salvation is of the Lord", but he did not believe it yet.
  - f. **God places the value of people above all physical things in this world.** (4:9-11)

**Bonus Lesson:** In Jonah's anger he made three errors that we often make in anger as well.

1. He quit
2. He separated himself from others.
3. He became a spectator.

## SOMETHING GREATER THAN JONAH

Jesus pointed to the "sign of Jonah" at least twice during his ministry.

Matthew 12:39-41 - Matthew 16:4 - Luke 11:29-32

1. When the people around Jesus wanted a sign from heaven, He told them the only sign they would receive would be the sign of Jonah. He clarified that Jonah's sign was the time he spent in the whale's belly near death, but that the Son of Man would spend time in the earth in death. (Matt. 12:40, 16:4, 21)
2. **Jesus made it clear that his sign would be a "greater than Jonah" miracle.** Jonah emerged from a whale and preached mercy and repentance to Nineveh. **Jesus would emerge from death to new life and offer mercy through repentance to everyone.**
3. **Jesus reinforced Jonah's message that "Salvation is of the Lord."** It is not based on religion, nationality, or our own actions. It is based on repentance before a holy God. Jesus confirms that the Ninevites that repented before the Lord had been saved. However, He tells the people of Israel that they are an evil generation because they had rejected the mercy of God for their pride, nation, and religion. (Lk. 11:32)
4. God's offer is extended to all people not based on human merit.

**Bonus Lesson:** It is in the city of Joppa where Jonah fled from God that God confirms to Peter that His salvation is offered to all people. Many had thought that even the sacrifice of Jesus was Jew only or Israel first (meaning priority), but in the city of Joppa God makes it clear once again that "Salvation is of the Lord." - Acts 10-11

Jonah ends with a question from God. It is addressed to Jonah, but it is meant to interrogate our own souls and feelings as well. God loves all people. Are you ok with this? God intends to save even your "enemies". How do you feel about this? What is your place in this story of redemption, and how does your heart need to change to be a part of it?