

JONAH

Most likely written by Jonah, but some think it was written about him

- Very short, only 4 chapters
- different from all the other prophetic books
 - focuses on his story and not a message to a nation
 - His only message of warning to the people was:

Jon 3:4 Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown."

- This book has been called "The Old Testament counterpart of John 3:16"
 - shows God's love even towards pagan nations (Nineveh).
 - what makes this book so hard for some people to believe is the miraculous story of Jonah surviving in the belly of a fish for 3 days

-as we discussed in our first study, if we can believe the first verse:

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

- then we won't have a problem believing anything that follows
- we have already discussed evidence of the unbelievable account of the parting of the Red Sea
- compared to that, this doesn't seem that hard to believe

Since we all know the story, we won't take too much time here

- but here is the basic outline:
 - God calls Jonah to preach to the wicked city of Nineveh
 - instead of obeying, Jonah gets on a ship going the other direction
- but he doesn't go just a little ways
 - Nineveh was 500 miles East of Jonah's hometown
 - Tarshish was about 2500 miles in the opposite direction
 - it was as far as Jonah could get from Nineveh

God brings a massive storm upon the ship

- the crew questions Jonah

Jon 1:8 Then they said to him, "Tell us, now! On whose account *has* this calamity *struck* us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?"

Jon 1:9 He said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land."

Jon 1:10 Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, "How could you do this?" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

-this amazes me

- these people are not believers
- they were calling out to their gods
- but when they find out they are dealing with the Lord God of Heaven, they become terrified
- if you know there is a God who is all powerful, why waste your time calling to gods that have no power?
- if you believe that He is all powerful and you are terrified by His presence, why not throw your lot in with Him?

-the problem with getting to know the real God is accountability

- if you are accountable to God, you can't just live your life however you wish
- and that's what people want
- they like the idea of a god, but don't want to be accountable to Him

That's why God wrote it in stone

Exo 20:3 "You shall have no other gods before Me.

- I don't think it's by accident that He made this the 1st commandment

Jonah tells them to throw him overboard so the sea will be calm

- The crew actually doesn't want to
- they even pray to the Lord to spare them
- finally they cast him over the side and the sea stops it raging

Look at the reaction of the crew who previously called out to their gods

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

-it's possible that Jonah wasn't the only one God was after on that ship

- although it doesn't say how long their transformation lasted, I wouldn't be a bit surprised to see them in heaven

Ch. 1 ends with the Lord appointing a great fish to swallow Jonah

- he was there 3 days and 3 nights

Ch. 2 starts out with a great verse

Jon 2:1 Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish,

- His prayer is recorded in chapter 2

- an interesting picture

Jon 2:5 "Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, Weeds were wrapped around my head.

Then he says

Jon 2:6 "I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars *was* around me forever, But You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God.

- For generations, the ocean floor was thought to be flat and sandy
- it wasn't until the 1900's that oceanographers discovered mountains and valleys in the ocean

- God hears his prayer and causes the fish to vomit him on the dry land near Nineveh

 - immediately, Jonah starts his message to the great wicked city

 - notice their reaction:

Jon 3:4 Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown."

Jon 3:5 Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.

- they seem to repent immediately without question

 - it even says that when the king heard of it, he repented and instituted a city-wide fast while he prayed to the Lord

That may seem extreme for a wicked city

- but think of what they were seeing

- a man who had been in the belly of a fish for 3 days

 - his clothes must have been no more than rags

 - his skin might have been red and hairless from the stomach acid

 - probably still had that seaweed wrapped around his head

 - not to mention the smell

- so the people repent and God turns His anger from them

 - you would think that Jonah would be pleased

Ch. 4 starts out:

Jon 4:1 But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry.

-and now we see his real motivation for fleeing to Tarshish earlier

Jon 4:2 He prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my *own* country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.

-Jonah didn't want to go because he knew God would forgive them

-he wanted to see God wipe them out because they were wicked

-doesn't that sound familiar?

-we all know people who do wicked things

-cheat on their taxes

-receive benefits they don't deserve

-are two-faced or materialistic

-and it's so easy to feel like Jonah

-“Man I hope they get caught”

-“I'll laugh when the IRS finally catches up to them”

-And those people never seem to make it into our prayers at night

-because like Jonah, we really don't want to see God forgive them

-we want to see them pay

I want to read the rest of the chapter

-it is such a great conversation between Jonah and God

Jon 4:3 "Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life."

Jon 4:4 The LORD said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?"

Jon 4:5 Then Jonah went out from the city and sat east of it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen in the city.

Jon 4:6 So the LORD God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant.

Jon 4:7 But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day and it attacked the plant and it withered.

Jon 4:8 When the sun came up God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with *all* his soul to die, saying, "Death is better to me than life."

Jon 4:9 Then God said to Jonah, "Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "I have good reason to be angry, even to death."

Jon 4:10 Then the LORD said, "You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and *which* you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight.

Jon 4:11 "Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know *the difference* between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?"

-so the next time someone tells you that the God of the Old Testament was mean or angry, just remember these examples we have seen over and over again

-Not only to His chosen people, but event to the gentiles in Nineveh

Jesus Type:

-Not hard to find here

-Jesus Himself gives us the description:

Mat 12:38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

Mat 12:39 But He answered and said to them, "**An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;**

Mat 12:40 for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.