

## Theological Themes in Jonah

### Introduction

Jonah is one of the minor prophets, but it's different from every other prophetic writing we have in the Old Testament.

Compare typical "prophetic" passages from the Old Testament (Isaiah 14:22-25 or Micah 6:1-5) with the only prophetic verse in Jonah (3:4).

*"And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."*

The Book of Jonah is a ballad of ironies and twists that the reader should not expect. But we should be careful that we read and understand it the way it was intended.

- It is not an allegory, though it uses fantastic pictures and language.
- Neither is it the complete picture of everything that transpired.

Of all that did historically happen to Jonah, only certain things are recorded for our learning. We take every word of this for what it says, knowing that a lot more happened in this story than we are told here. We should look at what is written and how it is organized to see the emphasis of the story of Jonah and take away the main points the author intended for us.

### Theological Themes in Jonah (3)

#### 1. God's Sovereignty (Jonah 1:9)

*"And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land."*

Jonah acknowledges God here as more than just "maker" but the Lord ("ruler") of all that He has made. The "Sovereignty of God" over Nations is a very common theme in the Prophets. But in Jonah, there is a unique emphasis of God's sovereignty over Creation as well.

#### God's Sovereignty in Jonah:

- God came to Jonah and spoke clearly to him. (1:1)
- God sent a wind to stir up the seas. (1:4)
- God made the lot (dice) fall on Jonah. (1:7) (Prov 16:33)
- God calmed the sea afterwards. (1:15)
- God prepared a great fish. (1:17)
- God kept Jonah from taking his own life. (2:6)
- God took Jonah exactly where he was running *from*. (2:9)
- God gave his word to Jonah again. (3:1)
- God has the power to destroy world leaders. (3:4)
- God relinquished his wrath from them for a time (3:10)
- God created a plant. (4:6)

- God destroyed the plant. (4:7)
- God appointed the heat. (4:8)

Point: We ought "*fear the Lord who made heaven and earth, the sea and dry land.*" (Jn 1:9)

## 2. God's Judgment (Jonah 3:4)

*"And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."*

God's judgment is a very common theme in Prophets, and Jonah is no exception.

- Judgment of pagans is prophesied. (1:2)
- Judgment first falls on a different set of pagans (and Jonah who's acting like one). (1:4-5)
- Judgment comes exclusively for Jonah. (2:17)
- The judgment message reaches the pagans. (3:4)
- Temporary judgment comes on Jonah again. (4:6-11)

Point: Kingdoms rise and fall. God is the one exalting them and the one bringing them low. But one day every kingdom will be overthrown by Christ.

## 3. God's Mercy (Jonah 4:2)

*"For I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil."*

It's very common in the prophets for God to extend mercy to his people. But far less common in the prophets for God to extend mercy to his wicked enemies.

*God's mercy is arguably the main theme in Jonah and the element that distinguishes the book of Jonah from any other OT prophet.* He has compassion on who we do not expect: ALL of them! Both his people and those who are not his people.

- Mercy on the Sailors (1:14-16)
- Mercy on Jonah (repeatedly)
- Mercy on Ninevites (3:10)
- Mercy on the Cows (3:7-8; 4:11)

Point: God is not wrathful alone, but full of mercy and great kindness, slow to anger.

## Conclusion:

The author of Jonah was a worshipper of the same God as us today. He was a mighty theologian and a master story-teller. These doctrines he teaches us are not just merely for our knowledge, but to change us and impact our stories as well. And as we share our stories with others. As God has been merciful to us, so let us go and be so to others.