

The Sign of the Prophet Jonah

Matt 12:39-41, Luke 11:29, 30

The book of Jonah one of the shorter in scripture. Challenged because of the whale story; some say it is too fishy. The genius of the story and the way God used this prophet, however, is dependent on the whale story or its equivalent.

Jonah is clearly set in history: he is not a fabrication or part of a story construct.

1. We can date him: Jeroboam II was from 782 BC to 752 BC, contemporary of Hosea and Amos; 2 Kings 14:25 says he prophesied to him;
2. We can place him: Gath-hepher in Zebulun
3. We know his family: son of Amittai
4. We know his call from God: “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city; their wickedness has come up before me.”
5. We know the evil of Assyria of which Nineveh was the capital city; there is no reason to doubt the historicity of the story. **Either God does miracles, or he does not; if he does, either He does them according to my judgment, or, He is God and does what He wants.**
6. Since He is quoted as an historical individual by Jesus, either Jesus was confused, or it is true.

Let me offer three reasons to reject the story:

1. **It is a story of missions, and some do not like missions.**
2. **It is a gospel story, a story of repentance and forgiveness** and sparing from judgment
3. **It is a story of warning:** Rich man and Lazarus

The story: in c770BC, God called a man to go as a missionary to the capital of Assyria. He rejected the call, so God gave him opportunity to think it over and called him again. This time he obeyed.

1. **A disobedient prophet, chapter 1**
 - a. God’s call
 - b. God’s commission:
 - c. Jonah’s character:

- d. God's determination: a series of miracles; it was his compassion, that knows no bounds
 - i. The Lord hurled a great wind
 - ii. There was a great storm
 - iii. The great fish
- 2. **A disciplined prophet, chapter 2;** Jonah has become a man of prayer;
 - a. A prayer of distress, v2
 - b. A prayer of one abandoned, v4
 - c. A prayer of faith, according to the covenant of Solomon
 - d. A prayer of surrender, v6, from the pit (corruption)
 - e. A prayer of discovery
- 3. **A determined prophet, Chapter 3** The word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time.
 - a. Jonah had learned obedience, to proclaim the proclamation God would give him
 - b. 40 days and Nineveh will be overthrown
 - c. The people believed, fasted, repented and turned from their wickedness, surrendered: "Who knows?"
 - d. God relented and did not destroy them.
- 4. **A displeased, depressed prophet chapter 4**
 - a. His displeasure became source of anger: whines to God, "Was not this what I said?"
 - i. Made a shelter in the shade -- happy
 - ii. God made a plant grow to shade him and deliver him from his discomfort;
 - iii. God appointed a worm who destroyed the plant and the east wind;
 - b. **God's revelation: The story is not about you, Jonah, but about me.** You had pity, compassion on a plant that lived and died without your contribution; yet you do not understand that I should

have compassion on a great city with 120,000 people who do not know the difference from left and right hands.

The angels rejoice when one, one! One!!! Soul is made saved.

- Jesus talking to a multitude of people along with some Pharisees: This is an adulterous generation (one unfaithful to God), asking for signs, a kind of “cafeteria plan” miracles that I will prescribe. No sign will be given except the sign of Jonah:
 - Whale’s belly and resurrection analogy;
 - The condemnation of Assyria, men rising up; responded when they heard truth;
 - The queen of Sheba traveled hundreds of miles to hear the wisdom of Solomon;