

## The Underbelly of Humanity

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Rev. Lex DeLong / General

Major Posts from Minor Prophets: Be an Influencer / Jonah / Jonah

No matter who you are, God will do whatever it takes to have you follow His call.

### Notes

02/05 "The Underbelly of Humanity" Subtitle: Who Deserves Your Attention, Scripture: Isa. 42:5-9

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As the 5th of the minor prophets, this book contains: four short chapters, 48 verses total, one each: colossal fish, reluctant prophet, and compassionate God, but lots of undeserving people.

That is a lot of material for these few verses to cover. The content style of the book better resembles the narrative forms about the OT prophets, found in the Historical books of the OT (1 Kings 17-19, Elijah), than it does that of the other prophetic books, except maybe the book of Hosea that we already studied. One of the most unique features of this book is the manner in which it ends. This book leaves its readers with a rhetorical question, one that very well might help those readers sort through the immediate questions that come to mind about the book:

- Is this book the story of trusting God in Faith?
- Is this book the story of needed and unavoidable obedience?
- Is this book about an almost unbelievable circumstance between a huge fish, a disobedient prophet and a sovereign God?
- Is this book about a wicked, yet repentant people (Israel as well as Assyria)?
- Is this book about which people see/acknowledge God and which do not?
- Or, could this book be the story of missed blessings?

In order to identify the right question about the Author's intended thrust of this small book, we first have to know a few things about the characters and settings of the narrative.

The events and arguably the writing of this book is found to be most likely in the 8th century (the 700's) B.C. Since its content enables us to conclude this narrative occurs while the Northern Kingdom of Israel was still intact, it is safe to say this is prior to 722 B.C. when Assyria conquered the Northern Kingdom. That would give us a date range of roughly 78 years from 800-722 B.C.

This pre-exilic time marked the Northern Kingdom Israel with power, influence, territory, and wealth that rivaled the days of Solomon's rule over the entire nation. They were powerful, prideful, and accomplished.

At the same time, the barbaric Assyrians to the North East of Israel found themselves in a low point in the region, having suffered famine, pestilence, and infighting that weakened their Geo-political presence in the region. History bears out that as Assyria would thrive, Israel would shrink and when Israel would rise, Assyria would shrink. This ebb and flow between the region's 2 super powers demonstrates why there would be found such animosity between them.

The Assyrians were legendary brutes, worshiped many gods and goddesses, and "were known to impale their enemies on stakes in front of their towns and hang their heads from trees in the king's gardens." They tortured, dismembered, burned at the stake, used the skin of their victims to cover city walls, and made piles of skulls from their victims as warnings for their enemies. [1] It was to these barbaric people that God sent Jonah to deliver the message of repentance.

[1] E. Ray Clendenen, "Jonah, Book Of," ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 942.

Jonah is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25 as a prophet of God during the time of Jeroboam II's ruthless reign over the Northern Kingdom (roughly 786-753 B.C.). It was a time of great expansion from conquest, including Damascus, which is the region of modern day Syria. Israel saw Assyria's demise as an indication of God's disdain for those wicked people, but had great pride in what they saw as God's blessing and approval for themselves.

[This hatred for the Assyrians remained entrenched long after the time of Jonah, clearly seen in the NT with the Jews hatred of the Samaritans who were intermarried descendants of these Assyrians and other conquering nations, with Israel's remnant that remained in the land after all the prominent nobles, skilled workers, and mighty warriors were exiled. What was left in the land after the exile were, what the prominent population of Israel considered the second class citizens, the simpletons, the down-and-outers, the low-lives, the underbelly of society. The hatred for the Samaritans in the NT is more easily understood against the backdrop of these underbelly of Israel's society intermarrying with the likes of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Rome. They are who made up the population of the Samaritans.]

Now God is asking His prideful prophet, Jonah, to bring the message of repentance, not to the "deserving" nation of Israel, but to these barbaric, distraught, and chaotic people who Israel considered the very underbelly of society in their region. Of course Jonah hated the idea of going to them. Jonah did not yet fully understand that there is no limit to who God might choose to show His love to.

From the worthiest of people to the basest of humanity, God's directed compassion is always both unmerited in its choosing and impossible to stop in its distribution. Furthermore, God chooses who to deliver His message of compassion through. God's chosen people are to be a light on a hill, to the nations, not because they are great, simply because they were chosen to be a light, by the God who is great, the LORD and Creator of all

things.

Jonah resisted God's compassion and sharing God's message of compassion, much like many of God's people do today. We have a way of looking at different types of people who we would rather just avoid, we make fun of others, even sometimes of those around us. Like Jonah, we don't see people the same way God does. We often do exactly what Jonah did, we run from sharing God's message of compassion with the people God has sent us to in our lives.

This is where the book of Jonah begins. Jonah 1:1-3.

**No matter who you are, God will do whatever it takes to have you follow His call.**

Read Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-4)

God has called us to Proclaim, not to Judge (Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-4)

**God has called us to Proclaim, not to Judge** (Jonah 1:1-2; 3:1-2)

- ++God calls us to Warn
- ++God judges wickedness
- ++God sees humanity's response
- ++Leave the who, when, and where to God

# God will not let us run (Jonah 1:3-4; 3:3-4)

## **God will not let us run** (Jonah 1:3-4; 3:3-4)

- ++We can choose to obey or not
- ++We cannot choose the consequence
- ++What "Storm" has God sent to put you back on His path?

# God calls us from wherever we are, no matter who we are (Jonah 3:5-10)

## **God calls us from wherever we are, no matter who we are** (Jonah 3:5-10)

- ++Believe in God
- ++Repent of sin
- ++Call on God earnestly to confess sin
- ++Count on God's mercy

Remember the series of questions we asked at the beginning:

- Is this book the story of trusting God in Faith?
- Is this book the story of needed and unavoidable obedience?
- Is this book about an almost unbelievable circumstance between a huge fish, a disobedient prophet and a sovereign God?

- Is this book about a wicked, yet repentant people (Israel as well as Assyria)?
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- Or, could this book be the story of missed blessings?

The answer is found in the very last verse of the book. God, through Jonah, leaves us with a rhetorical question that points us to the overall purpose of the book. Jonah 4:11.

Jonah 4:11 "11 "And 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?""

This is a book that is about a God who calls you, no matter who you are, to follow His call.

Know this:

**No matter who you are, God will do whatever it takes to have you follow His call.**

**No matter who we are, we have a choice, to heed God's call or not. Isn't it nice to know that God has created us in His image, which means He also has a free will to choose. He can and will choose, who He wants, wherever they are, whenever He chooses. Is God calling you to come follow Him?**

Every creature free and doing as it wills, yet God more free still and doing as he wills, not only in heaven but among the inhabitants of this lower earth.

**The Infallibility Of God's Purpose**, *Volume 7, Sermon #406 - Job 23:13*

**Charles Spurgeon**