

## The Reluctant Missionary: the Story of Jonah

Prophet to NORTHERN Kingdom: ISRAEL > Struggling Nation, Many Problems  
 CALL of GOD > Look BEYOND THEMSELVES to NEEDS of OTHERS  
 COMMON IDEA in Local Churches > Too Many Problems to think of Missions

Jonah NOT Story of Big Fish!! – FOCUS is on BIG GOD  
 Theme verse – “Salvation comes from the Lord” Jonah 2.9

### 1. Prophet in a Panic 2. Preaching with Power 3. Pity-Party

#### 1. Prophet in a Panic

1.1 “word of the Lord came” Jonah 1.1 – 100 X’s in OT  
 DUTY OF GOD’S PEOPLE NOT CHANGED – almost 3000 years  
 1) GO 2) PREACH // marching orders King Jesus gave to His Church

Jonah did not do so well – How about us?  
 GO – to Place He has called – CA or KZ / PREACH – Eternal, Inerrant Word

Jonah’s RESPONSE is IMMEDIATE – Got up RIGHT AWAY -- WRONG WAY

Contemporary Prophet of Jonah: “The lion has roared – who will not fear? The Sovereign Lord has spoken – who can but prophesy?” Amos 3.8 NOT JONAH!

NINEVEH > Known for its VIOLENCE // Modern City of TIKRIT, Iraq  
 Few want to GO THERE TODAY!

JOPPA – modern day Jaffa – only natural harbor on coast of Palestine

TARSHISH – probably South-Western Spain– AS FAR AS POSSIBLE!

1.3 After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord. Jonah 1.3

“When you run away from the Lord you never get to where you are going, and you always pay your own fare. But when you go the Lord’s way you always get to where you are going, and He pays the fare” Donald Grey Barnhouse

JONAH 1 > “I WOULD RATHER DIE THAN SERVE GOD” – can you relate??

“He who began a good work in you, will carry it out until it is complete...

Philippians 1.6

EVEN IF WE NEED TO BE SWALLOWED BY A GREAT FISH

GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY: Works all things together for the good of those who love Him, who are called by Him

Believer who forsook God –paid the way- went down – way, way, down!

1.3	“he went down to Joppa”	Jonah 1.3
1.5	“he went down below deck”	Jonah 1.5
1.15	“they threw him overboard”	Jonah 1.15
2.6	“to the roots of the mountains I sank down”	Jonah 2.6

JESUS BELIEVED JONAH – AND THE FISH – AS HISTORICAL FACT

“Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish...”

Matthew 12.40

Text: “great fish” > Something Common or Something Unique?

“To be inside a sperm whale would be uncomfortable, but survivable. It’s mouth averages 21 feet long, 15 feet high, 9 feet wide. There would be air to breathe, of a sort. It is needed to keep the animal afloat. But there would be great heat, about 100 to 105 degrees Fahrenheit. Unpleasant contact with the animal’s gastric juices might easily affect the skin, but the juices would not digest living matter; otherwise they would digest the walls of the creature’s own stomach”

*ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANICA Research Center*

LIFE IN THE BELLY – JUST LIKE AN APARTMENT IN ALMATY, KZ

Miracle OF the Fish > EXCEEDED by Miracle IN the Fish

JONAH FOUND GOD’S MERCY IN THE MIDST OF HIS MISERY

MIRACLE IN FISH – Jonah’s CHANGE of HEART – WORK of GRACE

JONAH DID NOT CURSE GOD – BLESSED HIS NAME IN PRAYER

Jonah’s PRAYER CLOSET – TOMB OF BLUBBER – No Interruptions

QUOTES FROM PSALMS - Jonah had recited these in worship many times

WHEN YOU SQUEEZED JONAH – SCRIPTURE CAME OUT

GIGO Principle > Garbage In / Garbage Out ----- Good Things In / Good OUT

HONESTLY FACED THE TERRIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF CHOICES

2.2 “from the depths of the grave...” Jonah 2.2 / SHEOL /

Place Dead await Final Judgment

2.4 “I have been banished from your sight” Jonah 2.4

2.5 “the waters were at my throat” Jonah 2.5

2.6 “the earth beneath me barred me in forever” Jonah 2.6

BOTTOM OF SEA / WORLD OF THE DEAD / INESCAPABLE

WHEN GO SO LOW – CANNOT LOOK ANYWHERE BUT UP

2.7 “When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple” Jonah 2.7

God Centered THINKING > Sign of Sincere Repentance

2.3 “you hurled me into the deep” Jonah 2.3

1.15 “they took Jonah and threw him overboard” Jonah 1.15

BIBLICAL PICTURE OF WATER – always Positive and Negative

RED SEA – drowned the Egyptians / path of Salvation to Israelites

BAPTISM –down into water of Death to sin / lifting up to newness of Life

JONAH – water that DROWNS became the waters of DELIVERANCE

KEY DIFFERENCE – FAITH IN GOD – Changes Symbol into Reality

## 2. Preaching with Power

Ch 3 Revival: GREATEST EVER? – Nineveh – whole city in 3 days

Number?? – 4.11 120,000 R/L?? – kids? Or SLOW?? 1 million Ninevites

GRACE: 3.1 “word of the Lord came to Jonah a *second time*” Jonah 3.1

2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 999 times – Jonah’s God – God of 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance to OBEY

“Go and Preach” Jonah 3.2– Same Command – no wiggle room // kids to parents

CHILDREN THROW TANTRUM to GET PARENTS to CHANGE MIND  
 GOD IS A WISE FATHER WHO IS UNMOVED BY KIDS FLOOR SHOW

“God is as concerned about the servant as He is about the service. Sometimes you feel like quitting and running away, and that’s the worst thing you can do. Resigning from your church, giving up your Sunday school class, leaving the committee, or abandoning the choir will never solve the problems or meet the needs in your heart. You’ll probably meet the same situation and the same people (with different names) in the next ministry you accept. Why? Because God won’t let His servants run away. God is determined that His children be ‘conformed to the image of His Son’ and He will keep working until He accomplishes His purpose.”  
 Warren Wiersbe

8 word sermon / in Hebrew only 5 words

“Forty more days, and Nineveh will be destroyed”

MAYBE MORE SAID – NOT RECORDED – FOCUS NOT ON ORATOR

Evangelism: “Sharing the Good News of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results in God’s hands.”

RESULTS – God’s Business // PROCLAMATION – Our Duty

“I wasn’t God’s first choice for what I’ve done in China...I don’t know who it was...It must have been a man...a well-educated man. I don’t know what happened. Perhaps he died. Perhaps he wasn’t willing...And God looked down and saw Gladys Aylward...and God said, “Well, *she’s willing!*” Gladys Aylward

GREAT MOVE OF GOD – MANY PLACES AROUND WORLD

3 KEYS to Preaching with Power >>>

1) Word of God Make Known > God’s Word in Power of God’s Spirit

JONAH’S SERMON – NOT LONG, ELOQUENT, INTELLECTUAL

2) Message Explained and Applied – “three day mission”

ARCHEOLOGISTS – SIZE of Nineveh – Walled City – Circum. 7 Miles  
 Could have walked across the city in couple hours – WHY 3 days??

PEOPLE QUESTIONED “who is this God, what is His name?”  
BECAUSE PEOPLE STOPPED HIM – WANTED TO HEAR MORE

“Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message comes through preaching  
Christ” Romans 10.17

3) True Repentance – Shown by Changed Lives

HOLY HUSH QUIETED THE BUSTLE AND NOISE OF NINEVEH

PEOPLE CRIED – sackcloth and dust – SYMBOLS OF DEEP REMORSE

FULL REPENTANCE 3.8 “their evil ways and their violence”

DIVINE ENCOUNTER 3.5 “The Ninevites believed God” NOT JONAH

GOD CONSCIOUSNESS SWEEPED ACROSS NINEVEH > His Work, His Praise

### 3. Pity-Party

JONAH – Far from Rejoicing – ANGRY, VIOLENTLY ANGRY  
STORY NOT MYTH – no “happily ever after ending” REAL LIFE

BEGINS – God and Jonah – add sailors, fish, Ninevites

END – God & Jonah – STORY OF OUR LIVES – End – Alone before God

Jonah AGAIN ASKED FOR DEATH

4.3 “Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better to die than to live” Jonah 4.3

4.9 “I am angry enough to die” Jonah 4.9

JONAH OUTWARD OBEDIENCE- SEETHING, INWARD ANGER

“Jonah was an angry servant, which is often the tragic consequence of service  
without love. Ministry motivated by love will build you up, but ministry motivated  
only by obligation or duty can produce hidden anger and eventually wear you  
down” Warren Wiersbe

a. Cause of Anger

### 1. Insistence on Own Way -- No Acceptance of God's Will

He did what God wanted / God did not do what he wanted

Not RECONCILED with the WILL OF GOD

REASON FOR MANY MISERABLE, BITTER CHRISTIANS

God let them down, Failed them – Life, Marriage, Kids, Job, Health

JOY OF THE LORD IS OUR STRENGTH – content and confident

GOD HAS US WHERE HE WANTS US – apt, job, marriage

JOY NOT IN ANY OF THOSE THINGS – ONLY IN JESUS

DIFFICULTY IN MINISTRY – If did not have any people, no problems!  
ONLY IN JESUS – JOY OF LORD IS STRENGTH – ENDURE PROBLEMS

### 2. Ignored God's Mercy FORGOTTEN GOD'S MERCY TO HIM

LONG JOURNEY from Mediterranean shore to walled city of Nineveh

Like the WANDERING ISRAELITES who longed to return TO EGYPT  
Forgot MIGHTY DELIVERANCE thru RED SEA

Have we forgotten MIGHTY DELIVERANCE – Jesus upon Cross?

Mt 18 – Servant who was forgiven millions of dollars by Great King  
FINDS FELLOW SERVANT WHO OWES HIM CHUMP CHANGE  
Refuses to forgive that SMALL AMOUNT – even though forgiven much  
King angrily says to this unmerciful servant – “You should have had mercy on  
your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you” Matthew 18.33

ANGRY BELIEVER – MERCILESS BELIEVER – SHORT MEMORY

### 3. Ignorance of God Did not know God as well as he thought

PROBABLY A PROUD JEW – revelation of only True God - TORAH

4.2 “I knew you were a gracious and compassionate God” Jonah 4.2 BAD?

Grace and Compassion FOR NINEVITES? Isn't this monopoly of Jews??

2.8 “those who worship worthless idols” Jonah 2.8– Confession of his Problem  
SUBSTITUTED TRUE GOD FOR ONE OF HIS OWN IMAGINATION

KNEW SOMETHING ABOUT GOD – BUT NOT MOST IMPORTANT  
Did not Know God's Grace and Mercy – for himself and for Nineveh

LIKE OLDER SON who SULKED AS FATHER CELEBRATED w/ Prodigal

Nineveh – Greatest Revival in History // Jonah – Greatest Evangelist  
NOT ULTIMATELY Important – IS NAME WRITTEN IN GOD'S BOOK?

#### 4. Isolation

Jonah had a “Pity Party” – only guest invited was himself

WHY BUILD SHELTER – every house in Nineveh open, incl. King's Palace  
HE WAS GOD'S INSTRUMENT OF THE ENTIRE CITY'S SALVATION

Should have been like JOHN CALVIN – taught Scripture to city of Geneva

INSTEAD – Jonah got hillside view of Nineveh  
WANTED TO SEE PREACHING FULFILLED “Nineveh will be destroyed”

Shelter = Christians building Denominations – HISTORY – Unresolved Anger

Being Spectator, not a servant makes one overly critical - angry

#### b. Cure for Anger

Not fully solvable in this life – BUT CAN GET SOME HANDLE ON IT

#### 1. Right Perspective – Ultimate Truth

Calm Questions – Ex. God's use of Questions

To Adam & Eve – Guilty in Court Room of Eden -

“Where are you? Who told you that you were naked?”

To Cain whose brother’s blood was on his hands -

“Where is your brother Abel? What have you done?”

To Judas Iscariot who sold out our Lord -

“Are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

ANSWERS REVEAL WHERE WE STAND BEFORE A HOLY GOD

First Question to Jonah – 4.4 “Have you any right to be angry?” Jonah 4.4

PERSPECTIVE – Who is Right? – Angry Prophet or Awesome God

2 OPPOSITE OPINIONS - God is Pleased, Jonah is Angry

WHATEVER OUR THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS – GOD IS RIGHT!

PAUL “Let God be true, and every man a liar” Romans 3.4

JONAH SO ANGRY – IGNORES GOD – WALKS OUT OF CITY

God’s Second Question to Jonah – 4.9 “do you have any right to be angry?”

ONLY TIME IN WHOLE BOOK see – “Jonah was very happy” Jonah 4.6

NOT ABOUT Sailors Conversion, Big Fish, Salvation of Nineveh

“Jonah was very happy about the vine”

NO JONAH IS ANGRY ABOUT THE SHRIVELED VINE – enough to die!!

NOW HE’S NOT ANGRY AT GOD – ANGRY AT WORM - PETTINESS

## 2. Right Authority – Ultimate Power

Some have only a BIG, MUSHY, TEDDY-BEAR GOD / not Biblical

1.4 “the *Lord sent* a great wind on the sea”

Jonah 1.4

1.17 “the *Lord provided* a great fish”

Jonah 1.17



- 4.6 “the *Sovereign God provided* a vine and made it grow”      Jonah 4.6  
 4.7 “*God provided* a worm which chewed the vine”      Jonah 4.7  
 4.8 “*God provided* a scorching east wind”      Jonah 4.8

God will GET OUR ATTENTION – in Small Things, and if necessary  
 IN INCREASINGLY BIGGER THINGS

God took the Election of Jonah so seriously that He would even sink the Ship  
 THE GREATER HIS DISOBEDIENCE – THE GREATER GOD’S STORM

IF GOD IS SOVEREIGN – ABSOLUTE POWER & AUTHORITY  
 EVERYTHING COMES FROM HIS HAND

WE WILL RECEIVE THE OBVIOUS BLESSINGS  
 BUT QUESTION – EVEN CURSE – APARENT CONTRADICTIONS

God gives Children / how about Barrenness?  
 God gives Safe Travel / how about Plane Crashes?  
 God gives Health / how about Sickness?  
 God gives Food / how about Starvation?  
 God gives Life / how about Death?

Do the DIFFICULT THINGS – COME FROM SATAN?  
 Has God given over His Sovereign Rule to the Evil One? – not 2 gods  
 One is Creator – other a mere creature

ONLY A SOVEREIGN God will work all things together for the good of those  
 who love Him, who are called by Him

“be thankful IN all circumstances” – NOT FOR ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

NOT thankful FOR barrenness, plane crashes, sickness, starvation, death

BELIEVER IN SOVEREIGN GOD – “even in greatest tragedy – God is working,  
 working for the good of his people, and the glory of His name”

Joseph’s brothers had sold him to slavery and misery – bitter separation  
 “You meant these things for evil, but God intended them for good, and the saving  
 of many people”      Genesis 50.20

“Consider therefore, SAYS APOSTLE PAUL TO ROMANS, the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness”  
Romans 11.22

### 3. Right Motive – Ultimate Love

GOD’S Third and Final Question to Jonah

4.11 “Should I not be concerned about that great city?”  
Jonah 4.11

IF YOU DON’T CARE ABOUT ADULTS IN NINEVEH – kids? Cattle?

Jonah was sorry about wilted vines // God sorry about wicked sinners

“This is a warning that it is possible to obey God but to do so with such a degree of unwillingness and anger that, so far as we are concerned, the obedience is no better than disobedience”  
James Boice

BOOK ENDS WITH THIS QUESTION --- No Written Answer  
Question Echoes Down the Corridors of Time

Question that God wants you and I to answer

Book of Jonah – Picture of every believer see ourselves – Israel and Church

Moments of Victory – Moments of Shame – God’s Mercy will Find Us

Book – Most Importantly – Picture of God

La Salle St. in Chicago – Lutheran church with Crucifix on Wall – 1000’s see  
Inscription -

“Is it nothing to you, all who pass by? Look around and see. Is any suffering like my suffering that was inflicted on me, that the Lord brought on me in the day of his fierce anger?”  
Lamentations 1.12

“Should I not be concerned about that great city?” Nineveh, Chicago, Almaty, LA

As we look to God – who Jonah even describes as – “slow to anger” 4.2

May we find grace to change Anger for Adoration / Selfishness to Service

May God Himself > Turn our RELUCTANCE into REJOICING