

JONAH: THE WRONG-WAY PROPHET (Part 1)
“Meet Mr. Jonah: The Man, The Book, & The Message”
(Jonah 1:1-3)

INTRO: Mystery surrounds Jonah, the man and the book. It is the *test* book of the Bible. It challenges our faith. Through the ages it has been subjected to much abuse and criticism. Dr. R. J. McKnight writes: “No other book in the Bible...”

I. JONAH - THE MAN (2 Kings 14:23-25) – World’s Worst Missionary

- A. General background – “The *name* “Jonah” means dove (traditional symbol of Israel). He was the “son of Amittai”. His *home* was “Gath-Hepher”, modern Meshed, North of Nazareth. He was one of the *minor prophets*, contemporary with Hosea and Amos. He prophesied during the 8th century B.C. 41 yr. Reign of Jeroboam II in the NK (Israel), while Assyria was in its heyday. He predicted the extension of the kingdom. Tradition says he was the son of the widow of Zarephath and that he was discipled by Elisha and succeeded him as prophet.
- B. Three Witnesses Jonah was an actual historical character.
 - 1. From OT - No reason to question the reliability of the Kings historical record. No one denies that David, Josiah, etc. were real kings. Look at v. 25 – Jeroboam II was a real person, Israel a real nation, Hamath a real place - unlikely Jonah was only fiction. The OT prophet Joel quotes Jonah (1:14). The OT record gives impression of a genuine historical figure.
 - 2. From Christ (Matt. 12:38-42; 16:4; Lk. 11:29-32) - The input of our Lord is strong in confirming the authenticity of both the man and his book. Jonah was one of only 4 OT prophets whose ministries were referred to by Christ (Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, & Jonah). He refers to Jonah as a real prophet in same breath as He spoke of the ancient rulers, Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. The people of Nineveh were real people. Jonah preached there said Jesus and confirmed the success of his ministry. Jesus clearly supports the sea monster incident. It is inconceivable Jesus would refer to a story He knew to be a myth as historical fact. To reject the existence of Jonah is to break with Jesus Himself.
 - 3. Jonah’s own honest testimony further proves the integrity of the man and his book. Jonah doesn’t spare himself in exposing his guilt, disobedience, cowardice, bigotry, racism, etc.

II. JONAH - THE BOOK

- A. Outlooks - Jonah commonly used as an allegory, parable, fable, myth, or legend like “Robinson Crusoe” or “Gulliver’s Travels.” Why rejected at face value as an authentic historical narrative? Its supernatural element of the miraculous is unreasonable & unacceptable to most critics. It contains no less than nine miracles: storm (1:4); lot (1:7); cessation (1:15); fish (1:17); deliverance (2:10); revival (3:1-10); God prepared vine (4:6), worms (4:7), and east wind (4:8). It is contrary to science and violates natural laws.

Miracles are not only possible, but credible. Jesus used miracles to prove His deity.

B. Outline (4 chapters, 48 verses)

- Ch 1 Running *from* God - God’s *Problem* Prophet in Rebellion
- Ch 2 Running *to* God - God’s *Praying* Prophet in Repentance
- Ch 3 Running *with* God - God’s *Preaching* Prophet in Revival
- Ch 4 Running *ahead* of God - God’s *Pouting* Prophet in Rejection

All of us find ourselves somewhere in this outline!

III. JONAH - THE MESSAGE (Themes) - Sadly, people are usually so busy measuring the fish’s belly, that few have taken the time to understand its message. Jonah’s teachings are so advanced it is called “the most Cn OT book.”

- A. *God’s love for all* - The message of Jonah is not the story of a giant fish, but of a great God, who loves all people, regardless of race or nationality. God’s people have a responsibility to take the good news to a lost world. Jonah has message about world vision and missions. It condemns a cold indifference that says, “I’m in and to hell with the rest!” G.C. Morgan said, “People are so taken up with the great fish of Jonah that they overlook the great God of Jonah.” In 48 verses, there are some 40 references to God! God is key character, not Jonah (cp. 2:9; 4:2). God is the star of this book. He *prepared* a call, storm, fish, a city, vine, worm, wind.
- B. *People are wicked and rebellious, but redeemable* - Ninevites were wicked sinful people but redeemable (1:2; 3:4-6). Even God’s people will disobey and try to run but God will find and seek to renew (1:3, 4, 17; 2:9; 3:1). God will not cast us aside for faithlessness. When we fail He doesn’t give up on us.
- C. *A type of Israel (church)* - called to be witnesses, but disobeyed; swallowed by the nations of the world; yet preserved to be given another chance when Christ returns. Jonah reminds us of our missionary purpose.
- D. *Jonah’s experience was a sign of the greatest event in human history, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* This is the one OT book which sets forth the resurrection, “As Jonah...so Jesus.” When Jesus was asked for a sign to prove His claims, He mentioned only the sign of Jonah! The only prophet Jesus directly compared with Himself was Jonah. If we discard Jonah over a great fish, we must discard the Gospels because of the Resurrection.

CONC: The fish is neither the hero or the villain of the story. The fish is one of the props (like the vine, wind, boat, Nineveh, etc.). They are incidentals. The essentials are Jehovah and Jonah - God and man! Each of us is in this story somewhere: being called and commissioned, running from, running to, running with, or running ahead of God.