

Jonah 1:1-3

Last Sunday, we finished our series on Ephesians...and this Sunday we will begin our series in Jonah.

Now before I read to you from Jonah and pray, I would like to sum up Ephesians...this will be my way of tying it all together before moving on.

Now, Paul's letter to the Ephesians is a wonderful epistle where Paul explains God's good news of God's manifold grace in Christ and what kind of life God's grace creates and brings about in believers and the church.

In **Ephesians, chapters 1** through **3**, Paul introduces himself and addresses his audience. Paul bursts into praise; marveling at God's glorious grace in the saving work that God the Father appointed, God the Son accomplished, and God the Spirit applied. Paul then explains his thankfulness, and he prays that the Ephesian Christians would come to know in more depth the hope of God's calling of them, the wealth of God's inheritance in them, and the immeasurable power of God that is at work in them.

And then, Paul contrasts the Ephesians' past condition in sin to their present condition in Christ. Paul does this at the individual level and the group level; the Ephesian believers are new individuals and they belong to a new corporate entity in Christ called the church.

And after giving an explanation of this, Paul begins to pray for them, but then he interrupts himself because he wants to clarify a mystery in Christ and to request of them not to be discouraged over his imprisonment. After making this request, Paul finishes the prayer that he interrupted. And he asks God to strengthen them through the Spirit that Christ would abide richly in their hearts. And Paul requests this strengthening that they may further grasp the infinite dimensions of God's love for them and that they may be filled with the fullness of God.

And it is at this point that Paul transitions from explaining to commanding. In **chapters 4** through **6**, Paul delivers *ALMOST* all his main commands with the same word: "*walk*." In the Spirit, Paul commands these Ephesian believers to walk worthy of (*in balance with*) their call to salvation...and then *NOT* to walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds...And a little further, Paul commands them to walk in love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us...and to walk as children of light...and then to look carefully how they walk.

So after Paul commands them to keep a close watch on their walk and to practice wisdom, Paul provides the details of wisdom and the Lord's revealed expectations for a variety of relationships: the wife-husband relationship, the child-father relationship, and the slave-master (*or employee-employer*) relationship.

And this is where Paul breaks his pattern. Paul has been commanding these Christians to walk, to make it their life's habit to practice unity, holiness, love, light, and wisdom. And now, Paul commands them to be strengthened to stand; he commands them to put on the full armor of God...to bring to mind their new identity in Christ and practice Christ-exalting character and habits.

And right before concluding, Paul requests the Ephesians to keep him in prayer. Then, Paul concludes his letter by describing Tychicus who delivered the letter...then Paul says goodbye...drawing their attention back to God and the precious gifts that He has bestowed on the Ephesians through Christ His Son: peace, love with faith, and God's grace.

This is Ephesians...the summary

Now join me in **Jonah chapter 1**.

The book of Jonah is located in the Old Testament with the minor prophets: Hosea...then Joel...then Amos...then Obadiah...and then Jonah.

For modern Christians in the United States, the minor prophets are kinda like the Spanish channels on TV for those who don't know Spanish that well. Every once in a while you'll stop and see what's happening, but very quickly you'll move on to something more familiar.

Jonah chapter 1...I would like to read to you **verses 1 through 6**.

“Now the Word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before Me.” But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.”

“But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. So the captain came and said to him, “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.”

This is the Word of the one true and living God...Please bow your head and join me in prayer.

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for allowing us to gather and meet for Your praise this morning. What an encouragement it is to assemble together...to sing together...to pray together...to hear the Word of God together...to remember the Gospel together...all of this is for our good and Your glory!.

And as Your Word is preached and Your good news is announced, Lord please cause those who are lost...unbelieving...unrepentant...please cause those who are without Christ to come to realize who Jesus is...and what exactly Jesus accomplished in His life, death, and resurrection for His people...and cause them also to realize why they need Jesus and how to receive Him.

And Lord, please refresh the hearts of Your saints...increase our faith...cause our love for You to always be abounding more and more with knowledge and all discernment, so that we may approve what is excellent and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to Your glory and praise!

In the name of Christ our Redeemer. Amen!

...Now look at these first **3 verses** of **Jonah**...

TITLE...COMMAND...RESPONSE...

Verse 1 is the TITLE to the book...Originally, this is what would be at the top of the scroll above the rest of the text...in our day, this would be on the cover.

And like all good titles, **verse 1** gives us some huge hints about this book.

“Now the Word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai...”

Now, it is NOT unusual that the title verse...or the heading...or the leading caption of a book of the minor prophets starts with the phrase—“*The Word of the Lord came...*”

Hosea starts in a very similar way...so does Joel and Micah and Zephaniah. So this is normal.

And the most helpful part of this verse (*and most interesting part of this verse*) comes with Jonah’s name.

“*Now the Word of the Lord came to JONAH, THE SON OF AMITTAI...*”

This gives us some context to consider...because this is NOT the only time “*Jonah, the son of Amittai*” is spoken of in the Old Testament.

Please turn to **2 Kings chapter 14**...I want to read to you **verses 23** through **25**.

“In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, began to reign in Samaria and he reigned forty-one years. And he (that is Jeroboam the son of Joash, Jeroboam II) did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. He did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin. He (Jeroboam II) restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the Word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which He spoke BY HIS SERVANT JONAH THE SON OF AMITTAI, THE PROPHET, WHO WAS FROM GATH-HEPHER.”

This gives us valuable information...This tells us a few key things.

First, this tells WHEN Jonah ministered...Jonah ministered during the reign of Jeroboam II...which was 793-753 BC. So Jonah ministered as a prophet approximately within those same years.

Let me try to put this into prospective.

Jonah’s ministry shared some overlap with the ministry of the prophets Hosea and Amos.

And Jonah’s ministry would be shortly followed by Isaiah and Nahum.

So, during Jonah’s prophetic ministry, the Assyrian Empire would have been expanding their territory and increasing their fame as a brutal world power.

In fact, Jonah and the events that take place in this book occurred roughly 30 years before the events of **Isaiah 7**—where Isaiah approached Ahaz, the king of Judah to ask for a sign, which Ahaz hypocritically declared that he would not tempt the Lord God. This is where the wonderful prophecy of Immanuel was declared.

Now let me add-on to that, the events in the book of Jonah occurred roughly 60 plus years before the events of **Isaiah 36-37**—which is one of the greatest military reversals in human history...

After the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel...and after Sennachrib invaded Judah and taunted Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem, in the blink of an eye Hezekiah enjoys a surprise victory...Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem miraculously defeated the vast army of Sennacherib, king of Assyria and delivered Jerusalem from the brink of destruction, NOT by military prowess, but by faith in the Lord God...

King Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem simply trusted the Lord to do what they couldn’t and they asked the Lord to protect them and defeat their enemies...and the angel of the Lord struck down 185,000 of the Assyrian army in a single night...and those who survived ran back home...this happened roughly 60 years after the events of Jonah.

Does this give you a general idea for when the events of the book of Jonah occurred?

The Assyrians were the top dog but they hadn't attacked Israel yet...and this is well before the Babylonians came into the picture as top dog.

Now that's the first bit of important information that **Jonah 1:1** and **2 Kings 14:23-25** clues us into.

Second, this gives us information about WHO Jonah is...this lets us know that Jonah is a true prophet.

“[Jeroboam II] restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, ACCORDING TO THE WORD OF THE LORD, the God of Israel, WHICH HE SPOKE BY HIS SERVANT Jonah the son of Amittai, THE PROPHET, who was from Gath-hepher.”
2 Kings 14:25

Jonah is described as a servant of the Lord and a prophet whose prophecy successfully came to pass in the days of Jeroboam II.

So this is what **Jonah 1:1** clued us in on...this verse is the TITLE...and it helps us figure out a general idea of WHEN and WHO...WHEN Jonah ministered and that Jonah is a true prophet.

Now let's see the COMMAND that the Lord gave to Jonah...

“Now the Word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, SAYING, “ARISE, GO TO NINEVEH, THAT GREAT CITY, AND CALL OUT AGAINST IT...”

There are multiple parts to this command...here are the first 2 parts—“ARISE”...and... “GO TO NINEVEH.”

Simple enough... “*Get up and make your way to Nineveh.*”

And then, the Lord describes Nineveh as “*THAT GREAT CITY.*”

In Jonah's day, Nineveh was a city that was very large in size (*it even says so in **Jonah 3:3**, it would take you a 3 day's journey to pass through it*), and Nineveh was densely populated city (*it even says so in **Jonah 4:11**, 120,000 persons*).

So Nineveh was a great in that sense, but Nineveh was also great in importance...because it was considered the epicenter of the Gentile world.

In fact, Nineveh was considered the epicenter of the Gentile world from the time it was founded by the descendants of Noah in **Genesis 10:11-12**.

Now, what is Jonah supposed to do once he arrives in Nineveh?

“...CALL OUT AGAINST IT...”

In other words, God is commanding Jonah to deliver a message that is against the city...proclaim a message of judgment.

And you'll have to wait until **Jonah 3** to get more details on that message of judgment.

Now, why? Why does God order Jonah to deliver a message of judgment to the people of Nineveh?

“...FOR THEIR EVIL HAS COME UP BEFORE ME.”

This is very similar for why God judged Sodom and Gomorrah...

“Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down...” **Genesis 18:20-21**

So God orders Jonah a true prophet to announce God’s judgment on the people of Nineveh because the people of Nineveh have committed a terrible evil...their grievous sin had reach a certain line and God wasn’t going to allow their evil to cross that line.

So this is the COMMAND...God’s command...the Lord clearly ordered His prophet to deliver a message of judgment because they’re sin was reaching the dangerous point of no return.

Now notice the RESPONSE...Jonah’s response to God’s command.

“But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.”

What a striking contrast between God’s command and Jonah’s response...

Jonah did rise but NOT to go to Nineveh...but to FLEE TO TARSHISH.

Tarshish may be referring to Spain, but most likely it is simply referring to the general location of “to the sea.”

Either way, it is unmistakable that Jonah blatantly disobeyed God...he refused to obey God’s order.

And multiple times, it points out that Jonah is fleeing “from the presence of the Lord”...Obviously this ISN’T teaching that you can actually get away from a God who is omnipresent...always present in all of His fullness everywhere all the time...David said so in **Psalms 139** and this is the testimony throughout all the Scriptures...

Instead, I think that this is simply communicating that Jonah was trying to get away from his responsibility as a prophet of God.

At the moment, we’re not told why he wants to flee from his responsibility as the Lord’s prophet...you’ll have to wait for the final chapter of Jonah, for his motive to be revealed.

And this is what makes the book of Jonah so very interesting...because it uniquely speaks of a disobedient true prophet.

One commentator...**Michael Shepherd** said it like this—

“A disobedient true prophet is completely unexpected and creates a sense of suspense and adventure for the reader. Much like a Steve McQueen or Clint Eastwood character in the movies, it is difficult to tell whether Jonah is a good guy or a bad guy...though readers typically don’t sympathize with Jonah.”

Step back consider a few observations with me.

At this point in the book of Jonah...we can realize that Jonah is going to read a lot different than any of the other prophets.

This will not be a book full of woes and oracles...indictments and predictions...instead this book will read like a historical narrative, much like Samuel and Kings.

Also, at this point in the book of Jonah...we can realize that there are multiples crises...in every story there is usually a problem to be faced and resolved...but here there are 2 problems...

For Jonah, his problem is with his calling, we don't know why right now but as we go deeper into this book, Jonah's problem will be unfolded before us.

That's the first crisis...the second crisis has to do with Nineveh.

The people of Nineveh have a problem as well...Their problem is also their sin and that God's judgment hangs over them. Now, we've been given a partial answer for why God wants Jonah to tell them of His judgment...but we don't know God's full and deeper reason...and we'll just have to wait for chapter 3 for God's full and deeper reason.

Now...by this point...certainly you're thinking to yourself—"Why should any of this matter to me?"

Is the point of Jonah simply to tell history...history about Jonah's problem and Nineveh's problem?

THANK GOD!...the point of Jonah is NOT to merely tell history and unfold Jonah's problem and Nineveh's problem...as well as, the remedy to Jonah's problem and Nineveh's problem...

The point of Jonah is to convince you that Jonah's problem is your problem...and that Nineveh's problem is your problem.

You and I share the same problem with sin that both Jonah and Nineveh had.

The Word of God is clear...and yet there is this contrast between God's commands and our responses.

How often do you want to flee from your responsibility before God?

And let's stop pretending that God is somehow unaware of our sins...our grave and serious evils...As the sins of Nineveh were plainly before God, so are ours...and left to ourselves...God's judgment hangs over us.

In the book of Jonah, God will convince Jonah and Nineveh of their problems and He will make it very clear the only remedy.

Friends, what has God already done to convince you of your most serious problem—your sin and God's wrath?

And friends, what has God already done to convince you of your only hope of forgiveness of your sins and satisfaction of God's wrath?

Hasn't God the Father already sent His own beloved Son for sinners?

Hasn't Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God come and dwelt among us in human flesh?

And hasn't Jesus perfectly kept all of His Law and sacrificially laid down His life to satisfy all of His wrath...in the place of sinners?

The Lord Jesus is the only remedy to your greatest and most serious problem...and He has provided in His life, death, and resurrection all that you will ever need to be fully and forever saved and satisfied in God...now I

plead with you...receive Jesus as your only Savior...depend upon Him and His work alone to gain forgiveness of sin and salvation from the wrath of God.

And believer, don't you still have a problem with sin...and don't you still need a Savior who can keep you saved and actually change you?

So, who are you holding on to?

Who will hold you fast...when temptations seem not to waver...and when sin seems to prevail? Who will hold you fast?

Christian, don't forget what the cross ought to convince you of...the seriousness of your sin and the sureness of salvation in Christ.

Let's pray...