

The Book of Jonah

Chapter One – Jonah’s Refusal

Background

- Author - Jonah
 - His name means “dove”.
 - Was from Gath-hepher, near Mt. Tabor in Zebulun’s possession.
 - First mentioned in II Kings 14:25, where he prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II (reigned 825-784 B.C.) in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
 - Rejected legends say that he was the son of the widow of Zarephath (I Kings 17:17-24), the servant that fled with Elijah (I Kings 19:3), the youth sent to anoint Jehu (II Kings 9:1-10), and more.
 - Contemporary with ministries of Hosea and Amos.
 - Mentioned in New Testament in Mathew 12:39-21 and Luke 11:29-32.
- This book was written around 760 B.C.
- Purpose of this book – B.H. Carroll
 - To teach the bigoted Israelites that salvation is for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews.
 - To give a genuine lesson on repentance, as illustrated, (a) in Jonah, (b) in the Ninevites and (c) in God Himself.
 - To typify Christ.
- The Neo-Assyrian Empire (911-609 B.C.) was the ascendant world power, known for ferocity and cruelty. They would conquer the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C.
- Quick notes on Nineveh
 - Located near modern Mosul, Iraq.
 - A capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire and considered to be one of the largest cities in the world at that time, if not the single largest.
 - Jonah 4:11 says 120,000 inhabitants, possibly just speaking of children.
 - We will dig deeper into Nineveh when we get to Chapter 3.

Notes on Chapter 1

- vs. 2 – We may see parallels to their rising wickedness in the cases of the pre-Flood world (Genesis 6:5) and of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:20-21). Neither of these repented and faced God’s judgment.
- vs. 3 – Why would Jonah refuse to go to Nineveh? In his own words in 4:2 it appears he did not want them to be able to repent and to thus to suffer judgement. Simply, he hated the Ninevites/Assyrians.

- Tarshish – most today believe this to be Tartessos near modern Andalusia, Spain. Josephus believed it to be Tarsus in modern Turkey. Among other theories is Tunis/Carthage in modern Tunisia.
 - Note – I find that ancient Jewish names for far off places are often very generic and difficult to pinpoint.
- Joppa – modern Jaffa, Israel. One of the few ports on the coastline near Israel.
- vs. 4-6 – the desperate situation – praying, lightening the ship.
- vs. 5 – How could Jonah sleep? Perhaps because he didn't care if he survived.
- vs. 7 – God can work even through superstitious methods, but we should trust in God and not the method He chose to use.
- vs. 10 – The sailors did not worship the true God, but they undoubtedly knew His reputation and the zealousness of His true followers. To them, Jonah had angered a very powerful God in running away.
- vs. 13 – They could not reach land because Jonah still was not ready to obey. He still had a lesson to learn, and God had arranged a new, very wet teacher.
- vs. 14 – Whatever Jonah had done to anger God, the sailors did not want to be guilty of killing an innocent man, hence their hesitancy and this prayer.
- vs. 16 – Jonah makes converts even when he does not mean to!
- vs. 17 – We will talk about the “great fish” next time...
- vs. 17 – Three days and three nights - see Mathew 12:39-21

