

Jonah: A Commission of Divine Compassion!

The Background and Historical Setting:

1. While there has in recent decades some debate among scholars about whether the book of Jonah should be understood allegorically (or parabolically) rather than historically, the biblical witness seems to “demand” an account rooted in history (cf. 2 Kings 14:25-28 and see Jesus’ reference in Matt. 12:38-41) that has multiple spiritual applications.
2. The date and occasion of Jonah is not perfectly clear but it seems preferable to postulate a date during or shortly before the reign of Jeroboam II (793-753 B.C.), king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (whose contemporary counterpart in the Southern Kingdom of Judah was King Uzziah/Azariah, 792-740 B.C.) because there was a period of Assyrian weakness between the death of Adad-nirari III in 782 B.C. and the seizing of the throne by Tiglath-pileser III in 745 B.C. It was during this time that Assyria was in serious conflict with the mountain tribes of Urartu and the Mannai and Madai in the north that had pushed their frontier within a hundred miles of Nineveh.
3. The Assyrian Empire (*which reigned supreme in this region from ca. 900-600 B.C.*) would defeat the Northern Kingdom (*the 10 tribes that split from Judah in 922 B.C. at Solomon’s death*) in 722 B.C. The ancient Assyrians, who’s capital was Nineveh, were Semitic people and most likely resembled the Israelites. The Assyrians were proud of military prowess and cruel treatment of their enemies, ruling with an iron fist of intimidation.

The Book as a Whole:

1. It is the ___ book in “The Book of the Twelve” in the Hebrew Bible and is unique in that is almost entirely _____ (not poetry) and, along with Obadiah and Nahum, one of the most _____ of the 12 minor prophets in the Hebrew Bible since it has a “singular audience” of a _____ (Gentile) nation.
2. This book’s addressing of a nation near Israel is not unique among biblical prophets since “oracles against foreign nations” is a common theme (dozens of times the prophets have a “word for the world”).
3. Jonah’s special emphasis seems to be that his call from God is rooted

in God’s “concern” for the “trouble” (most frequent meaning rather than “evil/wickedness”) Nineveh is having.

4. Jonah is a story that is full of twists and turns, unusual and even “illogical” attitudes and actions. At the heart of its message is a “blasting away” of many elements of conventional beliefs about God and His perspective and dealings with His creation.

The Prophet Himself:

1. Jonah is from the Hebrew noun that means “_____.”
2. “Jonah, son of Amittai” is the only prophetic name recorded for the North in the nearly ___ years since the death of Elisha (who followed Elijah) and the ministry of Amos (see 2 Kings 14:25); however, it would be unwise to think there were no other prophets who spoke God’s message.
3. Surprisingly little is known about this man, who was from _____ whose calling and reaction to that calling are quite well-known and filled with surprising _____.

The Outline:

- I. Called to Go and _____ Not (1:1-16)
- II. Called to Go and _____ Not (1:17 - 2:10)
- III. Called to Go and _____ (3:1-10)
- IV. Called to Go but Chose to _____ (4:1-11)

The Prophet’s Purpose: To Reveal God’s Great Love for Those in Trouble because of His Sovereign Compassion and Mercy.

Key Verse: “And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?” (4:11)

God’s Love for the World Creates a Commission with His Compassion!

1. Will you _____ the _____ of God on your life? (1:1-16)
2. Will you _____ personal _____ for your disobedience and give _____ for God’s grace? (1:17-2:10)
3. Will you _____ the task that the God who loves you and has commissioned you has assigned to you? (3:1-10)
4. Will you choose to _____ God’s compassionate _____ rather than call for His _____ wrath? (4:1-11)