

Jonah

Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly, and said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord. And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited Jonah upon the dry land. Jonah 2:1-10

I. Jonah the Prophet lived in the Northern Kingdom (2 Kings 14:25) during the reign of Jeroboam II who walked in the way of the first Jeroboam, worshipping false gods. While Judah had kings who honored God and enjoyed prosperity at this time, Israel was in decline. Soon the Northern Kingdom would teeter on the threshold of destruction as Assyria rose in the east, and subsequent rulers increased the idolatries that led to the collapse of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC.

II. Structure The book of Jonah can be handily divided by its chapters. 1. Flight
2. Rescue 3. Sermon of deliverance 4. Jonah's complaint

III. Divine Satire Prophets willingly serve the Lord. Knowing the times, they instruct or rebuke Israel and the nations. But unlike Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah and Jeremiah, Jonah flees God's command to prophecy. Instead of going up to Nineveh, Jonah travels downward away from the Lord. Though Jonah is a prophet on his head, the foolishness of man cannot frustrate the wisdom of God.

Throughout the Old Testament period, Israel was called to be a priestly nation that led the other nations to Yahweh (1 Kings 8:38-43; 10:1-9). Should Israel abandon God and their calling to evangelize, they would be made jealous by a people who were not a people (Deut. 32:15-21 cf. Rom. 10:19). Salvation was not the sole possession of Israel.

Jonah flees from the Lord only to find himself in his presence in the depths of Sheol. Though the Lord saved Jonah in the belly of the great fish, Jonah resents the mercy of the Lord upon Nineveh. God creates a story that exposes Jonah's misplaced loyalties.

The Sign of Jonah We have seen that though Jonah tried to flee from God's commands and purposes, they hunted him down. Despite any attempt to evade the mercy of God, he will resurrect the dead. God has always been merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and full of forgiveness for the repentant. He will salvation to the world, and anyone who calls on him will by no means be cast out.

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