

Adult SS - Jonah: The Reluctant Prophet-2

I. Jonah's Running: God's Preparation - Chapter 1

A. The Word Of The LORD Came v1,2

"Now the word of the LORD came..."

- It begins with God.

God is intimately involved with **you and I**. In addition, He is intimately involved with the events of **the entire world**.

History itself is His. The fact that the word "Now" starts the narrative, links us to the rest of the written Word of God.

- God has blessed us and had blessed Jonah with His Word.

Have you ever stopped to consider what your life would be like, had the Word of God not come?

- We come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ because of His Word.
- We come to understand our _____ based upon this Word.
- We come to _____ God in His Word.
- We are _____ and _____ by what is recorded for us in the Bible.

But as we will see here shortly, **God's Word can also be a difficulty for you and I when we are living a life away from the Lord.**

Jonah is about to come into conflict with God's Word.

- This verse also tells us of God's faithfulness.

1. Jonah of Gath-Hepher v1

Who did the word of the Lord come to?

Jonah is like you and I.

He is flesh and blood (He has a body, a soul and a spirit). He is a man.

We could say this, "...*We also are men of like passions...*" (Paul and Barnabas: **Acts 14:15**) or as is commented by James concerning the prophet Elijah in **James 5** speaking of his prayer "*Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain:...*" (**James 5:17**)

When we read the Scriptures and see people like Moses, Elijah, Peter or even Jonah we must realize that those spoken about are not some extra special men that were sub-human, but are rather men that were identified with God.

Part of our responsibility is to seek the Lord's face, to know the purpose God has for us.

They were men that wrought wonderful things, laboring together with God in spectacular ways (**I Corinthians 3:9**). But they were men none the less.

What specifically can we know about Jonah?

Jonah's Father's name was Amittai (v1), which means 'my truth'.

"God's prophets should be sons of truth." - Matthew Henry

So, it is with you and I, **we are to be sons of truth**. **John 14:6** asserts that it is Jesus Christ who is the truth.

When we become a child of God, we should be sons of truth, walking in His ways.

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." **I Peter 1:23**

We also note that Jonah's name means 'dove'.

It brings to mind the verse concerning the commission given to the disciples in **Matthew chapter 13** that they should be **harmless as doves and wise as serpents**.

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” **Matthew 10:13**)

It also brings to mind the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Remember the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus Christ in the form of a dove.

Prophets were to be men of truth. Though the prophetic office has ceased in our day, we should **forth-tell the Word of God**.

The first instance of the word ‘prophet’ is found in relation to Abraham. (**Genesis 20:7**)

We should note that the prophets **were not self-proclaimed, but were specifically called by God**.

Most of us think of the prophetic office as being limited to the ‘writing prophets’ (**Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel** etc..). However, it seems, since the beginning God has had men that proclaimed His truth.

We would also call to mind Jonah’s attitude did not represent well his name ‘dove.’ When we think of a dove, we think of gentleness, but Jonah certainly was not gentle towards all people-groups.

What about us? **Does the name Christian fit us?**

We may find ourselves in the way of Jonah not agreeing with our name.

We find out even more about Jonah from the Old Testament passage which is **II Kings 14:25**.

“²⁵ He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher.”

Where exactly is Gath-Hepher?

It is a place identified with the tribe of Zebulun (**Joshua 19:13**), “about three miles northeast of Nazareth, separated by a **wady** (see below definition) from the traditional Cana of Galilee.”

Wady - A ravine through which a brook flows; the channel of a watercourse, which is dry except in the rainy season. (Oxford Dictionary)

It is from this knowledge that we correct the inaccurate criticism of the Pharisees in response to Nicodemus' attempt to vindicate Jesus Christ.

*“They [the Pharisees] answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: **for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.**” John 7:52*

Thus, we see Jonah again indelibly linked with Jesus Christ.

2. The LORD's instructions and explanation v2

The instructions and explanation are given to us here in **verse 2**. It states, *“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.”* (v2)

What is marvelous about this particular verse is that the instructions are given with an explanation! It would be enough for God to just give us the instructions, but again His compassion is seen in this statement of explanation.

The connecting word *‘for’* brings us to the explanation answering the question of why Jonah is being sent.

*“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; **for** their wickedness is come up before me.”*

“...their wickedness....” is the simple explanation that we can understand from the introduction concerning the Assyrians manner of life.

But we must not just stop at the warlike atrocities that we spoke about in the introduction and dive a little deeper into the abyss. Here we will see what is much more heinous and repugnant. This is discovered in the word *‘wickedness.’*

In our text the word wickedness describes that **which is contrary to God and His ways.**

Albert Barnes described it this way, “God represents Himself, the Great Judge, as sitting on His Throne in heaven, **Unseen but All-seeing**, to whom the wickedness and oppressiveness of man against man “goes up,” appealing for His sentence against the oppressor.”

When we imagine God as being one-sided we do not comprehend Him truly. God is not just a God of judgement, but He is also perfect in love. But He is not just perfect in love, He also is the Just Judge. (**Romans 3:26**)

The book of Jonah and Nahum picture for us perfectly God's mercy and grace, but also His judgement.

This reminds us that God will not allow sin to go unabated indefinitely and that judgement may appear to happen suddenly (due to the blindness of the sinner).

I Thessalonians 5:1-3 describes the sudden judgement after God's gracious revelation of the truth for such a long period of time.

*"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. **For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.**"*

We should not compare this to the empty threats that are sometimes echoed by parents of judgement for the wrong actions of their children, but understand that **had Nineveh not repented within the time period that Jonah preached they surely would have been destroyed.**