



WHEN YOU RUN FROM GOD THE ONLY DIRECTION IS DOWN.

Background

- Who was Jonah? “Jonah was an ardent nationalist, pro-Israel and anti-foreign; at least, anti-Assyrian. The book also reveals, implicitly, that he was a dedicated, disciplined, strong-willed prophet.”¹ 2 Kings 14:25 mentions Jonah as a “servant” and “prophet.” Jesus referred to Jonah as a historical figure (Matthew 12:39–41).

Matthew 12:39-41

But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

- “His name means “Dove” or “Pigeon” in Hebrew, but there is no evidence whatever that this name bears any special significance in the book (e.g., allegorical), any more than the name of Moses’ wife (Zipporah, i.e., “Birdie”) does in Exodus, or than Simon Peter’s father (Jonah) does in Matt 16:17. Bible names, in general, are only rarely symbolic.”²
- Date: 800 BC. Adad-Nirani III (810-783 B.C.) or Assur-dan III (771-754) were likely ruling during Jonah’s time.³

Major themes

- Gleason L. Archer: “The theme of this prophecy (which is really a biography rather than a sermonic discourse) is that God’s mercy and compassion extend even to the heathen nations on condition of their repentance. It is therefore Israel’s obligation to bear witness to them of the true faith; and a neglect of this task may bring the nation, like Jonah himself, to the deep waters of affliction and chastisement.”⁴
- God’s consistency vs. Jonah’s inconsistency. God desires for all people to come to repentance whereas Jonah desired his own comfort and the destruction of “the others.”
- “It is the sinners, not the righteous, who most often may recognize their need for forgiveness and do something about it (Matt 12:41; cf. Luke 15:10).”⁵
- Loving your enemies is a forward glimpse to Jesus.
- It is no longer “Us” and “Them.” God cares about all people.
- Hosea and Amos prophesied that God would use Assyria as an instrument of discipline against His people. So if the Assyrians survive then they will dominate the Israelites. Therefore, avoid helping the future oppressors!

Jonah 1:1-16

Jonah Flees the Presence of the LORD

¹ Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ² “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.” ³ 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. ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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. ⁶ 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.”

Jonah Is Thrown into the Sea

⁷ And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸ Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” ⁹ And he said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” ¹⁰ Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. ¹¹ Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?” For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. ¹² He said to them, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.” ¹³ Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. ¹⁴ Therefore they called out to the LORD, “O LORD, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you.” ¹⁵ So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

Running from God...

- ▶ God calls Jonah: Get up, go to a bad **place**, and preach to twisted **people**. – 1:1-2

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ² “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.”

- ▶ Jonah runs from God...the opposite direction! – 1:3

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.

- ▶ Jonah **sleeps**. – 1:4-6

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. ⁵ 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. ⁶ 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.”

- Pagans more concerned about the loss of life than Jonah. He could care less.
- Pagans echo God's call: *Arise, call out to your god!* – 1:6

- ▶ Jonah reveals his **identity** and the pagans are terrified at his **inconsistency**. – 1:7-10

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- ▶ Jonah reveals his **heart**: "I'd rather die than see "them" saved." – 1:11-16

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- Pagans more concerned over the loss of human life than God's prophet!
- Pagans are now praying to the Lord!

Action points

- 1) What is God calling you to do? Are you running to or away from your calling? There's no true rest in running from God.
- 2) What will it take for God to get your attention? Running from God drags down those around you.
- 3) Do I rejoice when I receive mercy and become angry when others don't get what they deserve? We all have some Jonah in us. Father, give me more of Jesus and less of Jonah!

¹ D. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* Vol. 31 (Dallas: Word, 1987, 2002), 431.

² *Ibid.*

³ Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 345.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 341-342.

⁵ Stuart, 434.