

September 8, Sermon Application handout

“Does God Tell Fish Stories”

Jonah, Chapters 1-2

I. The Setting Of Jonah

1. Before you begin, take time to pray and ask God to reaffirm in your heart that His Word is sure, accurate, and inerrant. Ask Him to help you pay attention to it as a lamp shining in a dark place (2 Peter 1:19).

2. Read Jonah 1-4 and make some observations. Who is the main character of this book? Where is he from? What are some of the cities that are mentioned in this book? Who are some other groups of people that he comes into contact with?

3. According to verse 1, how is Jonah identified? What came to him? What does this tell you about him?

4. Read 2 Kings 14:23-29. Who was king when Jonah was alive? Was he a good king or a bad king? What was happening with Israel at this point in their history? Where was Jonah from? What kind of prophecy did he extend to Israel? What was God’s attitude toward them at that time?

5. According to Jonah 1:2, what did God call Jonah to do? Was this a negotiable request or a command? Why did God need Jonah to do this particular thing? What was happening? Why the sense of urgency?

6. Have you ever had a time in your life when you chose to flee from God rather than obey him? What were the circumstances? What did you learn from that experience? Why do you believe it would have been better to obey God than disobey?

II. The Story of Jonah

7. Whose presence was Jonah trying to run away from (verse 3)? Is this even possible? Why or why not (cf. Gen 4:16, Job 1:12, Psalm 139:7-12)?
8. Where was Jonah trying to flee to (verse 3)? What did he find when he got there? How did he try to run?
9. Do you identify with Jonah at this point? Have there been times in your own life where you know that God is omnipresent (everywhere present) so it's not as if you are running from Him but you're running from what He is calling you to do in service to Him? Has He called you to something lately but you are choosing to "flee from his service?" Why are you trying to keep away? What's hindering your obedience?
10. How did God respond to Jonah's disobedience? How did He pursue Him (verse 4)?
11. What transpired next (verse 5)? How did the sailors respond to God's mighty tempest? How did Jonah respond (verse 6)?

12. Do you find Jonah's response troubling? In the same way Jonah slept and sought to ignore God's service, how might a Christian "sleep" and ignore God's calling (cf. Romans 13:11-14)?

13. Reread verses 7-10. How did the sailors plan to resolve this issue? How did Jonah respond to their question (v. 9)?

14. Did you catch the fact that there appears to be a gap between what Jonah knows theologically and what Jonah is living out practically (v. 9)? Has this ever happened to you? What was the heart attitude behind that? What were you choosing to believe or not believe about God in that moment?

15. According to Jonah 1:11-17, how did God use His creation to cause Jonah to repent and return back to the path God had directed for him?

16. Based on Jonah's prayer in chapter 2:1-9, would you surmise that Jonah believed he deserved to perish? What new heart attitude is beginning to emerge in him? What happened after he prayed (v 10)?

III. The Certainty about Jonah

17. When you read the book of Jonah, do you find it hard to believe? Do you think that God tells fish stories? Can the Word of God be trusted in total? Is it always reliable? What does God's Word say about this very topic concerning itself (cf. Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19)?

18. What is the danger in coming away from the book of Jonah thinking it's just some kid's story best reserved for the Sunday school classroom? Who does it ultimately undermine (Mt 12:38-41)? Is it possible to believe in the historicity of Christ if we reject the story of Jonah?

19. How do you respond to this statement? "To suggest that there are errors in the Bible is to impugn the character of God. If the Bible has errors it is the same as suggesting that God can fail, that He can make a mistake. To assume that God could speak a Word that was contrary to fact is to assume that God Himself cannot operate without error. The very nature of God is at stake."¹

20. What principles did you glean from the lesson this week? Is there one thing from the reading that you can thank God for? Are there any sins listed in this reading to avoid? What was the specific teaching that you understood from this chapter? How will you apply what you have learned from this reading in your life today? What is one thing you can ask God to help you with?

¹ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, p. 169

RESOURCES

Specific Resources for Jonah:

Jonah by Hugh Martin

Jonah by R. Reed Lessing

Reliability of the Bible:

Evidence that Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell

New Evidence that Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell

Inerrancy by Norman Geisler

Always Ready by Greg Bahnsen

The Inspiration and Authority by B.B. Warfield

General Resources for the Minor Prophets:

The Minor Prophets by James Montgomery Boice

The Minor Prophets by Charles Feinberg

The Prophets of Israel by Leon Wood

Major Points from the Minor Prophets by John Blanchard

A Survey of Old Testament Introduction by Gleason Archer

Interpreting the Minor Prophets by Robert Chisholm Jr