

It's More Than a Fish Story

We know the story - Jonah, the prophet of God, disobeys God, is swallowed by a great fish, saved alive in the belly of the beast, and then spit out upon shore, to go and preach to the Assyrians. Only two verses in this book are taken up with the account of Jonah and the great fish. Yet countless scholars and inquiring minds have discounted this story as a myth

because a man was swallowed alive by a great fish. So the book has to be about more than a story some have a hard time believing. Believe the great fish story or not, this story is a part of God's true truth contained in the Scriptures. Those who will give themselves to reading it, studying it, and hearing it preached will gain much in the way of God's grace. I hope you will give yourself to this book over the next several months. It promises to be life changing.



The structure of this book is artfully crafted. It contains four chapters divided to communicate to the reader two incidents. In the first account (chapters 1&2) Jonah is given a command by God and he disobeys it. In the second account (chapters 3&4) he's given the same command, and this time he obeys it. These accounts are penned in a beautiful parallel style. In both accounts Jonah interacts with God's Word: It comes to Jonah (1:1 & 3:1); there is a message to be conveyed (1:2& 3:2); and Jonah responds (1:3&3:3). In both accounts Jonah interacts with God's world: there's a word of warning (1:4&3:4); the pagans respond (1:5&3:5); the pagan leader responds (1:6&3:6); and the pagan's response is better than Jonah's (1:7ff&3:7ff). Finally, we read of Jonah and God's grace: God taught Jonah his grace through the fish (2:1-10) and through the plant (4:1-10).

As you read and study the book it's crafted parallel structure allows you to see many of the author's messages. In both accounts you have an opportunity to see how Jonah the religious leader regards and interacts with people who are different from himself racially and religiously. In the midst of Jonah's disdain for others different than himself, God's love for these same people is evident. This enables us to see our own blind spots in these areas, as well as our own idolatry that powerfully impacts our hearts and lives in our relationships with others. And yet God in his love shows us his way is to be our way, a loving mission toward those different from ourselves. As we grasp this our hearts are changed, and with this our humble cultural engagement is changed. We can become people of reconciliation in difficult relationships. We can become peacemakers in a world of hatred and war. We can become the servants God uses to build bridges in our communities for the glory of his name and the good of others.

But if this book is to have this kind of effect in our lives we must see the depth of it's theological meaning. Jonah is a person like us. He wants a God of his own making. He wants a God who blesses all the good people and destroys the evil people in the world. Yet, what Jonah finds is that God is not like himself. Jonah's main question is, how can God be merciful and forgiving to a people who have done so much wrong in the world? He cannot reconcile the mercy of God with the justice of God. This question is not explicitly answered in this book.

However, Jonah is one book as a part of the whole series of books that unfolds the plot of God's saving mercy. It's a book that teaches us to look ahead to how God saved the world through the ultimate Jonah (Mt.12:41). Jonah points us forward to Jesus who is both just and the justifier of all who live by faith in him. Our reading, studying, preaching, and hearing the true God speak to us from this book will be the grace God uses to change us. It is his grace that he gives to thrust out our Pharisaical Jonah like hearts, and our cruel God and people hating hearts, to become the children, women, and men, we were meant to be in the likeness of his Son.

A Great Overview Of Jonah

Watch and learn from this terrific overview of the book of Jonah provided by The Bible Project. It's an excellent resource for visual learners. Click this link: <https://youtu.be/dLIabZco04c>



Catalyst Prayer Theme #9 Generous Lives for Humble Cultural Engagement

Catalyst Prayer is a season (April - June) of corporate and private prayer for the Vision and Mission of CCC, and her future planning. Please pray with us privately and corporately by using the weekly "Catalyst Prayer Theme".

The Mission and Vision of Christ Covenant Church are centered in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are praying through our Vision which is centered in the gospel:

CCC exists to participate in a movement of the gospel that will bring personal conversion and renewal, community formation, and generous lives serving others through humble cultural engagement in Columbia and beyond.

Our Vision is what we long to see. Therefore, we pray trusting God together for a movement of his gospel that will bring about generous lives engaged in culture.

Pray that we will experience God's grace for generous lives. We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. - 2 Corinthians 8:1-2

Pray that we will experience God's grace to serve others in the culture. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. - 1 Peter 4:10-11

Pray that we will experience God's grace to be generous in serving with humility. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. - Philippians 2:3-4

Pray that we will experience God's grace to be humbly engaged in our culture through our various callings (work). For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. - Ephesians 2:8-10