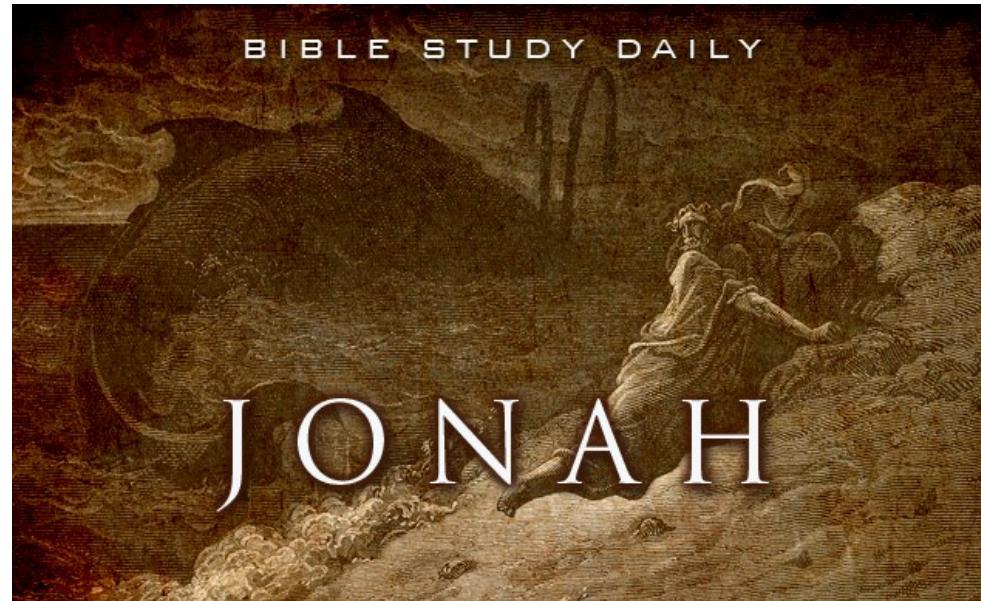




BIBLE STUDY DAILY



This document contains the introduction to the book of Jonah as well as my study notes for the book.

Name

The book of Jonah is named for its central character, Jonah. Jonah means “dove.”

Author

Authorship of the book of Jonah is a subject of some debate among scholars. Some believe the book was written by an anonymous author reporting in a narrative about the life of Jonah. Their rationale is the book is written in the third person (except for a section in chapter 2 which is first person). However, this by itself is not a compelling argument for an anonymous author because other books of the Bible were written in third person. Moses often referred to himself in the third person throughout the Pentateuch. Isaiah and Daniel also referred to themselves in the third person.

Technically the book is anonymous, but I do believe Jonah was the author.

Genre

Narrative (fifth of twelve books commonly referred to as the “Minor Prophets” because Jonah was a prophet, not because the book was prophetic). The debate surrounding the genre of Jonah centers around whether it is considered a historic narrative, or a parable.

I believe Jonah is a historical narrative because 2 Kings 14:23-25 specifically refers to Jonah, a prophet, the son of Amittai as a real person who lived in Gath-hepher during the reign of Jeroboam. Gath-hepher is a real place and Jeroboam was king during this time period, so it stretches credulity to think that Jonah is not also a real person.

Also, Jesus referred to Jonah in Matthew 12:39-41 and Luke 11:29-32 as a real person who preached in Nineveh.

Literary Form

Historical Narrative.

Time Frame

The reference to Jonah in 2 Kings 14:25 during the reign of Jeroboam II places the book sometime between 793-753 B.C.

Emphasis

The emphasis of the book of Jonah is on God’s sovereignty but is directed to the nation of Israel. God commanded Jonah to preach repentance to Nineveh. Despite Jonah’s initial reluctance he did preach a message of repentance and the people of Nineveh responded by turning to the Lord (in contrast to the people of Israel who had rejected the Lord’s prophets and their call for Israel to repent).

Outline

- Jonah's call and disobedience to God (1:1-1:17)
- Jonah's deliverance from the fish (2:1-2:10)
- Jonah preaches in Nineveh (3:1-3:10)
- Jonah's anger at God's mercy (4:1-4:11)

What I Noticed Today

(Jonah 1-4)

Jonah 1

In verses 1-2 the word of the Lord came to Jonah, son of Amittai, saying he should go to Nineveh and prophecy against them because their evil had come to God's attention.

Note: The city of Nineveh was located on the Tigris river about 550 miles northeast of Samaria. It was the capital of the Assyrian Empire (opposite the city of Mosul in modern day Iraq).

In verse 3 rather than go to northeast to Nineveh, Jonah went to Joppa (modern Jaffa) about 35 miles from Samaria and boarded a ship bound for Tarshish (in southern Spain, about 2,500 miles west).

Note: In verses 4-16 there is a complex chiastic structure (where the theme of an early verse is repeated by a later verse):

- The theme of verses 4-5a is repeated in verses 15-16. Sailor's fright.
- The theme of 5b is repeated in verse 14. Sailor's pray.
- The theme of 5c is repeated by verse 13. Sailor's unloading//rowing ship.
- The theme of verse 6 is repeated by verse 12. Captain & Jonah's speeches.
- The theme of verse 7a is repeated in verses 10b-11. Sailor's/Jonah's words to each other.

The theme of 7b-8 is repeated in verse 10a. Sailor's questions to Jonah.

The theme of verse 9 is in the middle. Jonah's confession.

In verses 1-4 rather than speaking to Jonah, the Lord communicated via his power over the elements. The Lord sent a great storm that threatened to break up the ship. The sailors were afraid and dumped the ship's cargo overboard to lighten their load.

Jonah was unaware of their peril because he had gone below decks and fallen asleep (*Seriously!? How could he sleep through this storm and all the activity?*). The ship's captain woke Jonah up and implored him to call out to his God in hopes that He might save the ship. (*I wonder what made him think Jonah and Jonah's God could save the ship?*).

In verses 7-10 the sailors cast lots to determine what the cause of this storm was and the lot fell to Jonah. Jonah confessed that he is a Hebrew who feared the Lord God who made the sea and the land. The sailors were afraid because they knew Jonah was trying to flee from the Lord.

In verses 11-17 The sailors asked Jonah what they should do and he told

them to throw him overboard. The sailors tried to row through the storm but couldn't so they prayed to the Lord not to take Jonah's life and not to blame them for throwing Jonah overboard. They threw Jonah overboard and made a sacrifice to God.

Note: In addressing the Lord as God, and in praying and offering a sacrifice, it seems they were more obedient to God than was Jonah!

The Lord then sent a great fish to swallow Jonah and he was in the fish for three days and nights.

Jonah 2

In verses 1-2 Jonah begins to recount the prayer of thanksgiving he made to God. Jonah called out to God from the belly of the fish and God heard him.

Note: Jonah refers to himself as being in the belly of Sheol. Presumably, Jonah had not died but thought of himself as being dead and entombed. Yet when he called out to God, God heard him. *God hears us wherever we are!*

In verses 3-7 Jonah describes his experience in the great fish and God's deliverance. Jonah refers to this situation as a result of God's actions: "you cast me into the deep" and "your waves...passed over me." Jonah said even though he was driven away from God he had confidence that he would again be in God's presence (the holy temple). Then, says Jonah, he began to sink into the depths of the sea in what he thought would be his grave (the land whose bars closed around me forever). Yet, just before death, God lifted him up from the pit (grave).

Note: In verse 6b a repentant Jonah turns to God in prayer affirming his personal faith in God when he says "O Lord my God."

When Jonah remembered and prayed to the Lord he knew his prayer had been heard.

In verses 8-9 Jonah warns against worshipping foreign idols because to do so is to forsake the steadfast love of God. But Jonah, full of thanksgiving, said he would sacrifice to God, do what he had promised to do, and shouted Salvation belongs to the Lord. And with that prayer and promise, God had the fish vomit Jonah out on dry land.

Note: In order to accomplish His objective to have Jonah preach repentance to the Ninevites God did five miracles in these two chapters:

- God caused the storm (1:4).
- God caused the lot to fall on Jonah (1:7).
- God calmed the sea as soon as Jonah was thrown overboard (1:15).
- God caused the fish to swallow Jonah (1:17).
- God caused the fish to vomit Jonah out onto dry land (2:10).

The result of these miracles by God (and perhaps another miracle); Jonah repented, pledged his faithfulness, and returned to God.

Jonah 3

In verses 1-2 the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time telling him to go to Nineveh and preach against the city the message the Lord would give him.

Note: In Jonah 1:2 the Lord told Jonah why he was to preach; because their evil had come to His attention. In this second commissioning, God tells Jonah go and say what I tell you.

In verses 3-5 Jonah responded to God's command and went to Nineveh. It was a very large city; it took three days for Jonah to walk across it. As he went, he warned the people of Nineveh, in 40 days Nineveh will be overthrown. The people of Nineveh from the greatest to the least believed God, called or a fast, and put on sackcloth (sign of mourning).

Note: It seems the Ninevites had a conversion experience but we don't know if their conversion was sincere or an attempt to avoid judgment. If their conversion was sincere it is hard to understand why they continued in their violence and why some 37 years later (722 B.C.) they destroyed Israel.

In verses 6-9 Jonah's message reached the king of Nineveh. He covered himself in sackcloth and ashes and issued a proclamation for everyone to fast, to call out to God, and to turn from their evil ways and from violence in hopes that God would relent and they might not perish.

In verse 10 when God saw what they had done and how they had turned from their evil ways He relented and did not bring disaster on them.

Jonah 4

In verses 1-4 Jonah was exceedingly upset that God relented in His punishment of the Ninevites. He claims he knew that because God was gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in love He would relent from His judgment and that is why he attempted to flee to Tarshish.

Therefore, Jonah said, he would prefer to die than to live. God asked if he thought he had the right to be so angry.

In verses 5-11 without answering, Jonah left the city and made a small shelter for himself to see what would happen to the city. The Lord made a plant to grow up and give him some shade and he was happy. But the next day, the Lord had a worm eat the plant and it withered. Then the next day, the Lord sent a hot wind and again Jonah said he wanted to die. God asked Jonah if he was right in being angry at the plant and Jonah said yes, angry enough to want to die.

Note: The Lord's point is Jonah did not have the right to be angry about the city of Nineveh or the plant. He did not create either one. He did nothing



to sustain either one. Jonah had refused to appreciate God's sovereignty except when it benefitted him. He was more concerned with what he wanted for the Ninevites (retribution) and for his own personal comfort, than for doing the will of God. In fact, he was more concerned for the plant than he was the 120,000 people of Nineveh.

Note: Jonah's attitude toward God's commission on him to preach to the Ninevites went from rebelling & disobedience in Jonah 1, to thanksgiving and praise in Jonah 2, to obedience in Jonah 3, and to anger with God in Jonah 4. It seems he never fully accepted or embraced this aspect of God's call on his life.