

Jonah (part 1)

Jonah the Prophet

He heard from God

This is always the hallmark of a prophet.

God wanted him to go to Nineveh

He sends his servants to a particular place. We do not prophesy into the air but to a people God has appointed to hear it.

He was given a message to speak to the Ninevites about their sin

It is never easy to confront people with their wrongdoing.

Jonah had a different problem

He could not accept that God could possibly forgive these people.

He decided to disobey God and not give them the chance to repent.

Jonah's Mission

His task was to preach repentance. He could not make people repent but he could point out their wrongdoing and call upon them to change their minds and hearts and agree with God in his assessment of them.

Repentance is key to any real shift in a person or a nation's spirituality. Like John the Baptist we urge people to turn from neglecting God and His laws and live in a way which honours Him, rather than bring disgrace upon the human race.

Jonah's Disobedience (Jonah Chapter 1:1-14)

He rebels

He is in no doubt about what God has said. He simply does not want to do God's will.

His disobedience leads to a waste of resources

Money is spent on a journey by ship, which could have been better used.

Time is spent running away, which could have been better used.

We need to be very vigilant that we do not waste what God has given us, especially when we are in disobedience.

His understanding of God is poor

How can he run away from an all-seeing omnipotent God? He is deluded. God sees him at every step.

His disobedience involves others and endangers others

Seldom is our sin and disobedience confined to ourselves. Almost always, others are involved. In this case, the lives of the sailors are put at risk.

God's Discipline of Jonah (Jonah Chapter 1:15 - 2:10)

He is thrown overboard

Sometimes, drastic measures are allowed by God to bring us to our senses and back into His will.

He is swallowed by a big fish

God's provision for our salvation is not predictable. Who would have thought that the shame and humiliation of the cross, endured by our Lord Jesus, would lead to such a wonderful salvation!

God speaks to him inside the fish

The magnificence of the ocean, with its vastness and splendour, brings an incredible sense of judgement. Jonah looks to God in His temple - that holy place where Sovereign Jehovah God meets with His people.

He is vomited out onto the land

Despite his disobedience, God takes Jonah and puts him exactly where He wants him to be.

We must hear from God and we must go where He sends. We do not judge or question God's message. We deliver it and then leave the response with Him. Let us thoroughly and wholeheartedly obey God.

Rev Richard Brunton

Jonah (part 2)

Jonah is Sent Again (Jonah Chapter 3)

God speaks to Jonah again to go to Nineveh

We wonder whether God's compassion towards the Ninevites is more the reason for this second chance, rather than Jonah himself.

So often the Bible gives no assurance of a second chance and we must never presume upon it. Very often, the opportunity never comes again but our God is merciful.

This time he obeys God

He declares that God will judge the people of Nineveh by allowing them to be overthrown.

The people from the king down to the people seek mercy and they fast, pray and repent.

The Ninevites do not presume that God will forgive them and save them but they are hopeful that He will have mercy.

God responds to the penitent cry of the Ninevites

He does not bring upon them the judgement He could have done.

Jonah's Struggles and Depression (Jonah Chapter 4)

Jonah becomes angry

The thing he did not want to happen, has happened. The Ninevites have repented! Jonah is at a loss to understand how God could forgive such a pagan, gentile people. What a mercy for Peter that, although in Acts 10 he struggles to go to the Gentiles, he does go and he does see God blessing and he recognises that God has the right to bless whoever He chooses.

Jonah does not rejoice

He becomes depressed! Strangely, he thought he could run away from God but now, here in verse 2, he gives an eloquent comment on God's mercy and grace.

His depression causes him to want to end his life

He sits outside the city and waits to see what will happen. It is hot, so the Lord provides a plant which provides him with shade. God then sends a worm which eats the plant. Jonah is very angry that his shade has been taken away and is sorry for the plant, which had been so useful to him.

The Lord tells Jonah, you had pity on the plant and I took pity on Nineveh and its more than 120,000 people. This people were so disjointed and confused, they did not know their right hand from their left.

Jonah and Jesus (Matthew 12:38-41)

The Lord has compassion on the peoples of the world

He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

The devil loves to discourage warp and twist truth so that God's people are tempted to despair and give up

We must submit to God. His ways are not our ways. God so loved the world that He gave us Jesus.

The angels must have been very confused when the joy of heaven JESUS CHRIST was whipped, beaten and humiliated. He was nailed to a cross and after hours of torture, died and was buried in a tomb.

Jesus knew something of the Jonah experience, although Jesus was thoroughly obedient to the Father's will

On the third day he rose again and having conquered sin, death and the devil, he is now seated at the right hand of the Father and lives for evermore.

Jesus spoke about the victory He would win and reminded people of the prophet Jonah. Just as Jonah was buried in the fish and then brought to life again, so this was a sign and a symbol that our Saviour would go through horrific suffering and death but would emerge

victorious, so that we, as sinful as the Ninevites, can be brought to salvation if we repent and believe in Christ and Christ alone.

Let us rejoice in our loving and merciful God.

Rev Richard Brunton