

JOURNEY'S IN JONAH

(CHAPTERS 3 & 4)

OUTLINED NOTES

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Journeys In Jonah (3)

Introduction:

1. We have left Jonah soaked on a Middle Eastern beach. In chapter one, we saw Jonah journeying away from God. In chapter two we saw him journeying towards God. In chapter 3 we shall find him journeying with God.
2. By the grace of God, He gave Jonah a second chance (3:1). This time Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord.

Discussion:

I. Jonah's obedience (3:1-4).

- A. Despite the high controversy that had occurred between Jonah and Jehovah, we find that reconciliation had been fully accomplished as God once again renewed His commission.
 1. A second time was given not only to show reconciliation, but to test the spirit of Jonah to see if true repentance had come.
 2. Note, that after God forgives, we need to rise up and go about the work that God has asked of us to do. I can picture Jehovah saying to Jonah what Jesus said to the lame man that he healed in Jn. 5:14:

“See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.”
 3. Jonah's repentance is clearly manifest, for he sought not to close his ears from the divine commission, he didn't default in his task and run from it, but “arose and went.”
 4. Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of will and way; it is a return to the work that we left undone (cf. Matt. 21:28-31).
 - a. This is the aim and objective of God's chastening, that men may conform their will to His and leave not the Lord's work undone.
 - b. See Psalms 119:67, 71
- B. Notice Jonah's message (v. 4).
 1. His message was plain and simple. It was bold and clear. Some may have considered it “negative.” But it was God's message (v. 2).
 2. God's word is unalterable. We are either preaching His word or we are preaching something else.
 - a. We are either preaching what pleases Him or we are preaching to fit the fancies of man. God's word shall never comply with the whims and wishes of preacher's or the hearers. Rather, these need to comply to the word.
 - b. This principle has to be the foundation for any real conversion to take place. Have you noticed how much men try to make the Word comply to their wishes? Whenever we do not like the word, we try to make it conform to what we do like. I am convinced that 90% of the controversies that exist are because someone simply doesn't respect God's word like He should.
 - 1) How many preachers make Matthew 19:9 comply to their adulterous wants and wishes?
 - 2) How many men make the creation account of Genesis comply to their evolutionary wishes?
 - 3) How many men make the Bible's teaching on discipline comply to their wants and wishes (2 Thess. 3:6)?
 - 4) How many men make God's plan of salvation with baptism comply to their wishes? Some have suggested that Mark 16:9-20 should not be in the Bible. Why? Because it conflicts their theology!

- 5) How many men make Romans 14 apply to their wants and wishes in teaching that we can still have unity at the cost of doctrinal differences?
- c. I am sure that you get the point, but how many of these fantasizing theories, engineered by rebellious men, have power to actually change the divine truth? NONE! If Jonah had went to Nineveh and preached something other than the Lord's word, would that have saved Nineveh? No! (Ezek. 33:8; Gal. 1:6-12). It would not have saved Jonah either.
 1. God expects nothing more or less from his ministers than what is revealed in His word. Nothing is worth preaching except what God wants preached. If it is not dealt with by God's book, then it shouldn't be dealt with in the pulpits.
 2. One thing that impresses me whether you look at the prophets of the Old Testament or the apostles in the New: God's prophets were preachers, not performers. They didn't place emphasis on humor like the jokesters and storybook tellers of today. These preaching clowns among us today, with their humorous homologues may attract large crowds, but how many souls are saved through such?

II. Nineveh's repentance (3:5-10)

- A. We find Jonah simply going and preaching what the Lord commanded and God gave a bountiful increase of repentance among the Ninevites (Jon. 3:5-10).
 1. God sent them one messenger, they heard one sermon and they believed, proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth.
 2. To Israel He sent many prophets and they would not repent.
 3. Can you imagine our country doing this today? Can you imagine a president saying that same thing today? Can you imagine the great and small alike doing it? Can we not see how much more ungodly than we are than Nineveh?
- B. A doctor asked me about my being an evangelist. He correctly stated that an evangelist was one who traveled about preaching the word. I told him that was correct that I do travel to different localities and preach the word but am also located or have a place of residence in one area.
 1. He wanted to know what my purpose was when I preach in these various meetings.
 2. I stated that it was to call the sinner to repentance by rebuking sin, exhorting those who have repented and to convince the atheist (2 Tim. 4:2).
 - a. That is the work of an evangelist. He is an instructor of the ways of God (1 Tim. 4:6).
 - b. In order to teach these things, he must know those things and live by these things, thus he must be nourished in the faith (*ibid*).
 - c. He must give much time to reading (1 Tim. 4:13, 15-16).
 - d. Some people think that the job of an evangelist is to be chained to an office as if he is some "office boy" for the church. Some think that he is to be chained to a local pulpit. Some think that he is the one who is to go around visiting all the sick. Some think that he is there to fulfill the wishes of others—perform marriage ceremonies and funerals.
 - e. While I will do those things, those are really not the work of an evangelist. I do them only because there is opportunity to preach the truth to some wayward soul. Jonah should have had this mindset going to Nineveh.
- C. The underlying point that I would like to emphasize in chapter 3 is that Jonah was successful and righteousness prevailed because Jonah did exactly what the Lord told him to do.
 1. If we want to run with the Lord, we must be careful to observe all that He commands us to do (see Deut. 4:2; 11:32; 12:32).
 2. Worshipping God must be done in a certain way (Jn. 4:24). This word, "worship," means to kiss toward one, like kissing the hand of one towards him. God is saying for you to kiss me, it must be in a certain way. Our love for him must be expressed in complete surrender to His will. It must be in spirit and truth. Jonah operated according to truth, but not *spirit* as we will see from chapter 4.

III. Jonah's Complaint (chap. 4:1-4).

- A. Whereas we saw Jonah journeying away from God in chapter one, we saw him journeying towards God in chapter 2, journeying with God in chapter 3, but in chapter 4 we see him journeying further than God.
1. One would think that after this successful spiritual revival that Jonah would be exhilarated.
 2. Instead of being happy that thousands of lives have been saved, Jonah was exceedingly displeased for God's graciousness (4:1-3).
 3. All the hopes that Jonah had for the Lord destroying Nineveh had now evaporated. He saw God's graciousness and was *angry* that this superpower would continue to pose a threat to his country. "If only Nineveh had not repented, then God could destroy them and they would no longer threaten Israel's prosperity," we could imagine Jonah thinking.
 4. As a little child who didn't get his way, so Jonah told God to take his life.
- B. Did Jonah have the right to question God about His decisions? Was he correct in striving with God and then requesting death in such a state? God's question to Jonah (v. 4) hit the target of the problem, the soulless heart of Jonah. **Notice:** "*Is it right?*"
1. God is justified in whatever He does and whatever pleases God should please us. Whether it be a quick judgment like that against Aaron's sons or a relenting of judgment against one's personal enemies. We should love what God loves and hate what God hates.
 2. That question, "*Is it right?*" is something that we should ask ourselves often. Is it right to get angry over this or that? Is it right to speak such and such? Is it right to do such and such? Think how much wiser we would be in what we say and do?
 3. Do we have a right to strive with God?
 - a. No! (Is. 45:9-13). Again, we see people strive with God over his laws of marriage, baptism, Lord's Supper, repentance, etc. Some may even strive with God over the reward in heaven).
 - b. God's way is the fair way (Ezek. 33:17).

IV. Jonah outside the city (4:5-11)

- A. After his little tantrum, Jonah went outside the city waiting to see if God will yet overthrow it (v. 5). Perhaps he is going to monitor the city in the hopes that God will change His mind, or that Nineveh's repentance shall be short lived and God will still punish them.
- B. Though Jonah goes outside the city in a huff, the graciousness of the Lord follows him in the hope to retrieve him as his preaching retrieved the city of Nineveh.
1. Jonah made himself a shelter from the sun and elements, but God prepared something better, a plant that came up and gave Jonah shade of which Jonah was very thankful (v. 6). God had earlier prepared a fish to save Jonah from the oceanic grave and now a plant to save and comfort him from the weather.
 2. But God also prepared a worm to damage the plant (v. 6). He also prepared a vehement east wind.
 - a. These are characteristics show the might of God. He can defy uniformitarian reasoning by making a plant grow overnight as well as create an organism to destroy it.
 - 1) He is in command of the wind and the seas.
 - 2) He has the power to make live and kill, save and destroy (Deut. 32:39; Is. 45:5-7).
 - b. In the New Testament we see Jesus exercising power over the seas, wind and fish too. Why? Because Jesus was there in Jonah's day too and He is the creator of those things (see Col. 1:16, 17). God can give and take away? He created the heavens and earth (Gen. 1:1ff) and he will make them pass away (Rev. 21:1).
 3. However when God damaged the plant it withered. This reminds me of when Jesus cursed the fig tree and it withered (Matt. 21:19). But Jonah became angry unto death (v. 8).

4. Then God asks him that familiar question, *“Is it right?”* (v. 9). God was schooling Jonah in right and wrong!
 - a. Creature comforts are good and we should be thankful for them. But Jonah is acting like a little child who is oblivious to things of real importance and is easily pacified with a little toy. He likes his gourd, and is very angry when it is taken from him, but wished a curse on Nineveh.
 - 1) A side lesson here serves to warn against placing our “great joy” in temporal creature comforts rather than in God (Ps. 43:4).
 - 2) Jonah should have thanked God for giving him it and for taking it away. Our creature comforts in this life are mere gourds, slender and fragile and are subject to failure by the smallest of adversities, a worm in Jonah’s day or locust in Joel’s (Joel 1:1ff).
 - 3) The Christian’s joy must come from a connection to Jesus, the Rock of ages and not to “things.” When we please ourselves most by them, and promise many things from them, then when they fail us, we are let down and our joy is turned to sorrow.
 - 4) But one who is rooted in Christ may lose it all and respond,

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (1 Cor. 12:10).

- 5) The comforts may go, but the creature remains and will give account to God. Some are like Jonah and if the gourd dies, then let me die too. Is it not foolish to have your life tied up in a weed? **Jonah’s gourd was gone, but his God was not!**
 - b. But from this God drives His point home to Jonah which evidently and hopefully converted the prophet and thus he wrote these things down that others may learn from his shortsighted religion (vv. 10-11).
 - 1) God’s argument shows that Jonah was not well in being angry and that God was well in being merciful.
 - 2) The plant was not made by Jonah; it was not earned by Jonah; it came up in one night. Nineveh was a large ancient city, with over a hundred thousand innocent infants, notwithstanding the fact that all these souls were immortal, unlike the plant. Plus the Lord mentions all the livestock which is also more valuable than a plant.
 - 3) Jonah was working backwards emphasizing the minor and neglecting the major.

V. Lessons From Jonah

- A. In Jonah we see a man who first ran from God (disobedience), then he ran with God (obedience) and now he was running further than God (disobedience).
 1. Rejoicing in the wickedness of men is sin (1 Cor. 13:6; Prov. 24:17).
 2. God doesn’t want anyone to perish (2 Pet. 3:9).
- B. Those who serve God are far from perfect.
 1. Jonah was a servant of God. He was God’s messenger!
 2. Jonah had his obstacles that he had to work out like the rest of us.
- C. Nineveh shows God’s love and justice.
 1. Nineveh was a wicked city that God desired earnestly to spare; that’s love.
 2. Nineveh was a wicked city that was going to be overthrown, that is justice.
 3. There are 5.5 billion people on earth today that God earnestly wants to save but unless they repent and turn to God, He will overthrow them too.

4. Jonah wanted God to save him in the deep but he didn't want God to impart the same measure of grace to Nineveh.
- D. God places great value on spiritual things, man places greater value on material things.
 1. Jonah was more concerned about a gourd than a city full of people who repented!
 2. What about us? Are some more concerned with comfortable church buildings, etc. than the millions who are lost?
 3. If this is the case, we won't have to worry about sinners being lonely in hell, there will be plenty of preachers, church leaders, and member there to keep them company (see Ezek. 33:7-16).
- E. Some people today try to hide from God in a big city, or their job or even in large churches! Don't!
- F. God can use all incidents for His purpose. God can use a fleeing Jonah as well as an obedient one. He used him to have opportunity to save the sailors (chap. 2)?

Conclusion:

1. Are you running from God? Will you keep running from God or obey Him now?
2. Come and repent like Nineveh and obey the gospel and live (Acts 22:16).