

This is lesson number Two in our exposition of the Book of Jonah.

Please open to the Book of Jonah.

INVOCATION FOR THE MESSAGE

Title: “But Jonah arose to flee ...”

Keep in mind as we study Jonah that the main lessons are:

The Sovereignty of God over storms and fish and nations and gourds and worms and men.

The mercy of God for all people;
He sends the rain on the just and the unjust.

The missionary mind of God; the Scriptures are consistent that God did not intend His blessing only for the Jews.

Here in Jonah we have the story of the greatest missionary success in all history. The world has seen nothing like it before or since!

Matthew 12:38-42

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. **40** For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. **41** The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.

Luke 11:29-32

And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, "This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. **30** For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation. **31** The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of

“But Jonah arose to flee ...”

Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. 32 The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.
 Let me give you my very rough paraphrase of an event that is reported in the Gospel of John. Keep your place in Jonah and turn to John 7:45.

Listen to me Nicodemus, what is the matter with you? Are you one of those ignorant hillbillies from up in Galilee? Listen! This Jesus of Nazareth that is causing such a stir among the rift raft is no prophet.

Because no prophet comes from Galilee!

John 7:45-52

Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?"

46 The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!"

47 Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived? 48 Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? 49 But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed."

50 Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, 51 "Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?"

52 They answered and said to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee."

This encounter with Jesus takes place in a culture where the Jews **hated** the Gentiles, and the Pharisees **hated** the Sadducees, and the Pharisees and the Sadducees both **hated** the Herodians, and the Judean Jews thought they were smarter than those poor “ignorant” Jews up in Galilee, and almost every one of them **hated** Jesus; they were blinded to the truth about who He was.

This is **another** reason that Jesus said that the prophet Jonah is the only sign that would be given to them that He is Messiah or the Christ: because Jonah was a prophet from Galilee! And Jesus was **the** Prophet from Galilee!

The sign of the prophet Jonah is primarily the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth after three days and three nights!

“According to the Scripture”: according to Jonah!

But **another sign** of the prophet Jonah regarding Messiah is that both of them were from Galilee. It is true that Jesus was born in Bethlehem according to the prophet Micah.

Jonah

“But Jonah arose to flee ...”

Micah 5:2

**"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth are from of old,
From everlasting."**

Jesus was born in Bethlehem but Jesus grew up as the son of a carpenter in Nazareth, a town in Galilee. He was known as Jesus of Nazareth, or as the Nazarene.

John Calvin says that Jesus limits the meaning of the sign of the prophet Jonah to: **“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”**

Who am I to take exception to John Calvin but I am convinced that the “sign of the prophet Jonah” is much broader. The primary sign of the prophet Jonah is the death, burial, and resurrection of the Christ after **“three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”** but do not miss the significance of where Jonah was from and the mission that God sent him on.

Jonah 1:1-3

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." 3 But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. NKJV

My exposition is predicated on the historical truthfulness of Jonah. The Lord Jesus Christ referred to Jonah and to Jonah’s missionary adventure as history with a purpose toward Himself.

When I meditated about how to present these first three verses in Jonah I saw **two movements**, each with **three parts**.

The **first movement** is the **Word of the Lord:**

The Word of the Lord comes to Jonah,

“But Jonah arose to flee ...”

How Jonah responds to the Word of the Lord,
And what was Jonah really thinking.

The **second movement** is a “Tale of Three Cities”.

[With a little work that might make a good title for a book.]

There is the hometown of Jonah’s father Amittai,
Nineveh,
And Tarshish.

The **first part** of the **first movement** is the **word of the LORD**.

Sometimes I think many people, even preachers, wouldn’t know it if suddenly all the Bibles in the world disappeared. Far too many people who claim to be Christian don’t read the Bibles they have and far too many preachers tell stories and jokes instead of preaching the Word of the Lord.

There are times when the Word of the LORD is rare [scarce].

At the pastors’ conference last Monday [02-02-04] I heard Ron Madison, Alabama Baptist Missions, Montgomery, preach a great sermon about the call of Samuel.

1 Samuel 3:1

**And the word of the LORD was rare in those days;
there was no widespread revelation.**

Brother Madison was encouraging the pastors to preach the Word of God.

The Word of the Lord was rare in the days of Eli and Samuel because true worship was corrupted and God was not speaking. In too many places today the Word of the Lord is rare because it is not being preached.

The Gospel of John records the time when the Messiah was about to be introduced by John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ. There was much religion and no Word from the Lord. If you wanted to hear from God you had to go down to the Jordan River where John was baptizing those who would repent. You would not hear from God in the temple where God’s truth had been corrupted and forgotten! The priests and scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees were all busy being religious hypocrites! The word of the Lord was rare in those days too.

Jonah

“But Jonah arose to flee ...”

And the Word of the Lord was rare when the Lord spoke to Jonah.

What do we know about Jonah?

The Hebrew name “Jonah” means “dove.”

Hebrew names have significance. Jonah or “dove” is symbolic of the Holy Spirit granting repentance to those wicked people in Nineveh.

Jonah is more like a hawk than a dove. But God can use the personality of stubborn and strong-willed men like Peter and Samson and Paul and Jonah. But God had to teach them **obedience** before He used them in His service.

Jonah was a prophet in Israel contemporary with King Jeroboam II who reigned from 793 – 753 B.C.

We know that the **LORD** had used Jonah before this call came to him in about 780 to 760 B.C. God had used Jonah to bring the word of relief to Israel.

It is likely that Jonah would have been excited and delighted to be used again by God to help the Jews. But Jonah was not at all interested in God showing mercy to the heathens.

2 Kings 14:23-27

In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, became king in Samaria, and reigned forty-one years. 24 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. 25 He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hopher. 26 For the LORD saw that the affliction of Israel was very bitter; and whether bond or free, there was no helper for Israel. 27 And the LORD did not say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.

Nevertheless the word of the **LORD** came to **Jonah**. What God said to him was not anything that Jonah wanted to hear but it was the word from the **LORD**.

Jonah

“But Jonah arose to flee ...”

1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, **2** "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me."

Imagine now that you are a prophet. You know that God has spoken through you before and now God is speaking to you again. **What would you do?**

The word of the LORD came to Jonah.

The **second part** of the **first movement** is how Jonah responded to the word of the LORD.

3 But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

But Jonah! Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah: But Jonah!

A prophet and a man of God; his first responsibility is to obey God.

3 But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

Jonah lived over 200 years after King David. Jonah was a man of God. We know that Jonah knew the Psalms because he quotes from no less than six of the Psalms in his prayer while he is inside the belly of the great fish.

Did Jonah really think he could hide from God?
Jonah would have known Psalm 139.

Psalm 139:7-12

7 Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.
9 If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
10 Even there Your hand shall lead me,
And Your right hand shall hold me.
11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me,"
Even the night shall be light about me;
12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You,
But the night shines as the day;
The darkness and the light are both alike to You.

Jonah “But Jonah arose to flee ...”

One writer suggested that the name of the ship that Jonah boarded was “**Wings of the Morning**”, cf. 9,10.

Jonah’s attempt to run away from the presence of the Lord is going to work about as well as Adam’s attempt to hide from God after he disobeyed God.

Jonah thought, “I will go in the opposite direction, and thus get as far from the “presence of the LORD” as I can.”

A commentary by Hugh Martin helped me on Jonah fleeing from the presence of the LORD. Jonah could not have believed that he could hide from God. A look at some other Scriptures that refer to the “presence of the Lord” will help us to see what Jonah was trying to do.

We will use the Analogy of Scripture; compare Scripture with Scripture, which is Biblical Theology.

Genesis 4:16-17

Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.

The “presence of the Lord” was the place where Cain and Abel brought their offerings. It was a place consecrated to the worship of Jehovah.

Later there was a tabernacle and then a temple. These places were where one would be in “presence of the Lord”.

It was not that God was not everywhere present but these were consecrated places and represented the “presence of the Lord.”

Most of the time this building is not a holy place. It is just another building. But right now while it is being used as a place to worship Jesus Christ it is a holy place consecrated to God.

And so Cain in his anger “**went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.**”

Jonah

“But Jonah arose to flee ...”

Another Scripture is:

2 Kings 13:22-23

And Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. 23 But the LORD was gracious to them, had compassion on them, and regarded them, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not yet destroy them or **cast them from His presence.**

The Assyrians would later remove them but the LORD “would not yet destroy them or **cast them from His presence.**”

One more example in Jeremiah where the context is false prophets claiming that they had an oracle or word from the LORD.

Jeremiah 23:38-39

38 But since you say, 'The oracle of the LORD!' therefore thus says the LORD: 'Because you say this word, "The oracle of the LORD!" and I have sent to you, saying, "Do not say, "The oracle of the LORD!"' 39 therefore behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you and forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and **will cast you out of My presence.**

So Jonah was not stupid enough to think that he really could hide from God. But he thought that if he could get as far from the place consecrated to God maybe he wouldn't have to go to Nineveh.

Let's also look at Jonah's decision to sin. Jonah knew the word of the Lord and he knew Psalm 139 but at this point he was **determined to sin.**

Let's look at the actions of a man who is determined to sin.

**He arose to flee,
He went down to Joppa,
He found a ship,
He paid the fare,
And he went down into it.**

Down, down, down!

Trying to flee from the presence of the Lord is always **down!**

Before we get all self-righteous about the sin of Jonah we had better be honest with our own vain attempts to hide from God.

Jonah

“But Jonah arose to flee ...”

At times we are all like Jonah.

He rose up to go to the store,
He went to where they sell pornographic magazines,
He found a rack,
He bought the magazine,
He went down into it.

Be very careful when you decide to sin. Jonah thought he was safe in the ship. No! Now he is in a prison and the LORD has the key. Either God will allow Jonah to continue in his sin or He will intervene and bring him to repentance.

We can know on an intellectual level, as did Jonah, that we cannot escape from the presence of God. And yet, there are times that we do what Jonah did. God says one thing in His Word and we decide to do just the opposite.

Why is God so merciful?

We will see that God is merciful to Jonah who certainly did not deserve God’s mercy. God is merciful to Nineveh, a people given over to idolatry. God is even merciful to the pagan sailors on the boat.

So 1) the word of the Lord came to Jonah and 2) Jonah decided to do the exact opposite of what the Lord told him to do.

The **third part** of the **first movement** is **why** Jonah responded to the word of the LORD.

He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

There is another line of thought suggested by Hugh Martin and I confess that I had not seen this aspect before but I believe it is correct.

Let’s be careful not to judge Jonah too harshly. Be careful about judging the motives of any man of God. What you see with your limited understanding may lead you to a wrong conclusion.

Jonah

“But Jonah arose to flee ...”

Let's be very clear. Jonah sinned by fleeing from the presence of the LORD. Jonah may have had a noble motive but Jonah presumed to know more than God did.

Peter tried to get in the way of God's purpose.
Didn't Jesus say to Peter, “Get behind me Satan.”

Matthew 16:21-23

From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

22 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"

23 But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

Why did Jonah flee?

It is true that Jonah despised the Assyrians but Jonah was zealous to protect the honor of the LORD! Even to the point of being killed in the process!

Jehovah had made an unmitigated threat against Nineveh.

“Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

Jonah knew that God could do whatever He pleased and that God could spare Nineveh. But if Jehovah did not destroy Nineveh then in the eyes of the pagan world He would be considered a *changeable* God.

Jonah reveals his motive in Chapter 4.

Jonah 4:1-3

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. 2 So he prayed to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, **One who relents from doing harm.** 3 Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!"

Jonah
“But Jonah arose to flee ...”

Jonah was trying to protect the honor of Jehovah and the LORD did not need Jonah to do any such thing.

Jonah, go preach to Nineveh the message that I tell you and leave the results up to Me!

Jim, Bob, Craig, go preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and leave the results up to Me!

Let me give you a modern example of what Jonah was afraid of.

A couple of years ago at Beeson I heard a visiting preacher use the case of God sparing Nineveh to support the heresy of **Openness Theology**. Openness Theology says that God cannot know everything.

Openness Theology says that it’s okay for God to know some things in the future but He cannot know everything!
God can’t know something until it happens they say.

And so this visiting heretic, referring to Jonah and Nineveh, said, **“See there, God changed His mind! You have got to deal with that!”**
Well, I have dealt with it.

That is exactly the kind of blasphemy that Jonah was trying to avoid.

We will deal with this question of God relenting or appearing to have changed His mind, more fully when we get to it in the text but rest assured that God knows the end from the beginning and He is not learning anything.

The LORD knew what He was going to do when He told Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach and it wasn’t up to Jonah to stand in the way.

So the word of the Lord came to Jonah and Jonah decided to sin and run from the presence of the Lord and Jonah was deep in sin.

That is the first movement in three parts.

The **first movement** is the **Word of the Lord**:

The Word of the Lord comes to Jonah;

Jonah responds to the Word of the Lord;

Jonah

“But Jonah arose to flee ...”

And what was Jonah thinking.

The **second movement** in these first three verses I have called a “Tale of Three Cities”. **The three cities are the three parts.**

There is the hometown of Amittai, the father of Jonah, **Gath-Hepher**, **Nineveh**, and **Tarshish**.

I didn't forget about Joppa but it is coincidental to the story of Jonah.

JOP'PA (jop'pa; Heb. yapo, "beauty"). An old city on the Mediterranean, about thirty miles NW of Jerusalem. It is supposed to have got its name from the mass of sunshine that its houses reflected. Its harbor naturally made it the port of Jerusalem. It was to Joppa that Hiram floated down from Tyre the fir trees of Lebanon (2 Chron 2:16), and, later, Zerubbabel, acting on the edict of Cyrus, caused to be brought here cedar trees from the same mountains (Ezra 3:7). Here Jonah embarked for Tarshish (Jonah 1:3). In Joppa Peter wrought the miracle on Talitha (Acts 9:36), resided for quite a time with Simon the tanner (v. 43), saw the vision of the great sheet let down from heaven (10:8-16), and received the summons from Cornelius (vv. 17-23).

(from The New Unger's Bible Dictionary. Originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois. Copyright (c) 1988.)

We have already seen the significance of **Gath-Hepher** the city of Jonah.

The Pharisees said, “For no prophet has arisen from Galilee.” By extension, their logic says that since Jesus is “Jesus of Nazareth,” a town in Galilee, Jesus is not a prophet.

Cf. 2 Kings 14:25 where we are told that Amittai was “The prophet, which was of Gath-Hepher.” Amittai is Jonah's father so Jonah is from the same town. Gath-Hepher is a town of Zebulun, in lower Galilee north of Nazareth.

“For no prophet has arisen from Galilee,” They said.

Not only were Amittai and Jonah from Galilee so was Hosea and Nahum.

When men are blinded by hate they will ignore facts and lie to suit their wicked purposes.

Jonah

“But Jonah arose to flee ...”

The **first part** of the **second movement** is the prophet from **Gath-Hepher** in Galilee and **“indeed a greater than Jonah is here!”**

The significance of Gath-Hepher is that Jonah was from Galilee.

The **second part** of the **second movement** is **Nineveh**.

"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me."

You must see the sovereignty of God in the study of Jonah.
But just as important is the mercy of God toward all men.

Nineveh was a wicked place but was Nineveh a city more wicked than Hueytown, Alabama? If it was it is only because God restrains the evil that men would do.

We won't spend a great deal of time on the geography of Nineveh and the culture of the Assyrian people but it will help us to see why Jonah was so disappointed and angry that God would send him to be a missionary to that great and wicked city.

NINEVEH

A famous and ancient city situated on the eastern bank of the Tigris River opposite the modern city of Mosul. Mosul is in Iraq about 200 miles north of Baghdad.

The Bible names Nimrod as the founder of Nineveh (Gen 10:8-11).

Nineveh was a great city, agreeing with Jonah's "three days' journey," makes it 55 or 60 miles across. Scholars do not agree as to whether it is a three-days journey in circumference or in diameter. A day's journey was 20 miles. There was a wall one hundred feet high and wide enough for three chariots to run abreast.

It would seem that Jonah would have approached the city and walked to the center of the place. If he walked around the circumference it

Jonah

“But Jonah arose to flee ...”

doesn't seem that he would have reached the people he was sent to warn.

Nineveh was the capital of ASSYRIA.

Later in history God will use the Assyrians to capture the northern kingdom of Israel.

Let's talk about the wickedness of these people.

In stature the Assyrians were of average modern European height and were well built. Their complexion was dark, the nose prominent, the hair, eyebrows, and beard thick and bushy. They were apparently of cheerful disposition, given to mirth and feasting, but of implacable cruelty. The pages of history are nowhere more bloody than in the records of their wars. It may be argued, however, that the Assyrians were not much more cruel than other peoples of the ancient Near East but merely kept better records. As cases in point, Egyptian monuments occasionally show mounds of body parts, demonstrating that the Egyptians mutilated their enemies; and even the Hebrews were known to have hacked away at those whom they had vanquished.

The religion of the Assyrians, much like that of the Babylonians, emphasized worship of nature. They believed every object of nature was possessed by a spirit. The chief god was Asshur. All other primary gods whom they worshiped were related to the objects of nature. These included Anu, god of the heavens; Bel, god of the region inhabited by man, beasts, and birds; Ea, god of the waters; Sin, the moon-god; Shamash, the sun-god; and Ramman, god of the storms. These gods were followed by five gods of the planets. In addition to these primary gods, lesser gods also were worshiped. In some cases, various cities had their own patron gods. The pagan worship of the Assyrians was soundly condemned by several prophets of the Old Testament.

The favorite pursuits of the Assyrian kings were war and hunting. Archaeologists have discovered that the Assyrians were merciless and savage people. The Assyrian army was ruthless and effective. Its cruelty included burning cities, burning children, impaling victims on stakes, beheading, and chopping off hands. But, like Babylon, whom

“But Jonah arose to flee ...”

God used as an instrument of judgment against Judah, Assyria became God's channel of punishment and judgment against Israel because of their sin and idolatry.

Because of the cruelty and paganism of the Assyrians, the Hebrew people harbored deep-seated hostility against this nation. This attitude is revealed clearly in the Book of Jonah. When God instructed Jonah to preach to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, Jonah refused and went in the opposite direction. After he finally went to Nineveh, the prophet was disappointed with God because He spared the city.

(from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright (c)1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Such were the people and the place that God told Jonah to go to and preach.

When we read the OT I am afraid we often miss the love of God for all people. It is true that the OT is primarily about the Jews and how God taught them about substitution and the sacrifice of blood, which pointed to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Don't miss the **missionary purpose** of God?

The Lord appeared to Isaac to remind him of this very thing.

Was the blessing promised to Abraham only for the Jews?

Genesis 26:1-5

There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines, in Gerar.

2 Then the LORD appeared to him and said: "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you. 3 Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. 4 And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; 5 because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."

“But Jonah arose to flee ...”

Then just a few weeks ago we looked at Romans 15 where Paul is nearly ecstatic over the **mystery of the ages** that was revealed to him in the parable of the single olive tree in Romans 11. Elect Gentiles and the remnant of the Jews who together make up the church.

Ephesians 3:8-9

To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the **Gentiles** the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of **the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God** who created all things through Jesus Christ;

Colossians 1:24-28

I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, 26 the **mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.** 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the **Gentiles**: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Romans 3:27-31

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. 29 Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? **Yes, of the Gentiles also,** 30 since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

Paul, in Romans 15, is teaching the church that the old prejudices must be forever forgotten.

Romans 15:7-12

Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. 8 Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, 9 and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written:

**" For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles,
And sing to Your name."**

10 And again he says:

"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!"

11 And again:

"Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles!

Laud Him, all you peoples!"

“But Jonah arose to flee ...”

12 And again, Isaiah says:

"There shall be a root of Jesse;

And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles,

In Him the Gentiles shall hope."

The missionary purpose of God to the nations is yet another aspect of the **“sign of the prophet Jonah.”**

God had commanded the Jews to be a light to the Gentiles and they took the word of God and thought it was only for them.

In the Introduction to Jonah I said that Jonah was the first missionary to the Gentiles. By that I mean to an entire city and nation.

Elijah was sent to a widow in Zareptath who was a Gentile. Elisha was sent to a king in Damascus. But here we have a Hebrew prophet being sent to preach to an entire city, the capital of a nation.

Jonah knew about these people and didn't think they deserved the mercy of God. Did Jonah deserve the mercy of God?

Do we deserve the mercy of God?

Jonah was sent to the most renowned city in all of heathendom.

In the NT it was Corinth.

In the OT it was Nineveh.

It was God's purpose to confer the spirit of prophecy and sacred rituals of ceremony and sacrifice to national Israel.

It was NOT God's purpose that Israel ignore their duty to be a light to the Gentiles. Israel had virtually made Jehovah a local deity as though God Almighty were some kind of Baal. [Baals were local gods.]

Jehovah is the God of all the earth.

Revelation 15:3-4

3 They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying:

“But Jonah arose to flee ...”

"Great and marvelous are Your works,
 Lord God Almighty!
 Just and true are Your ways,
 O King of the saints!
 4 Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?
 For You alone are holy.
 For all nations shall come and worship before You,
 For Your judgments have been manifested."

When God sent His prophet Jonah to Nineveh He was showing mercy to the Gentiles and at the same time **rebuking** Israel for ignoring them.

All through the centuries men have missed the “sign of the prophet Jonah.”

The death, burial, and resurrection of the Christ.
 The prophet that comes from Galilee.
 The missionary purpose of God to the nations.

God’s mercy and missionary purpose to Nineveh is the **second part** of the **second movement**.

The third city in these three verses is Tarshish.

Tarshish was Jonah’s destination where he thought he could escape from the presence of the Lord.

The location of Tarshish is disputed but the purpose of Jonah would put it as far from Nineveh as anywhere he could go.

Most probably Tarshish was on the far coast of Spain, beyond Gibraltar. If this is right then Jonah aimed for the place as far as possible from Nineveh. Jonah is in Galilee and Nineveh is to the northeast in what is now Iraq.

Tarshish was to the west. Nineveh was 500 miles to the northeast and Tarshish was 2000 miles to the west. Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh and he wanted to get as far from the presence of God as he possibly could.

Jonah
“But Jonah arose to flee ...”

In Christ God has removed our sins.

Psalm 103:12

**As far as the east is from the west,
 So far has He removed our transgressions from us.**

But Jonah wanted to get as far away from God as east is from the west.

We conclude this look at Jonah 1:1-3:

The word of the Lord came to Jonah,
 But Jonah arose to flee from the presence of the Lord,
 And Jonah failed in his attempt to protect the honor of God.

The Tale of Three Cities: Gath-Hepher, Nineveh, and Tarshish.

What if God were not sovereign and merciful and Jonah had been successful in fleeing from the presence of the LORD? Well, one thing is sure, Jonah would be in hell. **Do not be a Jonah!**

In our next study we will see how God overrules Jonah.

Jonah 1:4
“But the LORD ...”

The message is the invitation.

**The elders of this church are available to counsel with you at any time.
 If you are troubled about your soul do not suppress what may be the
 drawing of the Father to show you your need for Christ.**

Jim Gunn