

Jonah, an Overview (p1 in series)

The book of Jonah has four short chapters. We must understand and keep in mind that it is a book about Jesus Christ and Him crucified and His grace to sinners (Matt. 12:39-41; 1 Pet. 1:10-11; 1 Cor. 1:17-31; 2:2). In chapters 1 and 2, we see the substitutionary work of Christ, verified by our Lord Himself. In chapter 1, mariners are saved from the raging sea when Jonah is cast into it. In chapter 2, Jonah spends three days and three nights in the belly of the whale/fish, which our Lord explains as a prophecy of His own sin-atonement and justification in His resurrection. In chapter 3 we see the mercy of God to hell-deserving sinners. In chapter 4, we see that salvation is out of God's goodness alone, and even a prophet sent by the LORD is not our Savior, but only Christ, out of God's great goodness. Hence, the overall message of the book of Jonah is God's sovereign salvation by Jesus Christ to hell-deserving sinners! Jonah summarized the entire book before the LORD told the fish to spit him out. He said, "SALVATION IS OF THE LORD!"

The book of Jonah is about a wicked people (Nineveh). It is about a disobedient prophet (Jonah). And it is about the one true and only sovereign God who alone can and does save sinners by Jesus Christ. The book of Jonah is about God's rich mercy to sinners in Christ, flowing from His throne (as a river, Rev. 22), from His own goodness alone, uncoerced, undeserved and unimpeded by all that oppose, to save His people by Jesus Christ (Ex. 33:18-19; 34:6-8; Eph. 2:4; Matt. 19:17)!

Thus, in all of this, we see the theme of scripture. God is good (Psalm 34:8; 100:5; 135:3; 145:9; Jer. 33:11; Lam. 3:25; Nahum 1:7). He alone is good (Matt. 19:17). Good is who God is. He is nothing but good. He can do no wrong (Gen. 18:25; Psalm 145:17). His goodness is seen in all of His works. But nowhere more than in His great love and rich mercy to insignificant, ungodly, sinful people, who as I, not only did not like to retain God in their knowledge, but who preferred their own way and their own honor and thought their own righteousness was praiseworthy by God! Oh, the depth of my depravity! Oh, the height of God's solitary goodness! May we know Jesus Christ and our God and Father in His goodness by His goodness in our salvation!

Names in Jonah enable us to admire the message and Messenger

"Every word of God is pure" (Proverbs 30:5).

15 From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. **16** All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: **17** That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly [] furnished unto all good works.

The book of Jonah is a prophecy. But the message is by the personal life experience and events of the prophet, and the words recorded by God of others, such as the mariners and the king and people of Nineveh. It helps to understand that Jonah is both the writer and the historical

character about whom he writes. Thus, it is an autobiography that prophesies of Christ and Him crucified and the salvation of sinners by Him, according to the will of God who is abundant in goodness and truth and mercy (Ex. 34:6).

Jonah's father is **Ammitai** = "my faithfulness", "my truth".

Jonah's name is **Jonah** = "dove".

Jonah's hometown was, **Gath-hepher** = "Gath" = winepress; "hepher" = pit: shame. Hence, winepress of pit/shame/digging (2 Kings 14:25; Joshua 19:13, Gittahhepher) Jonah's hometown).

The city of **Nineveh**, which was capital of Assyria = "offspring of ease: offspring abiding".

Summary of Jonah

Taking the names of these people and places together with the subject matter of the book of Jonah, and using Christ's own words from Matthew 12:39-41, we can surmise the following. The account of the events and words of Jonah's life in this autobiography is:

- The inspired words of the Spirit of God (He is like a dove, Matt. 3:16)
- God raised up a sinful man (Jonah) out of the pit and shame of this world (Gathhepher), to be His preacher. Christ sent him (1 Pet. 1:10-11). 'The Word of the LORD came unto Jonah' (Jonah 1:1). Jonah is the son of 'my faithfulness/truth'. The 'truth' is in Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6), and therefore, the only and all-sufficient Savior. The book is about God's salvation of sinners by Christ to God's glory. The people the LORD saved were heathen Gentiles, who enjoyed ease in this life, as did Sodom (Ezek. 16:49; Isaiah 1:9) and Gomorrah, but to these who were not better than they (Rom. 3:9-19), God showed mercy (Rom. 9:8-23).
- Hence, this book is the way God saves all of His people.
- But it is also the personal testimony of all of us, how God saves us out of His grace (Eph. 2:4-7-10), for Christ's sake alone (Rev. 12:11)!
- This book is God's testimony of future history by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, risen, exalted and interceding for the complete and perfect salvation of His people (Matt. 12:39-40; 1 Pet. 1:11; Heb. 7:19, 25)
- It testifies to and portrays the sovereign God of heaven (Jonah 1:9)
- Who alone is good in all of His ways (Psalm 145:17; Matt. 19:17)
- Who for His rich mercy, and for His great love (Eph. 2:4),
- By His exceeding great grace (Eph. 1:7),
- Though the wickedness of Nineveh offended Him and offended the rule of His throne of justice and truth (Jonah 1:2; Psalm 89:14)
- Yet He (but, yet, nevertheless — all words of grace, e.g., Psalm 106:4-8; Eph. 2:4) sent His prophet to tell sinners who showed no sign of being the elect of God, to tell them of His Son, who would come and offer Himself to God for us who were perishing under the just wrath of God (storm) (Jonah 1:12)
- Christ was thus crucified, died and was buried, but rose again, as is seen in Jonah being three days and nights in the whale's/fish's/hell's belly (Jonah 2:1-9)
- God spoke to the fish to spit Jonah out. God raised His Son from the dead (Eph. 1:19; Rom. 4:25).

- Having risen again from the dead, Christ sent His preacher (in this case, Jonah) to those for whom He died, with the message Christ gave him to preach (Jonah 3:2; Acts 26:16-18 — and so many more, such as Paul)
- So that by the preaching of Christ and Him crucified, the message given to Jonah by the LORD, with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven (1 Pet. 1:11) to attend and make that word effective in the hearts of sinners (Acts 2:39-41; 4:4; 10:44; 16:14), even to take out of the Gentiles a people for His name (Acts 15:14; 2:39), those to whom Christ sends His preacher, though justly under the condemnation of God for their wickedness (Jonah 1:2), they nevertheless hear by God's grace, and by His grace believe (Jonah 3:5-8) and turn to God by faith in Christ (Acts 20:21; 26:18).
- Jonah's message is told first to the mariners by his confession (1:9-10).
- And the message of the book of Jonah is told again when he told the mariners that by the will of God they must cast him into the raging sea (God's wrath) so that the sea might be calm to them (peace with God by the blood of Christ, Rom. 5:1, 9-10; Col. 1:19-22). This necessary action of theirs is a clear picture of the substitutionary, sin-atonement, curse-bearing death of the Lord Jesus Christ! The wrath of God we deserve is propitiated by the blood of Jesus (Rom. 3:24-25), so that Christ was delivered up to bear our sins and the death for our sins we deserve that we might not perish for our sins (John 3:13-21; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 1:18-25; 3:18; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Rom. 5:5-11).
- Revel in this, dear sinner, believing in Christ (Isaiah 45:22-25)! Praise God for it! Bow before Him and worship His Son for it, and the Father by Him!
- Jonah's confession (Jonah 1:9): "I *am* an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry *land*"
 - (v9) **I am His, Christ's**, an Israelite indeed (John 1:47; Gal. 3:29; 6:14, 16; 17:2-6, 9-10, 20; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; Gal. 3:29). All who are in glory with Christ at last were chosen in Him (Eph. 1:4), given to Him (John 17:2) and purchased by Him (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23)
 - (v9) **I fear the LORD**. All who fear the LORD in the beginning of God's work shall believe Christ in the end of His work (Php. 1:6). Fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. The one that fears the LORD is that awe-struck sinner beholding Christ as His all-sufficient Savior, and seeing His Judge propitiated in Him!
 - (v10) **I sinned against Him** (I have rebelled against His word and ways)
 - **Salvation is of the LORD** (Jonah 2:9)!
 - What a confession! This is mine too, and it is yours if you are Christ's! God be thanked (Rom. 6:17; Psalm 76:10; Gen. 50:20; Acts 2:23; 4:28)!
- In light of the rest of scripture, Jonah's message emphasizes the great judgment of God's wrath that is against us for our sins (Jonah 1:2; 3:4). But it does not end there. Thank God, it does not end there! It is also the message of the great grace of God that is in Christ alone! Mercy rejoices against judgment (James 1:10-16; 2:13)!
 - **He saved me** (Jonah, me, every believer), being crucified with Christ (Jonah 2:1-9; Gal. 2:19, 20)
 - **Nevertheless I live** (Gal. 2:20)

- **Yet not I** (Gal. 2:20), **but Christ liveth in me** (1 Pet. 1:11; Col. 1:27; Rom. 8:10-11)
- **And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God** (Gal. 2:20), **who loved me and gave Himself to me** (Rev. 1:5; 5:9).
- This same **Jesus sent me to you with the Holy Spirit of God sent down from heaven** (Jonah 1:2; 3:2; 1 Pet. 1:11; Acts 2:4-36;), **though I am a sinner like you** (Acts 15:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:15), **to tell you:**
 - (a) of certain judgment from God because of His wrath against us for our sins (Jonah 3:4; John 3:13-21, 36; 16:7-11)
 - (b) the great grace of God that is in Christ alone (Matt. 12:39-41; 1 Pet. 1:11-25; Isaiah 55:1-11; 52:7; Nahum 1:15)
 - Therefore, don't be proud, but humble yourself (Jonah 3:5-10; Luke 18:13-14) and look to Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Lamb of God (Isaiah 45:22-25; John 3:14-15)!
- Note, **because Christ was crucified, buried and rose again** (Matt. 12:39-41; Jonah 2) **He is seated on the throne of God** (1 Pet. 1:11; 3:18-22; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; Acts 5:31). His glorification and session there is for His elect, redeemed people (Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12). Because He overcame that judgment for us, and because we were judged in Him, He has sent His preacher (Jonah, Isaiah, Paul) to you with this message (Acts 2:30-36; 5:31) from Him: the message of good news from heaven (Isaiah 52:7; Nahum 1:15);
- Christ crucified, risen and reigning, having appeased the wrath of God (Psalm 85:1-10; Isaiah 12:1-2), satisfied His justice (Isaiah 45:22-25; 53:10-11; Rom. 3:24-26; 5:6-10; 1 Pet 1:18-25; 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Cor. 1:30) is the Gospel. The Gospel comes in the context of our sin. It comes in the context of God's justice and judgment that is against us for our sins. In light of His holiness of God and our persistent pride, idolatry, and self-righteousness; in spite of our wickedness; in light of the magnitude of our offense against God, the message of Christ sent to us is exceeding great grace from God out of His great love, all of which is in Jesus Christ His Son, and this is sent by God from Christ to ungodly sinners (Jonah 3:8; Eph. 2:4-7)!
- Upon hearing this message, the people of Nineveh heard and believed the LORD, and turned from their evil ways (Jonah 3:5-10). God's word always accomplishes His intent (Isaiah 55:11).
- But Jonah was grieved, even angry at the LORD (Jonah 4:1-2)
 - Though Israel after the flesh heard the Gospel, but did not believe, and so was not gathered to Christ (Rom. 10:18-21; Isaiah 49:5; Rom. 9:31-33-10:4), though Jonah spoke to Israel in the name of the LORD (2 Kings 14:25-27; 1 Pet. 1:10-11; Micah 7:18-20; Luke 1:68-75), yet Nineveh did hear and was gathered (Matt. 12:39-41). Nineveh did hear and was saved by Christ when they heard the preaching of Jonah (Matt. 12:39-41).
 - This sovereign grace of God angered Jonah. He preached to his own people (2 Kings 14:25). But most of them did not hear him (Rom. 9:1-5). Just as Jesus

preached to the Jews in His day (John 6:25-29), but most of them did not hear Him (Matt. 12:39-41; 23:1-37-39).

- Yet, their unbelief was not due to failure on God's part, nor failure of His word preached by His messengers (Rom. 9:6), but but arose out of their own evil hearts (Heb. 3:5-4:13)
- God's word never fails to accomplish His will, the purpose for which He sends it (Isaiah 55:11)
- God *never intended* to save all men, no, not even all in Israel who, with their fathers, heard for generations (Isaiah 1:2-10; 6:8-13; Acts 13:48).
- Jonah was angry because God saved the wicked Ninevites, Gentile Assyrians, the enemies of Israel who would take all of Israel captive in later years (10 southern). The prophet knew these things. He grumbled against God's goodness.
- But this same prophet wrote of his own pride and the proud Ninevites whom the LORD saved by the doing and dying of the Son of God as our Substitute.
- Therefore, Jonah ultimately answers against his pride and anger in obedience and submission to God for Christ (Acts 15:8-11, 13-18).

The book of **Jonah** ("a dove") is recorded by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, who descended from heaven like a dove and lighted upon Christ at His baptism, showing that the Spirit of God was upon Him, that His Father was well-pleased with Him, and that He Himself is all that the Spirit of God is: Truth, Grace, Comforter, Pure, Harmless, the one whom heavy-burdened sinners therefore welcome (Matt. 3:16-17; 11:28-30).

The book of Jonah gives the account of a snippet of Jonah's life. But the account and the words in it, serve as the inspired prophecy of the Spirit of God to tell of Christ and the unspeakable riches of God's grace sinners! Were it not for God's distinguishing grace and Christ's particular redemption, none would or could be saved!

I love Jonah's singular message and focus (simple, pure, without hypocrisy, as a dove, Matt. 10:16 — 'harmless'; Rom. 16:19 — 'simple'; Php. 2:15 — 'harmless'): "I am His. I fear Him. I have sinned against Him. **Salvation is of the LORD!**"

This is the message of the Gospel to sinners far and wide. It is to every kindred, tongue, people and nation. God will save His elect people! Though their wickedness (Nineveh and Jonah) come up before Him, He ordained peace for us by Jesus Christ. "**LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in [for, LITV] us**" (Isaiah 26:12; Psalm 57:2).

"Dove" calls to our minds the Spirit of God, who, breathes our scripture with the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, speaking to the hearts of chosen sinners through messengers sent by the risen Christ, to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified, in fulfillment of the purpose of God (Isaiah 55:11), with the result that chosen, wicked men are turned from pride and unbelief to faith in Christ (1 Pet. 1:12; Acts 10:44; 16:14; 13:48; 26:16-18; John 6:63; Rom. 8:1, 2-4, 9-11; Jonah 3:5-9; Gal. 2:19-20; Jonah 2:1-9). If you believe Christ, it is because of this grace, to which you were ordained by God in Christ before the foundation of the world (Acts 13:48)!

The Spirit God as a dove descended and stayed on Christ. The Spirit of God was given by the Father to anoint Christ, the Son of Man, without measure (Matt. 3:16; John 3:34).

The Spirit of the LORD is called by various names in scripture, all of which we see in the words and life of Jesus. He is "The Spirit of Truth" (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13), "The Spirit of Life" (John 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6; Rom. 8:2, 10-11), "The Spirit of Grace" (Heb. 10:29), "The Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9; 1 Pet. 1:11), "The Spirit of God and of glory" (1 Pet. 4:14). He speaks through messengers chosen and sent by God. "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:21). He speaks of Christ crucified, risen and reigning (1 Pet. 1:11).

- He speaks of salvation by Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and of Christ's exaltation and glory thereby, as do His ministers (1 Pet. 1:10-11).
- He is "the Comforter", and comforts by directing sinners with almighty, saving power to Christ alone.
- His words, His doctrine, His message is truth: Jesus Christ, crucified, risen and reigning for the salvation of sinners to the glory of God in His Son. This is the good news from heaven. These are the words of peace and pardon and comfort from heaven by the blood of God's dear Son (Isaiah 40:1-2, 3-8 with 1 Pet. 1:18-25; Isaiah 52:7; Nahum 1:15; 2 Cor. 1:3-4; Matthew 11:28-30).
- God the Father sends His Spirit. When the Spirit of God comes to Christ's people, He was sent by the Father (John 14:16-18). When the Spirit of God comes, He is Christ coming to live in us and give us life and make Himself known and enable us to believe Christ (Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27; Rom. 8:9-11; Acts 10:44; 1 Pet. 1:12).

"**14** I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; **17** *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. **18** I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." (John 14:16-18).

- He is pure, without mixture, without hypocrisy, harmless, easy to be entreated (James 3:17; Matt. 11:28-30).

"Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, *and* to triumph in thy praise" (Psalms 106:47).