

Commentary Notes - Jonah

by Walter Beuttler

Walter Beuttler's sermon on Jonah explores themes of disobedience, God's mercy, and the power of repentance and prayer.

Scripture: 2 Kings 14:25, Jonah 1:1, Jonah 2:1, Jonah 3:1, Jonah 4:1, Matthew 12:38

Topics: "Prophetic Ministry", "Divine Providence"

Description

Walter Beuttler preaches on the book of Jonah, emphasizing its prophetic story nature and historical authenticity validated by Christ. He delves into the life of the prophet Jonah, highlighting his obedience, disobedience, and the lessons in service he provides. The message of the book reveals God's struggle with man's will, the universality of redemption, and the power of divine providence. Jonah's first and second commissions showcase his perversity, chastisement, obedience, displeasure, and prayer, illustrating God's ability to deliver from the most hopeless circumstances.

Transcript

A. THE BOOK OF JONAH

1. The book of Jonah is not a prophecy, but a prophetic story
2. It is an inspired account of Jonah's personal history in relation to his mission
3. This book forms one of the battlegrounds of modern destructive criticisms, being considered to be only an allegory, rather than having historical authenticity
4. The historical character of the book of Jonah is vouched for by Christ in Mat. 12:38-40 and most probably is likewise authenticated in 2 Kings 14:25-27

B. THE PROPHET JONAH

1. Nothing whatever is known of the prophet Jonah other than that he was from Gath-hepher, 2 miles north of Nazareth, 2 Kings 14:25
2. Jonah uses remarkable simplicity in his account and introduces miracles naturally and without any effort
3. To Jonah miracles are not incredible workings of God, therefore he makes no attempt at explanation as a special appeal to our credulity

4. According to Matt. 12:38-42, Jonah was a type of Christ in his entombment and resurrection
5. He was obviously also a type of his own nation miraculously preserved though cast out, but eventually calling upon Jehovah in their deepest distress and, like Jonah, finding deliverance
6. From the standpoint, of the nature of his message, he was the prophet of judgment, but from the standpoint of his disobedience he was the self-willed prophet
7. Jonah provides a lesson in service in that he is

(1) disobedient, 1:1-11;

(2) afflicted, 1:12-17;

(3) praying, 2:1-9;

(4) delivered, 2:10;

(5) recommissioned, 3:1-3;

(6) effective, 3:4-9;

(7) perplexed and fainting but not forsaken, 4:1-11 (Scofield)

C. THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK

1. God's difficulty with the will of man
2. The danger of false patriotism
3. The universality of redemption with God as the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews
4. The nature of true repentance and the response of divine forgiveness
5. God's pity for man and beast
6. The futility of man's effort to frustrate the divine purpose of grace
7. The power of divine providence

(With due acknowledgment to Pulpit Commentary)

JONAH'S FIRST COMMISSION, 1:1-2:10

A. JONAH'S PERVERSITY, 1:1-3

1. What was Jonah's message to Ninevah, 1:2? Not repentance, but judgment
2. Make a descriptive statement concerning:
 - (1) Nineveh, 1:2 - This was indeed a "great city" on the east bank of the river Tigris and the capital of Assyria
 - (2) Tarshish, 1:3- This was the Phoenician colony of Tartessus west of modern Gadiz, in southern Spain

(3) Joppa, 1:3 - This is modern Jaffa, a little over thirty miles northwest of Jerusalem

3. Why did Jonah select Tarshish? Probably because it was the farthest point west that Jonah knew about in the opposite direction from Nineveh

4. In disobeying God, Jonah did not only go from Joppa, but from what, 1:3? From the presence of the Lord

5. A valuable principle of divine guidance is seen in 1:3. Point it out: Favorable circumstances are not necessarily a sign that we are in the will of God

6. Comment on the fact that Jonah "paid the fare thereof," 1:3: We always pay the fare for the course of disobedience

B. JONAH'S CHASTISEMENT, 1:4-17

1. Note the various incidents in the story of the storm which show the overruling power of the providence of God as seen in:

(1) 1:4 - God sent a mighty tempest which put the ship in jeopardy

(2) 1:7- God caused the lot to fall upon Jonah exposing him as the cause of the mariners' plight

(3) 1:15- The casting forth of Jonah into the sea as a means of saving the ship

(4) 1:15 - The cessation of the storm witnessing that:

a. The storm was indeed of divine origin

b. Jonah was evidently the cause

c. The mariners were not held responsible for Jonah's fate

(5) 1:17 - The special preparation (not necessarily creation) of a great fish ("appointed," R.S.V.)

(6) 1:17 - The preservation of Jonah in the belly of the fish for three days and nights

2. Account for Jonah being "fast asleep," ("asleep and snoring," Septuagint) under these circumstances: He was fatigued and worn out with mental anxiety and emotional strain.

JONAH'S SECOND COMMISSION, 3:1-4:11

A. JONAH'S OBEDIENCE, 3:1-10

1. What comforting truth may be learned from 3:1? That the first disobedience does not necessarily deprive us of another opportunity

2. Comment on 3:2. God now speaks in a tone of austere authority demanding implicit obedience

3. How did Jonah respond, 3:3? Jonah was now as prompt in obeying as he was in fleeing

4. The announcement of the pending overthrow of Nineveh had what effect, 3:5-9? It brought about the repentance of the inebrites

5. Comment on:

(1) 3:5 - The people believed God and humbled themselves in token of their penitence

(2) 3:6 - The king left his throne of authority and laid aside his robe of dignity and honor to join in the national humiliation

(3) 3:7 - The Ninevites' penitence was so deep that even the domestic animals were made to share in their masters' fast and sorrow so that even their bleating and bellowing were so many appeals to heaven for mercy

(4) 3:8-9 - The national mourning was not a mere matter of formality, but a sincere repentance manifested in a change of their evil ways

(5) 3:10 - God responded to the Ninevites' response by not sending the threatened judgment inasmuch as they repented

B. JONAH'S DISPLEASURE, 4:1-11

1. How did Jonah react to God's mercy for Nineveh, 4:1? In exceeding displeasure and anger

2. What do we learn from 4:2?

(1) The reason for Jonah's earlier disobedience, namely his anticipation that God would spare Nineveh if they repented

(2) His awareness of the character of God, namely that in mercy he would threaten in order to arouse the people to repentance

3. How is Jonah revealed in:

(1) 4:3? As prone to self-pity

(2) 4:4? As being unreasonable

(3) 4:5? As being more desirous of his own vindication than of the sparing of Nineveh

(4) 4:6-10? As having more pity for himself than for a multitude of people

4. The fact that Jonah had told the mariners in 1:10 what happened shows what? That Jonah was troubled about having fled from the presence of the Lord

5. What is the most likely explanation of the prepared fish, 1:17? That God caused the already existing fish to be at the right place and swallow Jonah

6. Comment on the frequent incredulity to which the story of the fish has been subjected:

(1) Certain species of shark and whale are known to be capable of swallowing a man

(2) The white shark of the Mediterranean, which sometimes measures twenty-five feet in length, has been known to swallow a man and even a horse

C. JONAH'S PRAYER, 2:1-10

1. Comment on Jonah's prayer from:

- (1) 2:1 - Although having fled from the presence of the Lord and being imprisoned in naturally hopeless circumstances, Jonah resorts to prayer unto the Lord HIS God
- (2) 2:2 - Jonah's prayer is not merely a quiet meditation but an earnest and loud cry caused by his severe affliction
- (3) 2:3 - Jonah recognizes and acknowledges that his plight is not due to the mariners who cast him into the sea, but to the intervention of God resulting from his disobedience
- (4) 2:4 - Although aware of the divine displeasure, he dares to look again to God
- (5) 2:5-6 - Jonah's hopeless situation did not prevent God from bringing deliverance
- (6) 2:7 - Even though he was in despair, Jonah turned his thoughts back to God
- (7) 2:8 - Jonah now recognizes that one's own ways and aspirations are but a deceiving mirage leading to disillusionment
- (8) 2:9 - With this new recognition added by the pressure of his circumstances, Jonah is brought into submission to the sovereignty of God
- (9) 2:10 - With the submission of his obstinate prophet now accomplished, God speaks the word of deliverance and causes the fish to deposit Jonah on dry land - probably the coast of Palestine from which he fled

2. What may be learned from Jonah's prayer as a whole? That God is able to deliver from the most hopeless circumstances

3. How is God revealed in:

- (1) 4:4? As being reasonable with unreasonable man
- (2) 4:6-10? As being patient with a discouraged recalcitrant without compassion
- (3) 4:11? As being full of pity toward man and beast

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