

Jonah 1: Jonah Runs And God Catches...

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[0 : 00] If you want to open up your Bibles, we're in the book of Jonah this morning. And if you're in a pew Bible, the ESV pew Bible, it's on page 658, the NIV pew Bible, it's 1436.

If you're like me, what I end up doing is just find in the middle of my Bible and start going left. And so I'll just look until I hit Jonah, and eventually I get there.

Do you know what word associations are? The word association is when someone says something and then you say back the first thing that comes to your mind.

So if I say day and, you would say day and night. Peanut butter and? Jonah and the?

Whale. That's right. When you think of Jonah, you're probably thinking about a prophet in the belly of a big fish. And the book of Jonah is so much more than that.

[1 : 02] And so Jonah is unlike many other prophetic books because Jonah will focus on seven words of the prophet Jonah in Jonah 3.

But really the book of Jonah is about the life of Jonah. It's a biography of Jonah. It's about God's call on Jonah to preach a message of repentance to a distant and dangerous people.

We'll get there in a second. Jonah is a very dramatic, vivid book with a lot of changing scenes. I mean, chapter 1 takes place on a boat being ravaged by a tempest in the Mediterranean Sea.

And then chapter 2 takes place in the belly of a whale. Chapter 3 takes place in the city of Nineveh. The capital of Assyria in the 8th century.

And we're actually brought into the very throne room of Nineveh. And then in chapter 4, we find ourselves on the outskirts of Nineveh with Jonah.

[2 : 07] Where Jonah awaits and is hoping for God just to lay bare the city of Nineveh. But what Jonah gets is an object lesson in God's mercy and kindness and pity.

Jonah was a real person. All these events happen. This isn't a parable. This isn't an allegory. This is a historical account.

And this historical account teaches something to us. It's didactic. You see, ultimately, the book of Jonah is about God.

About God's heart for those who are perishing. For those who are lost. And so, over the next few weeks, we're going to learn a lot about God's heart.

And we're going to learn about some of our wayward tendencies. In God's call on our lives. But here's what's going to ring true. Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

[3 : 13] Anyone. Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. We see that happening in chapter 1. We'll see it happen in chapter 2. We'll see it happen in chapter 3. Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be delivered.

Our prayer. My prayer. Is that as we go through the book of Jonah. God will form in us His evangelistic heart for all people.

For people to come to know Him as the God over all. As the God who saves. As the one true God. And as a result, my prayer is that we as a church will seek to make Christ known to those who are perishing in our city. That God will burden us with a heart for the lost.

So instead of a word association when you associate Jonah with a whale. I think what we're going to realize is the association with Jonah is this.

[4 : 21] When you hear the word Jonah. You'll need to be thinking God's heart for the lost. Because everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Jonah chapter 1 has two scenes in it. It's a great story.

Two scenes. The first scene is this. Jonah runs from God. Second scene. God catches Jonah. So let's dive in and let's look at this.

So scene 1. Verses 1-3. Jonah runs from God. Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai.

Saying arise. Go to Nineveh the great city. That great city. And call out against it. For their evil has come up before me. Right from the beginning we're introduced to a particular name of God.

[5 : 22] You see that word Lord? In your Bibles do you see how it's all capitalized? L-O-R-D. They're all capital letters. Underneath that is the Hebrew name Yahweh.

The personal name of God. This is the name God revealed himself to Moses in Exodus 3. When Moses revealed that he was going to deliver his people from Egypt.

And so what from the beginning we're introduced to is God, Yahweh, is the deliverer. And he has a message for Jonah to proclaim to a particular people.

Which brings us to this guy named Jonah. Jonah son of Amittai. There's not much spoken of him here. It was just like Jonah son of Amittai. This is the guy. But in 2 Kings 14.25, Jonah, the son of Amittai, is referenced.

It's the same guy. And so that allows us to place him at a certain place in time. And so Jonah was a prophet during Jeroboam 2. He was a prophet in the northern kingdom of Israel in the 8th century B.C.

[6 : 38] And here's why that's interesting. Jonah was a prophet in Samaria in the northern kingdom of Israel right before Samaria was sacked.

Do you remember who sacked Samaria? Assyria. The Ninevites. And so this prophet is going to go preach the message to the people who will eventually be used by God to sack Samaria.

Speaking of Nineveh. Nineveh. Its remains lie on the Tigris River on the outskirts of modern day Mosul, Iraq.

It was the capital, the nerve center of Assyria. And though all Assyrians were image bearers of God, they were notoriously aggressive and brutal.

They were a major player for imperial dominance in the ancient Near East. They were very proficient at psychological warfare.

[7 : 49] As one of my seminary profs would say, they were one of the early terrorists. For example, after defeating a city, it wouldn't be unusual for the Assyrians to impale people from that city.

Impale them anally with a huge, huge pole. And then they would dig a hole and put the butt end of that pole in the hole. And they would lift this person up as a flag of sorts.

A spectacle that showed the Assyrian dominance. It would have been graphic. It would have been terrifying. But it wasn't just one person they would do this to. They would surround the city with these kinds of flags after they would defeat it.

They were brutal people. These are not innocent Ninevites. They were conducting a campaign of terror in the ancient Near East.

This is the Assyria Jonah knew. Jonah is called to do something. He's called to call out against the city of Nineveh.

[9 : 00] He's called to call out against it. To preach against it. To say, stop doing what you're doing. It was a message of repentance. And we're told why Jonah is called to preach against it.

For their evil has come up against me. God, Yahweh, was aware, thoroughly aware, of the sinfulness of these Ninevites.

And so God has called Jonah to go and preach against them. They've done evil in God's sight. God is holy and just.

He does something about it. Now, what's really interesting here is this. The Assyrians worshipped a different God than Yahweh. But notice.

Even though these Assyrians did not acknowledge Yahweh to be their God. God holds them accountable for their sinfulness.

[10 : 09] For their evil that has risen to Him. The God of the Bible is the God of all nations. All people everywhere are accountable to Him.

Whether they acknowledge Him as their God. Or even if they acknowledge His existence. God never sweeps evil under the rug. So what this means for us is this.

Everyone in the city of Kenosha is accountable to God. Everyone. Everybody in the city of Kenosha is accountable to God. And just as God sent Jonah to make known a message to a people, God is sending us to make a message known to the city of Kenosha.

To call people to repentance and faith in Christ. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

God sends Jonah to Nineveh.

[11 : 19] And so it should be no surprise to us that our Savior King Jesus tells us to go to the nations to make disciples. What we see here is God's great missionary heart.

He has always had a heart for all people to worship Him with everything they've got. This sense of arise, go, call.

In Jonah 1-2, there's urgency to that. There's priority to that. In verse 3, we see Jonah's response. And it kind of takes us by surprise, doesn't it? Jonah responds immediately. We've got to give him that. Look at verse 3.

But Jonah rose to flee. He's getting out of town. He jumps on the first ship to Tarshish. Now, that might sound weird in your ears.

[12 : 25] Tarshish. Tarshish. Everybody, just try to say Tarshish. 1-2-3. Tarshish. It's not easy to say. Now say Tarshish.

1-2-3. Tarshish. There's something to it, isn't it? Feels good coming off the lips. Notice Tarshish shows up three times in verse 3.

But Jonah rose 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 on board to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

There's some emphasis. Do you know why? Tarshish was most likely the most westerly city in the known world of the time.

So where Jonah was, he was in northern Israel and he used to go east to Nineveh. And so what Jonah does, he's like, I am out of here.

[13 : 26] He jumps on the first ship he can get onto. Pays a fare. He'll probably be on the ship for a year to get to the most westerly, remotest place on the face of the earth.

Jonah's on the run. Jonah's on the run. He doesn't want to go to Nineveh. And this is blatant disobedience.

Willful disobedience to God. God's not thrown by it though. We'll see that in a second. The other phrase that you need to see here is from the presence of the Lord.

It's also repeated twice in verse 3. Jonah wasn't just trying to get away from Nineveh. He was trying to get away from his God. He wanted to get as far away from God as he could.

And the very fact that he jumps a ship just shows how desperate he is. Jews were landlubbers. They didn't like going on ships. He jumps a ship to be on it for a year to get to Tarshish.

[14 : 37] He's desperate. He wants out. But you know what? We're never told why. We'll learn why in Jonah chapter 4.

I got a question for you this morning. Are you running from God's call on your life?

As a Christian, are you running from God's call on your life to make Christ known to those who are perishing around you? Are you avoiding it? Do you have your head in the sand?

You might not jump a ship for Tarshish, but maybe you've sought to escape in some other way. Let me just point you to something.

Aren't you glad that when God the Father sent Jesus the Son to come and die and be raised again, aren't you glad that Jesus didn't run the other way?

[15 : 37] Aren't you glad that Jesus came, the ultimate missionary for us? Well, scene one ends with Jonah on deck of a Phoenician ship sailing to Tarshish.

I love saying it. And we're left with tension. Because seriously, who runs from God and it's okay? There seems to be conflict.

There seems to be conflict between God and Jonah. How's this kind of thing turn out? You know how a ship has its name written on the stern, on the back?

You know what I'm talking about? If you walk down by the marina, you'll see things like the Mary Jean or Wind Walker or Bobby 2. Jonah gets on this Phoenician ship and in his mind, that ship's name is the Escape.

But what we're going to see happen is God has already got this ship named, baby. This ship is called the Prophet Catcher.

[16 : 46] And little does Jonah know that he's on board. And Jonah may run, but God is going to catch him in order to change him. And not only is he going to change Jonah, he's going to catch and change a crew of polytheistic sailors.

And he's going to change them. And then eventually, God is going to do a change of Jonah that's going to result in 120,000 Ninevites repenting.

It had to happen. This is God's mercy, what we're about to read. So scene one, Jonah is on the run. Jonah runs from God, but God's not freaking out.

Scene two, God catches Jonah. All right, here's a technical note. There is an unfortunate break in your ESV Bible.

If you're reading in the ESV Bible, in between verse 6 and verse 7, there's a heading that says, Jonah is thrown into the sea, which is true. But it's unfortunate because verses 4 through 16 are all one beautiful unit.

[17:55] They shouldn't be interrupted. And that unit, 4 through 16, is carefully designed to hold together to make a really important point.

I want to show you what that point is in just a second. But scene two starts with God hurling a great wind onto the sea.

And it forms a tempest. And it is chaotic. And these mariners on this boat start freaking out. Now these guys, they've done a lot of sailing.

And so for this to make them so afraid in verses 4 and 5, it means this was a crazy storm. Crazy. And what we see in verses 5 and 6 is that these sailors, these seasoned sailors, start crying out. Each cries out to his own God.

[18:56] Do you see that there? It's very important to note that. There's going to be a change. They start striving. They lighten the load.

And in contrast, Jonah goes down below deck and is sleeping. Now I'm not a psychologist. But there's something weird going on there. Do you know what I'm saying? Crazy storm.

Guy sleeping down there. He's like in denial. He doesn't care. Well, the captain goes down. Wakes Jonah up. And he says something very interesting in verse 6.

So the captain came and said to him, What do you mean, you sleeper? What are you doing sleeping? All hands on deck, buddy. Arise. Call out to your God.

Now look at verse 2. Arise. Go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it. Jonah would have got the point. God's there.

[19:54] Jonah, wake up. You're on the prophet catcher. I'm doing a work. The captain wakes him up.

There's an echo of God in that. He doesn't want these people to perish on his boat. Verse 7, there's a sense of panic and dread on the ship. Sailors are asking for an explanation of what's going on.

And so they do what they only know how to do to get an explanation. They cast lots, which is a way of kind of divining direction. Who can explain this to us?

They cast lots. God into sovereignty pulls up who? Jonah. And so these sailors, in verse 8, come to Jonah and pepper him with questions.

And what they're essentially doing is, Jonah, will you explain the lot fell on you? Why is this happening to us? Splash. Splash. And then in verse 9, we have the very first quote of Jonah.

[21:02] Jonah, the first thing he says in the book of Jonah. What's happening to us? Jonah says, I wasn't there, so I don't know.

I am a Hebrew. And I fear the Lord. The God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land. If I were one of the sailors, you know, I'd be like, okay, okay, okay.

Okay, you're a Hebrew. I pick up on the accent. I buy it. Okay, okay, okay. You fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and dry land.

Okay, I'm familiar with Genesis 1 enough to know that Yahweh made the sea and the dry land. I get it. I get it. But you fear the Lord?

Jonah, Jonah, you want a ship bound for Tarshish? Captain just woke you up. What do you mean you fear the Lord?

[22:11] It rings hollow. And it's supposed to. Because it is. There is a major gap between Jonah's profession and his practice.

Jonah is saying one thing, I fear the Lord. But he's doing another. He's running in disobedience. I know the Jonah complex.

Do you? Your profession doesn't match up with your practice? Do you? Do you? Do you? Do you? Do you? Do you? Do you? Do you? Do you? Well, we turn to verse 10 and these sailors, in great contrast to Jonah, they hear what he says and they were exceedingly afraid.

The Hebrew reads, they feared with a great fear. And they say, what is this you have done? They knew he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord.

He told them. And so these guys are putting it together. Jonah's God, Jonah's God, the Lord, Yahweh. He is the one behind all this. And it seems that Jonah and his God have some unfinished business and we're getting caught up in it and his God is amazing.

[23 : 36] Their fear is a real fear. Not a professed fear. They really are afraid. They really are aware that they are in the presence of a God who is doing something that is way beyond them.

The irony is thick. Jonah, the prophet, who's supposed to know God, doesn't really fear God. And he was sleeping.

And these sailors, who are polytheistic, they were worshipping all sorts of different gods when they got on board this boat. So, these polytheistic sailors are now encountering the one true living God and their response is what Jonah should have been.

Fear, reverence. What do we do? How do we respond? How do we respond? The sailors, realizing that they have an expert in Yahweh on board, in verse 11, starts saying, Jonah, you know this God. What do we do? How do we stop this? Tell us what we must do to be saved. Jonah. But Jonah doesn't point to God.

[25 : 03] He points to himself. In verse 12, Jonah gives the explanation. We're in this mess, guys, on account of me, so throw me in the sea, and the sea will be made quiet.

And when you read that, it's really hard to know as you're reading it whether or not Jonah is being noble or he's just kind of thrown in the towel. You don't know. And it's intentional.

The author of Jonah wants you not to know. He wants you to be experiencing some tension. In verses 13 and 14, the sailors strive for Jonah.

They dig in their oars. They try to make it to land. Jonah didn't care about these sailors, but these sailors cared about Jonah. Ironic. They dig in and they start moving to land, but God in His sovereignty clicks up the intensity of the storm.

They're going nowhere. And so these sailors are only left with one option. And they realize Jonah's God is limiting them to just one option.

[26 : 24] And that option is to throw Jonah into the sea. And it's in verse 14 that something really amazing happens.

Would you look at verse 14? Therefore they called out to the Lord, O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life and lay not on us innocent blood for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.

Lord, O Lord, O Lord. Yahweh, Yahweh, Yahweh. Yahweh, Yahweh, Yahweh. They are crying out, not each to his own God, they are together crying out to the one true God, Yahweh.

You see what happened? At the beginning of this section, they were polytheists. God is now moving them towards monotheism and the fear of the one true God, Yahweh.

These sailors know that they are in the hands of Jonah's God and they've realized that they are accountable to Him. That's why they say, don't hold this man's blood against us.

[27 : 40] What happens here is that these sailors are calling on the name of the Lord. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. They call on Him and God does something amazing.

In verses 15 and 16, the sailors throw Jonah into the water and remember, you see what happens? Quiet. It might ring a bell.

At the end of Mark 4, Jesus speaks a word to the Sea of Galilee and there is silence. God is sovereign over these things.

This account ends with these sailors throwing Jonah into the sea and the result is peace.

Deliverance. God has delivered them.

Yahweh has delivered them. They then fear a great fear. They're no longer panicking. They're worshipping. They make sacrifice.

[28 : 49] They make vows. To who? To the Lord. Yahweh. These sailors have turned from trusting in false gods to trusting in the one true God.

God has not only caught His wayward prophet, but it seems as though He's caught some wayward sailors and He's changed them. There's something about this passage that you can't see with English eyes.

It was originally written in Hebrew and there's something going on here that's worth pointing out.

But in order to do that, I've got to talk weddings. You ready? We married a couple here yesterday.

It was great. Huge wedding. Massive wedding party. Typically what happens is a wedding party, groomsmen and bridesmaids will come down, walk arm in arm down this center aisle and they will

move out and we'll have bridesmaids on this side and groomsmen on this side.

You know what I'm talking about? And so they pair and then they separate and what happens is you have both sides of the wedding party kind of filling in and moving towards the center.

[30 : 06] all in anticipation of the coming in of the bride and the bride and the groom standing together in front of everybody.

We have that going on in this passage. If you'll notice at the beginning of chapter 1 verse 4 and 5 and at 15 and 16 you have someone hurling something into the sea.

fear. And then there's great fear. And then there's calling out. And what happens in this is that there is a movement in these verses towards verses 9 and 10 which is where the author wants our eyes to fall.

And there lies the emphasis of this passage. Fear. And it's in contrast to each other. Jonah says he fears the Lord but he really doesn't.

These sailors really do. And it's ironic because the prophet who's supposed to fear the Lord doesn't. And these polytheistic sailors who are not supposed to fear the Lord they do.

[31 : 19] and the result one is delivered the other is thrown overboard. The sailors are delivered.

The prophet's thrown overboard. What this is all pointing to is the importance of fearing the Lord. Everyone anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

The point of this passage is this. God is willing and able to deliver anybody who calls on him.

The sailors were willing but Jonah was not. God delivers the sailors but Jonah is thrown into the sea. So you could say something like this.

The prophet catcher caught the prophet but then threw him back. But he wasn't done. As we'll see next week starting in 117 God has had a bigger plan all along.

[32 : 27] In order for God to change this prophet's heart he had to get this prophet into a whale. And then in the whale what you'll see is this prophet crying out to God.

Salvation belongs to the Lord. Making sacrifice. Making vows. There's a couple things I want you to see. God's heart has always been that all people in all places would call upon him with all their heart.

I'm just going to close with a passage from Malachi. Malachi. Malachi 1.11 From the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations for I am a great king says the Lord of hosts and my name will be feared among the nations.

Word association. Day and night. Peanut butter and jelly. Jonah and God's heart for the lost.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved. Let me pray. Oh God, would you help us to not only fear you with all of our hearts but God to be faithful to your call on our life to make Christ known to those who are perishing.

[34 : 04] We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.