

Brad Harbaugh • North Carolina • 2600 Fairview Rd • Raleigh, NC • 27612 • 919-649-5208 • brad.harbaugh@capitolcom.org

Last week's study analyzed the thoughts and intents of Jonah's action to flee from God. The process of unpacking Jonah's heart revealed God's heart of compassion for all people. God is compassionate. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to repentance and be aligned with the True Shepherd of their souls. (I Peter 2:25; II Peter 3:9) But God is not just a God of mercy, He is also just and must address evil. Thankfully, God's grace, mercy and compassion are His strong suite, but His longsuffering does end. There is a point in which God must act and carry out His justice. This was the situation when God called His prophet Jonah to "arise, go and condemn" but Jonah resigned. What happens when a prophet resigns? Let's find out...

Review:

Jonah was a popular prophet in Israel.

- He prophesied the King's expansion predicting that Jeroboam II would regain all the land Solomon had during days when the Assyrian empire was the ruling world power. (1 Kings 14:25)
- **JONAH SON OF AMITTAI MEANS: "A PURE PROCLAMATION THAT YAHWEH IS FAITHFUL AND TRUE"**
- **This new ASSIGNMENT to Nineveh WAS UNPRECEDENTED. JONAH WAS THE FIRST PROPHET IN HISTORY TO GO BEYOND ISRAEL'S BORDERS WITH A MESSAGE FROM GOD.**

1. When God must carry out Justice...He first pursues Mercy!

Jonah 1:1-2 (ESV)

¹ Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ² "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me."

The Lord, YHWH, gave Jonah three clear commands:

The Hebrew text of v. 2 begins with two imperatives, "Arise, go" (*qûm lēk*). The first imperative functions adverbially to give the command to go in a sense of immediacy (cf. NRSV "go at once"). This is a definite and firm call from the Lord. The prophet was given traveling orders, and the destination was Nineveh.¹

The third imperative is translated "call out against it". This imperative (*qara' 'al*) combines a verb with a preposition and connotes disapproval and warning.²

If the book ended with these first two verses, it would uphold what many (incorrectly) believe about God. That He is one who looks down from heaven seeking a group of sinners to squash. But that is an incorrect view of God! The text continues and presents God as not quick to destroy. He persistently pursues mercy! God wants to send His prophet to warn Nineveh so they might repent and be saved from God's wrath. (Jonah 4:2)

Today: 1) God's understanding of Evil 2) God's persistent pursuit of Mercy towards both Nineveh and Jonah

1 God's Awareness of Evil

"for their evil has come up before me" (Jonah 1:2c)

- That is, their wickedness is so great as to require {The Lord's} open interposition for punishment.⁴
- The New Living Translation captures the compounding effect of wicked offenses, Jonah 1:2 (NLT) "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are."

The phrase "has come up before me" is used throughout the Bible—(Genesis 4:10; 6:13; 18:21; Ezra 9:6; Rev 18:5)

Here are a few observations of evil from these texts:

- Genesis 4:10 [Shortly after Cain murdered his brother Abel] "...the voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground."
- Genesis 6:13 [The days before Noah's Flood] "God said, I have determined to make an end to all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them."
- Genesis 18:21 [Just before God destroys the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.] "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave."
- Ezra 9:6 [Israel's repentance after finding the Book of the Law in the temple rebuild, after returning from exile] "O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached the heavens."
- Revelation 18:5 [The end times description of judgment on Babylon] "...for her sins are piled up to heaven and God has remembered her crimes."
 - 1) Evil is cannot be hidden from God
 - 2) Evil causes those affected (the victims), even creation itself, to cry out to God. God hears these cries.
 - 3) Evil acts produce guilt internally because God's Law is written upon every human conscience. (Romans 2:15)
 - 4) God's Law when understood forces a decision of either repentance or rejection of God's truth.
 - 5) Evil acts accumulate, pile up.
 - 6) Evil activity rises up to God and at a point must be addressed by God. The time determined seems to be directly related to God's plan for history, the cries of victims and the balance of God's love and justice.

¹ Smith, B. K., & Page, F. S. (1995). *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah* (Vol. 19B, p. 224). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers. Jonah

² Youngblood, Kevin J., *JONAH* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan 2013)55

³ Ibid.

⁴ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Vol. 1, p. 683). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

- 7) The way of national/personal escape of God's wrath toward our sin requires understanding our own evil by God's definition, repentance and forgiveness by God.

What observations would you add?

2. Jonah's Choice Against God

- a. **Jonah arose! But not to obey, he fled from God!**

Jonah 1:3-4 (ESV)

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 down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord. ⁴ But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up.

Instead of going up to Nineveh, (Northeast), Jonah goes down to Joppa (Southwest). Joppa is today's modern Jaffa, about 35 miles west of Jerusalem.

- b. **A hasty resignation - "he finds a ship going to Tarshish"**

Lordship is "ALL IN" but Jonah acts "All Out" Note: When you want to disobey God, there is always a ship waiting!!

In reality, Jonah makes a hasty decision to flee 2500 miles away from the Lord to Tarshish. A quick decision that was, in effect, a hasty resignation as God's Prophet. Tarshish was not just as far away from Nineveh as a person could go, it meant long term commitment.

2 Chronicles 9:21 (NASB95)

²¹ For the king had ships which went to Tarshish with the servants of Huram; **once every three years** the ships of Tarshish came bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks.

Discuss:

How hard is it for a man to know his way when he chooses not God's way? Jonah had a pressure to "react" with haste. Where is this pressure coming from?

(Bible helps: Proverbs 14:12, Jeremiah 10:23; Mark 7:21-23)



- c. **A hardened heart**

Tarshish was a major life change decision that represented a choice of sustained rebellion against God. Warren Wiersbe calls Jonah a "backslidden prophet who mistakenly thought he could witness for the Lord when he wanted."⁵

⁵ Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Jon 1). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Bavli Nedarim 4:3 "R Yohanan said of Jonah 1:3 that Jonah paid for the rent of the whole ship. R. Romanus said, the fee to rent the ship was four

backslidden people do not want to worship God and Tarshish was a place where Jonah could avoid worship of the Lord (YHWH). Deuteronomy 12:4-12.

3. Jonah's self-direction leads him down

You cannot miss the contrast presented in the text. Jonah rises up but goes down.

"Down to Joppa, down into the ship, down into the sea, and down into the great fish. Disobedience always leads downward. But note that often things seem to "work out" even for a backslidden believer, for the ship was waiting for him and he had the money to pay the fare. He was so at peace that he was even able to go to sleep in the storm!"⁶

4. Jonah's disobedience cost him...a lot!

Money:

Ancient Jewish tradition suggests Jonah paid to rent the entire ship for his journey. This cost him a lot of money, historical sources say 4000 gold denarii.⁷

Jonah 1:4-10 (NASB95)

⁴ **The Lord hurled a great wind on the sea** and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. ⁵ Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten *it* for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep.

God's merciful pursuit of Jonah begins with a storm. (Can you relate?)

What else did rebellion against God cost Jonah?

Jonah 1:4-10 brings out that "He lost God's voice, for now God had to speak to him in a storm. He lost his spiritual energy and went to sleep in the hold of the ship. He lost his power in prayer, and even his desire to pray. The heathen were praying, but Jonah was sleeping. He lost his testimony with the men on the ship, and he lost his influence for good, because he was the cause of the storm. He also almost lost his life."⁸

"Satan will always tell you what it costs to adjust your life to obey Jesus Christ, but Satan will never tell you what it costs not to adjust. I asked God to help me always to know what that cost is!" – *Henry Blackaby, Experiencing God.*

The main character of Jonah, chapter one, is not Jonah, but God. Jonah 1 presents these precepts; 1) no matter how much God pushed out of your life, He is still present. 2) No matter how far you run, God is still there. 3) God's mercy relentless pursues!

June 7 Legislators Prayer Breakfast

Legislators Dining Room Tuesday 7:30 AM

All Legislators welcome!

Monday June 6 Staff Bible Study Noon, Chapel

thousand gold denarii." cited in Neusner, Jacob., *Habakkuk, Jonah and Obadiah in Talmud and Midrash: a Source Book* (New York:University Press of America, 2007) 86 cited by Kevin Youngblood, *Jonah*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2013)56

⁸ Ibid, Wiersbe.



Jonah
Prophet on the Run
May 2016

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