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The heart of YHWH (God) revealed in the historical account of the book of Jonah, (786-746 BC), was articulated by God the Son, Jesus Christ, who said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.

Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already, because He has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." (John 3:16-18a NIV84) Jonah was given a direct command by YHWH (God) to "Go and condemn" Nineveh, for "its wickedness had come up before God." Why would God warn them? Jonah fascinates the reader with a story of God's amazing grace to people who do not deserve it, ... people just like you and me!

The Book of Jonah - Why study it?

- 1) A man in history. II Kings 14:25 Jonah served God as a Prophet of Israel during reign of Jeroboam II, (793-753 BC)
- 2) Jonah is compared to Jesus Christ by Christ Himself, as a sign for His resurrection. (Matt. 12:39-41; Luke 11:9-32)
- 3) Jonah is a compact Theology book, filled with precepts that describe God's person and heart.
 - a. God's Law reaches beyond the borders of Israel.
 - b. God's Law is universal and is written upon the hearts of all people. Romans 2:15
 - c. All people stand condemned by God's Holy Law and can only be saved from God's wrath by being forgiven by God. (This was the reason why Jonah was given direct orders to 'go and condemn'. So people in Nineveh had the opportunity to repent and experience God's Amazing Grace.) The New Testament clarifies: Romans 6:23; 10:13-15

- 4) JONAH SON OF AMITTAI MEANS: "A PURE PROCLAMATION THAT YAHWEH IS FAITHFUL AND TRUE"
- 5) GOD GAVE JONAH AN ASSIGNMENT THAT WAS UNPRECEDENTED. JONAH WAS THE FIRST PROPHET IN HISTORY TO GO BEYOND ISRAEL'S BORDERS WITH A MESSAGE FROM GOD.

Jonah 1:1-4 (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." 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.

Introduction:

When someone does something out of character, it begs the question -why? Jonah refused to follow God's direct and clear command. Why did he refuse to preach to Nineveh? What in the world was Jonah thinking? The text gives an answer.

1. Jonah's Fear Would Not Let Him

"Archaeology confirms the biblical witness to the wickedness of the Assyrians. They were well known in the ancient world for brutality and cruelty. Ashurbanipal, the grandson of Sennacherib, was accustomed to tearing off the lips and hands of his victims. Tiglath-Pileser flayed victims alive and made great piles of their skulls."¹

"Go to that great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." Jonah 1:2

D.A. Carson translates this verse "preach to it because its trouble is of concern to me." Either way, scholars seem to agree that the phrase preach against it implies personal involvement. Jonah had to be there and in a non-directive fashion announce imminent judgment, leaving it to his hearers' conscience to judge why it was coming.²

What Jonah heard was an assignment born from God's compassion on Nineveh, not an assignment that would necessarily result in judgment on the city.³

God's assignment did not make sense to Jonah, it was most definitely out of his comfort zone, especially to go to the barbarian Assyrians!

Jonah read Exodus and Deuteronomy which teach the precept that God's work done in God's way brings God's blessing. However, his fear of man stood above His fear of God.

¹ Smith, B. K., & Page, F. S. (1995). *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah* (Vol. 19B, p. 225). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

² Ibid H. L. Ellison suggests that the translation "preach against it" may imply that Jonah was more personally involved in the message than the Hebrew expression (qāra' plus 'al) justifies. He prefers the JB translation: "Inform them that their wickedness has become known to me." In a nondirective fashion "Jonah had merely to announce imminent judgment, leaving it to his hearers' conscience to judge why it was coming." Wherever the verb qāra', "cry out, proclaim," occurs with the preposition 'al, however, it describes an appeal for or an announcement of the Lord's judgment against someone or something (cf. Deut 15:9; 24:15; 1 Kgs 13:2, 4, 32; 2 Kgs 23:17).

³ Stuart, D. (1994). Jonah. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 818). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

When a person fears man more than God, he is setting himself up to be afraid in his entire being. Why? Isaiah 26:3
Is clear “God will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.” **How is Jonah’s trust?**

2. **Jonah’s National Zeal Would Not Let Him**

Jonah gives the reader his thoughts before he fled to Tarshish. “...O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.” Jonah 4:2-3

Jonah sounds like a child with a toy saying, “you are my God and I am not sharing You with them”. Jonah grew up with Assyria as the world dominating leader. Assyria was headline news every day. As mentioned previous, the Assyrians were wicked in their power and oppression. Although, at this time in their history Assyria had internal struggle. This was part of the reason Jeroboam II could expand his kingdom. II Kings 14:25
Jonah struggled with God’s plan because his national zeal was clouding his judgment. Can you begin to see his internal struggle? God is gracious and will forgive our nation’s enemy!? Jonah’s statement in chapter 4 tells the reader that he knew great attributes of God but they were interpreted through the lens of national zeal. Jonah thought, why would God want to forgive our enemy? That is not the way the God of Israel should act? Jonah allowed the experience of his national life in Israel to narrow his understanding of God.

Jonah is walking out on God. He is voting no to this amendment.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO ALLOW POLITICAL ZEAL TO CLOUD AND EVEN KEEP A PERSON FROM FOLLOWING GOD’S WORD?

WHAT WOULD YOUR COUNSEL TO JONAH BE AT THIS MOMENT IF YOU WERE HIS NEIGHBOR AND SAW HIM PACKING TO FLEE FROM GOD, and KNOWING THE SITUATION?

IF GOD IS ALWAYS RIGHT, THEN OUR EFFORTS SHOULD BE TO UNDERSTAND “RIGHT” FROM GOD AND ACT ACCORDINGLY.
Would you agree?

3. **Jonah’s Cultural View of God Let Him**

“Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish.” Jonah 1:3

Why and where is Tarshish?

- The ship was bound for Tarshish, probably Tartessus in southern Spain, about 2,500 miles west of Joppa. Since Tarshish was a Phoenician colony, the ship’s sailors may have been Phoenicians. Phoenicians were known for their seagoing vessels and skill on the seas.
- DA Carson *Tarshish*, sometimes a place name, means ‘open sea’. Jonah hoped to run *away from the Lord* by taking a sea-going ship from the Philistine port of Joppa out into the Mediterranean to a distant site. He probably didn’t care which.

OT prophets could be used by God even if their theological understanding was not perfect in every area, and Jonah’s theology apparently included, incorrectly, the virtually uniform ancient idea that a god had power only in those places where he was actively worshipped. **Away from Israel, Jonah hoped to be away from God’s power to make him do what he didn’t want to do.**

How easy cultural views of God deceive when God clearly reveals Himself in His word.

Notice: Even though God makes it very clear that He does live where He is not worshipped (Nineveh). Jonah didn’t get it! He allowed cultural views of God to crowd out truth about God. He grabbed hold of the God who isn’t instead of the God who is!

Jonah found a way to go forward running away from God, but God promises to give us a way out obeying Him.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

God’s way of escape is staying under the pressure, obeying Him and enduring the pressure of the moment. It is not fleeing outside the will of God.

4. **Jonah’s God (YHWH) stayed with him!**

Think about it

Jonah ran away and made choices that seem to really mess up God being able to use him. One of the amazing threads of this little book is the big picture God sees. God is not exasperated about Jonah’s disobedience. God uses Jonah’s rebellion for Jonah’s good. **God is longsuffering and gracious!**

“God’s plan is realistic. It is not an idealistic blueprint that He must revise every time you fail or miss the mark. It takes into account the mistakes and failures He knew would occur, even your sins. They grieve him deeply, but He never says, “Oops! What should I do now?” {God} has both the wisdom and the power to weave your wrong decisions and actions into the best possible outcome for you and those around you, as well as for his greatest glory. He has the wisdom and power to do this. But the outcome is always best for you if you do His will in the first place. His will is always easier on you, though it may not be easier for you.”⁴

GOD IS FOR YOU!

Next Legislators Bible Study: May 31, Tuesday
7:30 AM LOB 414 All Legislators welcome!

Next: Staff/ Intern Bible Study Monday June 6
Chapel at Noon.

⁴ Warren and Ruth Myer, *Discovering God’s Will*, (Colorado Springs: NAVPRESS, 2000)