

Date: 2 Oct 2022

Scripture Passage: Jonah 1:1-17

Title: Running Away From God

Introduction

- Jonah was one of three “minor prophets” to the northern nation of Israel, after the nation split into two. The other two prophets were Amos & Hosea. The book is a historical reality meant to teach spiritual lessons.
- In this study we see how God’s commands are to be obeyed, not contradicted. Those who disobey will be afflicted.

The hidden motive (v 1-3)

- From 2 Kings 14:23-27, we know Jonah was an experienced preacher. His behavior appeared childish, but he was likely going through a crisis of faith. This was because so deeply imprinted was the belief that Israel was the special people of God that command to preach at Nineveh triggered the crisis. In 2 Chronicles 11:16, we saw that many moved to the southern nation of Judah. But Jonah remained in the northern nation of Israel and faithfully preached when others were silent. We should put ourselves in the shoes of Jonah, and not jump to judgement. He was struggling internally. "The heart knows its own bitterness, And a stranger does not share its joy (Prov. 14:10)."

The exposed fugitive (4-12)

- Jonah had a crisis of faith such that he was oblivious of others around himself. He was asleep and was not bothered by his surroundings. He asked the mariners to throw him into the sea and did not do so himself. But when confronted by the mariners, Jonah instinctively bears witness to Jehovah (v9). As Christians, we ought to be bearing witness of the gospel in our everyday life.
- The mariners were afraid, rightly attributing their situation to Jonah’s rebellion against Jehovah. Jonah's sin was found out. When the mariners asked Jonah what must be done to calm the sea, the response of Jonah appears bizarre. But seeing this in light of personal crisis of faith helps explain the situation. The mariners acts of worship in v 16 indicate that Jonah had told them more about God than is recorded. “Your sin will find you out (Num. 32:23).”

The divine corrective (13-17)

- Mariners had enough decency not to throw Jonah overboard immediately. They tried hard to save everyone, but were not successful. Then they cried out to Jehovah, the God of Jonah, for forgiveness before dumping Jonah overboard. When the sea became calm immediately, the men “feared the LORD exceedingly” (v 16). They ended up worshipped the true God. Even in rebellion, Jonah made to show forth God’s mercy. God’s will is not altered, but we have to bear consequences of rebellion & disobedience.
- A big fish swallowed Jonah up alive. Note, it was Jehovah who prepared the fish to be there, to swallow him up without hurting him. He was in the belly of fish three days & three nights, pointing us to Christ’s death on cross (Matt. 12:40).
- In the Old Testament, the sacrifices offered and vows taken, are to point us to Christ’s atoning death. We ought to cling to the cross, repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, whose death on the cross atoned for the sins of his people. And Christ's righteousness is imputed to those who trust in Him.