

Jonah and the Sailors – Part 1

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – God hurls a storm at the ship in which Jonah flees, and the sailors throw him overboard
2. aim – To cause us to understand that there are deep consequences to disobedience
3. passage – Jonah 1:4-17

b. outline

1. The Storm Rages Over Jonah (Jonah 1:4-5)
2. The Sailors Confront Jonah (Jonah 1:6-10)
3. The Sea Receives Jonah (Jonah 1:11-17)

c. opening

1. the **nature** of the pericope
 - a. **again:** the outline based on a *parallelism* twice-over repeated, followed by a *conclusion*
 - b. **today: B¹:** Jonah and the sailors (**1:4-17**)
 - c. this pericope is *sandwiched* between Jonah's disobedience and Jonah's grateful prayer
 1. it is *important* in that it represents what happens when a man is disobedient to the *explicit call of God* (**i.e.** in contrast to what happens when a man is *obedient*, **e.g. B²**)
 2. yet, it is *not the main point* of the narrative – it explains *how* God "righted" Jonah's disobedience, but it doesn't add (or subtract) anything from the *point* of Jonah going to Nineveh to preach
 - a. **e.g.** it seems (**IMO**) that the only part of this story ever remembered is Jonah in the fish
 3. **IOW:** it is an *indented point* between **A¹** and **C¹** – interesting and instructive, but not particularly *necessary* to the overarching point of the book (**i.e.** a message re: the sovereignty of God *even over nations* through *both* his compassion and his wrath, which he uses *as he sees fit*)
 - a. certainly, this passage represents God's sovereignty *over Jonah* – but that is *subtext* to his *greater sovereignty over nations*, nations of people (Israel and Assyria) *defying him as God*

I. The Storm Rages Over Jonah (Jonah 1:4-5)

Content

a. the storm is sent by the Lord (v. 4)

1. "*the Lord hurled*" = in response to Jonah's disobedience, God *specifically* acts
 - a. **providence** = the work of God *in time and space* to accomplish his purposes; the "actuating" of his decree by *involving* himself in the affairs of nature and humanity *through the use of means*
 1. deism = the belief that God is "distant" from his creation, allowing it to simply "play out"
 - b. **means** = specific elements of the created order through which God acts, sometimes *directly* (primary), sometimes *indirectly* via the choices and actions of others (secondary)
 1. **e.g.** acts of evil are always *secondary* means – God may *ordain them* to accomplish his purposes (such as Judas' betrayal, or Pilate making an evil choice to crucify Jesus), but he does not *directly* cause or act with evil intent
 2. **e.g.** the preaching of the gospel is a *means* of God bringing his people to faith; prayer is a *means* (sometimes!) used by God to accomplish his will (**i.e.** asking him as a part of it)
 - c. **ITC:** an example of a *primary means* of God accomplishing his will – God *directly* sends a "*great wind*" upon the sea to afflict the sailors and get Jonah's attention
 1. **note:** the storm itself is *not* evil, even though it put the sailors in jeopardy – it is a part of the natural order which God used to complete his commission over Jonah
2. "*the ship threatened to break up*" = the storm was strong enough to put the sailing vessel (and its crew and cargo) in jeopardy – this was *not* just a thunderstorm ...
 - a. **IOW:** God sending a storm **to get Jonah's attention (maybe!)**

b. the storm terrifies the sailors (v. 5a)

1. **note:** it is undoubtedly true that these men were *experienced "mariners"* – they had many encounters with storms on the Mediterranean, so their response indicates the **intensity** of the storm
 - a. they attempt to *mitigate* their destruction by "lightening" the ship (**i.e.** tossing the cargo overboard)
 - b. **i.e.** the ship rides "higher" in the water so that it does not get overcome with high waves

2. “each cried out to his god” = the sailors on this ship were *probably* of various ethnic backgrounds, each coming out of a different form of paganistic religious practice (*i.e.* no Israelites other than Jonah)
 - a. **principle: there are no atheists (Romans 1:20f)** – every human being *instinctively knows* that there is a Creator, and *under great pressure*, “resorts” to some sort of *religious expression*
 - b. *i.e.* (pagan) religion is simply the “expression” of the *Imago Dei* out of people suppressing the knowledge of the One True God; or (in many cases) out of people who *have no light given by God* and stumble around in the dark looking for something to call “god”
 3. **question:** is God *free* to act in such ways over humanity? is God free to a) cast storms over the lives of men without their consent, and/or b) to withhold from men the knowledge of himself?
 - a. **careful:** it is the *primal sin* of humanity that suggests that God is *not* free act as he wills – the *intrinsic* nature of the flesh *strongly suggests* that we are the “governors” of our experiences
 1. *i.e.* (in the midst of crisis) to assert that pain is “unfair” *because we did not ask for it*
 - b. **reality:** it is *easy* to uphold and defend the sovereignty of God when all is well – it is *far harder* to embrace it when life gets hard – thus, **the time to prepare is before the storm**
- c. the storm fails to awaken Jonah (v. 5b)**
1. Jonah is “fast asleep” in the belly of the ship, *even while this great tempest tears the ship apart*
 - a. **why:** how can Jonah *sleep* through such a thing? **answer:** Jonah has so convinced himself of the “rightness” of his choice (*i.e.* his conscience is so “seared”; **1 Tim. 4:2**) that he sleeps right through
 - b. *i.e.* Jonah is **oblivious** to his own sinfulness – he is *so convinced* that his choice was right that he sees *no danger* in running from the Lord (he sleeps “like a baby”, with no thought to his actions)
 2. **mirror:** Jesus *also* sleeps in the bottom of a boat while a storm rages around him (**Luke 8:22ff**)
 - a. on some unknown occasion, Jesus and his disciples go across the Sea of Galilee – a storm arises and the disciples (some experienced seamen) are afraid for their lives
 1. Jesus rebukes the storm, and then rebukes *them* for their lack of faith
 - b. **ITC:** Jesus sleeps soundly **for a very different reason** – in his case, his conscience is *fully convinced* of his *obedience* to his Father, knowing that his *destiny* is a cross, not drowning
 1. Jonah is the **evil mirror:** he sleeps convinced he is doing right *because his conscience is seared* by his own evil choice (and because he *despises* what God has told him to do)
 2. **principle: the Christian must always be “examining himself” (2 Cor. 13:5)** – we must *never* take for granted that our choices are pure and right, but always be examining ourselves against the light of Scripture, to assure ourselves that our conscience is truly clean and right with God

II. The Sailors Confront Jonah (Jonah 1:6-10)

Content

a. the captain awakens Jonah (v. 6)

1. “what do you mean, you sleeper” (“how is it that you are sleeping” NASB) = how can you sleep through such a storm as this? don’t you realize the *danger* we are all in (**see above**)?
 - a. the captain (and the others; **see v. 7**) believe that there is some **causal connection** (link) between the *individuals* and the *storm* – **IOW:** this is *more* than just “get up and help us”
 - b. **IOW:** at this point, the sailors have done everything *humanly* possible to save their own lives, now they must pursue *other avenues* to survive (*i.e.* into the “religious”)
2. “arise, call out to your god” = make an *intercession* before whatever “god” that you worship; maybe he will relent of this calamity so that “we may not perish”
 - a. **consider:** these *polytheistic* sailors are unsure which “god” is responsible for their calamity
 1. **IOW:** this is why the captain awakened Jonah: we need “all hands on deck” to make every appeal to whatever “gods” we can think of – maybe we can “find” one that will help ...
 - b. **reality:** the *vast majority* of the world’s religions were/are **polytheistic** – the corruption of the *Imago Dei* in Adam’s Fall convinced humanity of a *pantheon* of gods *made in our image*
 1. *i.e.* we *reflexively* view the “divine” as a *population of deities* similar to ourselves (as gods)
 2. because ... everything man corrupts, he does by “rearranging” it according to a view of *himself*
 - a. **e.g.** the *deeply entrenched* man-centered “theology” of modern evangelicalism
 - b. **e.g.** *secularism* claims to be “free of religion”, but it is one of the most *polytheistic* forms of religious expression, where (literally!) every man is a god, the “priests” are the *influencers* of perversion between men, and the “sacraments” are rites where personal autonomy is celebrated (**e.g.** abortion, gender transition, etc.)
 - c. **IOW:** modern “gods” are fictional *constructs* devoted to happiness, and take many shapes

3. **ironically:** the Israelites, *from which Jonah had fled*, had also become deeply polytheistic by embracing the “gods” of the Canaanites (**i.e.** in a form of *syncretism*)
 - a. a reality (**you remember**) Jonah had “overlooked” in his zeal to pronounce favor upon Jeroboam II and the N Kingdom (one that Amos and Hosea had to deal with)
 - b. this makes Jonah’s “confession” (**v. 9**) so very interesting ... (**see below**)
- c. thus ... it is *the captain* who comes to Jonah as the *means* God uses to awaken him to his “plight”
 1. **i.e.** the *storm itself* was ineffective in getting Jonah to “see the light” – the captain went down into the hold to awaken him, and Jonah (now!) sees that he (and the others) are in danger
 2. now ... Jonah must actually *face* his peril – there is nowhere to run from here (well, maybe one)
3. the Christian religion is the *most pure* form of **monotheism** = that there is only one God (no *pantheon* of gods), and that *we* are not “gods” in our own right
 - a. and ... this one God **entered into his own creation in the form of a man**
 - b. **reality:** the *singular* God comes to *polytheistic* men *in the form of a man*, to show them:
 1. a) the one *divine being*, b) that there are no *others*, and c) that humans are not *divine*
 2. and ... he comes to show that there is only *one way* to the *one God* ...
 - c. **the Son of God demonstrates conclusively that no one is God but God himself**
 1. thus **the Supper** is a testimony, *by his own*, that they have *abandoned* all other “gods” (self-righteousness, religion, self-divinity) to put their eternal destiny **in the hands of the One who came to reveal the Living God**