

Jonah 05 – True Reality: Death and God

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Jonah 2

Understanding Prophetic Language

- Each type of literature uses language in a unique style
 - This is clearly acknowledged in the world of literature
 - One does not read poetry as one reads novels
- This is clearly as true in the Bible also
 - Prophetic literature has its own unique style
 - Conceptually based changing chronology or history

Avoid Tendency to Allegorize

- Only God understands heavenly concepts for man
 - Scripture must define Scripture
 - Later Scriptures can redefine earlier Scriptures
- Do not arbitrarily assign your meanings to Scripture
 - Occurs when readers worldview does not understand writer's worldview
 - Man *fills-in* the gaps of knowledge - Leads to confusion

Look from Writer's Perspective

- Jonah was chosen as much for his perspective
 - Salvation
 - Knowledge
 - Prejudices
 - Fears
- If reader does not understand these then the scope of interpretation is limited, and can be erroneous

Jonah - Skin in the Game

- The Mission: Give Gospel message to Assyria also had consequences on Jonah affecting his actions and revealing his *hidden* fleshly weaknesses OM 10:26-28
 - Jonah was an advisor to king of Israel - Treasonous Body
 - Repentance required Assyrians to reject their gods for his God - Treasonous Body
 - Disobedience to God is rejection of God - Treasonous Body & Soul

Jonah Fears Death

- Rather than condemn Jonah out of hand for his obvious [to us] disobedience of God
 - We should see it from Jonah's perspective: Facing Death
 - His Israeli king would kill him for supporting enemy
 - Assyrians would kill him for disrespecting their Ashur
- Jonah represents the agonizing choice we all face: the consequences for obeying God in the World - Death

Jonah Dies in the Ocean

- No person can long survive in tempestuous waters
 - Jonah dies quickly from drowning
 - Fish swallows *free*, non-struggling meal
 - The body is dead - Price of disobedience
- The soul remains alive - Jonah is not his body but his soul (as we) and he discovers a new reality

Jonah Encounters True Reality

- Shed of his body he experientially understands truth of death apart from God
 - The death that he would condemn others to endure for eternity he is now enduring for a season
 - He calls out to God in faith knowing of God's mercy and long suffering
 - He knows he will be saved; but, what of Nineveh?

Waters and Darkness

- Two most important elements to Jonah are the waters and the darkness
 - Waters we have discussed at length representing the sinful forces at work in this creation
 - Darkness is the active force of sin at work in us and through us in the world
 - Jonah is at the mercy of both of these forces

Picture of Sheol – Hollowness

- Jonah is powerless, finding himself dragged to Sheol
 - Belly (hollowness) of Sheol is an actual place
 - Predominate quality of Sheol is darkness (Job 6:21)
 - Terror of Sheol is a force (water) that prevents escape
 - He is dragged down into this place, powerless to escape
- Jonah has one defense: He can pray to God for life

Darkness & Water Old Friends

- Present together at creation (Gen 1:1-5)
 - First three days of creation is the imposition of order upon the chaos of darkness and water
 - Light is introduced but it is the Light of Christ (John 1:1-9)
- Remain together throughout this material creation
- Both banished from the new creation in eternity future (Rev 21:1, 22:2)

Psalm 107 Describes Jonah (Ps 107:30-36)

- The Psalm describes in detail the hopelessness one experiences when one's sin has produced only darkness
 - They had rebelled, choosing to live in sin
 - Sin oppressed them preventing escape at their hands
 - Metaphors of darkness and bars of iron trapped them
 - They knew God but had rejected Him until in their sin
 - Now they pray to God and He frees them in mercy

Psalm 107 Describes Jonah (Ps 107:23-32)

- They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business on great waters - Metaphor for life: Describes Jonah
 - Jonah experienced the tempestuous seas, and death
 - Now, he cries out to God in the midst of his troubles
 - God will hear him bringing him to his desired haven
- This is Old Testament view of peirasmoi {testings} that reveal our absolute need for God continually; we forget

Sheol Not Just for Men

- Demons also fear the abyss {belly of Sheol} (Job 41:6)
 - When Christ cast out Legion, he asked if Christ was tormenting them before the appointed time
 - Asked Christ not to cast them into outer darkness (Lk 8:26-31)
 - They will be released by Lucifer for a season during the Great Tribulation (Re 9:1-6)
 - Lucifer and demons will enter abyss for almost 1,000 (Re 20:1-3)

Why Was Jonah Sent to Nineveh

- Gentiles were in great darkness (Is 9:2)
 - Christ never intended salvation to be only for the Jews
 - It was the Jews who intended salvation to be only for them {Talmud, Midrash, Mishna}
 - In this day He sent Jonah to teach them truth of Him
 - In His day He brought Light {Salvation} to the Gentiles
 - Salvation is the Light that subdues darkness of sin (Is 8:12)

Christ Reveals Sheol (Lk 16:19-31)

- Sheol was the Dark and Paradise the Light
 - Sheol was the abode of darkness and torment the Rich Man experienced
 - Paradise was the abode of light and comfort Lazarus experienced with those who had also arrived
- Christ preached His victory to both during His three days in the earth (Mt 4:8-10)

Jonah Remembered the Lord

- It is not remarkable that Jonah remembered and cried out to God nor that God heard his prayer
 - It is remarkable that God answered his prayer
 - Jonah expressed true repentance for his sin
 - Jonah expressed true faith that God would save him because of God's grace
 - Jonah knew he would see Jerusalem again, sacrificing to God and giving testimony to the Jews: Grace to Gentiles

Salvation Belongs to God

- Jonah's confession of faith comes from God and proves he is saved: "Salvation belongs to the Lord!"
 - The sailors promised to sacrifice to God; out of reverence and fear, not out of faith
 - Jonah promises to sacrifice only in Jerusalem demonstrating his knowledge of God and faith that God would bring him back from Nineveh: He would not die there, nor would he return to Israel and die

Jonah Vomited Up on Land

- The fish cannot digest Jonah, vomiting him onto land
 - Jonah is resurrected in answer to his prayer
 - Jonah's directive from God still stands
 - Jonah directs his steps in accordance with God's will
- Jonah's epiphany did change him but he still had his body of flesh; thus, he was only partially changed which occurs to all who follow Christ (1Co 15:42)

We Are All Jonah's

- Jonah is the archetypical Christian (Ro 7:18-24)
 - We have the new nature (1Co 5:17)
 - We remain in this body of flesh that sins
 - We are powerless to do the good our new nature desires
 - What we do are the works of the flesh powered by sin
- Christ allows peirasmoi to reveal to ourselves our sin

We also have Jonah's Hope

- As Christ raised up Jonah, becoming the *sign* for Him
 - He gives us grace to rest in Him (Ro 7:25)
 - The indwelling Spirit guides us if we will but follow
 - Faithfulness is not *doing* for Christ; it is *following* Christ
- When we stand at the Bema Seat (1Co 5:10-15; 2Co 5:10)
 - Our deeds for Him will be wood & hay, burnt as loss
 - His deeds in us will be gold tried by fire, given to Him