

THE BOOK OF JONAH

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I. Introduction

A. No book of the Bible has been subjected to more scorn and ridicule by the skeptics than the book of Jonah.

1. Yet no book of the Bible is better authenticated than this one.
2. The Lord Jesus Himself vouches for its historicity and literalness.
3. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matt.12:40). The Lord uses Jonah as a type of his own death and resurrection. Matt 12:40
4. In spite of these unmistakable words of our Lord, men have continued to discredit the book and make it a mere allegory.
5. The attack upon Jonah comes from three sources.

B. The first attack is by the skeptic who rejects the entire story as a myth.

1. We should not be surprised at this for the scriptures teach us that spiritual things must be spiritually discerned.
2. Jesus said; except a man be born of God he cannot SEE

C. The second attack is by those who do accept the inspiration of the book but deny it is a literal event.

1. They consider it a parable or an allegory with great spiritual lessons but not a record of actual fact.
2. This is an error because Jesus calls Jonah a "prophet" (Luke 11:29)
3. If Jonah's experience was not literal by the same kind of reasoning we can allegorize Jesus' death and resurrection.

D. The Third Attack is more subtle than the first two.

1. Sincere, earnest and godly men who would defend the infallibility of the book and Jonah himself have been used to take Jonah out of the realm of the miraculous and reduce the account to the level of natural possibility.
2. These sincere defenders of the faith claim its entirely possible to explain Jonah's sojourn in the fish on purely natural grounds.
3. They compass land and sea for some form of whale that can swallow a man whole without crushing him.

4. There are cases on record that prove such events have taken place and these are used as proofs of Jonah's experience.

5. The attempt to produce proof that the biblical account is true is a subtle form of unbelief.

E. God expects us to believe Him without any evidence other than His Word; we must accept it by faith.

1. I would remind you that Jesus' answer in Matt 12:40 was in response to the unbelieving Pharisees who asked for proof

Matt 12:38. (Master we would see a sign from thee)

2. What was His answer - Matt 12:39 - an evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, no sign shall be given~ but the sign of the prophet Jonah.

3. Faith in the book of Jonah is an acid test of orthodoxy.

II. Jonah is a Book of Miracles

A. It was a miracle Jonah was preserved three days and three nights in the belly of the fish - he normally would have been digested.

1. It was a miracle that a gourd could spring up overnight and be used to give Jonah shade from the heat.

2. It was a miracle that a little worm could destroy that vine in a matter of moments.

3. This book is full of miracles but the only one questioned is the one about Jonah being swallowed by the fish.

B. We hear nothing about the supernatural gourd, or the worm, or the stilling of the storm.

1. The reason is quite obvious, Jonah's death in the fish and his resurrection are a picture of the gospel of Christ.

2. Satan and his emissaries hate the gospel They will swallow the storm, the gourd, the worm, the vine but that fish story, is too big a mouthful to swallow.

III. Jonah Had a Divine Commission (1:1)

A. God gave Jonah his orders and expected his servant to obey.

1. God's first word to Jonah was arise. Evidently he was sitting or lying down at the time.

2. He was at ease, enjoying himself while an entire city was rushing to its doom.

3. Jonah was an easy going lackadaisical person, this was implied in his name.

4. Jonah means Dove - mild, harmless, meek, peaceful. We would in modern parlance call him a phlegmatic.

B. He was not only at ease when God called him - later in his disobedience we find him fast asleep in a terrible storm.

1. How sad that believers can be asleep in the midst of a storm.

2. It reminds me of Paul's words to the Romans 13:11-12

It is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. (Rom. 13:11,12)

3. Listen again to Paul in the book of Ephesians

Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil

(Eph. 5:14-16).

C. That same commission is our commission.

1. The word of the Lord to Jonah was "arise and go"

2. That is the word to every believer in every generation.

3. Nineveh represents a lost and needy world heading for judgment and condemnation.

4. Though millions are wandering without the gospel of Jesus Christ, the church is just going through the motions of coming

to church.

5. Most of us feel that is sufficient but it isn't. God wants us to do what we can to bring someone under the sound of the gospel of Christ.

6. Like Jonah we have settled down enjoying our salvation.

D. We have closed our eyes to those around us. How long has it been since you have talked to someone about their soul.

1. What proportion of your time and talent do you give to share the gospel with others.

2. God would cry out to us as the ship master did to Jonah in 1:6. What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not (Jonah 1:6).

3. Whether we like to face it or not, those who have not received the gospel of Christ will die in their sin.

4. What are we doing to rescue people from sin and judgment.

5. If you feel ill equipped to share the gospel with them will you at least bring them to this chapel where they can hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

6. The gospel is the good news that Jesus died for our sin according to scripture and that He rose again that we might receive the forgiveness of sin and the acceptance of the Almighty God.