

Jonah

Romans 15:4

INTRODUCTION:

- A. **Romans 15:4** – “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”
- B. Of the 2,930 Bible characters, the man for whom the 32nd book of the Bible is named, is indeed most interesting.
1. Positioning:
 - a. Of the 39 Old Testament books, his is the 32nd in our arrangement.
 - b. 31 have come before it and 7 will follow it before the Old Testament section of our Bible closes.
 - c. 10th book among the total of 17 prophets.
 - d. 5th book among the 12 minor prophets.
 2. I speak of the Book of Jonah.
 - a. 4 chapters
 - b. 48 verses
 - c. 1,321 words
- C. There is uniqueness about Jonah. Several things can be said about Jonah that cannot be said about any of the other Minor Prophets.
1. Jonah is the only Minor Prophet where miracles play an important role.
 2. Jonah is the only Minor Prophet whose major activity takes place on foreign soil.
 3. Jonah is the only Minor Prophet who preaches to a foreign people.
 4. Jonah is the only major Old Testament character taking a trip on the Mediterranean Sea.
 5. Jonah is the only Minor Prophet mentioned by Jesus.
 6. Jonah is the only Old Testament character Jesus likened Himself to.
Matthew 12:39-41 – “But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.
40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.
41 The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.’”
- D. Jonah was from Gath-hepher.

1. Located three miles north of Nazareth in lower Galilee, thus making Jonah a prophet of the Northern Kingdom of Israel but not to the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
 2. The village is today called Mash-had.
- E. Background:
1. Jonah was from the region that would later be known as Galilee.
 2. One Jewish tradition holds that Jonah was the son of the widow of Zarephath whom Elizah raised from the dead in 1 Kings 17:8-24,
 3. Jonah was a contemporary of Jeroboam II, 13th king in the Northern Kingdom of Israel (782-753 B.C.)
 4. He ministered after the time of Elisha and just before the time of Amos & Hosea.
 5. He lived in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
- F. Many powerful spiritual lessons are to be found in the Book of Jonah.
1. There are four chapters.
 2. In each of the four chapters Jonah is running in a particular direction.
 3. I submit that everyone is running in one of these four directions. Let's note them for the value of study they may be to us.

CHAPTER 1 – JONAH IS RUNNING FROM GOD

- A. God told Jonah to go one way Jonah went the other. In fact he went in the direct opposite direction from what had commanded him.
1. Nineveh was located some 500 miles to the northeast.
 2. Tarshish was located some 2,000 miles to the west. Perhaps will you better recognize it by its modern designation, Spain.
 3. Although Nineveh was northeast of Gath-hepher, Jonah set out to the southwest to the city of Joppa, the modern day Tel-Aviv area in Israel.
 4. Exact opposite of the direction God wanted Jonah to travel. Jonah deliberately traveled in the wrong direction. He was running away from God.
- B. Jonah wanted to run away from the presence of the Lord.
1. **Jonah 1:3** – “But Jonah arose 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 from the presence of the LORD.”
 2. **Jonah 1:10** – “Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, ‘Why have you done this?’ For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.”
- C. Jonah displayed a very recognizable part of human behavior . . . namely, when we disobey God, we seek to hide from God.
1. Adam & Eve. **Genesis 3:8** – “And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid

themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”

2. Cain tried to hide the body of his slain brother so that would not see or know what he had done to Abel. It didn't work . . . It never does.

Genesis 4:8-9 – “Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ He said, ‘I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?’”

- a. Cain found out that he was more than a keeper . . . He was a brother.
- b. Our sins are not hidden from the eyes of Jehovah.

- D. Listening friends, we cannot run away from God. **Psalms 139:7-12** – “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?

8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

9 If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

10 Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.

11 If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall fall on me,’ Even the night shall be light about me;

12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.”

- E. Why Jonah may have wanted to run away.

1. The Assyrians had a reputation for human cruelty. In stone carvings discovered by archaeologists, Assyrian soldiers are shown:

- a. Torturing children.
- b. Blinding warriors.
- c. Chopping off hands.
- d. Impaling victims on stakes. Explain
- e. Beheading their enemies.

2. The human element might ask, “Could you not blame Jonah for not wanting to go?” it is the spiritual element that must be considered because it comes from God.

CHAPTER 2 – JONAH IS RUNNING TO GOD

- A. In chapter 2 we see a different man.

1. No more running away from God and God's will.
2. Now he is running toward God and God's will that he go to Nineveh.
3. In chapter 2 we see a man who had repented.
 - a. He had changed his mind.
 - b. He had changed his heart.
 - c. He had changed his state of faithfulness.

- d. He had changed his direction.
- 4. At the conclusion of his eight-verse prayer (Jonah 2:2-9), he said, “I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.” **Jonah 2:9**
- 5. Salvation can not be attained by doing the opposite of what God has said.
- B. The story of the Prodigal son in Luke 16:11-14 tells a beautiful story of a son’s return to his father after he, too, had gone in the wrong direction.
 - 1. He ran way . . . He messed up . . . He changed his mind (repented) . . . and He returned to his loving father.
 - 2. **Luke 15:18** – “I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.”

CHAPTER 3 – JONAH IS RUNNING WITH GOD

- A. In chapter three we can say that Jonah is running with God because he is obeying the will of God.
 - 1. **Jonah 3:3** – “So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD . . .”
 - 2. He complied with what God had said in **verse 2** – “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.”
 - 3. This time Jonah decided to obey God’s will rather than his own human will.
 - 4. Two questions:
 - a. Are you running with God?
 - b. Are you obeying God? **Hebrews 5:8-9** – “Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.
And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.”
- B. Running with God involves in the light rather than in darkness. **1 John 1:7** – “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”
- C. Running with God involves running the race that He has set before us. **Hebrews 12:1-2** – “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

CHAPTER 4 – JONAH IS RUNNING AHEAD OF GOD

- A. Jonah was running ahead of God in that he wanted to runs God’s business in the matter before him. **Jonah 4:2** – “So he prayed to the LORD, and said, ‘Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God,

slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.”

B. Mankind is often incapable of running his own business . . . how can he presume to take over God’s business.

1. **Jeremiah 10:23** – “O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”
2. **Isaiah 55:8-9** – “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD.

‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.’”

C. Jonah forgot his place in relationship to God. **1 Corinthians 3:9** – “For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.”

CONCLUSION:

A. Listening friends, sin will take you away from God It will:

1. Take you farther than you wanted to go.
2. Keep you longer than you wanted to stay.
3. Cost you more than you wanted to pay.

B. Pause, contemplate, and ask yourself these four questions:

1. Are you running **FROM** God —————→ Turn around!
2. Are you running **TO** God —————→ Keep going!
3. Are you running **WITH** God —————→ Don’t stop!
4. Are you running **AHEAD** of God —————→ Slow down, stop, and get back in proper position!

C. How can we change a community for the better?

1. Don’t run from hard duty.
2. Preach the Word of God.
3. Don’t be afraid of a confrontational message.
4. Feel the urgency of the task.

D. **Nineveh did not come to Jonah . . . Jonah had to go to Nineveh.**

E. The responsibility of Nineveh was to repent . . . The responsibility of judgment belonged to God . . . The responsibility of Jonah (our responsibility) was to attempt to change a city.

1. Nineveh, the repentant city in 760 B.C. did not remain changed. 100 years later Nahum prophesied of Nineveh’s future destruction.
2. Nineveh did indeed fall to the Babylonians in 612 B.C. . . . some 148 years after Jonah preached to it.
3. Nahum said in **Nahum 3:11** – “You will be hidden.” It was for some 2,454 years until it was discovered in 1842. In **612 B.C.**, Babylon overthrew Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria. This takes place about **150 years** after Nineveh had been spared from destruction, having repented at the preaching of Jonah in about 762 B.C. destruction in 612 B.C. the site was

not rediscovered until A.D. 1842. (2,254 years later. It was hidden for a long time.) ? God means what He says!

F. Nineveh, did in fact, repent at the preaching of Jonah.

1. The repentance of Nineveh probably occurred in the reign of Ashurdan III (773-755 B.C.).

2. 1. Two major events may have prepared the people for Jonah's message of judgment.

a. Two plagues (765 and 759 B.C.).

b. A solar eclipse in 763 B.C.

G. Isn't it time for you to be spared? God means what He says!

H. **God's Plan for Man's Salvation**