

THEME: JONAH'S CALL AND DISOBEDIENCE

JONAH 1

INTRODUCTION

Prophet Jonah, the son of Amittai of the tribe of Zebulun of the northern kingdom of Israel, lived in the city of Gath-Hepher, about four miles north of Nazareth during the reign of Jeroboam II (793-753 B. C.) 2 Kngs.14:25. He was a lover of Israel and one of the only four writing prophets (Isaiah, Daniel, and Zechariah) that Jesus mentioned by name during His earthly ministry, he was the only one sent to preach to the Gentiles at that time and the only prophet that rejected his commission, and ran away from God. On separate occasions, there had been declarations of punishments upon the land of Israel from popular prophets like Hosea and Amos who were Jonah's contemporaries due to their rebellion, and that the nation of Assyria would be used for the woes that will come the nation of Israel. This made the hatred an average Israel had for Assyria to increase and all the Israel wished for Assyria was destruction, hence Jonah, finds excuses in going down to Nineveh with a message of mercy, salvation and deliverance. This chapter has a parallel expression in the Jesus of the Bible, but the difference is that, while Jesus was willingly succumbed to the will of the Father, Jonah the central character of the book and a metaphor of a savior did not.

THE OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 1

The command of God, The disobedience or resistance of Jonah, The storm, the violent wind, the sailor's fear, dilemma, blame game, the distress call, the confrontation, the shedding of weight, the enquiry, casting lot, the confession, casting forth into the sea, calming of the sea, God's providence, the sacrifice and vows.

PRESENT DAY REALITIES OF CHAPTER 1

The word of God came to Jonah son of Amittai- 1:1

The instructions to Jonah were clear- go to the land of Nineveh and preach it because of its wickedness which has come to the Lord. God is always in the business of talking to believers and this still comes to us every day and everywhere- **Gen.7:1,8:15; Hos.1:1,2; Heb.1:1,2; Ps.143:8; Is.30:21**. The word of the Lord is everywhere we go and wherever we turn to, we will find Him speaking. The question is, what will you make of His word as you heard Him speak to you?

"Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." 1:2

God was not interested in judging the people of Nineveh. He had to first provide an escape for the Nineveh. Rather His mercy is always calling out to all forms of wickedness. His love suffers long. He waits patiently for the sinner to have a change of heart.

He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed to Tarshishi to flee from the Lord- 1:3

Mortal man always finds a way round the will of God- **Gen.3:1ff; 1Sam.15:7-9**. Jonah expected his thought towards Nineveh to be God's thought and having found out to be otherwise- **Is.55:8**, he did not find this will of God comforting and he ran away. Many people are running away today from the presence and will of God. Many people don't want to have anything to do with God. He used his money to board a ship. Many times we use our resources in the wrong direction. We use it to go against the will of God. We use our resources to do things that do not conform to the will and purpose of God for our lives. Jonah was a typical representation of modern man who uses his resources to fight God and disobey Him.

Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep- 1:4,5

Jonah was in the ship when the violent wind began. There is always a consequence for all acts of disobedience and sometimes not only the disobedient person suffers, several other people also suffer with him. In the case of Jonah, it was the Lord who sent a violent wind to the ship. In the midst of this confusion, all the people in the ship began to cry out to their gods. The ship is the life we live. The confusion in the world today is because the children of God are not doing the will of God. The confusion in Nigeria for instance is because many of us are little Jonahs who have refused to do the will of God. Until we repent Nigeria may never get it right. The trouble in the country is a reflection of the disobedience of the children of God. Are we ever ready for divine discipline and redirection?

The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish." 1:6

The truth is that the people of the world know that the solution to the problem of the world is in the hands of believers. The sailor came to Jonah having tried in vain to calm the ship and asked him to call on his God. Unfortunately Jonah was in deep sleep and He was below the deck. Many believers are far gone into sleep. Many of us know the right thing and we know we are the solution to the crisis around us but we have become lethargic and gone too far into the world system that we have become useless. But then the people were not deceived. They knew Jonah had the solution and they came to him to call on his God. The world is waiting for us to call on our God perhaps he would have mercy on the world. We are the instrument of change. Jonah was the instrument of change though he ran away from God.

Then the sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity." They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. So they asked him, "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?" 1:7, 8

By the time they got Jonah's attention they began to ask series of question from him. These questions carry some great significance. In the first place they cast lot and the lot fell on Jonah. These people were superstitious people. But then God still allowed that circumstance to teach Jonah a lesson. Every believer must have to answer to the questions of the sailors; Who is responsible for this trouble?

Is it the who question or the what? The who question situates the source of our problem in people while the what question situates our problem in what went amiss. For the sailors, it was not about the ship being faulty. It was not about not being able to sail well. It was not a mechanical fault or the fault of the inclement weather. They were so discerning to know that the source of the problem was a person not the surrounding circumstances.

The next question to Jonah is; what kind of work do you do? We must pause to ask ourselves this question: What is our trade? What do we lawfully do for a living? One day, we will have to answer that question whether we like it or not. The world system is built in a way that throws up this question again and again. If your work does not glorify God, you are part of the problem of the world. Jonah was a preacher of the gospel but he was living in disobedience. There will also come a time when people will want to know where we come from. It may look harmless, but where you come from and the kind of person you are will determine what happens to you in life. What is it about your tribe and its disposition and love for other tribes?

He answered, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." 1:9

This is a turning point for Jonah. He had woken from his slumber and was alive to his person and responsibility. It is one thing to be deep in sin and disobedience. It is another thing to come out of it and come to our senses. In the case of Jonah he came to his senses. He declared his identity. He declared the God he serves. He declared that he serves the God that made the sea and the dry land. What a great declaration! Jonah had come back to his senses- Dan.4:34,37. It does not matter how far we have gone, when the chips are down we must wake up and confess the Lordship of God.

This terrified them and they asked, "What have you done?" (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so. The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us. Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you." 1:10-12

This was perhaps the most trying period in the life of Jonah. He was faced with imminent death. But he had to sacrifice his life for others to live. That is exactly what Jesus did. He had to sacrifice his life for our sins. In the case of Jonah he gave his life so that the ship will be calm and the people will be saved. He realized that it was his fault. He confessed it and was ready for the consequence. It is expected that believers should come to the realization that the solution to the crisis around them lies in their hands. If all believers live in the will of God, the world will be a better place. Jonah declared, Pick me up and throw me into the sea. He admitted his fault and proffered solution to stem the storm.

Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. Then they cried out to the Lord, "Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased." Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him- 1:13-16.

This confirms that salvation cannot be procured without Jesus' supreme sacrifice. The world can't save itself from pending destruction. The world needs a savior. That is what is demonstrated in the scripture here. The men did not want to sacrifice Jonah. They tried their best to row back to land. The human effort they are making would not save them or calm the tempest until Jonah was thrown into the sea. The way of God for the salvation of man is different from the way of man. Jonah paid a fare but Jesus paid with His Blood.

Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights- 1:17.

This scripture brings to mind the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was in the belly of the earth for three days and three nights just like Jonah. It is instructive to note that there is a connection between Jonah and Jesus. The two of them are saviors of some sort. One saved a country, the other saved the world. One was in the belly of the fish; the other was in the belly of the earth. One was obedient the other was disobedient and was forced by circumstances to obey. The link between the two: Jesus and Jonah underscore the mercy of the Lord for sinners.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has established the fact that God alone is sovereign, He is always right and also the fact that whoever stands in the way of working towards the accomplishment of His important task will be displeasing to Him.

1. When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

Refrain:

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

2. Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet.
Or we'll walk by His side in the way.
What He says we will do, where He sends we will go;
Never fear, only trust and obey.

Refrain:

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.