

JONAH: GOD'S REMINDER OF ISRAEL'S OUTREACH DUTY

I: The Foolishness Of Trying To Avoid God's Calling

(Jonah 1:1-17)

I. Introduction

- A. Since the Abrahamic Covenant provided that God would bless the Gentiles through Abraham's seed (Genesis 12:1-3), Israel was responsible to proclaim God's truth to the Gentiles. (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1462)
- B. The book of Jonah was addressed to Israel to remind her of her duty to proclaim God's truths to the nations, and Jonah 1:1-17 reveals the foolishness of trying to avoid God's calling in that responsibility. We view the passage for our insight and application (as follows):

II. The Foolishness Of Trying To Avoid God's Calling, Jonah 1:1-17.

- A. The book of Jonah opens with the word of the Lord summoning God's prophet Jonah to go to Nineveh of Assyria, a great city, and prophetically cry against it since its wickedness had angered the Lord, Jonah 1:1-2.
- B. This prophetic call had been preceded by several events that even ancient pagans regarded as evidence of divine judgment: a plague had occurred in 765 B. C., an eclipse of the sun came in 763 B. C. and a second plague occurred in 759 B. C. in Jonah's era, so these events could have prepared the people of Nineveh to heed Jonah's message. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1278, "Introduction to the Book of Jonah: The Times")
- C. Jonah viewed the Assyrians of Nineveh as Israel's foes, so he did **not** want God's *mercy* to be shown to them (Jonah 4:1-3), and Jonah foolishly and in futility tried to avoid God's call to preach at Nineveh, Jonah 1:3-17:
- D. Thus, instead of heading north toward Nineveh, Jonah tried to flee to Tarshish in Southern Spain near Gibraltar by going down to the seacoast, finding a ship headed to Tarshish, paying the fare and going down into the boat to try to avoid the presence of the Lord! (Jonah 1:3)
- E. However, Genesis 1:9-10 reveals that Israel's God separated the dry land from the seas, for He is the sovereign Creator of land and sea, so being on a boat in the Mediterranean Sea failed to escape God's knowledge, presence or power. The Lord thus sent a great wind on the sea, threatening to destroy the ship, Jonah 1:4.
- F. The Gentile sailors were terrified, they cried out to their pagan gods and cast overboard the ship's cargo to lighten the ship, but in contrast, Jonah had gone down into the lower deck and lay fast asleep, Jonah 1:5.
- G. Upset at Jonah's indifference, the Gentile captain aroused him, urging Jonah to call on His God that they not perish, and the sailors cast lots to see who had aroused the divine entity who was troubling them, Jonah 1:6-7a.
- H. When the lot fell on Jonah, the sailors wanted to know who he was so they could address the life-threatening problem they faced, Jonah 1:7b-8.
- I. Jonah replied that he was a Hebrew who revered the Lord God of heaven Who had made the sea and the dry land, referring back to Genesis 1:9-10, Jonah 1:9.
- J. Hearing that Jonah's God had made the sea, the Gentile sailors were dreadfully afraid, and asked him why he had done what he did in fleeing from the Lord, what he before told them he was doing, Jonah 1:10.
- K. The Gentile sailors asked Jonah what they could do to him to appease his God into calming the sea, and Jonah replied that they should cast him into it, Jonah 1:11-12. The sailors were afraid to throw what they thought was an innocent man in Jonah overboard, but when their efforts to row the boat to shore failed, they asked God not to let them perish for heaving Jonah overboard, and they threw him overboard, Jonah 1:13-15a.
- L. The sea ceased its raging, and the Gentile sailors reacted to this cessation of the raging of the sea by greatly revering the Lord, by offering a sacrifice to Him and by making vows to the Lord, Jonah 1:15b-16.
- M. Perhaps Jonah thought that being thrown into the sea would end his life so he still would not have to evangelize Nineveh, but the Lord blocked that effort by preparing a great fish to swallow Jonah and keep him alive, but in fearful discomfort, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and nights, Jonah 1:17.

Lesson: *When God's prophet Jonah received the Lord's assignment to evangelize the Assyrians of Nineveh, people who were Israel's great foes, instead of obeying the Lord, Jonah tried to run from his calling and hide from the Lord, a futile, foolish effort since God is sovereign throughout the universe, and His desires will be accomplished! Remarkably, even Jonah's effort to flee from the Lord was utilized by the Lord to evangelize the Gentile sailors on the ship Jonah used to try avoiding the Lord, showing the futility and foolishness of trying to escape God's calling!*

Application: *(1) If God has led and commissioned us to accomplish a specific calling, we need to obey Him or face difficult correctional punishment from the Lord until we obey Him! (2) If we DOUBT or even WONDER if we are performing God's calling, simply RELAX, for GOD is sovereign enough to guide and to lead us. (Psalm 23:3b)*