

## Incredible: Jonah and Jesus

### INTRODUCTION:

1. Today I want to talk about some things that are incredible.
  - A. Incredible: 1) too extraordinary and improbable to be believed; 2) amazing, extraordinary (**Merriam-Webster Dictionary**)
  - B. Though the people and events I want to talk about are incredible, amazing, extraordinary, they are recorded for us in God's word to help us believe, to help our faith in God grow stronger.
2. What I want to talk about are two incredible people, Jonah and Jesus, and the events surrounding them.
  - A. The two:
    - i. Jonah was a prophet of God and the "son of Amittai from Gath-hepher" (2 Kgs. 14:25; Jon. 1:1) whose work took place around 780 B.C. during the reign of Jeroboam II of the Northern Kingdom.
    - ii. Jesus is the Son of God born of the virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judea during the reign of Caesar Augustus of Rome and Herod the Great in Judea.
  - B. I want to talk about these two because they are connected, but more importantly **incredible** (Matt. 12:38-41 – "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."<sup>39</sup> But He answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation demands a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah."<sup>40</sup> For as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights."<sup>41</sup> The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at Jonah's proclamation; and look—something greater than Jonah is here!").
  - C. So, Jonah is a type of Jesus, howbeit in many ways one of great contrast.
3. With these things in mind, let's consider the incredible events of the book of Jonah and how they relate to Jesus the Savior of the world.

### BODY:

#### **I. Incredible mission:**

- A. That Nineveh would be the focus of God's saving mission is incredible.
  1. Nineveh was one of the oldest cities in the world. It was built by Nimrod and dates back to just after the flood (Gen. 10:11-12). But that is not what is incredible.
  2. Nineveh was also the **capital city** of the **Assyrian Empire**.
    - a. They were a very cruel, and bloodthirsty people who just prior to the time of Jonah were crushing their enemies and were a real and constant threat to Israel.
    - b. They boasted of their cruelty! The inscription of Ashurnasipal II who reigned about 100 years before Jonah read, "I slaughtered them, and with their blood I dyed the mountains like crimson wool... The heads of their warriors I cut off, and I piled them in a heap... and their young men and their maidens I burned in the fire... I slaughtered their inhabitants in great numbers—and the cities I burned with fire... From some I cut off their hands and their fingers, and from others their noses and their ears..." (*Collier's Ency.* [1955] 2:638).
    - c. Yet around 782 B.C. Assyria entered a very depressed state of rebellion within and war without, causing their influence to greatly weaken for about 40 years.
      - i. Jeroboam II's reign coincided with these dates, which helps explain his prosperity.
      - ii. And, for all the nations threatened and abused by Assyria, this was a welcomed time of peace and probably a "you are getting what you deserve" kind of time!
    - d. So, with their track record most everyone wanted them to be defeated and destroyed, including God's people and Jonah.
- B. That God would send Jonah to preach to Nineveh is incredible (Jon. 1:1-2).
  1. Now that God wanted Jonah to "cry against" Nineveh because of their wickedness may not sound so bad, but Jonah knew that meant that God was giving them a chance to be saved.
  2. I am sure Jonah was wondering why God would possibly give such a wicked nation a change to continue!

- a. This was especially true considering the possible harm they posed of God's people.
- b. And if you remember, the Assyrians later destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C., which was God's punishment against Israel for their idolatry!
- C. That God would preach to Nineveh shows He is incredible in His grace and mercy (Psa. 103:8, 11 – "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness ...<sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.").
- 1. His grace and mercy defy human reason.
- 2. So, His grace is something we need to ponder and to praise Him for daily.

## II. Incredible missionary:

- A. Because he was so much of what we *would not want* in one sent by God to save us!
  - 1. He did not want to go and tried to run away to Tarshish, a city in Spain (Jon. 1:3).
    - a. This is like God saying to go to N.Y. and instead going to California!
    - b. That he was going to Tarshish was said three times, emphasizing that Jonah was going the opposite direction from where God told him!
    - c. It was said three times that Jonah was going "from the presence of the Lord," indicating he was leaving behind his work as a servant and prophet of God.
  - 2. He did not want to preach a message to them that might save them.
    - a. Though God told him what to say, it is of note considering the context of the book that his message was totally negative (3:1-4).
    - b. God's grace to save sinners, a most incredible aspect of God's character, was not mentioned nor known by the people (3:9 – "Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish.")
- B. Because his actions were completely inconsistent and contradictory to his proclamation.
  - 1. We see this when Jonah enters the ship to sails for Tarshish.
    - a. For, to show his displeasure God sent a great storm that caused the men to fear for their lives and to seek for all on board to call upon their gods for salvation (1:4-6).
    - b. When the storm continued, they cast lots to see who fault this was, only to find that it was Jonah's, who claimed to serve God (1:7-10).
      - i. Note how Jonah described God as the "Lord God of heaven who **made the sea and the dry land**" (1:9).
      - ii. Such a proclamation caused even these heathens to see Jonah's inconsistency.
        - 1) How could you run from such a God?
        - 2) So, they rebuked him sharply for doing so and putting their lives in danger (1:10).
  - 2. You are just not going to be too good of a messenger if your actions are contrary to the message you proclaim!
- C. Are we so different at times?
  - 1. It is not that we choose to run from God to some foreign country.
  - 2. But, we come to worship, hear the message of his word, claim faith in God and His word, but often refuse to allow it to do its work and change our lives.
  - 3. Or, like Jonah we ignore God's commands to evangelize the sinners around us.

## III. Incredible signs

- A. The sailors saw the sign connected to God's displeasure with Jonah (1:11-15).
  - 1. Despite Jonah's blame, these heathens had more compassion than Jonah, not wanting him to perish, and calling on Jehovah for forgiveness before acting (1:11-14).
  - 2. When by his request they threw Jonah into the sea, they saw the sea stop ranging just as Jonah had said (1:15).
    - a. These people had possibly never heard of Jehovah, or really any god said to have created the sea and dry land.
    - b. But after following Jonah's word they witnessed an incredible sign of God's power that immediately calmed the sea.

- B. Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites (Lk. 11:29-30 – “As the crowds were increasing, He began to say, “This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah. <sup>30</sup> For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.”).
  - 1. Jesus does not specifically say how Jonah became a sign, but it is very much implied.
  - 2. It is apparent the sailors saw what happened to Jonah and told others (1:17).
    - a. And, it is apparent that news of this amazing event spread to Nineveh.
    - b. So, when Jonah showed up at Nineveh after spending three days in the sea in the belly of a fish and began preaching, the people of Nineveh took notice, believing His words to be the words of the God!
  - 3. These type signs have been part of God’s plan all along (Heb. 2:3-4 – “how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, <sup>4</sup> God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.”).

#### IV. Incredible response

- A. The calming of the sea brought an incredible response (1:16):
  - 1. That is no small thing considering shortly before they likely knew nothing of Jehovah.
  - 2. That was the very response God expects of His people (Psa. 76:11 – “Make **vows** to the Lord your God and fulfill them; let all who are around Him **bring gifts** to Him who is to be **feared**.”).
- B. Being in the belly of this fish brought about an incredible response (2:1-10).
  - 1. God putting Jonah in the belly of this fish:
    - a. Brought about acknowledgment that his sin had separated him from God (2:3-6).
    - b. Caused him to remember God and to turn to Him (2:7-9).
  - 2. Jonah’s response resulted in the incredible response from God who in his amazing grace caused the fish to vomit Jonah alive onto the dry land, giving him another chance (2:10)!
- C. Jonah’s message brought an incredible response from the Ninevites (3:5-9).
  - 1. They repented from the king down, believing in God and calling a fast for everyone.
  - 2. And the people were also to call earnestly upon God, Elohim, the Creator God, and to turn from their evil and violence in hopes that God might show mercy and relent.
    - a. Evil and violence were signature characteristics of Nineveh and the Assyrians.
    - b. The power of God’s sign in Jonah and the message he preached brought a 180 degree turn in the heart and lives of the people in this city!
- D. Jonah had an incredible response to God’s grace and mercy...howbeit a very negative one!
  - 1. We see it in Jonah’s response to God’s grace and mercy on Nineveh (Jon. 4:1-3).
    - a. Jonah wanted these people dead and, consequently, condemned to eternal hell fire!
    - b. This was so much his desire that God’s grace caused Jonah to want to die rather than live!
  - 2. We see it in Jonah’s response to God’s grace and mercy upon him (4:5-8).
    - a. Despite Jonah’s hardness of heart, God caused a plant to grow over him and shade him, which made Jonah happy.
    - b. Yet, when God took it away and the sun beat down on him, he again became angry with God again and wanted to die rather than live!

#### V. Incredible Savior

- A. That God would save Nineveh is incredible (3:10)!
  - 1. God responded to their deeds and penitent hearts.
  - 2. This is God’s way—His good news (Acts 3:19 – “Therefore repent and return, so that your **sins may be wiped away**, in order that **times of refreshing** may come from the presence of the Lord.”).
- B. That God sought to save Jonah is incredible
  - 1. God did not give Jonah what he deserved, choosing not to bring final judgement on him as he had so hoped God would do to Nineveh.

2. Instead, God gave him an object lesson showing the depth of His grace and mercy compared to Jonah's own vindictiveness (4:9-11).
- C. That God chose to save us is incredible.
1. God did so by an incredible mission (Jn. 3:16-17 – “For God so loved the world, that He gave **His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”).
  2. God did so through an incredible messenger (Phil. 2:5-8 – “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”).
  3. God chose to save us by an incredible sign of Jesus' resurrection (1 Pet. 1:20-21 – “For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you <sup>21</sup> who through Him are believers in God, who **raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory**, so **that your faith and hope are in God.**”).
  4. God chose to save us through an incredible response (Rom. 5:1-2 – “Therefore, having been **justified by faith**, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom also we have obtained our introduction **by faith** into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.”).
    - a. It is by God's work of grace in Christ Jesus that you, a sinner, can be saved.
    - b. And that salvation comes to you if you will just **trust God**, the one who has done so much to show He loves you and wants to save you, putting your life and soul into His hands and submitting to Him as your Lord and Savior.

CONCLUSION:

1. Will you come to Christ and be a part of the incredible salvation offered you by an incredible God who sent His Son to earth to become a man to fulfill an incredible mission culminating in His death and resurrection so that you can be offered incredible life with God for eternity?
2. There is nothing more incredible, amazing, extraordinary in this world than that God saves sinners!
3. Will you come to Jesus today in F-R-C-Bp?