

Seven Bible Studies 2017

Prophecy

October 6: Jonah 1-4 (Wade Stanley)

Good day to you all! We have a whale of a good reading assignment for today. Sorry if you find my humor tough to swallow. I should stop before I go overboard!

The book of Jonah is the most familiar of all the books of prophecy. Among the prophets, Jonah is unusual because it is entirely narrative. It is also unusual because it is concerned with provoking a Gentile nation to repentance. The prophet's ministry to Assyria likely occurred during the eighth century B.C., one hundred years in advance of Nahum who prophesied the end of Assyria.

The precise location of the city of Tarshish is unknown. Here is a short article from the Archaeological Study Bible.

"Where is Tarshish?"

It is impossible to say with certainty where Tarshish was located. What is known is that Nineveh was to the east and that Jonah was trying to get as far as possible from Nineveh by boarding a ship and sailing westward. If Tarshish were a specific port, it certainly would have been located somewhere along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, as may be suggested by several Old Testament texts (Ps 48:7; Isa 23:6; Eze 27:25) and by an inscription of Esarhaddon of Assyria. Many suggest that it was a city associated with mining and metallurgy, since the name Tarshish may be derived from a word referring to smelting or refining (see also Eze 27:12). Places that could satisfy these requirements include:

* Tartessus in southwestern Spain. This would be appropriate to the story, for it would have been difficult to sail any farther from Nineveh.

* The island of Sardinia. A ninth-century b.c. Phoenician inscription suggests the possible presence of Tarshish there.

* Carthage in North Africa ("Map 14"). This is supported by the Septuagint version of Ezekiel 27:12, which identifies Carthage with Tarshish (but there was also a Carthage in Spain).

* Tarsus in Anatolia (modern Turkey). This city would later become the hometown of Paul.

Some scholars, however, believe that the term "Tarshish" refers not to a specific location but simply to the "open sea." If this is the case, the author's intent may have been simply to describe Jonah as going off to sea. The church father Jerome, in his commentary on Jonah, accepted this interpretation.

Jonah's prayer in the second chapter contains Messianic undertones. I am always struck by how Jonah sees the great fish as God's means of rescuing him from death and not God's punishment.

If we judge a prophet's success on the basis of the numbers who repent at his preaching, Jonah far exceeds any other messenger from God including Jesus during His ministry among us. The fact that Jonah was such a reluctant and downright rebellious preacher makes his "success" remarkable.

Enjoy the reading! Keep your lamps trimmed and burning. Don't allow what's happening these days to distract you from your calling. Lift up your heads -- your redemption draws nigh!

Comment:

Butch O'Neal
Thank you, Wade!

Comment:

Cherris Lehman::
Nice song in the blue book. Mike Manning taught it to us at a two week study at Gregory Blvd. one year!

Comment:

Marc Hermon:
I feel like I should throw you some shade for this post.

Replies:

Wade Stanley:
Maybe I'm out of my gourd.

Charles Fry:
Where is that "aargh" emoticon?! 😞

Comment:

Steven Wright:
Thanks Wade! But, I wish you would stop fishing for laughs, but since we are in the game, one might say, for instance, that God told Jonah to "get up and go to Nineveh" but in the end God had to make the fish spit up to flow him to Nineveh!

Comment:

Wade Stanley:
<thinking emoji>

Comment:

Marc Hermon:
In my NIV study Bible, at the beginning of each chapter it says Theme: and then a blank line for you to fill it out. Throughout the year in this 7 Bible Studies I've been writing a quick phrase about the chapter. For Jonah Ch. 1 I was prepared to write, "Jonah flees from God and is swallowed by a fish". After reading, however, I wrote "Jonah turns the hearts of sailors to the Lord". In verse 5 the sailors cried out to their own gods. In vs. 14-16 they cried out to THE LORD, offered sacrifices and made vows to HIM! Thought I would give Jonah a break since God did.

Comment:

Paul Rutherford:

I really can't 'fathom' your humor. 🤔

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Punny, Wade! Thank you for these good notes. It's interesting God appointed a worm. Even the itty-bitties can have big jobs. Jonah gets a worm's eye view on Nivevah.