

Jonah—A Prophet on The Run

Popular Works

- Timothy Keller, “Rediscovering Jonah: The Secret of God’s Mercy” Penguin Books, 2020.
- Priscilla Shirer, “Jonah: Navigating a Life Interrupted” Lifeway Press, 2010.
- Stephen Witmer, “Jonah: The Depths of God’s Grace” The Good Book Company, 2020.
- Miles Custis, “Jonah: A Prophet on the Run” Lexham Press, 20114.

Scholarly Commentaries

- Douglas Stuart, “Hosea-Jonah” Word Biblical Commentary, 1987.
- Kevin J. Youngblood, “Jonah” Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament, 2015.
- David W. Baker, T.D. Alexander, & Bruce Waltke, “Obadiah, Jonah, Micah” Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, 1988.
- Leslie C. Allen, “Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah” New International Commentary on the Old Testament, 1976.

Background Overview

- **Style** – Jonah is the only Prophetic book which is biographical rather than recounting how God’s word was preached by the named Prophet.
 - All other prophetic books contain the oracles of the prophet, words spoken by God to the human prophet
 - The only “oracles” of Jonah are his shouting at the people of Nineveh
- **Jonah** is one of the 12 Minor Prophets (***Nevi'im***) of the OT
- **Date** – two theories:
 - If written by Jonah then mid-8th Century BC
 - If written by someone else, then after the Jewish Exile; probably 5th-4th century BC, no later than 3rd century BC
 - It is listed in the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus which is dated 190AD
- **Author** – Two theories:
 - Anonymous: the book itself gives zero clues as to its author
 - Jonah Son of Amittai, only other non-Jonah OT reference is 2 Kings 14:25
 - Jonah prophesized in the reign of Jeroboam II which is roughly 790 to 749BC
 - New Testament references to Jonah – 12 times
 - John 1:42; 21:15, 16, 17; Luke 11:29, 30, 32; Matthew 12:39, 40, 41; 16:4, 17.

- **Purpose** – 3 main theories
 - Fiction
 - What a fantastic novel
 - The big fish (whale) only is mentioned in two verses
 - Satire/Biblical Irony
 - The non-Hebrews in the book appear more positively than Jonah
 - Almost every aspect of Jonah’s character is bad
 - Historical
 - OT Jews hated the idea of salvation for Gentiles
 - Accurate portrayal of Nineveh’s barbarism
 - Joppa, Tarshish, and Nineveh were real cities
 - Only two verses mention the Whale/Big Fish; fiction usually embellishes with many details and flowery narrative
- **Christological Parallels**
 - 3 days/nights in tomb/whale
 - Expelled from tomb/whale
 - Lots cast by observers
 - God’s direction “Go to a Great City (Nineveh/Jerusalem).”
 - A violent storm (Sea of Galilee/Mediterranean Sea)
 - Jonah/Jesus sleeping in boat during violent storm
 - Jonah--Who is this man? Where are you from? What is your nationality?/Jesus-- Surely this is the Son of God.
 - Jonah—“Oh Lord you have driven me from your presence!"/Jesus—“Why have you forsaken me?”
 - Seaweed wrapped around Jonah’s head/Crown of thorns wrapped around Jesus’ head
 - Jonah – “I was imprisoned in the earth whose gates locked shut forever.”/Jesus – descended into hell.
 - The Lord “spit” Jonah out of the whale and he “removed” Jesus from the tomb
 - Jonah 3:4 – “forty days from now”/ Jesus – Matthew 4:2 “forty days in the wilderness”
 - Jonah 4:10 – the plant came quickly and died quickly”/ Jesus – Matthew 6:28-30 Look at the lilies of the field and the beautiful wildflowers are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow.
- **Structure of the Book**
 - Chapters 1-2; God tells Jonah Go; Jonah says No
 - Chapters 3-4; God again tells Jonah Go; Jonah says Yes
- **Message for Us**
 - Am I okay with the fact that God loves my enemies?
 - When God says “Go,” do I go?
 - Do I have room in my theology for God to “change his mind”?