

## SERMON FROM JONAH

# "IN EVERY NATION"

## SERMON ON JONAH

"Truly I perceive that God shows not partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." Acts 10:34-35

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. WHO WAS JONAH?

- A. His name means, literally, "a dove." He preached God's peace to the Ninevites
- B. Jonah was a citizen of the northern kingdom, Israel. He lived in Gath-heper in the days of Jeroboam II
- C. Israel was, in spite of its affluence, corrupt and decadent and ripe for the judgment of God
- D. Jonah was a prophet of God; sent by God to preach to Israel (II Kings 14:25); a contemporary perhaps of Elisha, Joel and Amos

#### II. WHAT WAS JONAH'S MISSION?

- A. Jonah was, we believe, to preach God's judgment upon the wickedness of Nineveh, and upon Nineveh's repentance and God's salvation, they became an object lesson for Israel, that, ". . . in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to Him."
- B. THIS IS THE MESSAGE JONAH BRINGS TO US TODAY
  1. God is no respecter of person
  2. He hates and will punish wickedness wherever it is found
  3. He loves and will reward righteousness wherever it is found
  4. This three-fold message is to be delivered to the whole world through preachers
- C. Jonah's experience became a prophetic type of the work of the Messiah in suffering death for sin—raised from the dead to bring salvation to the world

#### III. JONAH'S EXPERIENCE HAS ANOTHER LESSON FOR US

- A. God says "Go!"
- B. Man says "No!"
- C. The World, His Word can know

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DISCUSSION

I. GOD SAYS, "GO!"

A. Through His word (Revealed Commands)

1. God's word came to Jonah, how, we know not, probably directly
  - a. God's word had come to the Jews as a nation, earlier, that they were to be witnesses to the nations round about them of the one true God (cf. Deut. 26:19; 28:1, 9, 10)
  - b. But in Jonah's day the Israelites were so much like their heathen neighbors God commanded Jonah to go bring the nations to repentance as a lesson for Israel
  - c. Jonah was commanded to go into urban evangelism in a foreign country! Nineveh was about the size of St. Louis (600,000 pop.; approx. 18 sq. miles in size); its inhabitants noted for their cruelty against enemies, culturally sophisticated.
  - d. There was no doubt in Jonah's mind that God had called him. It was not an emotional experience Jonah had to wonder about.
  - e. GOD DID NOT LEAVE ANY PROPHET IN DOUBT WHEN HE CALLED THEM THROUGH HIS WORD! GOD'S COMMAND TO "GO" IS UNEQUIVOCALLY PLAIN AND IMPERATIVE!
2. God's word comes to every Christian whose heart is sensitive and fully surrendered to His will, saying, "Go!"
  - a. "Go . . . and make disciples of all nations . . ." Matt. 28:19-20
  - b. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," Mk. 16:16 ff
  - c. ". . . what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." 2 Tim. 2:2
  - d. GOD'S COMMAND TO "GO" IS UNEQUIVOCALLY PLAIN AND IMPERATIVE IN THE N.T. Men today are called through the gospel . . . God does not single out individuals today and speak to them audibly as He did to Moses, Isaiah, etc. BUT ALL CHRISTIANS ARE ENTREATED TO "GO" SOMEWHERE WITH THE GOSPEL!

B. God says, "Go" Through His Ways

1. God said "Go" to Jonah through the storm, the testimony of the heathen sailors, the 3 days and nights in the belly of the great fish.

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2. Sometimes God does not get our attention until He hits us between the eyes with the proverbial two-by-four of trial and tribulation.
  3. It was Paul's blindness on the Damascus road that called him to hear God's voice; it was Paul despairing of life that made him trust in God (II Cor. 1:3-11), and his thorn in the flesh that kept him from boasting (II Cor. 12:7-10).
  4. Alexander Campbell and other great Restoration preachers were called by God through trying experiences
  5. Wes Tuttle and wife directed to God's call to evangelize through tragedy in the family; Roy Rogers and his wife
  6. When such a call comes through providential working of God in our lives, whether we answer correctly or not depends upon whether we know, understand and are willing to acknowledge that God does call in such a way!
  7. Some recruits to specialized service find many trials in their way before they finally get to the place they have chosen to serve . . . BUT DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED, THIS IS GOD CALLING YOU IN HIS OWN WAY!
- C. God says, "Go" Through His Whispers to your Conscience
1. In a report by W. A. Cunningham, Eastern Christian College a few years ago, listing a report from every country in the world, there are 35 countries which would welcome U.S. missionaries, many of them where no missionaries have yet gone!
  2. The longer we wait the more difficult it will be. Did you know that 19 of every 20 who become Christians do so before they reach the age of 25; after 55, only one in 300,000! YOUTH MUST BE WON!
  3. Did you know 40 million people die each year—HOW MANY ARE LOST TO AN ETERNAL HELL?! Will God require their blood at your hands? 80 people die every 60 seconds! WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO SAVE THEM! ABOUT ONE HALF OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION HAVE NEVER HEARD OF JESUS!
  4. 1,000,000 Christians serve 100,000 churches of the 180,000,000 people in the U.S.; 27,000 missionaries work among the other 2.5 billion in the world; 91% of the population of the world has only 6% of the full-time workers for the Lord!

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5. WHAT DOES YOUR CONSCIENCE TELL YOU NOW! LISTEN TO IT! IT IS SAYING, "WOE IS ME IF I PREACH NOT THE GOSPEL!"

### II. MEN SAY, "NO!"

A. Men say, "Send someone else—not me!" Whether Jonah said, "Why me?" or not, we can only guess.

1. But whom else would God have sent in Jonah's day—Jero-boam II? the heathen sailors? THERE WAS ONLY ONE MAN FOR THE JOB, JONAH! JONAH PUT HIMSELF ON GOD'S LIST OF AVAILABLES WHEN HE ACCEPTED THE LORD AS HIS SAVIOUR!
2. Who else will God send today? The bartender? other non-Christians? nominal, worldly-minded Christians? JUST AS HE ASKED IN ISAIAH'S DAY, GOD ASKS TODAY, WHOM SHALL I SEND, WHO WILL GO FOR ME? The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are so few!
3. Even so, my friend, THERE IS ONLY ONE MAN FOR THE JOB, YOU! YOU PUT YOURSELF ON GOD'S AVAILABILITY LIST WHEN YOU ACCEPTED HIS SON AS YOUR LORD! Do not say, "Send someone else," YOU DECIDED TO "GO" FOR HIM WHEN YOU CAME UNTO HIM!
4. Young people who have had all the opportunities of Chris-tain training in their homes are the ones who cannot say, "Send someone else!"
5. Parents, whose children want to go, dare not say, "Send someone else."

B. Men say, "Don't send me there, send me somewhere else!" One thing is certain about Jonah, he did not want to go to Nineveh!

1. But God knew best—God knew Jonah and God knew Nineveh, and God knew that Nineveh would repent at the preaching of Jonah
2. It was a case of "running away from God."
3. Men, even Christian men, want to do everything else under the sun, but preach the gospel.
4. Men, even Christian men, want to go everywhere except the place they are best suited for and where God is evi-dently leading them
5. Why? Selfishness! Laziness! MANY WILL NEVER HEAR THE GOSPEL BECAUSE MEN DECIDE AGAINST GOING TO

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THEM WHEN THE TASK APPEARS TOO DIFFICULT . . . THERE ARE NO CONVENIENCES THERE . . . THE PEOPLE WOULD BE UNRECEPTIVE

6. Peter said, "Don't send me to the Gentiles," but God sent him and a great victory was won!
  7. Paul said, "Don't send me to *Troas*," but God did and a great victory was won!
  8. God sent St. Patrick to Ireland as a slave-boy to prepare him for later missionary work there
  9. Christ said "Don't send me to the Cross," but God did, and your salvation was wrought
- C. Men say, "Don't send me now, send me some other time" Perhaps Jonah rationalized with himself, "If God would only wait, I would go to Nineveh some day!" BUT GOD SAID, NOW!
1. Moses said, "Wait, God, I'm not eloquent" But God said, NOW, MOSES!
  2. Jeremiah said, "Wait, God, I am but a youth," But God said, NOW, JEREMIAH!
  3. Esther said, "Wait, God, for a more opportuune time," But God said, NOW, ESTHER!
  4. GOD'S TIME IS ALWAYS NOW . . . GOD'S DAY IS ALWAYS TODAY
  5. This does not mean that we should forget preparation to preach the gospel . . . it does mean that we must go somewhere, everywhere opportunity permits, even while preparing for some particular field. WE CAN PREPARE AS WE GO AND WE CAN GO AS WE PREPARE!
  6. God will not wait—if you resist and refuse His call, you will be lost, like king Saul, or like Baalam, or the rich young ruler.

SAY "NO!" TO THE WORLD; SAY "NO!" TO SATAN'S ENTICING WHISPERS; SAY "NO!" TO SELF; BUT FOR THE SAKE OF MILLIONS OF LOST SOULS, DON'T SAY "NO!" TO GOD!

### III. THE WORLD, HIS WORD CAN KNOW

#### A. Many will be Receptive:

1. Jonah probably reasoned on the docks of Joppa: "I have preached for years in Israel with no success in getting my own countrymen to repent, how does God expect me to reach foreigners!"

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2. But Jonah was in for a big surprise! The whole city received his message from the king down to the lowliest slave.
3. Why? Probably two reasons: First, they were probably thoroughly disillusioned with their own sinful lives and ready for a message of hope; second, there was evidence in the person of Jonah himself of the truth of his message!
4. Thousands upon thousands received the gospel in the first century for the same two basic reasons
5. Thousands upon thousands are ready to receive the gospel today, I am convinced, because of the first reason, but they have not accepted it yet, because it has not yet been *evidentially* presented to them. Jonah did not play upon the emotions of the Ninevites—he appealed to the evidences available! Jonah knew why he believed and was able to tell the Ninevites why they should believe!
6. Campus ministers are finding many disillusioned young people who want something solid, true, abiding, factual. This has been the experience of Roy Weece at University of Missouri; of Alan Bemo with Chinese students on Taiwan; of Gordon Souder in Canada—all over the world.
7. There is a constant barrage of requests coming to Ozark Bible College, and of other Bible Colleges I'm sure, for trained young people, both men and women, to go to the far-flung limits of our globe. Requests from other missionaries; requests from the peoples of other nations.

### B. Many will Repent

1. “. . . the king arose from his throne, removed his robe, and covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes . . .” and decreed that the whole city should do likewise
2. “When God saw . . . how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which he had said he would do to them; and he did not do it.”
3. Almost whole cities repented when Paul preached
4. Millions were saved from the apostate Roman church by the courageous preaching of Martin Luther
5. Millions have been brought back to Biblical Christianity as a result of the faithful, sacrificial work of Restoration pioneers
6. Thousands have been won to Christ just recently by dedicated young people; Joe Garman, graduate of OBC in

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Korean evangelistic crusades won thousands to Christ; the Reggie Thomas team in Africa including 4 OBC students) won thousands to Christ in just the summer months of school vacation.

7. Ted Hurlburt, in a very candid article about Bible College training, entitled "What About the Preacher Shortage?" Christian Standard, Feb. 3, 1968, writes: "Young people, the fields are white unto the harvest! The message of Christ will still be valid after the last 'hippie' has had his long hair cut and after any other new fad has lost its momentary popularity . . . Bible Colleges need more students—students longing to have their convictions of a saving Christ developed so as to effectively communicate His salvation to a dead, doomed, and damned world."

8. The Lord says to you as he did to Paul at Corinth: "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent, for I am with you, . . . for I have many people in this city." Acts 18:9-10

9. Yes, even the intelligentsia, the sophisticated-set, need the gospel and are willing to hear and repent

Joplin Globe, Dec. 2, 1967, "Pastor Preaches Gospel to Moonport Congregation." "After extensive intimate talks with members of his 'moonport' congregation . . . he concluded, 'from what they told me that they needed basic, simple' exposition of Christian doctrine. While they were highly educated in electronics, etc., . . . they were 'biblically and theologically illiterate.' They wanted help in understanding the 'person and nature of God' and in relating 'His teachings and purpose to their own daily lives . . .' After five years at the Cocoa Beach church . . . he says he has found that the gist of his message needs to be the straight 'good news of the gospel.' "

### C. Many will reject

1. The Bible is a book of history. It is candid, frank, accurate and realistic. It is not a philosophical-idealistic book of theories

2. Nineveh repented, but Jonah's own people, Israel, went stupidly, blindly, rebelliously on its merry way to destruction.

3. This is what discouraged Jonah. Jonah was not a sadistic cold-blooded, monster whose consuming passion was to see innocent women and children slain by God. Fairbairn says, "Jonah was downcast because the example of severity had

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been withheld, which he thought would operate so beneficially upon the minds of his countrymen and without which he seemed to have no means to attaining the great end and object of his life."

All of God's efforts to bring Israel had failed thus far. Now God sought once more to move them from their downward plunge by working upon them through jealousy and shame while at the same time giving them an example of His mercy and love when repentance is shown. Jonah, like Elijah of old, was waiting for God to speak out of a whirlwind or with fire, but God spoke in a still small voice of forgiveness. The Jews expected Jesus to speak with judgment upon the Gentiles if He were the Messiah . . .

**PREACHERS HAVE A REPUTATION OF THINKING THEY KNOW BETTER HOW TO DO THINGS THAN GOD DOES!**

4. So God teaches Jonah a lesson with the gourd. Jonah was distressed when it died because he needed it for shade. So, God needed to save Nineveh as an example of what He would do for Israel if she repented. God's cause would suffer if Nineveh should be destroyed. **SO, IN SPITE OF ALL MAN CAN DO AND IN SPITE OF ALL GOD DOES, MANY WILL REJECT.** "Many are called, but few are chosen."
5. Isaiah was told, when he had asked, "How long, O Lord," "Until cities lie waste and without inhabitant . . ." Very few paid attention to Isaiah.
6. Jeremiah was so discouraged, he wished he had never been born, but there was a fire in his bones and he could not quit.
7. Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Peter and Paul . . . all had their moments of discouragement, their failures, their enemies, **BUT THEIR VICTORIES FAR OUTWEIGHED THEIR DEFEATS, AND THEY KNEW THAT ULTIMATE VICTORY WAS ASSURED!** They may lose a battle here and there but the war would be won!
8. Bill Junkins, former President of Midwest Christian College, writing about having left the ministry from discouragement and returning to the ministry wrote, "Love your calling as a ministry sent to you by the Lord himself. It is the highest calling on earth. It is an invitation and challenge to walk with God where God walked when he visited our planet as our loving, serving, suffering Savior."

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### CONCLUSION

#### I. JONAH, THE RELUCTANT PROPHET, TEACHES US:

- A. God Says, "Go!"
- B. Men say, "No!"
- C. The World, His Word Can Know

#### II. LET THE HOLY SPIRIT SPEAK TO YOU THROUGH THESE WORDS OF HIS:

- A. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14)
- B. "For since in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe." (I Cor. 1:21)
- C. "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men . . . For the love of Christ constrains us . . . So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us . . ." (II Cor. 5:11, 14, 20)

MY FRIEND, THERE SIMPLY IS NO WAY FOR THE BILLIONS DOOMED TO AN ETERNAL HELL TO KNOW GOD AND BE SAVED, EXCEPT YOU BECOME A PREACHER AND TELL AS MANY AS YOU CAN!

### THE WHITE MAN'S BOOK OF HEAVEN

In the fall of 1832 five Indians traveled to St. Louis—in search of the White Man's Book of Heaven. They had heard about it from explorers and traders. It took them seven months to reach their destination.

When they arrived they were received by General Clark and entertained for the winter. However, two others died during the winter months, leaving only two of the original five.

In the spring, when they were ready to leave, General Clark gave them a banquet. During the banquet one of them gave a farewell address. Finally, the two survivors started back to their tribe, but one perished on the way and only one of the five ever saw his tribe again. Following is the touching speech that was made at the banquet by the Indian who had traveled so far in search of the White Man's Book of Heaven, *only to be shown images and burning candles and never once a copy of the Bible.*

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"I came to you over the trail of many moons, from the setting sun. You were the friends of my fathers, who have all gone the long way. I came with an eye partly open for my people who sit in darkness. I go back blind to my blind people.

"I made my way to you with strong arms through many enemies and strange lands that I might carry much back to them. I go with both arms broken and empty. Two fathers came with us. They were the braves of many winters and wars. We leave them asleep here by your great water and wigwams.

"My people sent me for 'The White Man's Book of Heaven.' You took me to where they worship the great Spirit with candles, but the Book was not there. You showed me the images of the Great Spirit and the pictures of the good lands beyond, but the Book was not among them to tell us the way.

"I am going back to my people in the dark land. You make my feet heavy with gifts, and my moccasins will grow old with carrying them, and yet the Book is not among them. When I tell my poor, blind people, after the more snow, in the Big Council that I did not bring the Book, no word will be spoken by our old men or by our young braves. One by one they will rise up and go out in darkness and they will go a long path to other hunting grounds. No white man will go with them and no White Man's Book of Heaven will make the way plain. I have no more words."

What a fearful catastrophe! What a terrible denunciation! Would to God there had been a Christian with a copy of the Bible, who could have met the need of the Indians, sent as they were by the Spirit of God. What, I wonder, will the people of St. Louis of that day have to say when they stand before God?

But now may God speak to our hearts, lest we, too, fail Him. May we do what we can to give The Book of Heaven to those who do not have it. Remember, a thousand tribes still wait in darkness and midnight gloom for the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. How will we excuse ourselves if we, too, fail Him in this dark day and hour?