



A Systematic Expository Study on the book of JONAH

Study 3: JONAH, A CAPTIVE OF THE LORD Jonah 1:17; Ephesians 3:1.

Jonah went through the storm as did Paul the apostle. But there are differences between Jonah and Paul. Jonah was an unwilling missionary; Paul, a willing missionary. The Lord trapped Jonah in the great fish so that He could reach his heart and make him willing to go and preach in Nineveh. He was an unwilling captive. Paul was a willing captive of the Lord, ready to go and preach the gospel to the Gentiles. In our text, we see, first, the manifold resources of Jehovah. In fact, running through the whole book of Jonah is this fact that the Lord has a lot of resources with which to accomplish His will. Not only in the book of Jonah but also in the whole of the Bible we see the Lord making use of these unlimited resources. By combining the resources as He did in the case of Jonah He was able to get Jonah to fulfill His will. Two, we see the merciful rescue of Jonah. Perhaps, the sailors who threw Jonah into the sea may have given him up as drowned. But the Lord was so merciful that He did not deal with him according to his rebellion and disobedience. He rescued him. Three, we find in the text, a foreshadow or symbol of the miraculous resurrection of Jesus.

THE MANIFOLD RESOURCES OF JEHOVAH

Jonah 1:17; Judges 7:9-15; Joshua 2:8,9,24; Numbers 22:22-28; Ezra 1:1-4; Jeremiah 25:9,12; John 11:47-51; Matthew 3:9; Acts 5:33-40; 22:3,10.

"Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. How sad to note that God could control the fish more readily than He could control the fisher of men! There are times that God can control the sinners in the world more easily than He can control preachers sent to reach them with the gospel. Here, God prepared a great fish and used it to fulfill His purpose. God is the Lord of His creation, whether it is fish as with Jonah's case, the ass as in the book of Numbers or Caiaphas as in the gospel according to St. John or Gamaliel as we see in the Acts of Apostles. In the animal kingdom, among men and among angels, God has resources and messengers enough to carry out His will and plans. In our text, God caused the fish to carry Jonah to the right spot and Jesus referred to Himself as the One that is greater than Jonah. As the fish carried Jonah to Nineveh, so does the Lord expect us to carry Him to the sin-laden world.

Talking about the unlimited resources of our Lord, He used the dream and the interpretation thereof of the Midianites to strengthen the hand and heart of Gideon to secure a decisive victory over the enemy. He used Rahab, a harlot, to give protection and information to the spies who had come on a mission to spy out the city of Jericho, **"And they said unto Joshua, Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us."** He used an ass to talk to and to bring conviction upon Balaam. He used Cyrus, the king of Persia to commence the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple. He used Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, as an instrument of oppression to punish the erring Israel and to bring them back to the path of rectitude and true worship. God has the whole world in His hands. If He wants you to do something and you do not do it, He has manifold resources He can use to accomplish His will. He even used Pharaoh's family to raise up Moses, the deliverer of Israel. And, when He calls us, it is not because He does not have an alternative. It is just that out of His love and mercy, He calls us so that we can be useful unto Him. If He promised you something, if He decides to do something for you, there is no need of you wondering how He will do it or trying to figure out how He will accomplish His promise. He has a lot of resources He can use to accomplish His will. He has all the resources on earth and in heaven to fulfill His promises.

THE MERCIFUL RESCUE OF JONAH

Jonah 1:17; Psalm 103:10,11; Isaiah 54:7,8; Romans 9:16; 12:1,2; Psalm 116:8,9,12-14.

That the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah instead of watching him drown in the deep water shows His mercy. Rather than deal harshly with him in accordance with his rebellion, He had pity on him and caused the whale to swallow him. Not only that. If He wanted, He could have picked another prophet in Israel to go to Nineveh in place of Jonah. Or even raised a Ninevite to carry out the task. That He did neither also shows His mercy toward Jonah. **"So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."** Many a time, when we are in sorrow because we had gone astray, because we have disobeyed the Lord and rejected His call, the tendency to think that He will not use us any more because we have disappointed Him is there. God is not like that. He may still use us because of His mercy. **"He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him."** If God has shown mercy unto us and has not dealt with us according to our sins, fear, shortcomings, we owe Him a duty to reciprocate His love and mercy by presenting our bodies **"a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."**

Jonah could have drowned. But the LORD showed mercy unto him and rescued him. In reciprocation, Jonah prayed unto Him and renewed his vows. Prior to this, Jonah might have thought that his life and ministry were ended. Sometimes when we think that our ministry is ended, when like Peter, we feel like abandoning the work of the Lord and going afishing, it is because we are only looking at the wrong side of the situation or event. As for Jonah, God was not finished with him yet. He sent a great fish (1), to *rescue* Jonah (2), to *return* him to Nineveh (3), to *renew* his vows (4), to bring him to the point of *recommissioning* him for the assignment of preaching the Word in Nineveh. If you have gotten yourself into some problem because of your disobedience and backsliding, the Lord can still rescue you.

THE MIRACULOUS RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Jonah 1:17; Matthew 12:40,41; Luke 11:30; 1 Corinthians 15:3,4,14,17; Romans 4:22-25; 10:9,10; 6:4; 1 Peter 1:3; Acts 4:33

Although Jesus, unlike Jonah, did His Father's perfect will, Jonah's three-day 'interment' in the belly of the fish is pictured in the New Testament as a symbol of the Lord's death and resurrection. It is an illustration of what would later happen to Him in fulfillment of His redemption plans for the sinful man. **"For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."** The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundational truth of the Christian faith. Without it, there is no hope of salvation because it was His resurrection that accomplished our justification. Now, what if you believe in the Virgin Birth of Jesus, His sinlessness, and His miraculous ministry but do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus? Then you cannot be saved. You cannot be born again. **"If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."** It is not possible for somebody to be a born again Christian and not believe in the resurrection.

Apart from guaranteeing us justification and salvation, the resurrection ensures for us power to walk in the newness of life and validates our hope of eternal life. Without it, there is no hope of our ever spending eternity with God. The apostles did not only preach the death of Jesus Christ, they also bore witness to His resurrection.

*If you are blessed by these bible study outlines, we'd like to hear from you.
You can email the pastor@deeperlife-liverpool.org.uk with your comments.*