

## Minor Prophets

### #5 JONAH

**HOSEA** took a faithless wife and spoke of judgement, love and life

**JOEL** told of locust plagues The Spirit and the end of the age

**AMOS** left his flocks and trees to call the nation to its knees

**OBADIAH** prophesied of Edom and its foolish pride.

**JONAH** tried to run away but lived to preach another day

#### A whale of a tale

- Jonah is also mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25
- Is the story of Jonah true?
- One theory is that he was picked up by a ship called 'Great Fish'
- Others say the story is an allegory or a parable
- There is a story of a 19<sup>th</sup> century whaler named James Bartley who was reputedly swallowed by a whale off the Falkland Islands and lived to tell the tale. But there is no verifiable evidence for this.
- In any case, there is no need of other instances – this event was unique. God prepared a fish especially for the occasion (1:17). It does not matter if such a thing has happened – or has never happened.
- 'Not one single Father has ever been cited' as doubting the veracity of the story (*Catholic Encyclopaedia*)
- Ultimately, we believe the story because Jesus did
- See Matthew 12:39; 16:4; Luke 11:29-32
- Would he offer a piece of fiction as a sign of the greatest event in history?
- Note how Jonah, the queen of Sheba, Solomon, the temple of Solomon and Nineveh are all lined up together – suggesting that all are historical people/places (Luke 11:29-32).

#### 1. Jonah's refusal (1:3; 4:1-2)

- Jonah 'ran away from the Lord' (1:3)
- His reason? The Assyrians were a fierce and warlike people who wrought terror in the hearts of the peoples of the ancient world. They were vicious and cruel. Jonah wanted God to judge them. He seems to have thought that if he did not preach to them they could not repent and therefore would be punished (4:1-2).
- Even so, he refused to do God's will
- Has God called us to take the message of his love to others? There is no good reason for disobeying.
- Story of failing to collect my daughter from school one day. She asked two questions: 'Where were you? Why didn't you come?' Can lost people around the world ask us the same questions?
- *There is never any good reason to disobey God*

**2. Jonah's regret (2:1-6)**

Jonah finds himself –

- In distress (2)
- In the depths of the grave (2)
- Hurlled into the deep (3)
- Banished from God's sight (4)
- At the point of death (5, 7)
- We may also find ourselves in the depths of despair and regret over mistakes, missed opportunities, sins and transgressions. We cannot turn back the clock and do it differently. But, like Jonah, we may get another chance.
- *Failing does not make you a failure!*

**3. Jonah's response**

Although Jonah was in the depths of despair—

- He remembered God (7)
- He prayed to God (7)
- He recalled the steadfast love of the Lord (8)
- He sang thanks God (9)\*
- He made a vow to God (9)
- He declared that salvation comes from the Lord (9)

In times of distress, it is well to remember the Lord's steadfast love and to worship him with songs of thanksgiving. Remember Paul and Silas in prison (Acts 16).

- *It is always a good time to praise the Lord!*

**4. Jonah's revival (3:1-10)**

- When Jonah went to Nineveh, the people 'believed God' (5)
- *God's Word always accomplishes its purpose (Is 55:10-11)*

**5. Jonah's rebuke (4:10-11)**

- God rebuked Jonah for his lack of pity
- *We should be careful of correctness without compassion*

**The second chance**

- Although Jonah failed he was given another chance
- Compare the stories of David (Psalm 51) and Peter (John 21:15-25)
- *Thank God that He is willing to give us another chance!*

**Our response**

- We may have failed – or feel we have failed
- We may be in the depths of despair and regret
- But like Jonah, we need to turn back to God, to give thanks to Him and to look to him for deliverance!

**SOMETHING TO THINK OR TALK ABOUT**

**Read** Jonah chapters one to four; Matthew 12:38-42.

Biblical

1. What did Jesus say the sign of Jonah demonstrated? (Matthew 12:38-42)
2. Who is the one who is greater than both Jonah and Solomon? (41, 42) In what ways?
3. What point is Jesus making when he refers to both the people of Nineveh and the queen of Sheba? (41, 42)
4. What does this passage tell us about Jesus' attitude to the story of Jonah?
5. What does chapter one of the book of Jonah tell us about Jonah's character?
6. What does chapter four tell us about Jonah's character?

Personal and practical

1. When we are in trouble, what can we learn from Jonah chapter two?
2. Think about 2:1 and 2:9. Imagine that you have disobeyed God and are full of regrets. How hard would it be to do what Jonah did here? Why?
3. What would be equivalents in your life of what Jonah says in 2:9?
4. Why didn't God send someone else to Nineveh, instead of asking Jonah a second time?
5. What do you think of Jonah's description of God (4:2)? Give reasons.
6. What lesson can we learn from 4:5-11? Can you think of times when you have acted like Jonah?

Memorise: Jonah 2:9

## About Dr Barry Chant

Barry Chant is Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. He is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He was the initiator and former president of Tabor College, Australia.

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