

## **Jonah 1**

**2009 December 8<sup>th</sup> for 2010 January 6<sup>th</sup>**

This is the famous story of Jonah in the whale.

Jonah was called by God to go to Nineveh and “preach against it,” but he didn’t want to so he bought a ticket on a ship going somewhere else.

The ship encountered a huge storm at sea and all the sailors were afraid and called on their own gods. Meanwhile, Jonah was down in the ship sleeping. The captain came and got him and told him to call on his god too but nothing they tried worked.

They threw lots to figure out who was the problem and Jonah was chosen. They asked him what they should do and he told them his story of running away from God and told them to throw him in the ocean and all would be well. They didn’t want to do this so they kept trying to row toward land, but to no avail. Meanwhile the storm only got worse. Finally, they decided to do as Jonah asked praying,

“O Lord, please do not let us die for taking this man’s life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, O Lord, have done as you pleased.”

They threw him overboard and the storm ended. “At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.

“But the Lord provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights.”

There is debate about whether the story of Jonah is fact or fiction. It would not be in our canon except that Jesus referred to it. This, among other things, leads some to believe that it is fact, probably from the 8th century B.C.

Jesus was in the earth for three days and three nights, like Jonah was in the whale three days and three nights. Jesus also slept in a boat in a storm. As a character, Jonah has other Christlike characteristics, excepting, of course, his rebellion.

## **Jonah 2**

**2009 December 14<sup>th</sup> for 2010 January 7<sup>th</sup>**

“From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. He said:

““In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me.

From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry.

You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me.

I said, “I have been banished from your sight;

yet I will look again toward your holy temple.”

The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head.

To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever.

But you brought my life up from the pit, O Lord my God.

“When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord,  
and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple.

Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.

But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you.

What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the Lord.’

“And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.”

Fish vomit, cool....

### **Jonah 3**

**2009 December 14<sup>th</sup> for 2010 January 8<sup>th</sup>**

“Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: ‘Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.’

“Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city -- a visit required three days. On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: ‘Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.’ The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

“When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh:

“By the decree of the king and his nobles:

“Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink,. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.’

“When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.”

### **Jonah 4**

**2009 December 14<sup>th</sup> for 2010 January 11<sup>th</sup>**

“But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the Lord, ‘O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.’

“But the Lord replied, ‘Have you any right to be angry?’

“Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. Then the Lord God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah’s head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, ‘It would be better for me to die than to live.’

“But God said to Jonah, ‘Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?’

“‘I do,’ he said, ‘I am angry enough to die.’

“But the Lord said, ‘You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?’”

Jonah wanted his prophesy to come true, but God wanted the repentance that Jonah’s preaching had elicited. This made Jonah angry. He wanted to sit outside the city and watch the firestorm, but all he got was an object lesson in compassion.

## **Micah 1**

**2009 December 16<sup>th</sup> for 2010 January 12<sup>th</sup>**

God gave Micah visions of Jerusalem and Samaria during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

God speaks from his holy temple against all the people of the earth. He is coming down from his house. “The mountains melt beneath him and the valleys split apart.” Israel and Samaria have both sinned from their highest places. Therefore they will be made into heaps of rubble, suitable for cultivation.

“All her idols will be broken to pieces; all her temple gifts will be burned with fire; I will destroy all her images.

Since she gathered her gifts from the wages of prostitutes, as the wages of prostitutes they will again be used.

“Because of this I will weep and wail; I will go about barefoot and naked.  
I will howl like a jackal and moan like an owl.”

The wound is untreatable. All is shame, don't tell the neighbors about it.

“Those who live in Maroth writhe in pain, waiting for relief,  
because disaster has come from the Lord, even to the gate of Jerusalem.”

Conquerors will come. The mourners will shave their heads, “bald as the vulture.” The children they love will go into exile.

## **Micah 2**

**2009 December 18<sup>th</sup> for 2010 January 13<sup>th</sup>**

“Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds!  
At morning's light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it.  
They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them.  
They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his inheritance.”

God is planning a disaster for this people, one from which they cannot save themselves. It will be a calamity. They will be ridiculed. There won't be anyone left in the assembly to make judgements.

Some prophets say that this will not happen, that nothing like this could ever happen to the house of Jacob, but by not being upright, God's people have become God's enemy. They will not enjoy what they have earned, they will not experience leisure. Blessings will be removed from their children forever.

“If a liar and deceiver comes and says, ‘I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and beer,’ he would be just the prophet for this people!”

But the remnant would be delivered, God would gather them like a shepherd gathers up his flock for safety.

## **Micah 3**

**2009 December 18<sup>th</sup> for 2010 January 14<sup>th</sup>**

“Then I [Micah] said, ‘Listen, you leaders of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel.  
Should you not know justice, you who hate good and love evil;  
who tear the skin from my people and the flesh from their bones;  
who eat my people's flesh, strip off their skin and break their bones in pieces;  
who chop them up like meat for the pan, like flesh for the pot?’

Such people cry out to God but get no answer. He cannot stand their evil.

God then blasts the false prophets. For food they will proclaim peace and when they don't, the people "wage war against [them]." God does not speak to them. All is dark for them; all is shame. Micah, on the other hand is full of power from the Spirit of God, "to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin." He rails against their distortion of truth, their bribes, the priests who teach and the prophets who "tell fortunes for money." At the same time they are saying that they are God's people and that God would never let anything bad happen to them.

"Therefore because of you, Zion will be plowed like a field,  
Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets."

#### **Micah 4**

**2009 December 18<sup>th</sup> for 2010 January 15<sup>th</sup>**

Now the prophesy turns to the idillic life for the people of God, and God's plan for how they will live under him.

"In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains;  
it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it.

"Many nations will come and say,

"Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.  
He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.'  
The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.  
He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide  
They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.  
Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.  
Every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree,  
and no one will make them afraid, for the Lord Almighty has spoken.  
All nations may walk in the name of their gods;  
we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever."

Also at that time God will gather up the lame and the exiles and all those who have experienced grief into a strong nation. God will rule forever there and all their dominion will be restored.

But there is also a dark side, even in God's idillic plan:

"Why do you now cry aloud -- have you no king?  
Has your counselor perished, that pain seizes you like that of a woman in labor?  
Writhe in agony, O Daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor,  
for now you must leave the city to camp in the open field.  
You will go to Babylon, there you will be rescued.

There the Lord will redeem you out of the hand of your enemies.”

The nations against Zion gloat and say, “Let her be defiled.” They don’t know God or understand his plan. God will enable Zion to break many nations and devote their ill-gotten wealth back to him.

## **Micah 5**

**2009 December 19<sup>th</sup> for 2010 January 18<sup>th</sup>**

God promises that a ruler of Israel will come from Bethlehem, David’s birthplace (in the past to Micah) and Jesus’ (in his future).

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

“Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.

“He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace.

When the Assyrians invade, the shepherds will raise up a leader and rule them. The remnant of Jacob will be “like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep, which mauls and mangles as it goes, and no one can rescue.”

In that day, God will destroy the horses and chariots, the cities and strongholds, the witchcraft and spells, the carved images and sacred stones. “[Y]ou will no longer bow down to the work of your hands.” God will avenge the disobedient nations.

## **Micah 6**

**2009 December 19<sup>th</sup> for 2010 January 19<sup>th</sup>**

God makes his case against Israel. He demands that they stand up and plead their side.

““My people, what have I done to you?”” God asks, ““How have I burdened you? Answer me. I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery.

I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam.

My people, remember what Balak king of Moab counseled and what Balaam son of Beor answered.

Remember your journey from Shitim to Gilgal, that you know the righteous acts of the Lord.””

“With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, and calves a year old?  
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil?  
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

(This was the text of a song we just sang Sunday, by Dauerman, who also preached.)

The prophet then answers famously that none of this is what God wants:

"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

(This is the text of another song.)

God is angry with the city and its wickedness, with deceptive practices like the "short ephah, which is accursed." (The "short ephah" is kind of like 1-7/8" X 3-3/4" two by four lumber that is common today.)

He will not acquit the dishonest, the users of false weights, the rich who are violent, the liars. They will store up but be empty. They will plant and not harvest. They will have oil and wine and not be able to use it. Because:

"You have observed the statutes of Omri and all the practices of Ahab's house, and you have followed their traditions."

God gives them over to ruin, derision, and the scorn of nations.

**Micah 7:1 - 7**

**2009 December 21<sup>st</sup> for 2010 January 20<sup>th</sup>**

Micah begins to wind up with this commentary on the human situation.

"What misery is mine!

I am like one who gathers summer fruit at the gleaning of the vineyard;  
there is no cluster of grapes to eat, none of the early figs that I crave.

The godly have been swept from the land, not one upright man remains.

All men lie in wait to shed blood; each hunts his brother with a net.

Both hands are skilled in doing evil; the ruler demands gifts,

the judge accepts bribes, the powerful dictate what they desire -- they will conspire together.

The best of them is like a brier, the most upright worse than a thorn hedge.

The day of your watchmen has come, the day God visits you. Now is the time of their confusion.

Do not trust a neighbor; put no confidence in a friend.

Even with her who lies in your embrace be careful of your words.

For a son dishonors his father, a daughter rises up against her mother,

a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law -- a man's enemies are the members of his own household.

“But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me.”

**Micah 7:8 - 20**

**2009 December 22<sup>nd</sup> for 2010 January 21<sup>st</sup>**

Micah's book ends with redemption for Israel.

“Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise.  
Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light.  
Because I have sinned against him, I will bear the Lord's wrath,  
until he pleads my case and establishes my right.  
He will bring me out into the light; I will see his righteousness.  
Then my enemy will see it and will be covered with shame,  
she who said to me, ‘Where is the Lord your God?’  
My eyes will see her downfall; even now she will be trampled underfoot like mire in the streets.

“The day for building your walls will come, the day for extending your boundaries.  
In that day people will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt,  
even from Egypt to the Euphrates and from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain.  
The earth will become desolate because of its inhabitants, as the result of their deeds.  
Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance,  
which lives by itself in a forest, in fertile pasturelands.  
Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead as in days long ago.

“As in the days when you came out of Egypt, I will show them my wonders.

“Nations will see and be ashamed, deprived of all their power.  
They will lay their hands on their mouths and their ears will become deaf.  
They will lick dust like a snake, like creatures that crawl on the ground.  
They will come trembling out of their dens; they will turn in fear to the Lord our God and will be afraid of you.  
Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance?  
You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.  
You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.  
You will be true to Jacob, and show mercy to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our fathers in days long ago.”

Payback time. God does not stay angry with his people forever.



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