

Missiology and the book of Jonah

SESSION 1

An inquiry into the biblical significance of the City in the 21stc

Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it because its wickedness has come up before me....

But Jonah ran away 1/1 3/1

Should I not be concerned about that great city? 3/11

1. General, lengthy introduction.
2. A story of two cities and a question that deserves an answer
 - The City of Man: Babylon
 - The City of God: Zion

Contrary to popular opinion the Bible has more to say about cities than it does about the countryside. Even the so-called Shepherd Psalm ends with reference to the 'House of the Lord' that is, the sanctuary in the city.

According to scripture, the city constitutes a central context for faith and practice

3. An exposition of Psalm 87 – Zion city of God. Heb 11/10 12/22

An extraordinary psalm

A map of the Ancient World

Passport and Visa stamped by God

God's most favoured place

4. A twin emphases

Daniel - the overthrow of physical Babylon

Revelation the collapse of the world order

18/2,10,16: 21/10 ff

5. The growth and incredible redistribution of the world's population

Then - 19th century

Now - 21st century

- China is a great example: what will this mean for the church and missiology?
- India – close on China's heels
- Old Missionary Practice – new Missionary Practice
- From the United Kingdom to the Republic of China -

6. My evangelistic formula

- God: Jonah: Jonah Ninevah: Ninevah God.....
- God: Jesus: Jesus the world: The world God
- God: AIC: AIC Tanzania Tanzania God
-

God's activity 1/1 he gives his word 1/4 sends wind 1/6 Captain reminds men God might be gracious 1/14 sailors say God does as he pleases 1/17 Lord provided a fish 2/3 God causes distress 2/9 Salvation from him 2/10 commands fish to vomit up Jonah 3/1 sends word second tome 3/9 King refers to Gods mercy 3/6 God causes plant 3/7 sends worm 4/8 wind near death experience

GROUP WORK

1. Discuss the concept of the Bible as a story of two Cities

2. Spend time on your own reading again the book of Jonah

3. Read it not just historically – but as though in some ways it is a story of you 'I am Jonah' – remember the comment in the opening lecture

4. What initial lessons have you learned?

5. Discuss Tanzania with reference to the movement of population

6. How might this affect your role as an evangelist?

7. Why was Jonah reluctant to go to the city?

8. What comfort can we draw from this book concerning cities?

Missiology and the book of Jonah

SESSION 2

1. Review of what we have already covered.

2. God's weakest link

To Sodom God sends Lot

To David God sent a prophet

A tattered sail who cannot respond to the winds of God'

'A man of God fleeing from God a disgrace to his profession liability to others'

3. The praiseworthy mariners

The unusual fear of the sea men: not an ordinary storm

The disciples had a similar experience.

SAILORS

do their job as best they can (1:5)

call on their gods (1:5)

are foreigners and pagans

act on what they know

pray to God for pardon in advance (1:14)

offer Adonai "a sacrifice and vows" (1:16)

Note the name change

4. The Conversion of the Mariners

Gentile sailors

Had a God awareness – and a conscience

5. The Missional Work of the Holy Spirit

In a pagan community

Cyrus, Cornelius.....

Theophany: dreams, impressions on the mind?

Does God hear the prayers of non-Christian people?

No book in the Bible conveys the absolute sovereignty of God as does this one. There are only forty verses. Yet the name of God is referred to three score times. He is Yahweh Elohim, controller of the world. The winds and the waves obey his will. He will rough up an ocean and calm it down, he can create an aquatic theological seminary and cause a plant to grow. He can change the outlook of sea-going pagans and change the heart of a man who heads up a war machine as guilty as he Nazis of the most reprehensible crimes against humanity. This is God of whom there is no other who does what he proposes ad purposes what he does. Answerable to none he was there before all time and will be at the end of time on the human scale

JONAH

flees, and hides in the bottom of the boat (1:5)

despite their invitation Jonah apparently does NOT call on his

"a Hebrew" (1:9) who "fears" Adonai God of heaven

knows God is "maker of sea and dry land" yet does not "fear" him enough to obey

even by chapter two still does not acknowledge to God the fault he declares to the sailors (1:10)

Floats away into the distance

Consider

1. The greatest missionary is the Holy Spirit – how do know this?
2. Who in the OT was used by God but was not an Israelite?
3. What indications does Jesus give that he has saving interests in *Gentiles* as well as Jews?
4. What does the Apostle Paul teach us about God's interest in Gentiles?
5. In your own ministry have you any experience of God preparing the hearts of people before you contacted them?
6. When Muslims pray to Allah – does God hear them?

Missiology and the book of Jonah

SESSION 3

Jonah and God: an exposition of chapter 2

The prophetic books have been called *The Dark Continent* of the Bible; they are little known. Jonah is amongst them. *Dark* because, though unknown like Livingstone's Africa, if explored they will reveal staggering truth, beautiful concepts and fearful warnings. Of these 17 books twelve are much smaller in length. The title *minor* is confusing. It refers to *size* and not to *quality*. Originally all these books so full of truth were bound into one volume. This was known simply as the *Prophetic Book*.

In *Jonah is a record of naked defiance*. This preacher's evangelistic role was not in dispute neither were his preaching credentials. 'The Word of the Lord' did come to Jonah son of Amittai 'arise go preach' 1v1; 3v1 He did get up, he did leave, but went he went in the wrong direction. Here is naked defiance unparalleled in the Old Testament. An angry man out of control, no longer allowing revealed theology to alter him because he wants to alter it. Theologically he has three problems which produced a fourth.

- the god he wanted was not the God that he got
- he attempted to run away from his responsibilities
- theologically he was totally confused
- and, finally, he was angry with God!

He is the opposite of Jesus. And now we find him on his own. 'Religion is what a man does with his solitariness'. Who was responsible for Jonah's dilemma? – he was. You can run away from God but you can't hide. Ps 139/9. Trace three steps:

- (i) Jonah prays
- (ii) He experiences the disciplines of God
- (iii) God *conquers* him

1. The Lord God caused his entombment

- 1/17 swallow him, he is not carried in the fish's mouth. The fish would protect him, not destroy him! At the end an undigested Jonah is coughed up! v 10
- v 3 the LORD hurled him into the sea. 3 days and nights anticipates Jesus in the earth followed by his resurrection.
- The important thing is not what went on in the belly of the fish but in the heart of Jonah.
- v 1 First time the prophet prays. The cause is his circumstances ('Sometimes I fall upon my knees because I have nowhere else to go.' Abraham Lincoln)
- I will look again to your holy temple The Prodigal son wants to come home! v 4,7

2. The Lord God's discipline is for Jonah's good

- He receives not the anger of God nor the condemnation of God but the *mercy* of God! v10
- The 'mother of all terrors' is eliminated v 4 I said I was banished from your sight.
- The renegade prophet becomes a psalmist (He wrote the *psalm* and indeed the whole book)
You called, I defied, You chastised, I prayed.

3. The Lord God conquers Jonah's defiance.

- V9 Salvation belongs to Yahweh: here is a theological corrective: *I am the way the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father....*(a greater than Jonah adds to this statement!)
- Idolatry – even in the form of a contented ministry – must yield to God I John 5/31
- Resurrection and a second chance is in the providence of God v 7
- In extremity prophets and prodigals find a way back to God v 7

For you to prayerfully consider

- What experience do you have of the disciplines of God?
- What did you learn from them and can you give an account to help others?
- Do you ever sense God's presence when on your own? Give your testimony.
- Is there anything you *do* that helps to give birth to this?
- Have you ever felt like giving up on your ministry? What was the cause? And what did you do?
- Which verses speak to you particularly from Jonah's 'psalm'?
- Can you think of other biblical passages where God gives people a second chance – how many chances have you had?!
- *Religion is what a man does in his solitariness.....* discuss this profound comment.

Missiology and the book of Jonah

SESSION 4

PREACHING AND REPENTANCE ch 3

1. Contrast 1/1 with 3/1
What is authoritative preaching?
Teach the teaching I have taught you
Preach the preaching I have preached to you
Walk the walk that I have walked with you
2. Examine Matt 28 Great Commission
3. Consider your own approach to preaching:
What gives it power? What should be the content?

Why did God send Jonah to Nineveh

What we have learned about the City – a worst case situation
Scenario..... if there is hope for Nineveh there is hope for every city in Tanzania!!

GENERAL REPENTANCE

The overwhelming grace of God

The prophet's departure

- Command to the fish
- Thank God for the second chance
- More information about the city

REPENT – the all-important word

- 1000x in the OT
- *Turning from – turning to*
- No repentance no forgiveness
- Definition of the Church *community of the repentant*

John Baptist/ Jesus Christ/ Peter/Paul

- The Community of those who have repented
- Spotlight on the King
- His actions – his demeanour
- One of the greatest examples of conversion

The message

- The cry - the preacher of one word
- The consequence – spread of the message
- The echo – around the city
- The response - total

Belief: repentance in action

- Belief – the shallows
- Belief - the depths

The ministry of Jonah – the ministry and tears of a greater than Jonah

Maybe God's concern for this city is indicative of God's concern for all cities even today. Large cities characterised by their power and wealth often have a downside seen in great poverty, neglect drugs and trafficking and human exploitation. In the vision of the city of God, the holy city, all evil and suffering is overcome. By addressing Nineveh it could also be that God wanted to show the effectiveness of his word to his own people in the city of Jerusalem ...maybe Nineveh's response was the eye opener God wanted for his own people ...Nixon p 159

Remember the cities

- God was there first
- God wants his people to go to the cities
- God listens to prayers for the city
- God longs for compassion for the cities

God has used men to transform our cities – *William Wilberforce & Carey*

For you to consider

1. What have you learned about preaching from the story of Jonah?
2. Are you identifying yourself more and more with this prophet
3. *The community of the repentant* is this a good description of the church – what are the pastoral implications
4. Why should we be encouraged by what happened at Nineveh?
5. Examine again the conversion of the king – what makes it one of the greatest illustrations of conversion of all time?

SESSION 5**The Compassionate God: Jonah chapter 4**

Jonah son of Ammittai disobeys God and spends 3 days in Sheol going through a death experience. Jesus Christ Son of the living God also enters Sheol. On the one hand is a prophet of *defiance* on the other the prophet of *compliance*. The one goes through a *chastening* experience; the other an *atonement* work. On the third day Sheol gives up an undigested Jonah sets off for Ninevah. On the third day Jesus is raised in the power of an endless life with a pardon won and extended to the whole world. What follows gives an even greater contrast between the revelation of God by the mercies of his son, and the anger of the prophet who fails to grasp the true nature of the God who called him to be a preacher

Why did Jesus die? Because what he represented as part of divinity was rejected by many of his contemporaries. Jesus the emotional Saviour – prone to groan and weep over the plight of men and women, *sheep without a shepherd. The blind led by the blind.*

JONAH'S RAGE

- His anger at God for what he allows is fierce and consuming.
- God's anger put out Jonah's anger put on!
- He prays for the second time and vents his emotions.
- The nightmare he feared has become a reality

THE CREED HE DISAVOWED

- *Ex 34/4 Psalm 145/8 Neh 9/17* He speaks though clenched teeth?
- *Gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love*
- *Relents from sending calamity.*
- Jonah – the elder brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son?

THE GOD WHO ASKS QUESTIONS

- A soft answer turns aside wrath..... God illustrates the proverb!
- Adam where are you Saul Saul why do you kick.....?
- Questions make you stop and think....slow to answer....

THE WATCH PLACE

- Outside the city from the East looking in
- What is the King doing? Waiting too Contrast

THE VINE, THE WORM , THE WIND

- The shelter improved and destroyed
- The blast was not to the citizens in the city but the prophet on the hillside
- Jonah and Elijah the prophets who wanted to die – but note the difference

THE SECOND QUESTION

- Gently reasoned
- And endorsed by a greater than Jonah! *Matt 6/25 ff If you consider yourself to be a sinner – God can never be too compassionate*

THE THIRD QUESTION

- The prophet is given the last word!
- The future bears abundant testimony to God's grace amongst the nations
- Jonah wept over a plant, Jesus wept over a people

FINAL REVIEW APPLICATION, A TIME OF PRAYER AND RE-DEDICATION

The responsibility of evangelists in Tanzania; new hope for our cities: greater power in our preaching: greater love for our people. 'I am Jonah – I have learned my lesson. Here I am – use me! f to be a sinner God can never be too compassionate!

Missiology and the book of Jonah

Postscript

Here we engage in a brief resume. And from the parable of the Good Samaritan I endeavour to inquire into three different philosophies which are found interfacing in the City of Man and the City of God. But first I will remind you of some salient re-occurring points as we have made our way through Jonah's slender book.

1. Flagrant Disobedience and Total Compliance

- The stark contrast between the historic Jonah and 'the greater than Jonah'
- At the heart of both was a different understanding of the character of God.

Thus one was angry with God but the Lord Jesus was in total harmony. Consider the importance of a correct theology.

2. Two possible different answers to the last of the three questions. *Shall I not have compassion.....*

- No you should not
- Yes you should.
- The evidence that both Jonahs came in with a positive.

What is your answer and what will you do about it? Carey and Wilberforce's view of the city was the driving force in the way in which they lived their lives.

3. From Joppa to Nineveh and from Jerusalem to Jericho!

We detect three attitudes, two within the City of Man – Babylon. And one which governs citizens who live in the City of Man physically but whose mind set is the City of God.

- What is yours is mine and I will take it
- What is mine is mine and I will keep it
- What is mine is yours and I will share it.

Finally: a last look at the two cities as we bid Jonah farewell!