

JONAH

A MISGUIDED PATRIOT LEARNS OBEDIENCE

There is only one instance of Jonah's prophesying to his own people of Israel, ^{<12425>}2 Kings 14:25. There he made a prediction concerning the restoration of the coasts of Israel, which was fulfilled in the reign of Jeroboam 2 about 800 B.C., showing that he lived earlier than that date. Of his personal history nothing further is known than what is found in this book.

JONAH 1

Nineveh (v. 2) was the capital of Assyria, and the reason Jonah sought to avoid the divine command against it (v. 3) arose from his patriotism. As a student of the earlier prophets he knew what was to befall his nation at the hands of Satan, and he shrank from an errand which might result favorably to that people, and spare them to become the scourge of Israel. The contents of the rest of this chapter require no comment till the last verse, where it is interesting to note that it is not said that a whale swallowed Jonah, but "a great fish" which "the Lord had prepared."

JONAH 2

Is self-explanatory, but it is interesting to observe Jonah's penitence under chastisement (v. 2), the lively experiences he underwent (vv. 3-6), his hope and expectation even in the midst of them (v. 4), his unshaken faith (v. 5), the lessons he learned (v. 8), and the effect of it all on his spiritual life (v. 9). God could not afford to set him at liberty (v. 10).

Is This Historic?

The question "Is this chapter historic?" will not go away. The evidence for it is found:

1. In the way it is recorded, there being not the slightest intimation in the book itself, or anywhere in the Bible, that it is a parable.
2. In the evidence of tradition, the whole of the Jewish nation,

practically, accepting it as historic.

3. The reasonableness of it (see the remarks under chapter 3).
4. The testimony of Christ in ~~4128~~ Matthew 12:38, and parallel places. There are those who read these words of the Savior in the light of the argument of which they form a part, and say that they allude only to what He knew to be a parable, or an allegory, but I am not of their number. Jesus would not have used such an illustration in such a connection, in my judgment, if it were not a historic fact.
5. The symbolic or prophetic character of the transaction (see the remarks under chapter 4).

JONAH 3

To grasp the significance of the events in this chapter it is necessary to know that the Ninevites worshiped the fish God, Dagon, part human and part fish. They believed he came up out of the sea and founded their nation, and also that messengers came to them from the sea from time to time. If, therefore, God should send a preacher to them, what more likely than that He should bring His plan down to their level and send a real messenger from the sea? Doubtless great numbers saw Jonah cast up by the fish, and accompanied him to Nineveh as his witnesses and credentials.

There are two side arguments that corroborate the historicity of this event. In the first place, *Oannes* is the name of one of the latest incarnations of Dagon, but this name with J before it is the spelling for Jonah in the New Testament. In the second place, there was for centuries an Assyria mound named *Yunas*, a corrupted Assyria form for Jonas, and it was this mound's name that first gave the suggestion to archeologists that the ancient city of Nineveh might be buried beneath it. Botta associated *Yunas* with Jonah, and the latter with Nineveh, and so pushed in his spade, and struck the walls of the city.

The Moral Miracle

Before leaving this chapter, observe that the moral miracle was greater than the physical. The sparing of a nation of confessed sinners, simply on their repentance and their giving heed to the message of the prophet, was more astounding than the prophet's preservation in the fish's belly (vv. 5-10)!

JONAH 4

Especially the opening verse (vv. 1-3), corroborates the view that patriotism led Jonah to flee from his divinely-imposed duty. He could not bear to see his enemy spared.

From verse 5 we gather that he waited in the hope of seeing the destruction of the city; and yet how gracious God was to his narrow-minded and revengeful servant (v. 6)!

JONAH A TYPE OF ISRAEL

But we should not conclude this lesson without speaking of the dispensational significance of Jonah and his mission, which is a contribution to its historicity. To illustrate:

Jonah was called to a world mission, and so was Israel.

Jonah at first refused compliance with the divine purpose and plan, and so did Israel.

Jonah was punished by being cast into the sea, and so was Israel by being dispersed among the nations.

Jonah was not lost, but rather especially preserved during this part of his experience, and Israel is not being assimilated by the nations, but being kept for God.

Jonah repentant and cast out by the fish, is restored to life and action again, and Israel repentant and cast out by the nations shall be restored to her former national position.

Jonah, obedient, goes upon his mission to Nineveh, and Israel, obedient, shall ultimately engage in her original mission to the world.

Jonah is successful in that his message is acted upon to the salvation of Nineveh, so Israel shall be blessed in that she shall be used to the conversion of the whole world.

QUESTIONS

1. Have you read ^{21}2 Kings 14:25?

2. What was the motive for Jonah's disobedience?
3. Give five reasons for believing the historicity of this book.
4. Can you quote ~~12:38~~ Matthew 12:38?
5. What explanation of this miracle is found in the worship of the Ninevites?
6. What two side arguments for the historicity of this event can you name?
7. What second miracle does this book contain?
8. Indicate the sense in which Jonah is a type of Israel.