

Survey of the Old Testament

Jonah

1. Jonah prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II (c. 790-750 BC) (2 Kgs. 14:23-29; note especially verse 25).
2. Jeroboam II reigned for forty-one years and regained lost Israelite territory, but he was evil and continued the idolatry of Jeroboam I. The prophet Amos spoke of Israel at the same time, and his prophecy gives more information about the wealth and wickedness that was widespread in Israel at this time.
3. Jonah was from Gath-hepher (2 Kgs. 14:25), which was a few miles north of Nazareth (which would place it in Galilee – note John 7:52).
4. The book of Jonah is different from any other of the latter prophets in that it is written entirely in narrative form.
5. The fish story
 - a. The “fish story” overshadows the rest of the book, but there are several miracles, and some valuable lessons to learn from the rest of the book.
 - b. This is a miracle – and does not have to be explained on natural grounds any more than any other miracle. Some attack the historicity of Jonah largely because of this fish story. Jesus treated it as a real event (Mt. 12:39-41).
 - a. What kind of a fish was it?
 - 1) The Hebrew is *dag gadol*, which means “great fish.” It is a general term that could include a whale.
 - 2) The Greek in Matthew 12:40 is *ketos*, which is also a vague term that refers to a large creature in the sea.
 - 2) Neither the OT nor the NT is specific enough on terms to know exactly what kind of sea creature this was.
6. God told Jonah to go preach to Nineveh. Jonah at first refused. Then, after being swallowed by the fish, he repented. God had the fish spit him out. Jonah then went to Nineveh and preached. They repented, God relented, and Jonah sulked.
7. What really is the point of this document? What good for Israel is a document that is all about the repentance of Nineveh? What were the Israelites (and we) supposed to learn from this information?