

Synthetic Bible Studies

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and
Bible Expositions

By

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LESSON TWENTY-FIVE

JONAH

The reason for placing the study of Jonah next to Joel is simply, that as near as we can gather the two were probably contemporary, the one in Judah as we have seen, the other in Israel.

There is, indeed, however, only a single reference to any prophesying of Jonah in connection with his own people, and that is found in II Kings 14:25. A prediction he had made concerning the restoration of the coasts of Israel had been fulfilled in the reign of Jeroboam II, somewhere about 800 B. showing that Jonah must have flourished at an earlier date, though how much earlier, no one knows.

Of his personal history nothing more can be told than that recorded in the same verse with the exception of what we find in his written book.

That book contains the record of his special mission to the great Gentile city of Nineveh, the Assyrian capital, a story as familiar as that of any of the old patriarchs. Everyone knows how Jonah refused to comply with the divine command, the punishment which befell him in being swallowed by the great fish, the repentance which followed, his subsequent obedience and the result of his commission both on Nineveh and on himself.

Of course, the question will not down, Is this historic?

The evidence for the actuality of the whole transaction is found:

- (1) in the way in which it is recorded, there being not the slightest intimation in the book itself, or anywhere else in the Bible, that it is a parable.
- (2) In the almost unbroken evidence of tradition, the whole of the Jewish nation practically, accepting it as historic.
- (3) But especially in the testimony of CHRIST as recorded in Matthew 12:40 and parallel places.

There are those who are able to read these words of the Saviour 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, or a myth, 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 that of a historic fact.

Before leaving this part of our subject, however, there are two or three other points which it might be well to speak of.

In the first place, we might note as a reason for Jonah's indisposition to obey the divine command, though not as an excuse for it, that he was moved by patriotic motives. As a prophet, and a student of the Word of GOD, he knew what was to befall his nation sooner or later at the cruel hands of Assyria, and we can readily understand how he must have shrunk from going on an errand to that people which might result in sparing them to be the scourge of Israel, as it did.

Another thing to notice is that great and astounding as was the physical miracle of Jonah's preservation in the fish's belly, it was as nothing in comparison with the moral miracle of sparing a whole nation of confessed sinners simply on their repentance and giving heed to the message of the prophet!

Nor let us conclude our meditations either without observing how the history of Nineveh in this case illustrates the principle of GOD's dealings with all the heathen nations as laid down in Acts 10:34, 35.

Jonah a Type of Israel

A dispensational significance in the book of Jonah, and one which itself is a contribution to its historicity, is found in its allegorical or typical relationship to the history of Israel as a nation.

To illustrate:

1. Jonah was called to a world mission and so was Israel.
2. Jonah at first refused compliance with the divine purpose and plan, and so did Israel.
3. Jonah was punished by being cast into the sea, and so was Israel by being dispersed among the nations.
4. 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.
5. Jonah repentant and cast out by the fish, is restored to full life and action again, and Israel repentant and cast out by the nations shall be restored to her former national position.
6. Jonah, obedient, goes upon his mission to Nineveh, and Israel, obedient, shall ultimately engage in her original mission to the world.

7. 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.

~ end of Lesson 25 ~
