

The Half Hour That Changes the World

Jonah

Book 32

Basic Questions behind the book:

How do we respond to God's call? And what does this book tell us of God's nature?

Summary of book:

This book is different from the other prophetic books in that it is a story about a prophet rather than an account of his teaching. Most scholars think that this book was never intended to be taken as history, but was written as fiction with a moral, or as an allegory. On the other hand, some attempts have been made to prove that what happened was real. Either way, this is the familiar story of Jonah being swallowed by a whale, but there is more to it than that. The story focuses on Nineveh, a leading city (and the last capital) of Assyria. At the height of its power it could accommodate 175,000 people according to archaeologists, which was very big in those days. The book of Jonah tells the story of Jonah's flight and how God stopped him and turned him around. As you read Jonah, you see the full picture of God's love and compassion and realise that no-one is beyond redemption.

Vital Statistics:

Purpose: To show the extent of God's grace- the message of salvation is for all people.

Author: Jonah the son of Amittai.

Recipients: Israel and God's people everywhere.

Dating: Jonah went to Nineveh around 750 BC although some think the story was written later.

Setting: Jonah precedes Amos and ministered under Jeroboam II, Israel's most powerful king. Assyria was Israel's great enemy, and Israel was conquered by them in 722 BC. Nineveh's repentance must have been short-lived, for it was destroyed in 612 BC.

Reflections:

God can do His own work, but he chooses to call us and is patient and waits for us.

"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?" (4:11)

"What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the Lord." (2:9)