

# Jonah: Facing Up to the Storm

Goldstone Church – 17-Apr-16 10:30am

Jonah 1:1-17

## Introduction

According to the website “TheTopTens.com”, the story of Jonah is the *seventh* most popular Bible story. But as we start this series in the book of Jonah, we need to look past the Jonah “story” that we may have heard in Sunday School, and ask God to speak to us afresh from this passage.

We know very little about Jonah other than what is written in this short book. 2 Kings 14:25 says that Jonah prophesied in the northern kingdom of Israel, following on from Elijah and Elisha. Jonah’s contemporaries were Hosea and Amos.

Interestingly, some Bible scholars struggle with the miracullous story of the book of Jonah, especially the part about a large fish swallowing the prophet. As a result, they make the suggestion that the book of Jonah is more of a “parable” than historical fact. However, according to Matthew 12:39-41, Jesus indicates that the book of Jonah is real and literal.

Just as a reminder, Jonah chapter 1 is the account of ‘Jonah and the Sailors’. God gives Jonah a message to take and give to the great city of Nineveh. But instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah jumps on a ship in the opposite direction to Tarishish, at the other end of the world.



Jonah tries to run away from God. Hopefully, we all know the story.

But believe God does not want us to focus specifically on Jonah today. And neither does God want us to focus on the real heroes of the passage – the Gentile sailors. Instead, God wants to use this passage to help us to understand more of His own character.

Notice that God’s name, “the Lord”, appears twelve times in this passage. Sometimes it’s the sailors calling on the name of “the Lord”. But other times, the text indicates that God is at work. As a result, going to use this passage to look at and understand something of who God is – what are some of God’s characteristics.

1. We Worship a God Who  
**MOVES AND MEETS** (Jonah 1:1 & 4)

**a) God Moves**

*“The word of the Lord came to Jonah” (v.1) NLT: “The Lord gave this message to Jonah.”*

God is not a passive God. Instead, our God is active – in fact, He is proactive. He initiates. God makes the first move.

*“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)*

Even before we acknowledged our need for Jesus in our lives, God took the initiative and sent His Son to the world to pay the price for our sins. We love Him, because He first loved us.

We worship a God that is alive and active. Our God is on the Move!

**b) God Meets**

*“Then the Lord sent a great wind” (v.4)*

Some people struggle with the thought that God would send a storm on purpose. But rather than focus on the difficulties within the storm, perhaps we need to understand the “why”. Why would God do this in the first place? What is God’s bigger picture?

In Jonah 1, God sent the wind as a way for Jonah and the Sailors to have an encounter with God. God was not doing anything sneaky or manipulative. Instead, God was just getting their attention.

I accept that negative events that come into lives of Christians these events are often heartbreaking and dark valleys of difficulty. However, we need consider possibility – just the possibility - that God brings these events into our lives so that He can get our attention.

God sent the great wind to get the attention of both Jonah and Sailors. God wanted to meet with all of them. How else would he be able to do so?

We worship a God that loves us so much, that He pulls out all the stops to meet with us.

2. We Worship a God Who  
**MATTERS AND MOULDS** (Jonah 1:9 & 12)

**a) God Matters.** He is a God who is credible.

*“I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land.” (v.9)*

Even though Jonah is deep into disobeying God, amazingly, he still describes himself as follower of Almighty God. He says, “I am a Hebrew” (v.9).

Possibly, this may be the usual way for a Jew to describe themselves to a Gentile. Just like we would say, "I'm a Christian". But note where Jonah was at that moment. He was on the deck of a sinking ship, in a storm. This is a remarkable statement. Clearly, Jonah's longstanding, personal relationship with God has had a major impact on his identity and the shape of his life.

Jonah's identity was not based on what he was doing – or in this case, what he was *not* doing. Instead, Jonah's identity was based on who he was in God's eyes. His ultimate allegiance was to "*the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land*".

We worship a God that is the highest authority, a God who has the highest credentials. We worship a God that matters.

**b) God Moulds.** He is a creative God that shapes His people.

Jonah says, "*I know it is my fault*" (v.12b)

This is another amazing verse. Jonah accepts his guilt - and is now prepared for the consequences. Jonah's relationship with God has progressed. God has moved Jonah on - from complete defiance and disobedience, to a place where there is the start of repentance.

Isaiah describes God as a potter. "*Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.*" Isaiah 64:8

To do the job correctly, the Potter is always in constant contact with the clay.

We worship a God that moulds his people. God shapes us and forms us, so that we can be used by Him – and for His purposes.

### 3. We Worship a God Who **MYSTIFIES AND MANAGES** (Jonah 1:15-16 & 17)

**a) God Mystifies.**

"*The men [sailors] greatly feared the Lord*" (v.16a)

The Sailors are amazed by the storm calming. These are hardened career sailors, who go from screaming for their lives in a storm, to the safety in calming seas – all in the space of a splash, as Jonah goes overboard.

When Jesus calms storm, Mark 4:41 says that the disciples "... *were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!'*". Jesus confounds the disciples by controlling the weather.

Even earlier in Jesus' life, when he was just a 12-year-old boy, visiting the temple, Luke 2:47 says that "*everyone who heard [Jesus] was amazed at his understanding and his answers.*" The top scholars of the day were mystified and floored by Jesus' intellect and responses.

Part of God's character is that He amazes! He is so far beyond anything we can imagine, that it causes jaws to drop in complete amazement. There is no one else is

like Him. We worship a God who mystifies – yet He loves us so much that He seeks a relationship with each one of us.

**b) God Manages.** A God who provides.

*“The Lord provided a great fish” (v.17a) NAS: “The Lord appointed a great fish”.*

God provides for His people. The Bible has several verses about this:

*“Consider the ravens: they do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!” Luke 12:24*

*“The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.”*  
Psalms 34:10

*“So do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.” Matthew 6:31-32*

We worship a God that manages and provides for the ones He loves.

## CONCLUSION

In this first chapter of Jonah, it is easy to get side-tracked and only focus on the great wind and the problems that Jonah and the Sailors encountered. Yes, it was a challenging time, but nobody died. Everyone was saved – even Jonah, although his life-raft was somewhat unique!

This passage is more than a story of a disobedient prophet. This chapter gives us an insight into the reality of who God is. We see God’s character being shown in the practicalities of life.

We worship a God who ...

- **Moves and Meets.** A God who makes the first move towards us. A God who wants to meet us in the realities and practicalities of our daily lives.
- **Matters and Moulds.** A God who is higher than any other, and a God who shapes and moulds us to be used by Him in the realities and practicalities of our daily lives.
- **Mystifies and Manages.** A God who constantly amazes everyone and provides for us in the realities and practicalities of our daily lives.

And in the light of who God is, our response can only be one thing – loving obedience.

We express our love for God as we worship Him with all our hearts, with all our soul, with all our minds, and with all our strength. And we express our love for God as we obey and as we follow what Jesus taught us to do in the realities and practicalities of our daily lives.

Let us live lives that declare afresh who God is, and respond by following Him in loving obedience.

Amen