

Jonah

Bible Study – Scene 4

Jonah 3:1-3a

Dr. Reed Lessing in his Concordia Commentary (CC) of Jonah divides his remarks on Jonah into seven scenes. This is the fourth section.

Jonah 3:1–3a does not explicitly state that Jonah has repented, that the experience with the sea and the great fish have humbled him, that Yahweh’s salvation (2:9) prompts his obedience, or that he now plans to change his theology to accommodate God’s desire to save all people, even pagan Gentiles like the Ninevites (Jonah resents that in 4:1–2). (CC)

So why does Jonah go to Nineveh this time? After all, this was a demanding journey of about five hundred miles from the Mediterranean coast across desert routes. The approximate travel time in antiquity from Jerusalem to Nineveh is estimated to have been between a month and forty-five days, based on caravan speed. So why go? (CC)

- One answer might be that Jonah realizes he cannot escape Yahweh. (CC)
- Another answer as to why Jonah goes to Nineveh this time might be that he hopes or anticipates that the Ninevites will not respond, in which case they would be destroyed. (CC)
- Or perhaps Jonah goes to the great city because of his renewed faith. After all, Yahweh had saved him from the death he surely knew he deserved. (CC)

But if this is true, it will become apparent in chapter 4 that Jonah is still “saint and sinner at the same time,” and this to the very end of the narrative. (CC)

1. God made a new beginning with Jonah, giving him a second chance (v. 1). (TLSB) How can we have a fresh start every day and sometimes several times a day?
2. What can one surmise from the repeated commands of God to Jonah concerning Jonah’s ministry to Nineveh?
3. How comforting are the words “the message I give you (v. 2)? Read also Luke 12:12.
4. What can you learn from these verses?

Some Answers to the above Questions:

- 1. As we remember our baptism we are reminded that we are forgiven and given a fresh start.**
- 2. The ongoing theme in the book is what God commands, says, and does will eventually accomplish His will. Even if Yahweh’s Word is not heeded or fulfilled immediately, as it is not in chapters 1–2, it will be fulfilled in time, as it is in chapter 3. He will not be thwarted. After all, he is the God of the heavens, who made the sea and the dry land (1:9). (CC)**
- 3. Like Jonah and disciples in Luke 12, we don’t have to worry what we will have to say when a witness opportunity is laid before us.**