

2. Observation and interpretation

June 21, 2018

I gave you guys homework last Thursday night. I am sure that you all finished it. First, you prayed to the Lord for wisdom and understanding. Then, you read through this Book 3 times minimum.

A. OBSERVATION – 5 Ws and 1 H

1) **Who:** God, Jonah, the ship captain and crew, the great fish, the king of Nineveh, and the people of Nineveh

2) **What:** Disobedience of the supposedly godly prophet,
Obedience of the ungodly ship crew and the people of Nineveh,
Omnipotent, omniscient, and sovereign God who is slow to anger, but full of mercy

3) **Where:** Israel – Joppa, On the way to Tarshish on the Mediterranean Sea, Nineveh, the capital city in Assyria

4) **When:** Jonah was a real person, a Jewish prophet from Gath Hopher in Zebulun who ministered in the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II.
2 Kings 14:25 He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hopher.

5) **Why:** The Lord, in His great mercy and lovingkindness, chose to give one more chance to the people of Nineveh through His prophet Jonah. At the same time, the Lord taught His disobedient servant an unforgettable lesson that he would never forget.

6) How:

a. GOD'S PATIENCE WITH JONAH (1:1-17)

- Jonah's disobedience – 1:1-3
- Jonah's indifference – 1:4-10
- Jonah's stubbornness – 1:11-17

b. GOD'S MERCY TOWARD JONAH (2:1-10)

- God hears Jonah's prayer – 2:1-2
- God disciplines Jonah – 2:3
- God honors Jonah's faith – 2:4-7
- God accepts Jonah's confession – 2:8-9
- God restores Jonah's ministry – 2:10

c. GOD'S POWER THROUGH JONAH (3:1-10)

- The gracious Lord – 3:1-2
- The obedient servant – 3:3-4
- The repentant people – 3:5-9
- The postponed judgment – 3:10

d. GOD'S MINISTRY TO JONAH (4:1-11)

- God hears him – 4:1-4
- God comforts him – 4:5-8
- God teaches him – 4:9-11

B. INTERPRETATION

Remember what I taught you last Thursday night about the interpretation? Observation and interpretation should be strictly objective, not subjective. The more we study the Bible, the better our interpretation will be.

- 1) **What was content?** Find the purpose or main point of the text
- 2) **Study the passage in its context.**
- 3) **Compare the passage with others.**

With that in mind, let's go to chapter 1:

Jonah 1:1-3 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." 3 But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

What do you see here? In v1, we see our main man Jonah's short lineage. He was the son of Amittai from Gath Hopher of the tribe of Zebulun. Their forefather was the sixth and the last son between father Jacob and mother Leah.

V2 – God's command to Jonah: "Go to Nineveh and preach against it." Seems simple enough. Why does the Lord want Jonah to preach against it? Because of their wickedness? What does the Scripture mean when it says, "for their wickedness has come up before Me"? What does the Lord know about people's wickedness? Everything. There is not a thing that our omniscient God does not know. None of man's wickedness can escape from God. He sees it all, and it may come to a point where it demands a specific warning and judgment of God.

V3 – What did Jonah do? He decided to ditch God by going in the opposite direction. From where he was, he went to Joppa which is a coastal city even today. You can see Tel Aviv from there along the Mediterranean Coast.

If you have a map, you can find out the distance between Joppa and Nineveh was about 550 miles and you have to head northeast to get there. But the distance to Tarshish which was a port city of southern Spain from Joppa was over well 2500 miles west.

Can you tell me why Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh? When you use the Strong's Concordance or Bible Dictionary, you will find many references to Assyrians' invasion to Israel – 1 Chronicles 5:26; 2 Kings 17:5-6; 2 Chronicles 32:22. Jonah hated the Ninevites and Assyrians with passion and prejudice. The bottom line is that he did not want them saved. There was a basis for his hatred.

Somehow Jonah thought that he could escape from the presence of God. Obviously he didn't remember Psalm 139:

Psalm 139:7-12 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me; 12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.

V3 again – Jonah went to Joppa and found a ship to Tarshish. What can we get from this portion of the Scripture? So, how would you interpret this particular portion of the verse and what can we learn from it?

Let's say you've been praying for something badly, no matter what it takes. Now what you've been praying for is available for you to have. Does it mean that the Lord wants you to go for it? Just because you are getting something you want after your prayer, it doesn't mean that it is the Lord's will for you to have it.

We often think that if we are out of the will of God, everything would go difficult and the things start to fall apart. On the contrary, if we are in the will of God, it should be a smooth sailing and the things should fall into its place.

If that is the only indication of whether we are in God's will or not, so far Jonah would think that he is not out of God's will. Purely depending on the sign of circumstances to find out the will of God can be extremely dangerous.

Jonah didn't have a problem going down to Joppa from Gath Hopher, nor had he a problem buying a ticket to the farthest location at that time.

For the prophet Jeremiah, nothing could go easy and right. When you read the Book of Jeremiah, you have to feel sorry for that guy. Everybody in Israel hated him to the point of death. God told him to prophesy the warning from Him to the people of Israel. Did they repent and turn to God? Not one single person. What did they do? They threw him in the jail. Not one thing went right for Jeremiah. His pillow was soaked with his tears for his fellow Israel people. It is no wonder why they call him the "Weeping Prophet." But Jeremiah was right smack dab in the center of God's will.

No matter what kind of situation occurs, the Word of God is our guide and we must not depart from it under the pretext of necessity or circumstances. We can easily justify the circumstances around us to favor what we have decided, but God's Word doesn't change.

If you've been in the Lord for some time, you might remember the story of Balaam who was enticed to curse the Israelis by Balak the king of Moab with much wealth in the Book of Numbers 22. The Lord allowed him to go with the king of Moab. Is that what the Lord wanted Balaam to do? It was a test and Balaam miserably failed.

Back to v3: *Jonah 1:3 But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it.*

Do you remember that I told you to pay attention to repeating words when you observe Scriptures, because the Lord, the Author of our Bible does not waste words in His Scriptures. Do you see any repeated words here? "Down." What can you get out of it? What is your interpretation of this?

When we run away from the Lord or go against His will, we go down and down. As we see here, Jonah had to pay the fare to run away from the Lord. It cost him money. Remember the apostle Paul had a heart desire to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles? The Lord made the way to Rome for Paul, all expenses paid by the Roman government. All the way to the emperor. OK, he was a prisoner. Where God guides, God provides, amen?

Yes, we are moving along at the blazing speed.

Jonah 1:4-5 But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up. 5 Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

V4 – The Lord sent out a great storm to the ship that Jonah was in. What do you see? Where did this mighty tempest come from? What can we get from this verse? God allows us to have storms in our lives or He actually sends storms to us to get our attention. Not every storm is sent because of our sins and rebellion against God. Some storms are sent by God to develop our characters. The stronger the winds of our lives blow, the deeper the root of our faith in Christ Jesus grows.

What else can we see from the storm that our Lord sends to our way? His love for us. He loves us so much that He doesn't want us to be as we were before.

Hebrews 12:6 For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.

Let's notice something else here in the second half of v4 and the first half of v5:

Jonah 1:4b-5a so that the ship was about to be broken up. 5 Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load.

What do you see here? When the storm of life comes to us because of our sin and rebellion, are we the only ones who get affected by it? No. Jonah could care less about what was going on the deck. The ship crew threw the cargo to lighten the load. It means that they were going to lose money on this voyage. That is what happens while we are in sin. We become careless about others who are around us. We only think about ourselves and become extremely selfish. Those who are around us also get hurt because of our own sin and rebellion.

In the last part of v5:

Jonah 1:5b But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

What does this verse mean to you? Jonah was not sleeping because he was at peace with God like Jesus did in the boat with His disciples in the middle of a storm. But Jonah was duped by satan. When we get into sin in the beginning, we get convicted by the Holy Spirit. But the more we get involved with sins, the more we become callous against the conviction of the Holy Spirit. At this point, Jonah was so callous that he could ignore God's knocking with the storm on the door of his heart.