

Dr. Marv Wilson, Prophets, Session 8, Jonah

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Wilson, Prophets, Session 8, Jonah, Biblicalearning.org, BeL

Dr. Marv Wilson's session on the Book of Jonah explores its historical context and various interpretations. It begins by situating Jonah within the reign of Jeroboam II and discussing the Assyrian influence of that era. **The lecture then reviews different scholarly approaches to Jonah, including fictional, allegorical, parabolic, and historical readings.** It considers challenging aspects, such as the miraculous elements and the city of Nineveh's rapid repentance. **The discussion underscores two primary purposes of the book: to illustrate God's universal love extending beyond Israel and to serve as a Christological type, foreshadowing Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.** The lecture concludes by suggesting that the sign of Jonah prefigures Jesus' preaching and power, thus connecting Yahweh's actions in the Old Testament with Jesus' actions in the New Testament.

**2. 10 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Wilson, Prophets, Session 8 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament →
Major Prophets → Prophetic Literature).**



**Wilson_Prophets_S
ession08.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Wilson, Prophets, Session 8, Jonah

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Marv Wilson's lecture on the Book of Jonah.

Briefing Document: Dr. Marv Wilson on the Book of Jonah (Session 8)

Introduction

This briefing summarizes Dr. Marv Wilson's eighth session on the Prophets, specifically focusing on the Book of Jonah. The lecture covers the historical background of Jonah, various interpretations of the book, and its significance in both Old Testament and New Testament contexts. Dr. Wilson emphasizes the importance of understanding scripture and its relevance to our lives, advocating for a balanced approach to interpretation.

Key Themes and Ideas

1. Historical Context of Jonah:

- **Time Period:** Jonah is placed in the reign of Jeroboam II (793-753 BC) of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, based on 2 Kings 14:25.
- **Location:** Jonah was from Gath-hepher, a town near Nazareth in the tribal territory of Zebulun. "Gath-hepher is that little town, just a short bike ride from Nazareth, and you see Gath-hepher right up here, quite near the Sea of Galilee."
- **Significance of the Location:** This region was later significant as the area where Jesus spent most of his time, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy about light shining in that area. However, in Jonah's time, it was a time of "great darkness" with the looming threat of Assyrian invasion.
- **Political Climate:** This period preceded the Assyrian conquest and the exile of the Northern Tribes, which began under Tiglath-Pileser III. The Assyrian deportation policy led to the intermarriage of Israelites with foreigners, creating the Samaritan problem by the time of Jesus, with whom traditional Jews did not interact. "They began to intermarry and that's why you have the Samaritan problem in Jesus' day."
- **Jonah's Role:** He is presented as a "foreign missionary" from the Northern Kingdom, called to preach in Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, near modern-day Mosul, Iraq.

1. Interpretations of the Book of Jonah:

- **Challenges in Interpretation:** The book of Jonah has been subject to various interpretations due to its unique narrative and miraculous elements. Dr. Wilson notes that like Genesis 1-11, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah and Revelation, it is a book that leads to a great variety of opinions and interpretations.
- **Fiction Interpretation:** Some scholars view Jonah as a short fictional story designed to convey a moral lesson. This perspective sees Jonah as a "legendary character" and attributes the miraculous elements to the influence of the stories of Elijah and Elisha, particularly Elisha who is attributed with about 12 miracles.
- **Allegorical Interpretation:** This view understands the story as an extended metaphor, with Jonah representing Israel, the fish representing Babylon, and Jonah being vomited onto dry land as representing Israel's return from exile. "The great fish is identified with Babylon that swallows Israel up for some 70 years... the three days of captivity in the fish led to the vomiting out of Jonah and coming to that dry land that stands for return from exile."
- **Parable Interpretation:** This approach sees the book as a parable that teaches a spiritual lesson, mainly to protest against the exclusive nationalism of Israel and demonstrate that God's love is for everyone. This view typically sees the book as post-exilic. However, Dr. Wilson critiques this view, asking if there are any parables in the Bible that are 3-4 chapters long and questioning whether all the complexity in the text can be reduced to one simple lesson.
- **Historical Interpretation:** This traditional view understands Jonah as an actual historical character and the events as real. Dr. Wilson upholds this view, stating it is supported by the Jewish and Christian communities prior to the rise of rationalism. He says that supernatural elements are common in scripture, citing Moses, Elijah, and Elisha as examples of this. He highlights New Testament references to Jonah and his experience as a justification for this view.

1. New Testament Perspective and the Sign of Jonah

- **Jesus' Use of Jonah:** Jesus references the story of Jonah in Matthew 12:39-41, comparing Jonah's three days in the fish to his own time in the grave: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

- **Credibility of Jesus:** Dr. Wilson suggests that Jesus' comparison with Jonah, assuming that one is historical, reinforces the credibility of Jesus's claims and highlights the significance of the repentance of Nineveh in time and space. He asks if Jesus would compare himself to a phantom or a fictional character that never existed.
- **The Sign of Jonah:** Dr. Wilson states the sign of Jonah is Jesus' message of repentance, and his miraculous resurrection which demonstrated the power of God is the same power that worked through the prophet Jonah. Jesus' ability to perform nature miracles parallels those attributed to Yahweh in the Old Testament. "the sign of Jonah is the sign of Jesus and the sign that God is alive, calling people to Himself."

1. Purposes of the Book of Jonah:

- **God's International Love:** The book reveals God's love and compassion extend beyond Israel to all nations. It highlights that God intended Israel to be a "light to the nations" (Isaiah 49:3, 6). "God's love embraces the whole earth, and even God's own prophets were slow to acknowledge that."
- **A Reminder of Compassion:** Dr. Wilson cautions against losing compassion towards others, even those perceived as enemies, emphasizing that God loves all people. "We may hate what they stand for and some of their terrible threats to other people, and yet we must acknowledge these are people that God loves, that He cares for, and that He desires to be touched with His love."
- **Christological Significance:** Through typology, the story of Jonah provides a portrait of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. "It becomes a dramatic prophetic portrait for the Christian of his Lord's death, burial, and resurrection."
- **Universality of God's Morality:** The Old Testament establishes a universal moral standard that applies to all nations, not just Israel, emphasizing the need for all people to repent and receive God's grace. "There is built into the Bible a morality that God intends for the entire earth. All people must repent of their sin and receive His grace."

1. The Missionary Impulse of Judaism

- Judaism had a missionary impulse that preceded Christianity and that the early church drew on in their own missionary efforts. The idea of going from Jerusalem to Samaria to the outermost parts of the world was not new.
- The Jewish community stopped missionary work largely due to economic and physical pressures within the broader Christian world during the 1200s, as well as the association of missions with violence, hatred, and imperial takeovers.
- There have been some attempts in the modern world to revive this missionary impulse.

Conclusion

Dr. Wilson's lecture emphasizes the importance of understanding the historical and cultural context of the Book of Jonah. It explores the various approaches to interpreting scripture, advocating for a balanced approach that considers both the historical reality of the text and its broader spiritual and theological significance. The lecture underscores the universal love of God and the calling for both Israel, and now the Church, to be a light to the nations and to share His message of repentance and grace. It also reinforces the view that the story of Jonah and the events of Jesus are not mutually exclusive, and that the sign of Jonah, in reference to both the historical prophet and to Christ, is "the sign that God is alive, calling people to Himself". The book itself is an important piece of scripture that helps give credibility to Jesus as it shows that he is doing the same things that Yahweh did in the Old Testament, particularly in relation to miracles over nature.

4. Study Guide: Wilson, Prophets, Session 8, Jonah

Frequently Asked Questions about the Book of Jonah

1. **When did Jonah likely live, and what evidence supports this?** Based on 2 Kings 14:25, Jonah is believed to have lived during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel (approximately 793-753 BC). This passage states that Jeroboam restored Israel's borders "in accordance with the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah, son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath-hepher." This places Jonah as a prophet in the northern kingdom of Israel during a time of political and military tension.
2. **What is the historical context of Jonah's mission to Nineveh?** Jonah's mission to Nineveh occurred during a period when the Assyrian empire was a growing threat to the northern kingdom of Israel. The Assyrians were known for their military might and their policy of deportation, where they would remove citizens from conquered territories and replace them with other populations. This created a mixed culture of people, which is why traditional Jews didn't mix with Samaritans. Nineveh was a major city of the Assyrian Empire, which would eventually fall about 100 years after Jonah's time. This context highlights the political and religious tensions that existed during the time of the prophet, and explains why Jonah would resist going to Nineveh.
3. **What are some of the different approaches to interpreting the Book of Jonah?** There are several ways to interpret the Book of Jonah. These include: the *fictional* approach, which views it as a short story meant to convey a moral lesson, the *allegorical* approach, which sees it as an extended metaphor for the history of Israel (with the fish representing Babylon and the three days symbolizing the exile), the *parabolic* approach, which sees it as a simple story to teach a lesson (primarily that God's love is universal and not just for Israel), and the *historical* approach, which takes it as a biography of an actual prophet who experienced real, supernatural events. Each view is subject to debate and analysis.

4. **What are the main criticisms of the fictional, allegorical, and parabolic views of the Book of Jonah?** The fictional, allegorical, and parabolic views of Jonah face several criticisms. The fictional view struggles to account for the specific historical context and Jonah's appearance in 2 Kings. The allegorical view seems to be reading much of post-exilic circumstances back into the text and is largely symbolic with no other historical record to support it. The parabolic view struggles to explain the lengthy and complex narrative of Jonah, as parables in the Bible tend to be much shorter and focus on one primary idea. Additionally, all three face the criticism that they do not match the traditional view of the church and that they undermine Jesus' references to Jonah in the New Testament.
5. **What is the significance of the "sign of Jonah" in the New Testament?** The sign of Jonah, as mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 12:39-40, is multifaceted. It refers to both the repentance of the Ninevites at Jonah's preaching and to Jonah's three days in the belly of the fish which is a type of Jesus' own death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus uses this parallel to highlight his own impending death and resurrection. He contrasts the responsiveness of the Ninevites with the hardness of heart of his own generation. The sign of Jonah is therefore not just about a past event but a present call to repentance and a future confirmation of Jesus' identity and purpose.
6. **What are the two main purposes of the Book of Jonah?** The Book of Jonah serves two primary purposes. First, it emphasizes God's international love and compassion. The story shows that God is concerned with all people, not just Israel, and calls them to repentance, even Israel's enemies. Second, the book has a Christological purpose. It highlights the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, with Jonah's experience in the great fish serving as a type of Christ's own death and resurrection. Through typology, God points to a future salvation of all people through the ministry of Jesus.
7. **How did the view of the book of Jonah change as a result of modern biblical criticism?** Prior to the rise of modern, higher, biblical criticism, the story of Jonah was largely accepted as historical, both in the Jewish and Christian communities. However, with the advent of rationalistic study of Scripture, which questioned the possibility of the supernatural and viewed the Bible as primarily a work of literature, the book of Jonah was often reinterpreted as a fictional or allegorical story rather than a historical biography. This change in perspective reflects a broader shift in how many scholars approach biblical texts and the assumptions with which they analyze them.

8. **How does the book of Jonah relate to the concept of missions in both Judaism and Christianity?** The book of Jonah serves as an example that emphasizes that God's mission of love reaches across borders to all people. Although Israel was initially chosen as a light to the nations, that role was ultimately expanded to include all who would respond in faith to God's grace. Similarly, while the Jewish tradition at one point had a missionary impulse, that diminished due to persecution in the medieval era. Christian missions, as understood through the lens of the book of Jonah, inherit the calling to be a light to all the nations and to proclaim God's international love and the call to repentance. The book shows that God's intention has always been global and that the message of salvation should be shared beyond religious and ethnic boundaries.

5. FAQs on Wilson, Prophets, Session 8, Jonah, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)