

SDG – Lesson #1

An Introduction to the Book of Jonah

The basic story of Jonah is known throughout the world. An in-depth study of the book reveals that this Biblical account was written with great purpose and has multiple lessons within it. One of the more unique features of this book is the style of its writing or presentation. It is written in a parallel form where the events are presented in one way and then in another. Finally, both are brought together to reveal God’s compassion and His call to us to extend that compassion to others.

Story #1

Jonah’s call and refusal (1:1-3)
Jonah and the pagan sailors (1:4-16)
Jonah’s prayer of Thanksgiving (1:17-2:10)

Story #2

Jonah’s call and obedience (3:1-3)
Jonah and the pagan Ninevites (3:3-10)
Jonah’s prayer of anger (4:1-4)

The Prophet’s Message

God’s lesson for Jonah and us. (4:5-11)

Jonah chapter 1 & 2; Story #1

1. Read 2 Kings 14:23-29. What had Jonah been called to do? Why?

2. What does the name/title “Son of Amittai” mean?

3. What did the LORD call on Jonah to do? Why?

4. Where was Nineveh? Tarshish? What does this tell you about Jonah and his actions?

5. Why did Jonah want to go to Tarshish? What does this reveal about him?

6. Notice how the author uses the literary tool of repetition. How many times does he mention Tarshish in the first three verses? Why would he do this?

7. In what three ways does the author describe the severity of the storm? Why would he do this?

8. What does the phrase, “each cried out to his god,” tell us about the sailors?

9. What physical action did the sailors initially take? Why? What does this tell us about the situation?

10. We again see the author using repetition. Jonah had “gone down” and “laid down” in the “inner part of the ship.” If a person went down into the ship it was understood that he had gone into the inner part. The inner part was down stairs. The emphasis of the repetition is “down.” Add to this that he had gone down to Joppa and we have a lot of going down. The phrase “went on board” also uses the Hebrew word for down. It literally reads “down on board.” Going down is a reference or metaphor for death or dying. Why would the author use this phrasing in these early verses?

11. Jonah was fast asleep in a ship that was sinking in a storm. He had slept through the off-loading of the cargo as well. Where else in the Bible do we read of such an event? How does that impact our understanding of Jonah’s situation?

12. What spiritual action did the captain of the ship call on Jonah to take?

13. What is meant by “casting lots?”

14. What questions were asked of Jonah? Why?

15. How did Jonah respond to the sailor's questions?

16. How did the sailors respond to this answer? Why? How might this impact us today? (See article at the end of the lesson)

17. How are verses 2 and 11 similar, connected or parallel in nature?

18. How are verses 3 and 12 parallel? How are they not?

19. What was Jonah's instruction for the saving of the ship? What was the sailor's response? What was the result?

20. Carefully read verse 14. What is remarkable about the prayer of the sailor?

21. What happened when the sailors followed Jonah's directions? What was their response?

22. What is the "fear" of the LORD? Why is this important? Proverbs 9:10

23. What happened to Jonah? How was this a prophetic message?

Jonah-Chapter 2

24. Why is the introductory phrase, "Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God" noteworthy? (And question worthy too!)

25. What did Jonah compare the belly of the fish to? What does this mean?

26. We saw in chapter one that the sailors threw Jonah into the sea. In chapter two he says to the LORD, "You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas." Explain this apparent contradiction.

27. What was it like when Jonah was first thrown overboard? (Vs. 3)

28. How did Jonah interpret his experience? What did he expect? Why?

29. What is Jonah describing in verses 5 & 6?

30. What did Jonah think of the prayers of the sailors?

31. What did Jonah plan to do when God delivered him?

32. What part did Jonah play in his deliverance? How was he delivered?

Beneath^{the} Surface

By Scott Lanser

Have you observed the trend in popular theological discourse for often-unstated human principles to become our source of authority on how the Bible's teachings can be understood and applied? These are human constructs that in practice function with controlling authority over discussions of doctrine, and even over the entirety of Scripture itself. These methodologies are nothing more than a form of "pop-hermeneutic," imposing themselves upon Scripture and functioning to direct discussions of doctrine toward a post-modern philosophical framework.

As a result, discussions of biblical doctrine are carried out with superficial interaction with the biblical text. Some formulations are completely devoid of the Bible, and doctrinal assertions are made without the essential work of building one's case from Scripture. This essential matter is often lost upon the average church-going Christian, as mere spirit-of-the-age opinions from certain pulpits, classrooms, and popular media sweep across Western culture, and many are unaware that such teaching is nothing more than the opinions of men; opinions that can have a corrosive effect upon their faith and in their trust in the final authority of Scripture.

Scripture or Human Reasoning? A Case in Point

In a recent popular publication from my own *alma mater*, the controversial issue of the date of Creation was addressed, and the author challenged readers to consider five important questions: 1 - *Are we willing for the Bible to change our minds?* 2 - *Does timeline really matter?* 3 - *Is your view a compromise to the spirit of the age?* 4 - *Am I allowing the text to speak for itself?* 5 - *Is there more we agree on than disagree on?*

The author, with good intention, is asking readers to consider these questions, because the issue of an old earth versus a young earth is so hotly debated today. And that debate sometimes turns ugly, and sadly, the flesh is more in evidence than Spirit-directed conversation. The author encourages Christians to respect each other's differences of opinion, and well states, "both sides can display the humility to have their minds changed by *what the word of God says*" [emphasis mine].

But of course, that is where the rub is as we consider this issue, and the overall argument the author is making. Are we basing our arguments and positions on what the Bible says? Are we constructing our doctrinal formulations with the Bible as the final authority (or are we using another authority)? The goal isn't simply to attain to that oft-repeated post-modern dictum, to "agree to disagree," as if that principle is what we are aiming for. Our aim, rather, is to seek, with clarity and unity, what the Bible is actually telling us. As important as "agreeing to disagree" may be, we accomplish little if one side

in the debate is ultimately failing to build their doctrine from Scripture, and instead is using other sources of authority to establish their argument.

It should always be our goal to construct our doctrine directly from Scripture. Historically, the Church has had a rich tradition of doing this very thing with carefully reasoned arguments from the text, arguments that would win the day and continue to powerfully guide the Church in the future. Today, some within evangelicalism seem to be far more concerned that individuals who take strong doctrinal stands (especially on Creation) might come across as dogmatic, argumentative, or possibly "insensitive". However, fears about these perceptions do not excuse us from strongly upholding sound biblical doctrine and passionately defending the faith; these fears reflect a historical and theological shallowness and fail to fully embrace our mission to one another and to the world.

I strongly affirm the intention captured in the third question the author has raised: "Is your view a compromise to the spirit of the age?" The author is properly asking all Christians to examine this issue with seriousness. In my opinion, however, the clear implications of this question ought to be directed at those who want to use human constructs and theories instead of Scripture to argue their case on the critical subject of the age of Creation. It seems apparent that schemes from outside of the Bible, such as the illegitimate use of ancient Near Eastern literature, honorific formulas to undermine biblical chronology, the improper application of literary genres, and Darwinism and other problematic theories, have poisoned the entire discussion. To claim that we all must submit to the Bible while building doctrinal arguments from sources outside the Bible seems to be nothing less than disingenuous and likely spiritually dangerous.

Associates for Biblical Research stands without apology on the conviction that God created the heavens and the earth in six normal, 24-hour days, and that the Creation is recent. *We believe the Bible must be the true starting point, and the authoritative ground from which our doctrine of Creation must be formed.* We believe that chronology matters profoundly, and that efforts that distort the Scriptures' intended time structures in Genesis, whether the days of Creation, or the chronologies of Genesis 5 and 11, are deeply misguided.

Can we agree to disagree? Yes, *but let the discussion be rooted in the Bible.* Any effort and any argument outside of Scripture that usurps the authority of God's revelation is doomed to fail. May God give us grace to have these discussions with respect and brotherly love, recognizing that we must all bow the knee to God's authority, authority that is only found in His holy Word.

¹ "Five Questions Every Christian Has to Face about Creation." Lancaster Bible College *Echo*, Spring 2018, Volume 16, No. 5, pp. 28-30.

NOTES:

SDG Lesson #2
Jonah Chapter 3

1. Compare Jonah 3:1 with Acts 26:14. What lesson(s) can we learn from these verses?

2. How was God's second call to Jonah different from the first?

3. How did Jonah respond to the second call?

4. How is Nineveh described?

5. What was the message that the LORD had given to Jonah?

6. Jonah was the prophet who spoke. But who did the people believe? Why?

12. What does this tell us about Jonah?

13. This leads us to a deeper understanding of the Law. What is the purpose of the Law?

Romans 3:20 - _____

Romans 7:7-12- _____

14. What did Jonah give as his rationale for heading to Tarshish instead of heeding God's call?

15. What was Jonah's request of the LORD? Why?

16. How did God respond to Jonah's rant in verses 1-3? Why?

17. How did Jonah respond to this? Why?

18. How did God respond to this? Why?

19. What did God mean when He said that the people of Nineveh did not know their right hand from their left? (Think back to the verses in question 13)

20. Why would God include the phrase “and also much cattle?”

21. What is the message of Jonah? (John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9)

22. What impact should this have on us? (Matthew 28:19-20)

SDG Lesson #3 Malachi Chapter 1

Introduction

It is generally thought that the book of Malachi was written by a prophet who had that name. The Hebrew name Malachi means, “my messenger.” So, this book could have been written by a messenger who was called by God to address His people. However, the opening verses of this book read like the other prophetic books of the Bible where the author is identified by name. Since the book refers to the temple, it must have been written after it had been rebuilt. This would put the date of its writing somewhere in the mid-fifth century B.C. (Approx. 450 B.C.) Such a date would make Malachi a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah. So, it follows that he addresses the same problems that they did:

1. A corrupt priesthood.
2. Inter-marriage with pagans.
3. Taking advantage of the poor.
4. Failure to tithe.

While these problems are significant, they probably had become worse because of the people becoming disenchanted with the Hebrew faith. After all, Haggai and Zechariah had encouraged the people to rebuild the temple, return to God, and enjoy His blessing. In reality, they were still a small nation under Persian rule, struggling with drought, consistently opposed by their neighbors and without a king from the family of David.

Perhaps this final note can inspire us as we work our way through Malachi. It would appear that more and more people are disenchanted when it comes to Christianity and the Church. Malachi’s admonition may be just as relevant today as it was when he began to write. May his words, inspired by the Holy Spirit, move us to action within the Church, our families and society.

1. What is an oracle? How does this impact our study of this book?

2. Read Jeremiah 23:33. The word translated as “burden” in Jeremiah is the same word that is translated as “oracle” in Malachi. In God’s message to Jeremiah, what was the burden?

3. The oracle given to Malachi is in conversation form, as if God and His people were having a discussion. What is God’s first point? How do the people reply?

4. Why did God respond, “Is not Esau Jacob’s brother? Yet I have loved Jacob...?”

5. We think of God as a loving God and yet God said, “Esau I have hated.” Why did God say this? (Obadiah 1) What was the result of this?

6. What sin is evident in Edom’s response, “We will rebuild the ruins”? How should have Edom have responded?

7. What is God's reaction to Edom's response or lack of proper response?

What was the ultimate reason for God doing this? How does this relate to His opening statement?

8. After addressing the people of Israel, the prophet turns to the religious leaders, the priests, by reminding them of a particular commandment. Which commandment is this? How does God use this commandment to emphasize His role in the covenant relationship? (Who does this commandment reveal God to be?) What was missing in this relationship?

Hebrew Beliefs/Traditions "Father"

To the Hebrew people, God was seen as their Father. As such, they believed 5 basic teachings about the role or characteristics of God as their Father:

- 1) God had begotten them:
 - a) He created all life
 - b) He had chosen them as His own
- 2) God was near to them
- 3) God dealt with them in a compassionate way
- 4) God would guide them
- 5) God would hold His children accountable

9. What was the second way that God identified Himself? What does this mean? What was due to Him as a result? What does this mean?

10. Instead of honor or fear for God, what did the priests have for Him? How was this shown? What is meant by this?

11. What did God say about this practice?

12. How did God make the point, that this practice was not acceptable to the priests?

13. How does verse 9 build off the challenge of verse 8? What is the message of the prophet?

14. Who is the prophet speaking directly to in verse 10? What would he like to see happen? Why?

15. Since the priests were not doing what the prophet advised, what does he reveal about God's response to this? What made this serious?!

16. What three expectations did the LORD put before the people?
(Vs. 11)

17. How did the priests and people view these expectations?

18. Verse 14 is both powerful and scary. What does the LORD say about the person who says he is giving a pure sacrifice but offers something less?

19. What does God say about Himself? (Vs. 15)

SDG Lesson #4
Malachi Chapter 2

1. Who is the object of this prophecy? Who might it be directed to today?

2. What two problems are quickly identified within this group? What is the result of this?

3. What is a curse? How many times is it used in this passage?

4. Read Deuteronomy 28:15-20. What does this say about a curse?

5. What was God going to curse? What does this mean?

6. What would God do with their offspring? What does this mean?

7. What is dung? What was done with dung? (Exodus 29:14) What message was the Lord giving to the priests?

8. Who was Levi? What makes him, his people, special?

9. Remember, a covenant was a two-way agreement. What was the Covenant with Levi?

10. What four good qualities does the Lord identify in Levi?

11. What does the Lord identify as a primary job of the priest? (Vs. 7) How might this apply today? (Consider your answer to #10 as well)

12. How does the Lord view the priest? What impact should this have on the priest?

13. What had the priests done with this responsibility?

14. What is meant by, “showing partiality in your instructions?”

15. There is a definite switch in the audience when we get to verse ten. Who becomes the audience or the recipients of the prophet’s attention?

16. What two points does the prophet make concerning God in verse 10? Why does he do this?

17. How had the people of Judah been faithless? (Deut.7:3)

18. This might seem like the Lord is being a little harsh or even racist by today’s standards. Read 2 Corinthians 6:14. What does the New Testament tell us about marriage? Why would it say this?

19. What was Malachi’s desire for such people? Why?

20. What do we learn about marriage from verse 14?

21. What were the people of Judah doing that angered the Lord and the prophet?

22. What else do we learn about marriage from verse 15?

23. What does it take to have “Godly offspring?”

24. How does a man who divorces his wife cover her garments with violence?

25. What were the people saying that wearied the Lord? Why did it do this?

SDG Lesson #5
Malachi Chapter 3

1. Who is speaking in verse one? Who is the “I” and “My?”

2. Identifying who is speaking is extremely important to understand this prophecy and basic Christian doctrine. The speaker says, “I will send My messenger.” Who is this messenger? (Matthew 11:10-14)

3. What was the role of this messenger?

4. How did this messenger complete this role? (Mark 1:4)

5. This concept/prophecy is not unique to Malachi. Who else made a similar prophecy? Where can this be found? (Mark 1:2-3)

6. To summarize, God would send His messenger to prepare the way before Him, the Lord. What would happen next?

7. Again, carefully look at the words that are used. Since “the Lord” would “come to His temple,” what temple is this prophecy referring to? And, more importantly, who would come into the temple?

8. Who or what is the “messenger of the Covenant?”

9. What is said about the people’s view of the Lord in regard to this prophecy?

10. Consider your last answer. Why would the Lord say, through the prophet Malachi, “Behold, He is coming?” Who, again, is the “He?”

11. Again, we must be careful in our precise reading of these verses in Malachi. Who, exactly, said “Behold, He is coming?”

12. What is said about what will happen when He comes? Why?

13. What was the refiner’s fire used for? What is fullers’ soap? How do these relate to the prophetic message?

14. What would the Lord refine? Why?

15. Verse 5 repeats what has been said already. “Then I will draw near to you.” Who exactly, using the context of verses 1-4, is the “I” in this verse?

16. Why all this attention to the words, titles and pronouns? Consider this, Jesus identified John the Baptist as the messenger prophesied by both Malachi and Isaiah as coming and preparing the way of the LORD. In every reference in these first five verses, the messenger prepares the way for the LORD, it is the LORD who is the Messenger of the Covenant, the LORD is the refiner, the LORD is the One they took delight in and were anxiously waiting for. Since John prepared the way for Jesus, what does that make Jesus?

17. Going back to verse 5, why would the Lord/Jesus draw near to the people?

18. Who or what is:

A. A sorcerer-_____

B. An adulterer (Matt 5:27-32)-_____

C. One who swears falsely (Matthew 5:33-37)-_____

D. One who oppresses-_____

E. One who thrusts aside the sojourner-_____

F. One who does not fear the LORD of hosts _____

What became of these people?

19. Immediately after this verse about caring for the worker, widows, orphans and sojourner, the Lord clearly states a foundational doctrine or truth. What is it? How is it introduced? Why state it here? (Deuteronomy 10:18; 26:12; Isaiah 1:17; Zechariah 7:10)

20. How did the people of Israel benefit from this key truth?

21. What truth did God reveal about the Israelites? (Vs.7)

22. In spite of this truth, (question 21) what does God set before the people?

23. What example of “turning aside from My statutes” and not keeping them does God use? What is meant by this? How does God view it? Why? What was the result?

24. What does God propose that the people do? Why?

25. Verse 13 introduces us to another complaint that God makes against His people, what is it?

26. What was the response to God's allegations?

27. What was God's response to this?

SDG Lesson #6
Malachi Chapter 4

1. “For behold, the day is coming.” What is this day?

Isaiah 13:6- _____

Joel 2:11, 31- _____

Zephaniah 1:14-15- _____

2. What is meant by the phrase, “burning like an oven?”

3. What is stubble? What is this describing?

4. Contrast a burning oven with the sun. What is the message of the two?

5. Those who fear the Lord, will “go out leaping like calves from the stall.” What is meant by this?

6. What is meant by the phrase, “you shall tread down the wicked?”

7. What is meant by the word remember? What are they/we to remember?

8. Who was Elijah? What is he known for?

9. Who is the Elijah that Malachi says will come before the great and awesome day of the Lord? (Malachi 4:5)

10. What is the role of this Elijah? What is meant by this?

11. What will happen if people’s hearts don’t turn?

SDG – Jonah & Malachi Zion Lutheran Church

Spring Calendar 2019

The week of March 31 Lesson #1
The week of April 7 Lesson #2
The week of April 14 Holy Week
The week of April 21 Easter Week
The week of April 28 Lesson #3
The week of May 5 Lesson #4
The week of May 12 Lesson #5
The week of May 19 Lesson #6

Class Times:

- Sunday Evening @ 6:30 p.m. in the Fireside Room
- Thursday Evening @ 6:30 p.m. Call church office for location

If you are unable to attend a particular class you are free to join with the other class. For instance, if you normally attend the Sunday evening class and you find that you can't make it one week, you are welcome to join the Thursday class for that week. Both groups will be doing the same lesson each week.