Introduction to the Book of Jonah
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I. Jonah is a type of Christ, the antitype, especially in regard to the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord.

A. Matthew 12:38-41, Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas: and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

B. Luke 11:28-32, But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it. And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign, and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

C. Matthew 16:1-4, The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them,
When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas, And he left them, and departed.

II. Coffman cites the following comparisons between Jesus and Jonah:

A. “Both were asleep on board a ship at sea in a storm.

B. Both were awakened; Jonah by the captain, Jesus by the apostles.

C. Both gave themselves to save others; Jonah for the sailors, Jesus for all men.

D. Both were “alive” after that three days and three nights experience.

E. Both converted the Gentiles; Jonah at Nenevah, Jesus throughout the earth.

F. Both were from Galilee; Jonah from Gath-hepher and Jesus from Nazareth.”

1. 2 Kings 14:25, He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher.
2. “Jonah, the son of Amattai, was from Gath Hepher*, a town in Zebulun in the northern kingdom of Israel.” (Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Youngblood, Bruce, Harrison)

3. Nothing more is known of Jonah following the events covered in this book of Jonah.

*Gath-hepher is called Gittah-hepher in Joshua 19:10-13, And the third lot came up for the children, of Zebulun according to their families; and the border of their inheritance was unto Sarid: And their border went up toward the sea, and Maralah, and reached to Dabbasheth, and reached to the river that (is before Jokneam; And turned from Sarid eastward toward the sunrising unto the border of Chisloth-tabor, and then goeth out to Daberath, and goeth up to Japhia, (Commentary on the Whole Bible, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

III. Without a doubt Jesus Christ, the omniscient Messiah, made it clear that the events in the book of Jonah were actual historic occurrences!

A. Those who question the historicity of the story of Jonah also question the knowledge and teachings of Jesus!

IV. Jonah himself was the author of the book of Jonah.

A. The Holy Spirit guided Jonah in regard to what he was to write.

B. The Bible tells it like it is!

1. Jonah’s faults were not overlooked nor hidden.
2. Our faults will not be hidden either.

V. “The book of Jonah was written before or during the long (41 years) reign of Jereboam II.” (Coffman)

A. Coffman dates the writing of the Book of Jonah “within the period 800-750 B.C.”

B. Butler dated the reign of Jereboam from 783-743 B.C. while W. J. Deane dated Jereboam’s reign 799-759 B.C. (Coffman)

C. During Jonah’s ministry Assyria was ruled by Tiglath-Peleser III and/or Assurdan III.

1. Jonah was divinely directed to preach repentance to Ninevah, the capital of the Assyrian empire. (Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

2. The Israelites regarded Ninevah and the Assyrian empire as rank political enemies, pagan worshippers of false gods and outcasts to be shunned and avoided. (Nelson’s New Illustrated Dictionary)

3. God had a different view of things and sent Jonah to Ninevah as a missionary.

4. For a fact, Jonah did not have his heart in his missionary work!

D. Assyria dominated the ancient word from about 885 to 625 B.C. (Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary).

E. Adam Clarke wrote, “Jonah foretold how Jereboam II, King of Israel, should restore the kingdom of Samaria to
its former extent, from the entrance of Hamath to the Dead Sea.”

1. This was certainly a popular thing to preach and would have been well received by Israel.

2. Jonah was told to preach salvation to Israel’s enemies, a most unpopular thing to do. What a contrast!

VI. The purposes of Jonah include the following: (Coffman)

A. God loves Gentiles as well as Jews.

B. God was displeased with the self-righteous exclusiveness of the Israelites.

C. God is willing and anxious to forgive and extend mercy to all who humbly turn to him in sincere repentance.

D. Prophesying the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

E. To show that Jonah’s resurrection from the depths of the sea is comparable to the resurrection of the dead upon Christ’s return.

VII. Coffman lists seven miracles described in the Book of Jonah; viz.,

A. The tempest (1:4).

B. The sudden calm (1:15).

C. The prepared sea-monster (1:17).
D. Jonah’s deliverance from the sea-monster (2:10).


F. The God-prepared worm (4:7).

G. The scorching east wind (4:8).

VIII. The New International Version in its Introduction outlines the book of Jonah as follows:

A. Jonah flees from the Lord (1:1-17).

B. Jonah’s prayer and deliverance (2:1-10).

C. Jonah goes to Ninevah (3:1-10).

D. Jonah’s anger at the Lord’s mercy (4:1-11).

IX. Theological Contributions (Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary):

A. God can use people who don’t want to be used to advance his cause, to do his will.

B. God wants to show mercy and grace to all earth’s people.

C. Self-righteous exclusiveness is not God’s way.
References

Commentary, Adam Clarke, Volume IV, Isaiah to Malachi, Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, Nashville.

Commentary on the Whole Bible, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1934.


Questions

Introduction to the Book of Jonah

1. Is the Book of Jonah historical, allegorical, mythical or a little of each? Give reasons for your answer. _______________________
   _______________________
   _______________________
   _______________________

2. What was Jesus’ opinion of Jonah? _______________________
   _______________________
   _______________________
   _______________________
   _______________________

3. List ways in which Jesus and Jonah are comparable. _________
   _______________________
   _______________________
   _______________________
   _______________________

4. List ways in which Jesus and Jonah can be contrasted? _______
   _______________________
   _______________________
   _______________________
   _______________________

5. In addition to what is said in the book of Jonah, what else do you know about Jonah? ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
6. Write here all you know about Jonah’s home town. __________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

7. Who wrote the book of Jonah? Give reasons for your answer. __
________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________

8. When was the book of Jonah written? Give reasons for your answer. __
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________________________________________________________________

9. Why was the book of Jonah written? What was its purpose? __
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________________________________________________________________

10. What did Jonah preach that was very popular? What did Jonah preach that was very unpopular? _________________
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________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

11. Describe the historic relationship between Israel and Assyria. _
12. List seven miracles in the book of Jonah. ________________

13. Outline the book of Jonah. ____________________________

14. What lessons, theological contributions, does the book of Jonah provide? ________________________________

15. What significance is there in the fact that Jonah’s faults and sinful feelings are fully revealed? Would most all Israelites have acted and felt like Jonah? What significance is there to this fact? _