

AP 40

Jonah / יוֹנָה / Yonah / Dove¹

Jonah is unique among the prophetic books. Jonah never calls himself a prophet, or is called a prophet in the book. The book is almost completely narrative – no oracles at all. Whether historical or not, the narrative we read in chapters 1 and 2 is fantastical. We might be tempted to dismiss it as a children’s tale, but Jesus doesn’t; he makes clear reference to the story of Jonah as a symbol of the resurrection in Matthew 12 and Luke 11.

The story of Jonah is one of the first OT stories children learn. But it has so much to say to us as adults. The story is filled with irony or inversions that no child would understand (a cue that Jonah was writing to adults). Just one of the more obvious ironies is that the bad guys (the Ninevite’s and Sailors) are good, and the good guy (Jonah) is bad.

Jonah’s themes include rebellion and repentance, sovereignty, a God who can change his mind, and grace that has a global reach.

Sunday, Aug 29

Jonah 1

For Reflection: *What is the hardest task God has entrusted to you? How would you characterize your relationship with God during that time? When have you said “No!” to God, or run away from God and his will for you? With what result? God doesn’t always chase us down, as he did Jonah and call us again (3:1).*

Lagniappe: Matthew 12:38-41

Monday, Aug 30

Jonah 4

For Reflection: *When have you been displeased and angry with God for extending grace and mercy to someone you did not think deserved it? Notice he so angry with God’s grace he asks to die in 4:3.*

Lagniappe: Luke 11:29-32

Micah / מִיכָה / Micah / Who is Like Yahweh?

Micah a younger contemporary of Isaiah, was a prophet from Judah. The book reads like a theological explanation of the politically cataclysmic events happening in the nations that surrounded Judah, and to Judah itself. He unequivocally predicted the falls of Samaria, Jerusalem and ultimately the Assyrians. Though you might say anyone² could have predicted

¹ It is apropos that Jonah’s name means dove, as he did make use of his wings in chapter 1 and flew.

² Carnac the Great? Apologies to the young for a dated reference.

the fall of Samaria, no one was predicting the fall of Assyria as punishment for treading on the soil of Israel/Judah – 5:5-6/

If Jonah is all narrative, Micah is exclusively oracle. Jonah (who was exclusively narrative) and Micah considered in the same week allows us an opportunity to see clearly what oracle looks like. In chapters 1 - 3, 6 and 7 we read oracles of judgement. In chapters 4 and 5 we find oracles of hope. Which nicely divides the book into 3 sections: 1-3, 4-5, and 6-7.

Micah's oracles of judgement are aimed at the leadership of Israel, both political and religious. You could say he was a populist, but he wasn't running for office. He is God's warning to the leaders. His oracles of hope include a messianic prophesy regarding the birthplace (Bethlehem) of the coming messiah (5:2)

Micah ministered between 759-687, the Northern kingdom fell in 722. So, the words of 1:2-7 came to pass while he was still alive.

Tuesday, Aug 31

Micah 1:1-7 and 3.³ (Judgment)

For Reflection: Vs 1 says, Micah *saw* this future judgement of Samaria and Jerusalem, that is why the NIV uses the word vision in its translation, as visions are something seen. The oracles of judgement in this first chapter seem focused on the Northern kingdom (Samaria, the capital of the N. Kingdom is predicted to fall in verse 6), but the towns listed in verses 8 and following are Judean cities. Also interesting, these cities were in the direct path of Sennacherib's invasion.^{4 & 5 & 6} *What emotions and thoughts do these words of judgment cause you to experience?* Chapter 3 highlights God's anger toward the leadership of Israel. *Do you think leaders invoke a higher standard of judgment as they influence and affect more people?*

Lagniappe: James 3:1

³ Micah understood our God to be very involved in our world- actively judging nations. We tend to not view God this active, but why? For me it's not because of God, it's because throughout history believers of all stripes have used this theology to say God is on their side. But God is sovereign, so I now tend to think if you are a prophet you can do this confidently.

⁴ The defeat of Lachish is recorded in Assyrian writings.

⁵ This is so cool... These verses are loaded with wordplays. The judgements of each of these towns is associated with the names/nicknames of the town. Imagine Micah making judgement on Cincinnati (my current residence) he might say "To the citizens of Cincinnati, look not for hope, for a swarm of flying pigs will blot out your light." (If you're not from Cincinnati ... one of its nicknames is Porkopolis and our big annual marathon is called, The Flying Pig Marathon.)

⁶ All these towns are within mere miles of Micah's hometown Moresheth. This may explain the origins of the proverb, "A prophet is without honor in his hometown" (Mark 6:4, John 4:44)

Wednesday, Sept 1 Micah 4 (Hope)

For Reflection: Compare the first verses with Isaiah 2:2-4. They both seem to be quoting some oral tradition, or one is quoting the other. They were contemporaries. Peace (4:3) is always the final result of God's rule. *Where, how, or with whom are you rehearsing/modeling/bringing peace this week? Another way to think of this question is where will you likely experience conflict this week and what will you do?*

Lagniappe: Matthew 5:9 and Isaiah 9:6 (another Messianic passage)

Thursday, Sept 2 Micah 5 (Hope)

For Reflection: 5:1-5 takes us from despair to hope. *Is Jesus the shepherd of verse 4-5? What hope/security does Jesus bring you?*

Lagniappe: John 7:40-42, Matthew 2:6

Friday, Sept 3 Micah 6:9-7:7

For Reflection: 6:9-16 reminds me judgement can sometimes be hard to see, there may be food in abundance, but it does not satisfy (6:14). *What "good" thing have you recently discovered does not satisfy?* 7:1-6 reminds us of the universality of sin, it's a big problem. But the paragraph, does not end with fatalism, but with verse 7.

Lagniappe: Philippians 4:19, Romans 3:23 (or 3:21-26)

Obadiah / עִבְדִּיָּה / O bad yah / Yahweh's Servant

The first thing people notice about Obadiah is that it is short. It really is unfair to Obadiah that everyone knows, "Jesus wept" is the shortest verse in the Bible, but not many people know the shortest book. But now you do! A whole 4 verses shorter than Paul's letter to Philemon.

The complaint of Obadiah best fits the Babylonian exile, but no one is sure. The argument for an exilic date is that Edom did not suffer exile by the Babylonians as did Judah did, and they used the opportunity to "resettled" the Jewish lands including Jerusalem (10-14). The Jews would say stole and plundered their lands (vs 5 cf w/ Jeremiah 49:9-10).

The entirety of Obadiah is poetic (oracle). The focus of Obadiah's oracle is a small, but persistently adversarial nation: Edom. Edom was founded/settled by Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. Jacob and Esau had their personal conflicts, and those personal conflicts grew over time into geopolitical conflicts. King Saul went to war against Edom, as did King David. Edom is excoriated by the prophets (e.g. Jer 49:7-22 or just 1 chapter before Obadiah Amos 9:11-12).

See... this is what treating your siblings poorly can come to!

Saturday, Sept 4 Obadiah (yep, the whole book)

For Reflection: The book begins with the judgement of Edom (Oracle of Judgment -1-14), and ends with the redemption of Israel (Oracle of Hope - 15-21). 1-14 *When have you experienced a momentary weakness taken advantage of?* 15-21 - *Does God care, about these opportunistic injustices?* Good thing we are not God because grace and justice are so hard to hold together.

Lagniappe: Luke 1:46-55 - When I think of the pride of the powerful (4) I am reminded of Mary's revolutionary song.