

Ir-ot-33
Sharing the Gospel with the World
(Jonah 1-4; Micah 2, 4-7)
By Lenet Hadley Read

[There are many lessons we can learn from Jonah's life. But the Savior taught we should search the Old Testament for *its witnesses of Him*. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). **Jesus specifically said the story of Jonah bore such witness. That testimony should not be ignored.** After Jonah, through Micah's writings, we will get what happens in the rest of the story].

I. Jesus Christ established a clear connection between Jonah and Himself.

A. He responded to those seeking a sign, "... **there shall no sign be given to [this generation] 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**" (Matthew 12:38-40).

B. But Jesus' statement was simplified. The connections between Jonah and Jesus go much deeper than that. Even those negative elements in Jonah's story had some relationship to the Savior and His gospel. Here are more of the parallels:

1. Jonah was on a ship in a tempestuous sea. While others trembled in terror, Jonah slept peacefully below. ***This pointed to Jesus' future experience***, who slept below while His disciples were experiencing terror above in the midst of raging waves (Mat. 8:23-27). **Those threatening waves themselves symbolized destruction by Death and Hell.**

a. Thus Christ calmed the sea, **as witness of His powers, not just over that current storm, but of Death and Hell itself.**

2. In Jonah's case, those on the ship cast lots to determine who should be sacrificed to save others on the ship. The lot fell on Jonah. Jonah yielded to his fate and its purposes: "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you" (Jonah 1:12). Jonah, then, was cast into a watery grave that death would be overcome for others.

3. In doing so, he taught of **Christ, who would actually be cast into an earthen grave to overcome Death for all mankind.** Jesus confirmed the deliberate timing of both internments --- three days and three nights.

4. Jonah's descent is deliberately overstated when in the bowels of the fish, "out of the belly of hell cried I" (Jonah 2:2). But that prophetic statement fits Christ, who *did* descend into the very depths of Hell.

5. Jonah's coming up out of the watery grave was also a witness --- of Christ's future resurrection.

6. **Jonah's final success "after his resurrection" *in bringing repentance to the Ninevites was a witness that Christ's real and wondrous resurrection would bring repentance and conversion to many, many Gentiles.***

No wonder then that Christ's words to the sign-seekers of His day were so full of emotion. We can now fill in between the lines.

“The sign which this generation shall see is like Jonah’s --- **my sacrificial death and my resurrection out of the tomb. But while the people of Ninevah repented at Jonah’s return from death, like many Gentiles will of mine, this generation has not, nor will not repent, though a greater rising from the dead will occur.**”

Though Christ returned from the dead, as did Jonah, in spite of the witnesses of His resurrection, that generation as a whole refused to believe.

(* Note: These understandings of Jonah can be found in early Christian writings, in early Reformation writings, and among modern writers, including Latter-day Saints.)

II. **The next part of Jonah’s story prophesied of the Jews’ rejection of the repentant Gentiles, as also occurred after Jesus’ resurrection.**

- A. Jonah did not feel joy, but anger, at Ninevah’s salvation. The Lord then taught him a great lesson. He prepared for him a gourd vine for shelter. But Jonah saw that vine eventually die, leaving Jonah to experience the “vehement east wind.” The Lord taught Jonah that just as Jonah was sorry because of the death of the gourd vine, so would the Lord be deeply grieved if all the people of Ninevah had perished.
- B. But these things witnessed of future happenings in Israel *after* Christ. Even those who accepted Jesus as the Messiah did not rejoice at the Gentiles coming into what they considered their “sacred relationship with God.” This attitude, and conflicts regarding the circumcision of Gentiles, etc, contributed to the eventual disinheritance of many Jews. Eventually, **like Jonah, those disaffected because of the Gentiles’ conversion, were left destitute of God’s continued protection, and became victim to the many future scourges which thereafter befell them.**

III. Ultimately there is a great message for we Latter-day Saints.

- A. We are called to go into all the world and bear witness of Jesus Christ and of His restored Gospel.
 - 1. **But this means we must remember to accept whoever repents and comes unto Christ** --- regardless of their culture, their nationality, their color, their past sins and weaknesses!
 - 2. **Our prophets make continual pleas for the Saints to make sure all persons, regardless of background, are fully welcomed into the church.**
 - 3. **We learn from Jonah, that not sincerely welcoming others *threatens our own worthiness.***

IV. Through the writings of Micah we get the rest of the story of the people of Israel who experienced that “vehement East Wind” and were cut off.

A. The Lord reaffirms He is a God who must have obedience of His people, otherwise, punishment will be exacted.

1. Because of their sins, both Israel and Judah were destroyed by the Assyrians or the Babylonians. Even their beautiful temple would be destroyed.

“Therefore shall Zion... be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and **the mountain of the house** as the high places of the forest” (Micah 4:12).

- B. **But the Lord makes clear that while ancient Israel and Judah would be cut off from the Land, in the Last Days, he would show mercy to those who returned unto Him.**

C. Micah contains some of the most beautiful of the Lord's promises of His Latter-day mercy to scattered and cut off Israel. For example, His ancient judgment on the *Mountain of the House* [Micah 4:12] in the Latter-days would be reversed.

1. "the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it." (Micah 4:1).
2. Other marvelous promises are given in 4:2-7.
- 3.

D. Note too there is a reversal of the fate of Jonah's vine and loss of its protection.

The Lord promises in the Last Days:

"But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken it" (Micah 4:4).

V. The people of Israel are indeed re-gathered, not just to experience great blessings, however, **but to do a great work** --- that which was first assigned to Jonah.

A. While Jonah fled from taking God's word to the world, in the last days, Latter-day Israel will fulfill it!

"Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, **and I will make thy hoofs brass**: and thou shalt beat in pieces [or thresh out] many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord..." (Micah 4:13).

1. We should realize that one way they threshed in ancient times was to put grain on the threshing floor. Oxen were tied to a wheel that turned. The oxen would then walk around and around in circles, threshing the grain under their feet.

2. The Lord is using this imagery of how grain was threshed anciently by hoofs, to relate to our modern day "threshing." However, our threshing **will be done by the walking feet of our missionaries**, not around and around in circles, **but all over the world**, seeking out those who will listen and accept Christ's Gospel.

VI. Micah further teaches that the sacrifices Israel gave anciently are no longer desirable. He teaches what sacrifices are expected of us in the Latter-days.

A. "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?" "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8).

We should always remember, the first "threshing" of the harvest must be ourselves: as we are humbled -- purified through love --faith in-- and obedience to Jesus the Christ.