

# “Jonah” From the Messianic Hour

By Charles Feinberg

Charles Feinberg:

The messianic Hour is on the air. Oh Israel, hear the word of the Lord.

[Musical Interlude]

A hearty welcome friends on the broadcast of the messianic hour. Under the direction of Dr. Charles Lee Feinberg professor of Old Testament at Talbot Theological Seminary. This program aims to foster a love for God's ancient people Israel and to spread the truth of salvation in the Messiah for blessing and inspiration. Stay tuned for the next half hour.

[Musical Interlude]

One night on the Quiz Kids radio program this question was asked a 9 year old boy what do you think is the most wonderful thing in all this world. There was a long pause and then the boy answered, remember nine years old. I think it would be redemption. That was followed by a longer pause. You could see the astonished Master of Ceremonies standing speechless speechless before this surprising answer. He of course was thinking in terms of radar television Atomic Bomb, then with conviction the announcer finally spoke. I believe you're right he was right. The

greatest being in the universe is God and God never did and never could do anything greater or as great as the thing he has already done in becoming the author of our great salvation.

[Musical Interlude]

It is well known that there is no music in rest but there is the making of music in it in our whole life melody the music is broken off here and there by rests and we foolishly think we've come to the end of the tune God sends a time of forced leisure: sickness, disappointed plans, frustrated efforts and makes a sudden pause in the choral hymn of our lives and we lament that whichever goes up to the ear of the creator. How does the musician read the rest? See him as he beats the time with unwavering count and catch up the next note. True and steady as if no breaking place had come in between. Not without design does God write the music of our lives be it ours to learn the time and not be dismayed at the rests they are not to be slurred over not to be omitted not to destroy the melody not to change the key note. If we look up God himself will beat the time for us with the eye on him we shall strike the next note full and clear. If we say sadly to ourselves there's no music in rest. Let us not forget there's the making of music in it. The making of music is often a slow and painful process in this life. How patiently God works to teach us how long he waits for us to learn the lesson said John Ruskin.

[Musical Interlude]

Friends it's not important what I say or what you say. But in the last analysis what says the scripture hear the Old Testament prophecy in Psalm 69 verse 21. They gave me also gall for

my meat and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. Now here is the New Testament fulfillment in the Messiah in John's Gospel the nineteenth chapter verses 28 to 30. After this Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished that the scripture might be fulfilled said I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar and they filled a sponge with vinegar and put it upon Hyssop and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar he said it is finished. And he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.

[Musical Interlude]

Our gracious God and our father thou God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. God of Israel the God of Messiah the Lord. How we thank thee that every word of scripture down to the last jot and tittle had to be fulfilled thy word must be given its full force its full weight its full emphasis its full authority its absolute authority and this messiah did. Or how many false messiahs came before his time and since. He is the true because he would not let a word of the scripture fall to the ground as though it were insignificant as though it didn't matter as though he could be lightly set aside and because thy word said the wages of sin is death. He went to the death of the cross that for Israel and all the world he might become the sin offering the offering that reconciled us unto thee putting away sin with the sacrifice of himself. He purchased us with his own blood. Lord may Jewish hearts see this may they enter into it. May they realize it as never before? Give them spiritual perception as thy spirit works in their hearts. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

[Musical Interlude]

Someone has written the beautiful poem Jerusalem; Jerusalem awake and sing joy yet for thee remained hark hark to thee thy tidings bring thy God oh Zion reigneth. Thy day of blessing now is come, the day that ends thy morning see; see thy children hastening home from every side returning. Thy God as he who gathers them. His arm is their salvation. He hath redeemed Jerusalem he ends thy desolation. God's holy city thou shalt be. Thy glory never waning. The Lord himself shall dwell in thee for all the nations reading. Rejoice in God, Jerusalem, his grace shall leave thee never. He knows thy sins and pardons them in him thou art blessed forever.

[Musical Interlude]

I'd like to think with you today friends on the remarkable Old Testament book The Book of Jonah. I'd like to treat this in four messages. Each chapter constituting a message of its own. And the first great truth taught in the book. In Chapter One is the disobedient prophet. Nothing is known of the prophet Jonah apart from this book and a statement in second Kings 14:25 which indicates that he probably ministered in the eighth century B.C. in Gathhepher in Zebulon north of Nazareth in Galilee. Unbelieve attacks this book more than any other in the Bible. It is the great missionary book of the Old Testament. The Jews consider it so important that they read it during the solemn hours of the Day of Atonement. Cyprian who was a Christian orator of the third century A.D. read the book was greatly moved and was converted through the book of Jonah. There is absence of the usual prophetic discourse but the transactions in the book are prophetic in themselves. The book is prophetic of Israel as well as of the resurrection of the Messiah. The book has been ridiculed almost laughed out of court as they say because of the swallowing of Jonah by the fish and his preservation in it.

Well the root of the trouble. Plain and simple is the denial of the miraculous if you're going to do that in the Bible. Where are you going to start and where are you going to conclude? The book of Jonah is full of miracles even in that short book of four chapters. It's just replete full of miracles from beginning to end. The storm the selection of Jonah by Lots as guilty, the sudden subsiding quieting of the sea, the great fish that appeared at the right time, the preservation of Jonah his ejection from the fish safe and sound on the shore. The gourd the worm the east wind the greatest of all the miracles the repentance of the entire city of Nineveh. We must not allow scorn to swallow up the great message of the book. This book begins its narrative with the call and disobedience of Jonah. The book begins with God's commission to Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach to it.

Now this is the only case of a prophet in Israel being sent to a heathen nation. It's true that the great prophets have portions in their prophesy against surrounding nations. But here is a case where the prophet is sent in person to prophesy to preach to a heathen nation namely the Assyrians at Nineveh. Now Nineveh is mentioned the first time in Genesis chapter ten verse 11 it was the ancient capital of the Assyrian Empire on the east bank of the Tigris River. It was destroyed by the Medes and Babylonians in six hundred and twelve B.C. We have material we have evidence outside of the Bible that confirms this and verifies it. Now classical writers say the city was in the shape of a trapezium the largest city in the world in that day and the third and fourth chapters of Jonah state more than once this great city a city great before the Lord. Now when Jonah heard his commission, he did a very unusual thing. He fled to Tarshish, he quit the ministry. He resigned.

Now prophets were not machines. They had power to resist the will of God. This is the only case on record where a prophet refused to carry out God's command. Nineveh was east of

Palestine. Tarshish was west. Latest biblical information places Tarshish either in Sardinia or Spain because the name is found in both places in antiquity. Now why did Jonah flee? Why did he go west when he was told very explicitly to go east? Well the answers vary. Some say he did it because the repentance of that city would mean ultimately the downfall of his own people. And we know it was the Assyrians who took the northern kingdom, 5/6th of the nation into captivity into Assyria in 722, 721 B.C. Some say it's because the sparing of that city would mean the ultimate downfall of so much of the nation of Israel. Others say that Jonah was afraid the conversion of Gentiles would detract from the privileges of Israel as the Chosen People of God. Still others hold it was just due plain and simple to pride and bigotry.

He just couldn't rejoice that God was to show grace to a heathen people he knew God was going to use Assyria as his rod on Israel. He indicated it in the book of Isaiah, God did, he indicated it in the book of Hosea. A final view is the one given in Chapter 4 Verse 2 where Jonah himself tells what his motive was in fleeing and I think this is the only valid way to interpret the whole transaction. He refused to go he says in 4:2 because he was afraid the message would be successful among the Ninevites. Can you imagine it? He wasn't afraid that he would be a failure but it would be a success he said was not this my word. When I was was yet in my land as much as said Lord I knew I knew your heart. It's so loving and compassionate and kind and tender that if these Ninevites gave you the least, the least reason by repentance you would spare them. You see the heart of man naturally prefer judgment on others rather than that God's mercy and grace should reach to them it's not a very pretty picture. But it's a true picture.

Now how did Jonah hope to flee from the presence of God he surely knew the omniscience and the omnipresence of God. The Psalmists had mentioned it. How can anyone flee from thy presence? Go up to heaven out there. One should go to Sheol there thy hand would

overtake him. Go to the end of the earth. Even there thy hand would sustain him. Jonah must have known that God knows all things and he is present everywhere. What is meant is that he fled from the land where the Lord dwelt manifestly in the temple when it says he fled from the presence of the Lord. And that's the same truth that we see in Genesis 4 when Cain after he killed his brother Abel. We read that he went out from the presence of the Lord well the Lord is everywhere.

It means he went out from the immediate conversation and conference with God. Here Jonah left the land where God was so manifestly worshipped in the temple. Included here may be the thought of escape from leaving of the Lord's service as well. He left from Joppa. The modern Mediterranean Sea port of Jaffa used as a harbor as early as the time of Solomon in the 10th century B.C. and from this same place Peter the Apostle had to have a heavenly vision to send him forth with the gospel to the gentile Cornelius, a very interesting sidelight and parallel on this in Acts 10. How we need to lean on the Lord and learn the lesson of obedience. Once when Charles M. Sheldon the writer and preacher was unexpectedly called to preach to the inmates of an insane asylum. He asked the superintendent what subjects he should take. And the superintendent said preach on the great need of obedience. Well that's what he did at the end of the meeting asked the superintendent. How much of my sermon do you suppose was understood. I feel a bit discouraged. I don't think much of it got over how much do you think they understood. The answer was they understood nearly all of it. Besides you see there were more than fifty of us counting doctors in attendance who were sane and I don't know but what we need. The doctrine of obedience preached to us just as much as other people.

I know the disobedience to God's laws and norms has brought most of these people into this asylum and the rest of us are in danger of the same end if we don't learn to obey the

commands of God how right he was. In the second place the storm is next in the account. The account tells us very vividly of the storm to bring Jonah into his will the Lord sent literally hurled a storm onto the sea. God hasn't relinquished his sovereignty over nature or man winds are his servants doing his pleasure. The Mariners knew this was no ordinary storm. They were used to the sea but they hadn't seen anything like this God in his grace was seeking after his disobedient servant. Probably the sailors were Phoenicians from different places worshipping different gods while the others were distressed were in turmoil and great confusion and anxiety of heart apprehensive.

There's Jonah fast asleep probably from the fatigue of the journey the anxiety that had wearied him prematurely that day. Sin brings Insensibility indifference with it. What a shame that the prophet of God had to be called to prayer by the heathen. General Booth in taking a religious census once of East London got this kind of reply from a working man's wife. She said to him the fact is Mr. Me and my husband don't take no interest in any think and anybody well they have too many people like them and probably Jonah turned to prayer. But the storm went on. In fact the scripture says it became more and more tempestuous. Then they cast lots to find out who was the guilty one among them. The only way they could do understand it was that some deity the deity of one of the people on that boat on that ship had been angry and had been disobeyed. So they cast lots to find out who the guilty one was. Now that wasn't against the will of God in that day it was done in the case of Akon in the case of the division of land under Joshua that we read in Proverbs 16 33 the lot is cast into their lap for the whole disposing [inaudible] of the Lord after Pentecost there's no record of the use of the lot by a believer.

The Indwelling spirit is sufficient now but the Mariners didn't doubt the lot. They want to Jonah himself to confess the nature of his sin and his guilt when the lot fell on him they still



wanted him to condemn himself so that they would not feel they had misunderstood how the lot came out. His answers were forthright. They were to the point when they heard Jonah's words they were terror stricken. That storm proclaimed the unquestioned omnipotence of God better than Jonah could. And here he had outraged, he had angered, he had provoked a God of such omnipotence. It was Lloyd George who said once in an address I was comforted to read the other day and I put it down what was said by a great old preacher. It was a year 1645 when things were looking rather black for freedom and this is what the preacher said. It's great folly to fear that any man that all the worms in the earth can stop the progress of the stars in the firmament. My friend the omnipotence of God can never be duplicated. It can't be denied it can't be frustrated.

The Mariners were more alarmed at the disobedience of Jonah than he was. What a rebuke from heathen to a prophet of God what a rebuke to him. And thirdly the scripture shows Jonah in the sea because they didn't want to meet out punishment of their own. Realizing the power of the God whom Jonah had offended they asked what course they should take. Now Jonah appears in a better life than anywhere else in the book. It took real courage to suggest they cast him into the sea to pacify the raging of it. He didn't throw himself into the sea. There is a difference between an awakened conscience and a despairing suicidal conscience. He was willing to sacrifice himself to save those about him and this was like our Lord. Though he didn't bring about the calamity of sin into which man had fallen of his own accord the mariners were noble too. They wanted to spare his life. They rode hard. The original says they tried to dig their way through the heaving waters. They had more concern for one life than Jonah had for hundreds of thousands in Nineveh.

They knew life was precious in God's sight but they were convinced that it pleased God to reveal the culprit in the storm the lot and in the advice of the prophet God spared the praying,

penitent ones. Jonah's going to learn that lesson in Chapter 2 when the storm ceased the men fear the Lord exceedingly the calm now witnessed again. The omnipotence of God. They sacrificed of that which they had with them on the ship then vowed to do more when they reached their destination. Finally we see Jonah in the fish God appointed ordered a fish to swallow Jonah. The Lord arranged it that the fish should be there. The dimensions of the fish are not as important as the man Jonah. This preservation of Jonah is a miracle. Natural explanations are not sufficient. Christ himself called it a sign. Throughout this remarkable account there is a close parallel between Jonah and the people of Israel. Chapter 1 is full of prophecy concerning God's people Israel. Israel like Jonah was called and that to witness to the person and holiness of God. Israel was commissioned of God as his witnesses.

Israel like Jonah was disobedient to the will of the Lord. Like Jonah Israel found himself among men of different nationalities. Jonah was among the heathen. They came to know God while Israel is among the nations of the earth. The Gentiles come to know the Lord. Jonah was miraculously preserved in the Sea Monster. Israel has been preserved of God through the centuries. Listening friend, have you been obedient to the voice of the Lord and to his will to take the gospel to the lost, to the lost in Israel. Are we God's modern day Jonahs? Unsaved one, dear Jewish friend learn of the omnipotence of our God. He manifested in the realm of creation but in salvation even more. Trust his word. His Grace life and blessing will be assured you. Our Father in Heaven, bless the message of the hour in music and through the preached word through this great prophecy of Jonah Lord speak to Jewish hearts.

May many turn this hour in this broadcast to Christ as savior and redeemer? We pray in his Blessed name amen.

[Musical Outro]

Friends since the beginning of the messianic hour the declared dedicated purpose and vision have been to reach our Jewish friends with the truth concerning God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ we found radio the most advantageous tool to reach those who would not otherwise attend any gospel service. It is one of the most inexpensive means of touching large areas of any population to make possible these broadcasts to maintain their outreach. Staff members themselves give generously to carry the heavy load they do need your help. Every gift receipt without deduction goes directly toward the specific Ministry of reaching the Jewish people with the news of the Messiah our savior we would greatly appreciate your daily remembrance of this work in your prayers and then as you pray invest in reaching the Jewish people for Christ are many address messianic hour post office box 11 0 2. That's box 1 1 0 2 Whittier California the zip code is 9 0 6 0 3. Trust we will hear from you would encourage all of us. Our soloist today was Dave Eflin Tom Leonard at the organ and this is Charles Feinberg thanking you for listening for your faithful prayers for your zealous witness on behalf of the lost sheep of the House of Israel. Listen again with your Jewish friends and neighbors next week at the same time for the messianic hour.

[End]