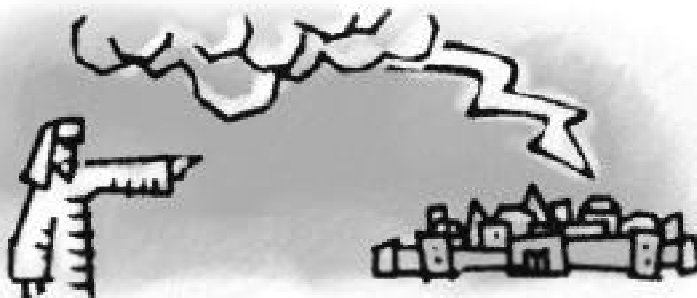


Jonah and Judgment¹

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AS THE FIRST VERSES OF JONAH show, this book is about God's judgment. Of course, that is nothing unusual. The Bible is full of different examples, warnings, and promises of God's judgment.

We know God is love. Jesus proved on the cross that God is love. Jesus dying on the cross is the greatest example of God's judgment. Because He is a God of love, we can trust His judgment to be fair and righteous (holy). With God, we do not have to worry about juries being dishonest.² We do not have to worry about judges being bribed. We do not have to worry about having an unfair³ trial.

This week we will continue to look at judgment as introduced in Jonah. Jonah shows that God does care about the evil that has brought so much pain, suffering, and trouble to this world.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: Why does God care about the wickedness of Nineveh or the wickedness of any place? What examples can we find in the Bible about God's judgment? What proof shows that people knew about the Ten Commandments before Mount Sinai? How can God judge people who have never received a clear picture of Bible truth?

MEMORY VERSE: "Peter began to speak: 'I [Peter] now realize that it is true that God treats everyone on the same basis. Whoever fears him [God] and does what is right is acceptable to him, no matter what race he [the person] belongs to' " (Acts 10:34, 35, TEV).

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 18.

¹judgment—to declare guilty or not guilty of sin.

²dishonest—not honest.

³unfair—not fair.

SUN NINEVEH UNDER JUDGMENT.

What does Jonah 1:2 tell us about God’s knowledge of Nineveh and His concern for our moral⁴ actions? How do the following verses help you to answer these questions? Judges 21:25; Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14; Matthew 12:36; Matthew 25:31-46; Hebrews 5:14.



God cares about how we act toward other people.

The Bible is clear that God has created a moral world. Many people may not agree. But God does judge us for right and wrong, good and evil, according to His law. No matter who we are, we all have a sense of what is right and wrong. God will be the final Judge of us and our actions. Jonah 1:2 shows that even people who do not believe in God, such as the Ninevites,⁵ must answer for their actions before God.

And the people of Nineveh will have plenty to answer for. The Assyrians

were known for being very cruel and warlike. Many ancient⁶ tablets⁷ have been found and translated from Nineveh. The translation of a document from the rule of Ashurnasirpal II, 884–859 B.C., is one example: “I built a movable battle tower over against his city. I pulled the skin off all the chiefs who had rebelled, and covered the tower with their skin. Some people I walled up within the tower. Some people I threw upon the tower on spears. Other people I chained to stakes round about the tower. . . I cut the arms and legs of the royal officers who rebelled. . . .

“I burned many people with fire, and I took many people as slaves. From some people, I cut off their noses, ears, and fingers. I put out the eyes of many people. I made one tower of living people and another of dead people’s heads. I speared their heads to tree trunks round the city. Their young men and women I burned in the fire.

“Twenty men I captured alive. I buried them in the wall of the palace.”
—Adapted from D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylon, Ancient Records Series 1*, in Geoffrey T. Bull, *The City and the Sign: An Interpretation of the Book of Jonah* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970), pp. 109, 110.

How does Romans 2:12-16 help

⁴moral—having to do with knowing the difference between right and wrong.

⁵Ninevites—the people of the city of Nineveh, Assyria.

⁶ancient—very old.

⁷tablets—pieces of clay people used to write on during Bible times.

us understand the fact that even people who do not believe in God will be judged by His law? Write a small paragraph summarizing these verses.

MON GOD'S JUDGMENT IS A SERIOUS MATTER.

Many people try not to feel guilty about their sins by focusing on God's love. But we see from the first few verses of Jonah (and all through the Bible), that God is concerned about how wicked humans are. God's concern about our wickedness is not opposite His love for us. It is because of His love for us that He is concerned about our wickedness.

Bible writers did not use modern methods of making a point such as underlining or italics. Instead, they carefully used certain words several times to communicate their point. In the book of Jonah, the words *evil* or *wickedness* are used ten times. Two times these words point to the Ninevites (Jonah 1:2; Jonah 3:8), because God wants us to know how bad Nineveh really was.

What are some other examples in the Bible of when God said people were wicked?

Genesis 6:5, 6 _____

Genesis 18:20, 21 _____

Ezekiel 7:10, 11 _____

Habakuk 1:1-4 _____

Revelation 16:1-7 _____

God also announced punishment against countries outside of Israel. The book of Revelation teaches us that the whole earth will fall under God's judgment. Much of Isaiah is filled with warnings to many nations (Isaiah 13; Isaiah 14:24-32). Jeremiah, too, is filled with many warnings against the nations around Israel—warnings that the nations will be judged for their evil.

The Bible is clear that God brings judgments against nations. But why do we have to be careful how we decide what is or is not God's judgment? When a nation faces disaster (terrible happening), it does not mean that God is somehow punishing that nation. All we can do is call people to repentance,⁸ confession⁹ of sin, faith, and obedience.

⁸repentance—being sorry for your sins, wanting to stop sinning, and turning away from your sins.

⁹confession—admitting you have sinned and saying you believe in Jesus.

TUE GOD'S STANDARD¹⁰ OF RIGHT AND WRONG.

The Ten Commandments were announced in a powerful way from Mount Sinai. So many people have decided that the Ten Commandments were first given by God to the Israelites at Mount Sinai. They also claim that the Ten Commandments were not in force until God gave them at Mount Sinai. But a careful reading of Genesis and the early chapters of Exodus shows that people knew the commandments and were responsible for keeping them.

How do the following verses show us that people were responsible for keeping the Ten Commandments before God announced them at Mount Sinai?

Genesis 12:10-20 _____

Genesis 20:1-14 _____

Genesis 39:1-9 _____



Joseph is a good example of a person who followed God's law.

The book of Job is the oldest book in the Old Testament. Job himself is not of the Covenant Line.¹¹ And he lived before the Ten Commandments were announced to the Israelites from Mount Sinai.

Which commandments (or at least the basic principles¹² found in those commandments) are seen in the following verses of Job? (Read also Exodus 20.)

Job 31:5, 6 _____

Job 31:9-12 _____

¹⁰standard—God's law that judges us.

¹¹Covenant Line—a historical line of Bible leaders such as Noah, Abraham, and so forth who received God's covenant. A covenant is an agreement between God and His people.

¹²principles—laws upon which other laws are based. The principles of the Ten Commandments are our love for God and our love for other people (Matthew 22:37-40).

Job 31:16-23 _____

Job 31:26-28 _____

Job 31:38-40 _____

How would you explain to someone that the Ten Commandments were necessary for people to have before Sinai? First John 3:4 says, “Whoever sins is guilty of breaking God’s law, because sin is a breaking of the law” (TEV). So why did the Ten Commandments exist before Mount Sinai?

WED MORAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

“God’s anger is revealed [shown] from heaven against all the sin and evil of the people whose evil ways prevent [stop] the truth from being known. God punishes them, because what can be known about God is plain [clear] to them, for God himself made it plain. Ever since God created the world, his invisible¹³ qualities, both his eternal¹⁴ power and his divine¹⁵ nature, have been clearly seen. They [God’s power and divine nature] are per-

¹³invisible—not seen.

¹⁴eternal—forever; without beginning or end.

¹⁵divine—of God.

ceived [seen] in the things that God had made. So those people have no excuse at all [for not knowing God]!” (Romans 1:18-20, TEV).



We see God’s power and divine nature in the things He has made.

Write a summary of what Romans 1:18-20 is saying. Focus your answer on the idea of judgment.

Romans 1:18-20 is clear that God will judge evil people fairly. God is a God of love. Jesus’ death covered every person who has lived or will ever live (John 3:16; Romans 5:18; Hebrews 2:9). From the beginning, God desired that all people would be saved. Romans 1:18-20 says that enough about God has been made known so that evil people also can be saved.

What do you think it means for evil people to “have no excuses at all”? What does the fact that they “have no excuses” tell us about God’s fairness in bringing judgment upon them?

We need to remember one important point: The same God who brings judgment is the same God who died on the cross for sinners. He must judge sinners. Only when we focus on the Cross can we begin to understand God’s righteous (holy) judgment upon evil.

“But even this final example of God’s anger in destroying wicked people is not an act of revenge.¹⁶ God is life. When people choose sin, they separate God from life. . . . (*The Desire of Ages*, p 764, adapted). God gives people life for a time so they may develop their characters. When they have developed their characters, they receive the results of their choices.”—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, on Romans 1:18, vol. 6, pp. 477, 478.

THU NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS.

“Then Peter began to speak, ‘I [Peter] now realize that it is true that God does not show favoritism [play favorites] but accepts men from every nation who fear [honor; respect] him and do what is right’” (Acts 10:34, 35, NIV).

The Bible shows that both Jonah and Israel had proven unfaithful¹⁷ to their responsibility of sharing salvation with the nations. Jonah and Israel had forgotten how God always shows His concern for everyone. God wants to reach nonbelievers. For this reason, He called Israel to be a special people.

How does the ancient covenant to Abraham include people outside of Israel? Genesis 22:18. How were all nations to be blessed by what God did through Abraham? Galatians 3:26-29.

God’s love went beyond Israel’s borders. Jonah surely knew about God’s love. But it is easy to choke the channels (pathways) that God has set up to flood the world with His grace.

During New Testament times, on a rooftop, Simon Peter struggled with the same problems as Jonah did. And in the same town of Joppa!

How did God teach Peter about His love and mercy¹⁸ for all people? Acts 10:9-16, 34, 35; Acts 11:4-10.

Biblical writers use the same words again and again to make a point. For example, Peter is told three times he must not call unclean¹⁹ what God has said is clean.

¹⁶revenge—getting even with someone for something he or she has done.

¹⁷unfaithful—not faithful.

¹⁸mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

¹⁹unclean—not clean.

Peter admitted that he understood God was not telling him about proper eating habits but about His love and mercy for all people. Even so, people do refuse to accept God's grace.

God has called us as Adventists to share salvation with people who do terrible things. But in what ways do we face the danger of not wanting to share salvation?

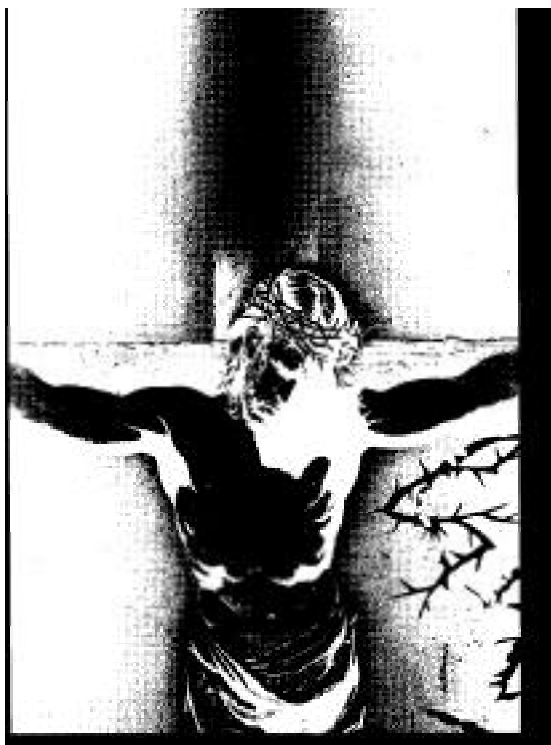
FRI **ADDITIONAL STUDY:** God wants people who hear His messages of warning and judgment to repent.²⁰ But He does not force us to repent. "The use of force is not part of God's government. God wants people to serve Him out of love. Love cannot be commanded. Love cannot be won by force or power. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him. God's character must be shown as opposite of Satan's character. This is the work that only one Person (Jesus) could do. Jesus knew the height and depth of God's love. Only Jesus could show God's love for everyone."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

One argument supporting God's presence is known as the "moral argument." The "moral argument" says: Suppose a world ruler decided that all red-haired people should be killed for the good of the world. Suppose the ruler convinced everyone that killing every red-haired person was the only right

thing to do. If everyone in the world believed that it was right to kill all red-haired people, would killing red-haired people be wrong? Most people now would believe it would be wrong to kill red-haired people, even if some people thought it was right. But if moral values come from people, instead of from God, how could it be wrong to kill all red-haired people? Discuss the strong and weak points of the "moral argument" for the presence of God.

SUMMARY: God is a God of love. But He is also a God of judgment. Just as His mercy covers all nations, so does His judgment.



Only Jesus could show God's love for everyone.

²⁰repent—to say you are sorry for your sins and then to turn away from your sins.