

Lesson 36 Jonah, Joel, The Song of Solomon

Read these three books.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. *How is Jonah different from any of the prophets we have read? Would you consider it historical? What would you think the purpose of the writer was? Where was Nineveh and of what country had it been the capital?*
2. *What kind of prophetic literature is Joel? How does he describe the Day of the Lord? See Mark 13:24, Revelation 6:12. What imagery is used by Jesus that is also in Joel and Revelation?*
3. *The Song of Solomon has been interpreted by the Church Fathers as a love song referring to Christ and the Church, also the Christian and the Holy Spirit. It is placed in the center of the Bible, could there be a significance to that?*

Song of Solomon 2:8-17 and prayer.

Jonah and Joel reflect two post-exilic attitudes among the Jews in Jerusalem. For orientation use the atlas, 8-41. The last history we read in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah took place in the fifth and early fourth centuries B.C. Here they recommitted themselves to the Law and revived worship in the reconstructed Temple. Then leaving the Israelites, we digressed. We read Esther, discovering her story was based on historic times of King Xerxes of Persia, B-41. The times of Ahasuerus, (or Xerxes and called Artaxerxes in the Greek additions) are faithfully reflected in the story. His equivocal feelings toward the Jews with legislation against them are all recorded by Ezra and Nehemiah. Soon, in our journey through the Old Testament, we will enter a new period of history, the rule of the Greeks. With these books of Jonah and Joel, we are between the years of Ezra's administration of the Law in Jerusalem, and the coming of the Greek Empire with subsequent Seleucid Rule. Jonah and Joel reflect two sides of this period as they both describe God's will for Israel. With these two works we finish the prophets, leaving only Daniel and the second Zechariah who are not true prophets, but are apocalyptic eschatological writers.

Jonah tells about the actions of a rebellious prophet. It is easy to recognize that the Book of Jonah is a different kind of prophetic writing. We are not reading prophetic words, but are considering the acts of a person who is called a prophet. The account is considered factual because Jesus uses it in Matthew 12 as history. We might consider the story to be fiction except for this distinctive fact - Jesus uses the story twice as an historic event. Yet, its meaning far transcends a whale swallowing a man. Though the distinctive thing about Judeo-Christian faith is its grounding in historic fact, truth often lies beyond historic details. Facts, like the resurrection of Jesus occurring in an historic moment, lead us to transcendent truth with eternal significance for every believer. In Jonah we have a historic happening whose factual building blocks also make possible its use as a parable.

The literary form of Jonah is parable. Jesus used parables to teach; the writer of Jonah is using a happening as a parable to teach. See Psalm 74:19 where the word "jonah" is used in its Hebrew meaning which is "dove" "Do not deliver the soul of thy dove to the wild beasts; do not forget the life of thy poor forever." Here we see Israel, God's dove, a weak, helpless, flighty thing that is loved and doted upon, but needs care and protection. This Jonah or dove is Israel. In our parable, dove-Israel has been commissioned like a pigeon to carry God's message to the whole earth. But instead, Jonah, the dove, flies off in the opposite direction. Because of this disobedience a tempest arises threatening everyone on board, not just the one directly involved in disobedience. Unawed, Jonah goes down into the ship's hold to sleep.

Israel sleeps and must be wakened. The story describes not only Jonah's self-absorption, but the forgetfulness of Israel - how easily she lapses into unawareness of her action's effect on the world and herself. She sleeps and must be awakened by the pagans who are the ones to awaken Jonah. Lots are drawn to see why this calamity has occurred. With all the pagan sinners on board, the lot, nevertheless, falls to Jonah who is the responsible one. He has sinned and disobeyed, so the pagans must throw him overboard. Yahweh commissioned Israel, Israel rebelled, Yahweh brought retribution by the hands of pagan Babylon, and sent Israel into exile. What does the fish symbolize? The three days

in the belly of the whale makes an analogy of the Exile when Jonah (Israel) has the experience of rethinking history and realizes the how and why of his plight. 2:4. "I am cast out from thy presence how shall I again look upon thy holy Temple?" This is the cry of the people from Babylon which ends with a plea for deliverance by God. And the miracle happens - the fish casts out Jonah upon dry land, just as Cyrus' edict does for the Jews, who find themselves miraculously delivered after being swallowed alive by an immense nation. Soon enough they are back at home. Now Yahweh will start over with the Jews as he does with Jonah. Will they go to the whole world and carry His message this time? The pagans cover a great part of the earth and are very numerous, just like the vast city of Nineveh which waits for the message of God to be preached. Jonah is to preach repentance to the Ninevites; Israel is to preach repentance to the world. Nineveh believes Jonah and repents. God does not destroy them. This is just what Jonah feared would happen. In the face of repentance, God cannot be trusted to carry out His threats against even pagans, and Jonah, who expresses the exclusive Jewish frame of mind, is angry. Israel's narrow point of view, just like Jonah's attitude, is that God's love should benefit only Israel. But God loves Jonah despite his arrogance and questions him lovingly, "Do you do well to be angry?"

Is the booth a tongue-in-cheek reference to the Temple? Jonah goes off in a pout and builds himself a booth (probably a humorous jibe at the insignificant second Temple), and then sits in the shade of a wondrous gourd plant which the Lord has caused to grow up. When the Lord lets a worm destroy the vine, Jonah is thrown into even more despair, "Angry, angry enough to die." Could this be an allusion to the despair of Joel over the locusts which have cut off the flow of offerings to the Temple? The same Joel exults at the possible destruction of the enemy nations? Anyway, this vine's death distresses Jonah greatly while there is no distress in Joel or in Jonah for the thousands that perish because of lack of knowledge of God on the fearful Day of the Lord. Yahweh chides Jonah about his sorrow for the plant and his lack of sorrow for the people who do not know their right hand from their left

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We have a wonderful revelation here of God and His love for all the earth. He loves the people He has called His own; He has given them a mission to reach out to other people whom He loves, but to whom He has not revealed Himself. After all, the dove has been chosen and named Beloved, not just for itself and its own comfort, but to spread the generosity of God's love and truth to all. Among the layers of meaning of this parable are messages to us personally. It is difficult to submit our stubbornness to do God's will. We refuse till some pain, some personal tragedy turns us back to seek again the will of God. Then we may be more willing to carry out our mission. Jesus speaks of "the sign of Jonah" as a description of His three days in the earth, Mat 12:38. Other prophets speak of God's love for all nations. Jonah was not the first; Isaiah proclaims it in 2:2ff and other places. From exile in Babylon, Deutero-Isaiah spoke of God's universal love. He foresaw that Israel would bring the whole earth to God; nations would stream to Jerusalem and from Jerusalem would go forth instruction. This lovely inclusive spirit then flows out from the Jews to everyone. But this hardly came to pass. When the Jews got back to Jerusalem and put up its walls after rebuilding their Temple, they did quite the opposite; they shut out all foreigners. The book of Jonah criticizes this tendency to withdraw, and says that they may well forfeit their privilege if they do not heed their mission this time, opening their arms to the nations.

The Jews in Jerusalem have an exclusive view of their religion. They have made it a kind of religious fortress centered in the Temple. The elements of the story relate to this exclusivism. The symbolism is: Jonah - Israel; pagan sailors - pagan nations used to punish Israel and wake her up; Nineveh - the wider pagan world that has not heard God's Word; fish - Babylonian Exile; booth - the Temple; gourd vine - provisions for Temple sacrifice. The attitude of the inspired writer, using historic fact to build his parable, is inclusive; he would have Israel realize a responsibility to carry God's word to the whole world.

Joel is an example of the fortress mentality. His prophecy opens with the picture of a natural calamity; a devastating plague of locusts has consumed the whole country. Joel, attached to the rebuilt Temple, perhaps as a priest, is affected by the plague because it deprives the

Temple of the normal offerings -1:8ff. He feels similarly to Jonah who mourns the gourd vine. A recent Nova TV. program vividly described locusts; they hatch out when the weather conditions are just right, then move in great clouds so that the sun is literally darkened, eating everything in sight. There is not left a blade of grass, nor a leaf, nor bark upon a tree. Everything is destroyed; and the ground, barren of vegetation, hardens and dries. Then the rain runs off without moistening the soil, and soon famine follows. The only relief from the insects comes if the wind blows the whole cloud of them off to sea. Then the people may cry to God for rebirth of the land. Such a sequence is described in Joel. For him offerings in the Temple are essential for fellowship with God 1:13. For this reason Joel calls for fasting and prayers, and cries to God to restore the fruitfulness necessary to support Temple worship. He then uses this natural calamity as the base for a far reaching vision of the last days through which his true colors as an apocalyptic eschatologist are apparent. He sees angels like men come upon the mountains 2:2; they are like the locusts of God, and like them will devastate the pagan lands. There follows a science fiction picture of what it will be like when these angelic warriors come down upon the earth 2:6ff. These images of the Day of the Lord with locust-like angels, darkness and earthquake will all again be found in the last book of the New Testament which points to a time yet to come, Rev. 6 and 9. And if we think that these images are not in line with Jesus teaching, look at his words of apocalyptic eschatology in Mark 13:24.

For the faithful there is time to repent. The message that Jonah preaches among the pagans to repent and believe God, His own people must also heed. If repentance is general among the nations, God may relent and not to go to war against them 2:13, His own people He will show mercy, He will restore provisions so that His presence can continue in the Temple with His people 2:18 If. He will remove the foreigner - the Northerner, just like the locusts are removed by being blown into the sea. As the earth is restored after the locusts have passed so after the Day of the Lord, the earth will be restored when the avenging angels have passed over. Then God's spirit will be poured out on everyone, young and old, male and female.

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Here we see the apocalyptic dimensions of God's judgment. Before God's Spirit is sent to revive, there will be the great judgment of the nations who have oppressed the Jews. Where the old prophets had believed that faith would be vindicated and that Israel would someday be seen as chief of all the nations in a golden age of justice with peace, this optimistic assessment of the future of Israel has changed. The apocalyptic-style writer no longer believes that this will happen in the normal course of events. Now a cataclysmic end to this evil world is necessary before God can birth an entirely new world. Upheaval and collapse of everything known will occur before God will, through cosmic powers, reestablish a world obedient to Him. We saw this insight with Ezekiel that enemies of God are to be overcome by angelic armies. So Joel, in the apocalyptic tradition, visualizes the Valley of Decision where the enemies of God, the pagan nations, will be judged and destroyed. They'd better turn their plowshares into swords and prepare for angelic battle. Ezekiel had called this battle of heavenly hosts (Og from Magog) the battle of Armageddon. Joel is full of references to past prophets, see Ezekiel 9:1-11, Isaiah 24-27. In his seventy verses he quotes from other Old Testament writers twenty times. The imagery is vivid; the wine press is full, the vats overflow with blood, the sickle has been wielded into Israel's ancient enemies.

Salvation is from and for the Jews. In the community of Israel there is a dominant attitude of exclusivity. Here we have the other side of the Jonah coin. Salvation is for the Jews, and all the promises of God are just for them. The Temple is the center of the creation, and God will come by superhuman means to set things straight elevating Israel as God's favorite. It is exactly this mentality that the writer of Jonah called into question. Which is true?

Exclusive, inclusive; both are right and true. After the return from exile the thread of revelation would have been lost without the exclusivity of the Jews. God's people needed to retrench. Consider the Roman Church of the past years. She assumed an entrenched protective attitude, best described as exclusive through the last four centuries. The Reformation forced this attitude. Now we shake our heads over it; but there is a time for everything, and wider the onslaughts of Protestantism orthodox faith needed defenses. Now we are entering a

new time when the emphasis is on inclusiveness. The problem is we may overdo it. The trick is to hold the two in tension. A mission poster a few years ago of the Pope and three young boys is a perfect balance of the two. Here the Holy Father reaches out to smiling boys of Near Eastern ethnic background. He holds one boy's head in a blessing. Our pope is often criticized, especially here in democratic America, as being too exclusive, too concerned with holding up doctrine. We Catholics must be sure of our convictions, then we can go out and love the world, even those who dissent or are potential enemies. We are on an unshakeable foundation and experience. Is anything merely chance about the Bible? Yada is the center of from it we can open our doors to everyone with no danger to the faith itself.

The promise of the Spirit will come to pass. The great promise of Joel 2:18ff points the way. "Afterward it will come to pass that I will pour my spirit out on all flesh." It is in the Holy Spirit that we are able to hold these two attitudes in tension, embracing them both. The Holy Spirit promise in this verse is fulfilled on Pentecost. Then, says Joel, the ecstatic experience and illumination experienced by the former prophets will be given to all Israel, and the great prophetic utterances of Isaiah and Jeremiah and the others will come to pass. The Lord will change all hearts so that all will know Him.

In the center of this lesson is the Song of Songs, or Song of Solomon. Intellectual knowledge, though light giving, is not saving knowledge. Only an experience of accepting God's salvation in Christ saves us. What is the Hebrew word for knowledge of God? "Yada", which is the underlying theme of the Song of Songs. We remember the meaning of "yada" which was the predominate word in Hebrew for "knowing God," and whose original meaning is sexual intercourse. Clearly, to the Jew knowing God is a total experience, not only a thought. If the knowledge we are dealing with remains only in our mental processes, it is not saving. However, when we open ourselves to God in the sacraments and invite Him in, allowing Him to possess us, as He allows us to possess Him, in a love of each other so complete that the identity of the one and the other is fused but not confused (we do

not become God, nor does He become us), then we are entering into saving knowledge. Ours is a personal-experience religion; in the Eucharist we are enacting this truth, "I in you and you in me." It is meant to be a total psychological experience, not just an exercise of one part of the brain. When we hold intellectual knowledge we are awash with all kinds of influences; doubt, hesitation, agnosticism. But with experience of what Christ has done, and commitment to Him all doubt is washed away. The sexual experience is closest to this in the language of the Hebrews, and God affirms it throughout Scripture. For this reason Israel is regarded eternally feminine and God eternally masculine. The significance of yada is written indelibly into His creation in the bodily form and function of man and woman. The Song of Songs is significantly placed in the center of the Bible.

This love poem is meant to be acted out on a wedding day. Possibly Solomon's wedding, this poem has its roots in such a regal celebration. In the Near East (Syria) on the wedding day pageants of this sort are still carried on. The groom is King Solomon, and the bride, his prospective Queen, the lovely Shulammit. Rather like the old T.V. show, Queen for A Day, they are honored as King and Queen, carried around to be saluted by all the villagers. There are three voices in the drama, the groom, the bride and a chorus who comments on the proceedings as the groom and bride take turns expressing their love through the text. Does a love song belong in Sacred Scripture? It was difficult for the Jewish rabbis to include it, but they did so believing the bride and groom analogous to God as Lover of Israel and His Beloved. The early Church Fathers regarded it as inspiration for Christians, viewing the groom analogous of Christ, the bridegroom, lover of the Christian soul, and the bride, the Church and its individual beloved members. The poem brings into relief the great love and longing of God for the soul of a man or a woman. Many of the saints of the Church including Bernard of Clairvoux and Teresa of Liseaux, understood and accepted the intimacy of God's love for them through this poem. Jesus calls Himself the bridegroom, a context they would have understood because of the Old Testament's use of "yada" (does anyone think that Jesus' maleness was incidental in the Incarnation?). The Song of Songs should be read as though the love words are addressed to us, and the words of loving response, our words to Him.

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JOEL

SONG OF SOLOMON (OF SONGS)

JONAH



APOCALYPTIC
ESCHATOLOGY

PARABLE OF THE LOCUSTS
THE ANGELIC HOSTS OF
GOD WHO WILL BRING
THE DAY OF THE LORD.

TO VINDICATE ISRAEL
TO PUNISH HER ENEMIES

THE AUTHOR IS CONCERNED FOR THE
TEMPLE SACRIFICES, AND WAITS FOR ENEMIES
TO BE DOOMED.

EXCLUSIVE



Levels of Meaning
St. Therese of Liseaux
St. Bernard

JESUS	CHURCH
YAHWEH	THE JEWS
MAN	WOMAN
FATHER	SON
HOLY TRINITY	THE SOUL
HOLY SPIRIT	VIRGIN MARY

YADA
to "know"

UNION WITH GOD

UNION OF OPPOSITES
BOTH ARE NECESSARY

A PARABLE

MISSION OF JONAH =
MISSION OF THE JEWS
AS LIGHT TO THE WORLD

THE SHIP AND SAILORS =
THE WHOLE WORLD IS PAGAN.
WITH JONAH "ASLEEP"

THE LOTS CHOSE JONAH =
ISRAEL'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR
THE ONSLAUGHT OF ITS ENEMIES.

THE WHALE = THE EXILE
VOMITED UP = EDICT OF CYRUS

MISSION TO NINEVEH =
WILL ISRAEL NOW CARRY LIGHT TO
THE WORLD?

NINEVEH'S REPENTANCE =
GOD WILLS TO SAVE ALL NATIONS

THE BOOTH = THE TEMPLE

JONAH'S POUT =
THE JEWS' EXCLUSIVE ATTITUDES

WILTED VINE AND JONAH'S ANGER =
JOEL'S OBSESSION DURING THE DROUGHT
ABOUT TEMPLE SACRIFICE OVER AGAINST
NEEDS OF THE WORLD'S PEOPLES.

JONAH (JUDAH) CONCERNED ABOUT TEMPLE SACRIFICE
RATHER THAN SALVATION NEED OF WORLD'S PEOPLE
THE AUTHOR SAYS GOD IS NOT HAPPY WITH THIS.

INCLUSIVE

Lesson 36

Jonah, Joel, Song of Solomon

Synopsis

JONAH

1. Jonah is called to go to Nineveh to cry against its wickedness but he boards ship to Tarshish away from God's presence a tempest rises on the sea the ship may break up the mariners throw goods overboard Jonah is asleep down below awake sleeper, call upon your god they cast lots, whose is the evil Jonah draws the lot; who are you? a God-fearing Hebrew what have you done to flee from the presence of the Lord? what shall we do with you? the storm increases throw me into the sea men rowed hard, but no headway they cried to the Lord let us not perish for this man's life O Lord, do what pleases thee so they threw Jonah into the sea they offered sacrifice, made vows and feared the Lord Jonah is swallowed by a great fish three days and nights in its belly
2. Jonah prayed to God out of distress cast in the deep, the flood all about "shall I again look on thy Temple?" waters closed in, weeds around me I went down to the land of the Pit my soul fainted, my prayer to thee "what I have vowed I will pay" deliverance belongs to the Lord

- the Lord spoke to the fish
Jonah was vomited out on dry land
3. the Lord spoke to Jonah, arise go to Nineveh, a great city take the message I tell you he proclaims God's word forty days but before judgment, the people turn they believe and repent king proclaims national repentance God repented of what He intended
 4. Jonah is angry; this is why he refused in the first place he knew God would relent repent of evil and love instead therefore, take my life it is better that I die the Lord said, is it right to be angry? Jonah went east and made a booth a plant grew up as shade Jonah was glad for the plant a worm killed the plant; it withered Jonah asked to die, better than life Are you angry for the plant, said God yet I should not pity Nineveh?

JOEL

1. hear! the Word of the Lord to Joel tell your children and their children the locusts, plague after plague have left nothing; the wine is cut off locusts have wasted everything lament like a virgin for her groom cereal and drink offering cut off at the Lord's house priests mourn fields are waste - no grain or wine harvest perishes, vine withers gladness fails the sons of men wear sackcloth, no offerings atiland call a solemn assembly and fast

- the day of the Lord is near
destruction from God is coming
God's house lacks food and joy
beasts groan even sheep dismayed
fire consumes and there is no water
2. blow the trumpet and sound alarm the day of the Lord comes and His powerful army fire devours before them nothing escapes the cosmic locusts like terrible war horses they leap on mountains people are in anguish they come on without swerving they enter through windows the earth quakes the sun and moon are darkened the Lord's voice sounds the great and terrible day of the Lord return to me, says God with fasting, weeping and mourning rend your hearts, not your garments return to God, He abounds in love He may decide to repent and bless let all observe a fast and gather in solemn assembly bride and groom quit their chamber let the priests weep and intercede why should other nations say "Where is their God?" God says He'll send the good things they will be no more a reproach I will remove the Northerner fear not the beasts pastures will be green with fruits, fig tree and vine be glad sons of Zion there is early rain, latter rain after my avenging army has past

- threshing floors shall be full
you shall eat in plenty
my people never again to be shamed
I will pour out my spirit on all flesh with prophecy, dreams and portents in heaven and on earth the terrible day of the Lord all who call upon the Lord delivered those who escape shall be those whom the Lord calls
3. I will gather nations and judge them on account of my people because they scattered them I will pay back Tyre, Sidon, Philistia who've taken my riches to temples I requite your deeds on your head proclaim this among nations beat your plowshares into swords gather yourselves and warriors here I will judge all the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat my wine press of wrath overflows multitudes judged in vale of decision the sun and moon darkened the Lord roars, heaven, earth shake but the Lord is a refuge to His people a fountain shall come forth Egypt shall be desolation and Edom but Judah shall be inhabited and Jerusalem to all generations God dwells in Zion

SONG OF SOLOMON

- 1 **Bride** give me kisses and love
your name is oil draw me after you
chorus we extol the maid and love
Bride I am a swarthy daughter a
keeper of vineyards
where do you pasture your flocks
I will be there
Groom follow the tracks you are
lovely - cheeks, neck
Bride my nard gives forth fragrance
my beloved is beautiful blossoms
Groom my love has beautiful eyes
we will lie on a green couch and see
the beams and rafters
2. **Bride** I am a rose, a lily my
love is like an apple tree
I sit in his shadow, his fruit is sweet
he brings me to a banquet
I am sick with love
oh, that he was making love to me
be careful not to awaken love
till it is right
he comes leaping over mountains
he gazes at my windows
he asks me to come with him
it is spring and all blossoms
arise, come, let me see your face
and hear your voice
my beloved is mine, I am his
my beloved is like a young stag
3. I sought him on my bed
he does not answer
I seek him and ask the watchmen then
I found him, I held him
bringing him into my mother's house
do not stir up love until it's right
Chorus the perfume of procession

- Solomon the groom, comes
he is surrounded by mighty men
expert in war, the King rides
on a palanquin beautifully bedecked
behold him with the crown
with which his mother crowned him
4. **Groom** you are beautiful
your eyes, your hair, your teeth
your lips and mouth are lovely
your cheeks and your neck
your breasts like two fawns
I will come to - mountains of myrrh
you are all fair, come with me
Bride My love knocked, I delayed
I saw his hand, it thrilled me
when I rose to open the door
he had turned and gone
I sought him but could not find him
the watchmen beat me
if you find my beloved
tell him I am sick with love
Chorus why is your beloved
better than all others?
Bride he is radiant his head, his hair
Groom you have ravished my heart
whose glance is love
your lips, your garments
a garden locked is my bride
with choicest fruits and spices
and a garden fountain
Bride awake, south and north
winds blow my garden's fragrance so
my beloved will come
come and eat my choicest fruits
5. **Groom** I come to my garden
and gather and eat and drink
Chorus eat and drink lovers
Bride his eyes are doves
- his cheeks, lips, arms, body, legs
his appearance like cedars
his speech is sweet
he is altogether desirable
my beloved and my friend
6. **Chorus** where has her lover gone?
we will seek him with you
Bride he has gone to his garden
I am my lover's and he is mine
Groom you are so beautiful
as beautiful as Jerusalem
your eyes disturb me
your hair, your teeth and cheeks
my dove, the darling of her mother
flawless, the maidens call her happy
terrible as an army with banners
Bride I went to see nature's beauty
imagining I sat in a chariot with him
Chorus return Shulammitte
that we may look at you
and watch you dance
7. with beautiful feet and thighs
a navel and belly, breasts like fawns
neck, eyes, nose, head and tresses
that hold a king captive
Groom this delectable maiden is fair
like a palm tree with clusters
I climb the palm, lay hold of clusters
your kisses are like wine
Bride I am my Beloved's
come let us go to the fields
I will give you my love
there are fruits laid up for you
O, that you were my brother
then none would despise me
for kissing you
I'd bring you to my mother's house
and give you spiced wine

- O, that he was embracing me
do not stir love until the right time
Chorus who comes leaning
on her beloved?
Bride I awakened you
where your mother bore you
under the apple tree
set me as a seal on your heart
love is as strong as death
jealousy is a cruel flame
many waters don't quench love
wealth is scorned for love
Chorus we have an immature sister
we will guard her
Bride I was a wall
with breasts like towers
in his eyes one who brings peace
Groom Solomon had a vineyard
he rented it out, I have my own
let Solomon have his thousand
Bride you who dwell in the gardens
let me hear your voice
make haste, my beloved
a young stag upon spicy mountains

Lesson 36 Jonah, Joel, Song of Solomon Outline

I. Jonah, an historic story referred to by Jesus in Matthew 12

- A. It releases its full meaning when read as a parable
 - 1. the truth here is beyond mere fact of a whale swallowing a man
 - 2. symbols in Jonah point to truth of their history
 - a. Jonah means *dove* in Hebrew, see Psalm 74:19
 - 1) refers to God's favorite pet, like a small bird
 - 2) but this pet has a mission to perform
 - 3) its favor doesn't mean privilege but responsibility
 - b. the Temple, rebuilt in Jerusalem is the booth
 - c. the Exile in pagan, but strong Babylon, analogous to the belly of the fish
 - d. the gourd vine analogous to the provisions for the Temple sacrifice
 - e. worm is the the locust plague that Joel bemoans
 - f. Nineveh is the ancient center of pagan world, therefore, a symbol for the center of the whole world's irreligion
- B. Jonah was written in response to Joel-istic attitude of the Jews after the Exile
 - 1. Joel is the embodiment of intolerance, bigotry and lack of human sympathy
 - a. the prophet Jonah is like Joel
 - b. yet Joel's prophecy does reveal God's love and future promise
 - 2. in the wake of the Nehemiah and Ezra reforms
 - a. there is a centrality of the priestly Law
 - b. there is freedom from contamination with foreigners
 - c. no intermarriage is allowed, whatever
 - d. no traffic with Gentiles who are beyond God's concern
 - 3. the Jonah parable, in contrast, has the spirit of Second Isaiah 45:22-23, 55:1-2 of 50 yrs. earlier
 - 4. God expects His message to get to the whole world through His Chosen
- C. Jonah is written about a prophet rather than giving us prophetic words
 - 1. Jonah actually fears the pagans will repent
 - 2. so he flees from God in the opposite direction
 - 3. the whale captures him, so he repents
 - 4. he is given deliverance
 - 4. now there is no choice but to go to Nineveh
 - 5. the pagans give instantaneous response of repentance to his message
 - 6. God then, in His love, relents his punishment of pagans
 - 7. Jonah sulks because he feared such
- D. The book ends with a question
 - 1. will the Jews respond to this challenge with a second chance?

- 2. the Jews are sitting in Jerusalem brooding over world's wickedness
 - 3. they clutch their faith to their bosom and center worship around the Temple
 - 4. the world cries out for the Word of God to be preached
- E. The truth must be both *inclusive and exclusive*.
- 1. Without holding fiercely to the truth, there is nothing to share
 - 2. Keeping truth to oneself, is not, however, the point.

Joel

- A. The background of this book is Israel's recent past history
 - 1. they are returned to Jerusalem from Exile
 - a. the community is small, poor, excludes all but the pure Hebrew
 - b. the Temple and Law are its center in the post-exilic time
 - c. they build a spiritual wall around themselves in order to be isolated
 - d. post-exilic Israel is waiting for all its prophecy to come true
 - e. they expect God to vindicate faithfulness with glory
 - 2. Israel's immediate experience needs explaining
 - a. a fierce plague of locusts had stripped the land
 - 1) Joel uses this as a parable of the Day of the Lord
 - a) locusts are like God's avenging army of wrath
 - b) only then, the locusts will be angels
 - 2) the fearful Day of the Lord will be like that described by the early prophets (Amos)
 - a) enemies of Israel would be sorted out for special destruction
 - b) sinners will all be punished
 - c) Israel would be revealed as chief among the nations
 - d) God will bring a new creation for Israel
 - e) the Day of the Lord ushers in an age of justice, peace, plenty
 - f) Yahweh is behind it, but political changes will bring it about and God's moral principles will govern
 - 3) that this did not happen caused a reinterpretation of old prophets
 - a) added more flamboyant images
 - b) visioned heavenly intervention - angelic armies
 - c) Bible students call this "apocalyptic eschatology"
 - b. apocalyptic eschatology explains why things are as they are
 - 1) it is pessimistic about history
 - a) they now despaired of political change ever bringing back the kingdom of David
 - b) the cataclysmic end of present evil world would happen through cosmic events which would bring the kingdom

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- c) upheaval, catastrophe, collapse would come first
- 2) it reinterprets the prophets of old who were a mainstay of hope
 - a) they promised a golden age
 - b) Yahweh would destroy enemies Ez 91-11, 38:18-22, Is.24,27, Zech 12-14
- 3) when prophecies "meet with an obstacle, they mount to the sky."
 - a) political realities are the obstacle
 - b) the change now depends on heaven's intervention with power
- 4) this kind of prophecy was written not preached
 - a) it speaks of mystery, miracle, supernatural wonders
 - b) it uses a strange language, bizarre symbolism
 - c) it introduces strange animals, angels, demons,
- 5) this literature flourished the last two centuries before Christ, and the first Century AD
 - a) see Revelations 9 and 6 which are replete with these themes
 - b) Jesus uses this language in Mark 13:24
 - c) Peter refers to Joel in Acts 2:14-18
 - d) Paul sees the true meaning in Gal 5:2?
 - e) the N.T. sees the promises of Joel to be meant for men of all nations thru Christ. Acts 2:21,39, 10:45, Rom. 10:12-13
- c. Joel is a call to repentance
 - 1) through a national day of prayer
 - 2) then fertility and abundance will be recompense for what locusts have eaten
- B. Joel expresses a narrowness of view of post-exilic Jews
 - 1. Gentiles are to be judged and killed
 - 2. this attitude was important for it did preserve Judaism and Revelation in a hostile time, so that God would continue to build toward His time of Salvation
- C. Roman Catholicism and Pope John Paul II, often called **exclusive**
 - 1. an exclusive doctrine is necessary as a foundation and bulwark
 - 2. upon which base the Church can be really inclusive - reaching out to the whole world

III. The Song of Solomon

- A. Love Song from a near-eastern wedding liturgy
 - 1. this is similar to a common pageant in Syria today
 - 2. it has roots going back to Solomon's time
 - a. a Solomonic wedding with an Egyptian princess is long remembered

- b. Solomon was known for his passion and his harems
- 3. this poem dates from the 300's before Christ
- B. It was questioned whether it belonged to the canon of O.T. sacred writing
 - 1. it extols a sexual lover, sensualness, and the physical attractiveness of the human body
 - 2. the rabbis identified the two lovers as Israel and Yahweh
 - 3. *Yada* is the central theme
 - a. that is *theknowing* of God described in terms of sexual intercourse
 - b. not relying on intellectual knowledge, but experiential knowing
- C. The Christian also accepted Song of Songs as allegory
 - 1. the lover is Christ; the beloved is the Church
 - 2. the lover is Christ; the beloved is the individual Christian soul
 - 3. the lover is the Holy Spirit; the beloved is the The Virgin Mary
 - 4. this poem gives Biblical approval to married sexual love of man and woman
- D. The background of the poetry
 - 1. it is springtime in Israel with much beauty in nature
 - 2. Syrian, Arabic wedding songs are similar
- E. Apex of Masculine/Feminine
 - 1. the Holy Trinity originates these principles of being in himself
 - 2. man and woman are created in *that image*