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I recently had the joy of preaching through the book of Jonah at The Trinity Church in Scottsdale, Arizona (thetrinitychurch.com). To help you study the book, or even teach it to others, the following research brief is a gift from Mark Driscoll Ministries. It was prepared for me a few years ago by a professional research team. I am happy to make it available to you, and I would request that you not post it online. If you know of other Christian leaders who would like to receive it, they can do so by signing up for for free leadership resources through the “leaders list” at markdriscoll.org.

If you would like to find more of my free Bible teaching resources, including the audio and video of my teaching through Jonah, feel free to visit the ministry website at markdriscoll.org. It’s a great joy helping people learn about Jesus from the Bible, so thank you for allowing me to serve you. If you would be willing to support our ministry with an ongoing or one-time gift of any amount, we would be grateful for your partnership.

A Nobody Trying to Tell Everybody About Somebody,

Pastor Mark Driscoll

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Jonah Research Brief

Jonah: the Book and the Prophet

The purpose of the book of Jonah is to show God's people that His plan is exceedingly compassionate (God is gracious) and exceedingly certain (God is sovereign). The central theme of the book of Jonah is the God who loves in freedom. We should desire to understand, accept, and love God's sovereign grace, rather than oppose it or be resentful of it. The book of Jonah stresses the freedom and primacy of God and God's initiative and grace toward humanity. Christians, applying the theology of Jonah to the person and work of Jesus, could claim that Jesus Christ is the freedom of God acting in love toward humanity.

The story of Jonah is one of the most well-known Bible stories of all. The reluctant prophet, Jonah, is commanded to go and preach to the Ninevites, Israel's sworn enemies, so that destruction might not fall upon them. Jonah would love nothing more than to see Nineveh destroyed, but he knows that God is compassionate and will forgive them if they repent, therefore he boards a ship heading the other direction away from Nineveh. God's wrath follows the ship, until Jonah is thrown overboard by the other sailors and swallowed by a giant fish. While in the belly of the fish, he repents of his own disobedience and is delivered back onto shore, at which point he preaches against Nineveh's sin and commands them to repent. They do, in wholehearted fashion, and God relents from destroying them. The book ends with Jonah waiting in vain for Nineveh to be destroyed, bitter that God would show such kindness to a people who are at war with His own.

We learn from 2 Kings that Jonah was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom during the reign of Jeroboam II, 786 - 746 B.C. The book of Jonah is unique among the prophetic books of the Old Testament. Rather than being a collection of the oracles of the prophet, it relates episodes in his life. In the Old Testament, the prophet Jonah is mentioned outside the book only in 2 Kings 14:25, Matthew 12:38-41, Matthew 16:4 and 17, and Luke 11:29-32. Although the prophet lived in the eighth century BC there is dispute on the correct dating of the book. It is written in the third person, and no author is identified any where in the Bible.

Outline of Jonah

Part One

I. First Commission and Jonah's Response is to Flee (1:1-16)

II. God's Response to Jonah and Jonah Repents (1:17-2:10)

Part Two

III. Second Commission and Jonah's Response is to Obey (3:1-10)

IV. God's Response to Jonah and Jonah Resents(4:1-11)

Major Themes

1. Mercy—God's compassion extends even beyond what we would like, even to those whom we ourselves show no mercy.

2. God's Sovereignty—His plan will be carried out and cannot be avoided.

3. Resentment—The book is a vivid portrait of what bitterness and resentment against other people and against God's plan can do to a person's soul—even the soul of God's own prophet.

Studying the Book of Jonah

The study of Jonah should be done should be understood as a historical, literary, and theological discipline. The goal is to determine (historical study), discover (literary analysis), and describe (theological formulation) what the text meant to its original audience and to explicate what it means today.

The historical study of Jonah bridges the gap between the ancient reader (the original audience) and us (the contemporary reader). But our investigation of Jonah must not stop with history. We should also incorporate the themes, categories, motifs, and concepts from the text itself. Attention given to the literary aspect of texts can lead to an additional perspective on the authorial intent for writing a text. In addition to history study and literary analysis, our understanding of Jonah should also be theological. This means that the themes and teachings of one text are to be analyzed by the doctrines and tenets of other Biblical passages.

When these three aspects are taken into account there are significant themes that are brought into focus. First, Jonah was both an object and an agent (reluctantly) of God's mercy. This teaches Israel and Christians their mediatorial role to proclaim God's grace and forgiveness those outside the community. Second, Jonah also displays God's freedom, resourcefulness, and undeviating effort to instill mercy and express wrath in judgment. An important theme in Jonah that was neither unprecedented nor frequently mentioned in the Old Testament was the inclusiveness of God's mercy.

This study on Jonah will first look at the historical aspects of Jonah, both the prophet and the book. Second, will be on a focus the literary devices and sophistication of the book of Jonah, such as parallelisms, symmetry /asymmetry, and the repetition of key words. Third, we will look at the themes found in Jonah as they relate to the rest of Scripture. The themes will be traced throughout the Old Testament. Fourth, we will trace the themes in Jonah throughout the New Testament. The main themes that will be investigates are 1) the wide scope of God's mercy and 2) the intentional scope of the mediatorial role. These two themes are not predominant in the OT except for a few passages and the book of Jonah, but they are significantly more central to the teaching in the NT.

When these three perspectives—the historical, theological, and literary significance of texts—are applied to the book of Jonah, various themes are centralized, such as the mercy of God and His desire to have His people serve as mediators of His grace. The book of Jonah, while being a complete book in itself, does not stand on its own. It is a part of the canon, and as such it is viewed in light of the other books of scripture.

The book of Jonah demonstrates the scope of God's mercy as He receives other nations and the mediatorial role Israel was to fulfill. The book of Jonah focuses on Israel's prophetic role to the nations. This focus is expressed in the two central themes of the book: the universality of God's mercy (and by implication, the universality of His judgment) and the mediatorial role of Israel. Included in these two themes of God's freedom and resourcefulness are His undeviating effort to instill mercy, His right and ability to express wrath in judgment against other nations, and the

inclusive nature of God's mercy and forgiveness. The two main themes, along with their sub points, will be developed through historical and literary analysis of the text.

Historical Study of Jonah

Jonah's ministry took place in the 8th century BC – sometime between 780 and 755 BC. We see him mentioned in 2 Kings 14:23-25 as predicting the expansion of Israel's territory during the reign of Jeroboam II. Remember that this was a time when the Israelites had divided their nation into to separate kingdoms – the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. They continued to worship the same God, but they were two separate kingdoms. We see here that Jonah is from the town of Gath Hepher, which was in the territory of the tribe of Zebulun – not far from Nazareth. He was clearly a prophet of respect and stature. And so it makes sense when God sends him on a mission. The language is the usual prophetic formula – "the word of the Lord came to Jonah."

It is important and helpful for the process of interpretation to observe the historical setting of the book of Jonah, specifically the Jewish-Assyrian relations. Before the destruction of Nineveh by Babylon in 612 B.C., Assyria brutalized Israel. Nineveh's evil ways are described in the book of Nahum (2:11-12; 3:1,19). In Nahum, the intent is to suggest the cruelty of Assyria as a whole-not just the capital city. Hence, Nineveh stands as a synecdoche for the brutally oppressive Assyrian empire itself. Assyria's atrocities were so notorious that the narration hardly needed an explanation or elaboration.

An understanding of this historical setting adds to the significance of Jonah's desire to neglect God's message to preach to the Ninevites and of God's desire to send a prophet to Nineveh. Jonah did not want to preach to Nineveh because he knew that there was a possibility that God would relent and forgive the brutal and cruel nation that oppressed his people. God wanted to send a prophet to Nineveh in order to warn them that judgment was near if they did not repent. The book of Jonah mocks Jonah for his self-righteousness and hypocrisy, while it celebrates God's mercy and compassion as He offers forgiveness to a brutal heathen nation that is both His enemy and the enemy of His people. The original audience was to learn from the Jonah narrative that they too were both objects and agent of God's mercy.

Historical Book or Parable? (www.thirdmill.org)

The incredibility of some of the events related in the text has prompted some scholars to identify the book as allegory or parable. The book, however, is presented to us as a historical account. It is ascribed to a historical prophet (2 Kings 14:25), and it contains no authorial comments or literary clues that suggest it is a parable.

Nevertheless, some have questioned the historicity of the book, especially because of the miraculous events surrounding the fish. At times, the odd structure and ending of the book have been used to support this theory, since the book does not follow a normal form for historical narrative. And some have pointed out that the poem in chapter 2 cannot possibly be a historical account of Jonah's experience in the fish.

First, if we accept the reality of miracles, there is no reason to think the basic events of the book could not have happened as stated. The book does not tell us whether or not Jonah died in the

fish, although this is a possibility (Jon. 2:6). If he did die and return to life, it would correspond well with Jesus' mention of Jonah (Matt. 12:39-40). But in either case, divine intervention makes all things possible.

Second, the odd structure and ending of the book are actually good arguments against this book being a parable. The book is far longer than any other parable in Scripture, and it is cumbersome in its arrangement. Besides this, it names an actual historical figure as its main character. All of these facts point away from Jonah being a parable.

Third, the poem in chapter 2 does appear to be a later rendering of Jonah's experience in the fish. Probably this is a poetic summary of Jonah's fear and panic in the fish, and of a vow he made to the Lord for salvation from the fish. It is likely that this poem was composed to attend the payment of the vow upon Jonah's return to Israel. This does not cast any doubt on the historicity of the events portrayed in the poem.

Finally, Jesus indicated that his death, burial and resurrection would take place "just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites" (Luke 11:30). He also indicated that on the Day of Judgment the Ninevites would condemn the unbelievers of Jesus' generation (Luke 11:32). Both of these details – especially the second – indicate that Jesus believed that the story of Jonah was historical. This alone ought to convince us of the historicity of Jonah.

Other interpretations of Jonah have also been offered, such as it being allegory or parable. With regard to allegory, there are no textual cues that it is an allegory, and Jesus did not treat it as such. Moreover, if it is an allegory, most of its details are far from intuitive, so that it would be a highly unusual and indeed rather useless allegory.

We can conclude that the story told by the book of Jonah is historical.

Literary Aspects of Jonah

An aspect of the book of Jonah that is significant for the interpretive process is the question of genre. There is no doubt that the text is highly stylized. The author strengthened his message with keen awareness to literary style. Blenkinsopp comments that the book's level of literary sophistication is manifested in its use of ironic contrast, deliberate exaggeration and distortion, symmetry, and deployment of key words. The author, continues Blenkinsopp, was obviously a trained hand at writing and was well versed in the historical, scribal, and prophetic heritage of Israel. He was writing to a specific audience to communicate a specific message.

It is beneficial to understand the larger structure of the Jonah narrative before making specific comments on the general themes found in the book. The book of Jonah is divided into two main parts, both parts having two episodes. The repetition of God's commission to Jonah (1:1-2 and 3:1-2) serves as a literary introduction for both parts. Here is a summary outline of the book:

Part One

V. First Commission and Jonah's Response (1:1-16)

VI. God's Response to Jonah (1:17-2:10)

Part Two

VII. Second Commission and Jonah's Response (3:1-10)
VIII. God's Response to Jonah (4:1-11)

The outline of the book shows the similarity of part one and part two. There is a large structural parallelism between parts one and two, episodes I and, and episodes II and IV. An exploration into the more specific aspects of the story reveals a noticeable symmetry throughout the entire text. The following is a chart reflecting the external design and symmetry of the book of Jonah.

Literary Symmetry in Jonah (from *Studies in the Book of Jonah*, Phyllis Trible)

- The word of Yahweh to Jonah – 1:1; 3:1
- The content of the word – 1:2; 3:2
- The response of Jonah – 1:3; 3:3-4a
- A pronouncement of doom – 1:4; 3:4b
- The response of the sailors/Jonah to threatened disaster – 1:5ab; 4:5
- The response of Jonah/Ninevites to the disaster – 1:5c; 3:5
- The efforts of the captain/king to avert the disaster – 1:6; 3:6-8
- The captain/king expresses hope – 1:6c; 3:9
- The efforts of the sailors/Ninevites to avert disaster – 1:7-16; 3:10
- Disaster averted – 1:15c; 3:10cd
- Focus returns to Yahweh and Jonah – 2:1, 2, 11; 4:1-11
- Jonah prays – 2:2; 4:2-3
- Yahweh replies – 2:11a; 4:4
- Yahweh uses something in nature to instruct Jonah – 2:11b; 4:6

Part One: Chapters 1-2	Part Two: Chapters 3-4
1. Word of Yhwh to Jonah (1:1)	1. Word of Yhwh to Jonah (3:1)
2. Content of the word (1:2)	2. Content of the word (3:2)
3. Response of Jonah (1:3)	3. Response of Jonah (3:3-4a)
4. Report of impending disaster (1:4)	4. Report of impending disaster (3:4b)
5. Response to impending disaster (1:5) -by the sailors -by Jonah	5. Response to impending disaster (3:5) -by Ninevites
6. Unnamed captain of the ship (1:6) -efforts to avert disaster by *action *words to Jonah *hope	6. Unnamed king of Nineveh (3:6-9) -efforts to avert disaster by *action *words to Jonah *hope
7. Sailors and Jonah (1:7-15) -sailor's proposal (l:7ab)	7. Ninevites and God (3:10)

-sailor's action and its results (l:7cd)	-Ninevites action (3:10ab)
-sailor's questions (1:8)	
-Jonah's reply (1:9)	
-sailor's response (1:10)	
-sailor's question (1:11)	
-Jonah's reply (1:12)	
-sailor's action (1:13)	
-sailor's prayer (1:14)	
-sailor's action (l:15ab)	
-result: disaster averted (1:15c)	-result: disaster averted (3:10cd)
8. Response of the sailors (1:16)	8. Response of Jonah (4:1)
9. Yhwh and Jonah (2:1-11)	9. Yhwh and Jonah (4:2-11)
-Yhwh's action and its result (2:1)	
-Jonah's prayer (2:2-10)	-Jonah's prayer (4:2-3)
	-Yhwh's question (4:4)
	-Jonah's action (4:5)
-Yhwh's response and its result	-Yhwh's response and its result
*by word (2:11a)	
*by nature: fish (2:11b)	*by nature: plant (4:6a-d)
	-Jonah's response (4:6e)
	-Yhwh's response and its result
	*by nature: worm, sun, and wind (4:7-8abc)
	-Jonah's response (4:8d)
	-Yhwh's question (4:9a)
	-Jonah response (4:9a)
	-Yhwh's question (4:10-11)

Symmetry and Asymmetry

One will notice that this chart reflects symmetry and asymmetry. Both are rather significant in the exploration of the main themes of this text. A very obvious and blatant symmetrical arrangement draws attention to certain aspects of the narrative and emphasizes the point the author is communicating. Symmetry produces rhythm, contrast, emphasis, and continuity while asymmetry disrupts rhythm to give contrast and emphasis through discontinuity. George Adam Smith calls asymmetry “symmetrophobia” which is defined as "an instinctive aversion to absolute symmetry, which, if it knows no better, will express itself in arbitrary and even violent disturbances of the style or pattern of the work, Rather than asymmetry destroying symmetry, it confirms it. Difference enhances similarity, but within symmetry asymmetry also flourishes. These literary devices keeps the reader's mind alert. Phyllis Trible writes of Jonah: “All in all, an exquisitely designed story begins to disclose its treasures for the readers.”

When noting the symmetry and asymmetry of Jonah one finds various points being emphasized. This analysis of symmetry and asymmetry in Jonah will focus only on the themes previously mentioned: universality of God's mercy and the mediatorial role of Israel. First, will

be an exposition of the themes found in the symmetry of the text and following that will be the themes expressed in the asymmetry of the text.

The symmetry and the repetition of God's commission to Jonah both divide the narrative into distinct parts, but also emphasize the mediatorial role Jonah was to fulfill. This repetition establishes symmetry, sets the tone, and provides meaning. Commentators disagree on the significance attached to the parallelism between 1:1-3 and 3:l-3. Regardless of the debate, the symmetry, at the least, highlights God's desire to send a prophet to the depraved Gentile city of Nineveh. This is evident by the repetition of three verbs to Jonah, "arise," "go," and "call."

Units 4, 1:4 and 3:4, give two accounts of impending disaster. One involves a ship of Gentiles and the other a city. This is an indication of the universality of God's judgment. While God is the God of Israel, He is also the God of the universe and He has the ability and right to initiate judgment.

Associated with the reports of impending disaster are the responses by those in threat of judgment (units 5). Each response is described by three verbs. The pagan sailors respond to the disaster sent by Yahweh. Three verbs in the discourse describe their response: "they feared," "they cried," and "they threw," Likewise, the response of the Ninevites is also described by three verbs: "they believed," "they called," and "they put on." Though the verbs are different they match in number, order, and kind. The first verb in each response was an inward response, the second verb was an articulated response, and the third verb was an outward response. Units 5 have equivalent length, verb forms, characters, themes, and locations within the external design. The parallelism of units 5 emphasize the universal aspect of God's mercy as the Gentiles in imminent danger of wrath respond with inward, vocal, and outward responses. The narrator contrasted the responses of the foreigners to the response of Jonah, God's prophet.

Not only do the Gentiles respond, but they express a theology of hope. The leaders of each group, the captain and the king, offer a speech with an attitude that anticipates, but does not guarantee salvation. The captain says to Jonah, "Perhaps your God will be concerned about us so that we will not perish." The kings word are similar, "Who knows, God may turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we shall not perish," This theology of hope proclaimed by the foreign leaders reveal the inclusiveness and universality of God's mercy also extended to the Gentiles also. It also expresses the freedom of God's mercy as He gives hope of salvation to pagans and Gentiles. The hope of salvation is manifested in units 7. They both end in the shared theme of averted disaster (1:15 and 3:10). The sea was calmed from its raging and God relented concerning the calamity He proclaimed He would bring them.

The difference in units 9 are remarkable. Unit 9 in part one is Jonah's prayer is a psalm of thanksgiving for his salvation from drowning (2:2-9). His response to God in 4:2-3 is a prose speech that contains the ancient credo found in Exodus 34:6. The difference in genre matched the difference in tone and content. This offers contrasting portraits of Jonah. He is one who is an object of God's mercy but is hesitant at being an agent of God's mercy.

There is asymmetry found in units 9 as divine questions (part two) replace divine imperatives and divine power (part one). The outcome is still open. Trible comments on this asymmetry: "Viewed from the perspective of the whole, the juxtaposition of the ending show theological movement from a god of distance to a god of dialogue; from a god of power to a god of persuasion, from a god of rigidity to a god of rhetoric." It is Yahweh, not Jonah, who has the last word. The endings to both part one and part two contrast even as they correspond. As asymmetry vies with symmetry, God's mercy is highlighted when he asks, "Should I not have compassion on Nineveh?"

There is significant asymmetry also found in units 5. The asymmetry is expressed in the form of a gap. The response to the impending disaster in part one involves a response from both the sailors and Jonah. In part two, the impending disaster is announced by Jonah and it threatens only Nineveh, not Jonah. The narrative keeps the focus on Nineveh as it moves from the humble response of the citizens and shifts immediate focus to the similar response of the king. This literary structuring highly emphasizes the universality and inclusiveness of God's mercy.

Disparity

Adele Berlin comments on two different types of disparities found in "the poetics of point of view." There is the disparity between two characters and the disparity between character and narrator/reader. Jonah uses the disparity between a character and the narrator/reader. The reader is not told until the end of the story why Jonah rejected his prophetic commission and fled away from Nineveh. The reason was clear from the start for Jonah. Jonah 3:10-4:3 states:

> God repented of the evil which he had said he would do to them; and he did not do it. This displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed to the Lord and said. I pray thee, Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I hastened to flee to Tarshish. For I knew thou art a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and of great kindness and repentest thee of evil.

Jonah knew that all along his prophecy was likely to be wrong and that the despised enemy of his people may encounter the graciousness and mercy of Yahweh. The main question of the book is why did Jonah neglect God's commission.

Since Jonah had the answer the whole story, this is only the reader's question. The reader comes to understand the reason only after it has happened (Jonah 4:2). By the use of disparity, the themes of the inclusiveness of God's mercy and the mediatorial role of Israel are highlighted and reinforced.

Themes from Jonah in the OT and NT

It is important to understand the theological themes of the inclusive nature of God's mercy and Israel's mediatorial role to other nations as they are found in the didactic-prophetic narrative of Jonah. Accompanying this task is the need to understand Jonah's theological themes in the light of the rest of Scripture.

Old Testament

One of the most striking aspects of the book in its Old Testament setting is its attitude toward those outside the community of faith and the fact that God employs one of His prophets into a mediatorial role. It is certainly not unprecedented that God shows mercy for Gentiles, but neither is it a frequent theme found in the Old Testament (Gen. 21:8-21 and 2 Kings 5). One also finds that this theme is expanded through the ministry and teaching of Jesus and His apostles.

The terminology of "inclusiveness" can be a slippery way of phrasing the theme of God's mercy, but qualifications may help establish what is meant by that term. The salvation offered to Gentile (Isa 45:22, 49:6, 52:10) implies an acknowledgement of the lordship of Israel's God (Isa. 45:53 and 51:5). The point is that they are to embrace the religion of Israel when it is preached to them. This is in fact what happens to the pagans in the book of Jonah (Jonah 1:16 and 3:5).

Isaiah 27:11 resembles the prophecy Jonah was to bring to Nineveh: "This is a people without discernment; therefore he who made them will not have compassion on them, he that formed them will show them no favor." Nineveh, on the contrary, was saved even though its people lacked discernment and did not "know their right hand from their left." What was the reason for God's relenting? Why did God not destroy Nineveh like He did the unnamed city in Isaiah 27? Nineveh's repentance was the reason for the mercy bestowed on them. The freedom of God and God's will to save had already been clearly affirmed in Ezekiel 18:21-22:

> If a wicked man turns away from all his sins which he has committed,... none of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness which he has done he shall live. Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked…and not rather that he should turn his way and live?

The Ezekiel passage is similar to the teaching found in Jeremiah 18:7-8: "If at any time I deem concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will repent of the evil that I intended to do it." This declaration refers to judgment oracles addressed to foreign nations by prophets. Jonah 3:10 is a clear expression of this mercy: "When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which he said he would do to them; and he did not do it."

Not only is God merciful to nations outside the covenant community, but He employs His prophets and His nation to be agents of this mercy. The role Israel is to serve is not a new role. God has desired that His people be agents of His mercy and allow those from outside the covenant entrance into the community, assuming necessary qualifications are met. One of the ways this role is expressed is in the phrase "light to the nations." Isaiah 42:6-7 is an example of this: "I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness...and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeons, and those who dwell in darkness from the prison."

The mediatorial role Israel is to fulfill entails being a light not only to nations near them but to the entire earth (Isa. 49:6): "I will also make you a light of the nations so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." God does not merely request that Israel be not merely an object but an agent of His mercy, God promises that nations will respond (Isa. 60:3): "And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising."

God is pictured as the active person in what the New Testament calls regeneration (Titus 3:5). The activity of God as He instills mercy is evident from Ezekiel 36:26:

> I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

Along with the references to Ezekiel, other Old Testament passages reveal the sovereign, active, and mighty grace of God as He transforms those who He calls His own (Exodus 33:19).

New Testament

The New Testament proclaims that Gentiles can be members of the kingdom and part of the covenant community. While God's grace extends to Gentiles, His people are to imitate Christ

and serve as ministers to the world (John 3:16). Jesus was sent to the entire world, His ministry was not confined to Israel (John 1:6-14).

Jesus ministry was initiated with an inclusive focus. He ministered to the rich, poor, noble, despised, religious, secular, men, and women. Jesus' ministry reached beyond Jerusalem (Luke 19:82), and included Nazareth (Luke 4:16), Galilee (Luke 4:14), and Samaria (John 4:4). The most vivid example of inclusiveness is Jesus' ministry to those outside of the nation of Israel. Christ had a zeal to allow those outside the covenant community access into the kingdom of God.

The Roman centurion (Matt. 8:5-13) and the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30) serve as examples of this passion. Christ instructed His disciples to advance the kingdom of God to all nations (Matt. 28:19). Before His ascension, Christ told His disciples that they shall be His witnesses "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

These themes were also taught by Christ's apostles. Paul insisted, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Similarly, James forbade any of favoritism and discrimination in the church (James 2:1-7). Paul also taught that the expansion of the kingdom to other nations was a necessity (Acts 14:1-8, 17:12, 28:31). The Revelation of John artistically expresses the inclusiveness of the kingdom of God. Those from "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" will constitute the people of God (Rev. 5:9; also see Rev. 7:9, 13:7). The book of Revelation also makes explicit reference to the preaching of the gospel to every nation: "...having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people."

While the theme of God's mercy to the Gentile is found in the New Testament, the Old Testament phrase "light to the Gentiles" is used on numerous occasions (Luke 2:32, Acts 13:47). Jesus blends both the "light" metaphor with the inclusive nature of his message to the world when He says: "I am the light of the world" (John 3:19, 8:12, 9:5, 12:46). But, interestingly, Jesus also calls His disciples light of the world and encourages them to let their light shine before all (Matt.5:14-16). In Paul's explanation of the gospel to Festus he refers to the Old Testament's "light to the nations" terminology: "...the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:23).

The book of Jonah described God's freedom in salvation and His resourcefulness in salvation. The New Testament makes explicit mention of both of these themes. In Romans 9:15-16, the apostle Paul quotes Exodus 33:19 and offers brief commentary: "For He says to Moses, T will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy." God is not only free to bestow His mercy, but He also uses the foolish things of the world to shame the wise (1 Cor. 1:27). God uses His objects of mercy, who are weak, finite vessels, and wrestling with sin, to be agents of His mercy to the world.

The theme of the undeviating mercy of God as expressed in Jonah and other Old Testament passages is also found in the New Testament. The inward change by God's grace is called a regeneration (Titus 3:5), a spiritual resurrection (Eph. 1:19, 29), a calling out of darkness into a marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9), a new birth (John 3:3), and a making alive (Col. 2:13). Hebrews 12:2 notices that as the "author and perfecter of faith" God instills His grace in His people.