

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF GOD IN MISSION: A CASE OF JONAH AND THE SAILORS

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Abstract

This paper aimed to find out the significance of the doctrine of God in mission from the study of Jonah and the Sailors. The trajectory of this study was led by four specific objectives which are; to investigate the historical, context, and missiological aspects of the book of Jonah; to find out how the doctrine of God relates to the mission; to find out the significance of the doctrine of God in Jonah's testimony to the sailors; and to investigate the response of the sailors towards YHWH. The method used in this study followed the descriptive, investigative, and exegetical types of theological research. The descriptive method was used to describe the doctrine of God in relation to mission; the investigative method was used to find out historical, contextual, and missiological aspects of the book of Jonah; and the exegetical method was used to find the significance of Jonah's testimony to the sailors and the response of the Sailors towards YHWH. The study reveals that the book of Jonah covers historical events which show God's desire to save humanity. This desire is closely related to His nature, which involves his majesty, his love, and justice. Based on Jonah's proclamation of God as the creator of the sea and the dry land, the sailors were moved to surrender themselves to the God of heaven. In response to their allegiance, they feared YHWH and offered sacrifice. This paper recommends that missionaries may include the doctrine of God in their mission endeavors, which in turn will help people to trust, obey, and revere God who created the heavens and the earth.

Keywords: Doctrine of God, Mission, Jonah, The Sailors, Nature of God.

INTRODUCTION

The Old and New Testaments of the Bible inform about the mission of God "missio dei" towards humanity (Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 3:8-10; Matthew 28: 19-20; and Acts 1:6-8; 14:6-12). The initial visible initiative of missio dei towards humanity is explicitly revealed in the call of God to Adam and Eve after the fall (Genesis 3:9). This mission was extended to Abraham when he was called to quit the worship of gods (Genesis 12). Again, the mission thread continued to the liberation of the Israelites from the influence of Egyptian gods to the worship of YHWH in the wilderness (Exodus 3:18). This call mandated the Israelites

to proclaim their God to non-Hebrews who worshipped other gods. In this mission, God revealed His majesty over nature (Exodus. 14:21-22); His power against sorcery (Exo. 7:10-12); and the one who deserves worship (1 Kings 18).

In connection to God's call towards the fallen humanity, God calls and qualifies individuals to carry out His mission such as Judges, Kings, Prophets, and Disciples. Among those was Prophet Jonah who was sent to Nineveh to proclaim the message of warning (Jonah 1:1). Though the book is among the minor prophets,

it contains no prophetic vision rather it tells the doings of the prophet (Tow, 2001). The main theme of the book focuses on the mission of God towards the Ninevites. This theme comes out explicitly in the opening sentence of the book “The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying arise, go to Nineveh that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness has come up before me” (Jonah 1:1, 2). Jonah did not respond to the call but took his way to Tarshish. Jonah’s escape did not materialize because the Lord disturbed the ship with a strong wind and allowed him to be swallowed by a big fish and vomited at the seashore after three days. All these strategies were God’s initiatives to constrain Jonah to take the message to the Ninevites.

Thus, God called Jonah for the second time to proclaim His message to Nineveh (Jonah 3:1, 2). Along with the major theme in the book of Jonah which focuses on the mission to the Ninevites, the book reports the story of the sailors who forsook their gods and worshiped YHWH.

Statement of the Problems

The internal evidence of the Book of Jonah affirms that God intended to send Jonah to Nineveh to proclaim the doom of the city (Jonah 1; 1; 3:1). The explicitness of this commission led many scholars to settle that the main theme of the book of Jonah focuses on the mission to the Ninevites (Nichol, 1978; Bob, 2016); Hess, 2016). Though this theme comes out unambiguously, there is a missiological clue that leads the Sailors to accept the worship of God of heaven (Jonah 1:14-16). Focusing on the conversion of the sailors, a query arises, what necessitated their conversion which led them to forsake their gods and gave sacrifice to YHWH? This query led to the quest of this study.

Objective and Scope of the Study

The main objective of this paper was to find out the significance of the doctrine of God in mission.

In order to reach the desired objective, this paper sought to focus on four specific objectives.

1. Historical, context, and missiological aspects of the book of Jonah
2. The doctrine of God relates to the mission
3. Significance of the doctrine of God in Jonah’s testimony to the sailors
4. Response of the sailors towards YHWH

Research Questions

This study was led by four key questions

1. What is the historical, context, and missiological aspect of the book of Jonah?
2. How does the doctrine of God relate to the mission?
3. What is the significance of the doctrine of God in Jonah’s testimony to the sailors?
4. What was the response of the sailors towards YHWH?

Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study was limited to the historical and missiological context of the book of Jonah, an overview of the doctrine of God in relation to mission, and Jonah’s conversion with the sailors as recorded in Jonah 1:4-17. Though the whole story of the book centers on Jonah’s response to mission dei, this paper does not focus on the discussion of Jonah’s reluctance, but rather limited to Jonah’s conversation with the sailors.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The trajectory of this paper followed the descriptive, investigative, and exegetical types of theological research. The paper is divided into six parts. The first part is the investigation of historical, contextual, and missiological

aspects of the book of Jonah. The second part describes the doctrine of God in relation to mission. The third is an exegetical exploration of the significance of the Doctrine of God in Jonah's testimony to the Sailors. The fourth part is an exegetical exploration of the response of the sailors towards YHWH. The exegetical part refers to a method that explores biblical passage looking at its original intent that moves to a theological significance. The fifth part is the results and discussion, and the last part is the conclusion and recommendation.

HISTORICAL, CONTEXTUAL, AND MISSIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF JONAH

Historical Account

The Book of Jonah is a narrative about Prophet Jonah, the key character in the book who was sent to preach in Nineveh. The name Jonah which primarily means a dove, refers to the prophet of the Northern Kingdom. Jonah does not come as a surprise in a series of Minor Prophets but he was among God's prophets who ministered at the close of Elisha's ministry (Tow, 2001). The book of 2 Kings 14:25 mentions Jonah as the son of Ammitai who ministered to the Lord during the reign of Jeroboam II.

On the same note, Jesus also referred to Jonah as a historical personage (Kaiser, 2000; Matthew 12:38; Luke 11:29-30, 32). Kaiser (2000) gives a justification for his argument that Jesus mentioned Jonah as historical, for He was able to distinguish between allegory, parable, and history. Jenson (2008) adds that the book does not give the explicit author and the date of composition but simply gives an account of a man who was sent by God to preach in the city of Nineveh, but instead of obeying this divine call he tried to escape the mission.

Based on the historical facts found in 2 Kings 14:25 and Jesus' confirmation of the historical personage of Jonah as recorded in Matthew

12:39-40. It can be concluded that this book does not fall into the pictorial or parabolic nature of literature, but rather, it narrates an ancient historical happening that portrays the mission of God to the Ninevites.

Contextual Analysis

The Book of Jonah is divided into four chapters. Chapter One narrates the call of God to Jonah who is commanded by God to depart from his homeland and preach to the Assyrians who were primary enemies of the Israelites (Hess, 2016). The beginning phrase in verse two reads; "Get up, Go!" This phrase is in an imperative mood which shows the urgent command from God to Jonah. This order came to Jonah as a necessity that asked him to respond without hesitation. In connection to this urgency, Hess (2016) comments that God's will for Jonah could not be thwarted even by Jonah himself. This observation is established by the fact that Jonah's attempt to flee to Tarshish did not materialize.

On the same connection, the chapter informs that Jonah's attempt to flee to Tarshish ended in confession (Jonah 2). The chapter also informs about the sailors who used to worship idols, were converted, and accepted the God who delivered them from the great storm which came as a stumbling block to Jonah's flee. Finally, Jonah's salvation from drowning in the sea was enabled by God through a big fish. The Hebrew phrase *וַיִּמַן יְהוָה גְּדֹלֹת דָּג וַיִּמָּן* "and the Lord assigned the big fish" (Jonah 1:17) gives a clue that the swallowing of Jonah was not an accidental phenomenon. The fish did not rejoice for having food that came its way, but it was a plan that God ordained to accomplish His purpose. The word *וַיִּמָּן* "assign" comes from the root word *מָנָה* which primarily means selecting something for a desired specific task. The combination of the word which has the prefixes *ו* and *י* and the suffix *ן* brings significant evidence that suggests God's authority over His creation because it primarily tells that it was a prepared event.

Another natural phenomenon was the great storm sent by God to disturb the ship which appeared to have been used against his purpose. Since God has been introduced as the creator, it is with no doubt that He can control His creation.

Chapter two explains Jonah's praise inside the big fish of which he repented of his mistakes. Having stayed in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, the last verse in chapter two (Jonah 2:10) affirms that, Jonah's stay in the belly of the big fish was controlled by God. This verse (Jonah 2:10) informs that the Lord spoke to the fish which vomited Jonah on the dry land. This scenario also suggests God's supernatural authority over His creation; He is able to use His creation to accomplish His purpose. This assertion can be justified by the previous events of God's intrusions over nature. These include the narratives of the Red Sea crossing (Exodus 14:21-22), the pillar of cloud in the daytime, and the pillar of fire in the night which accompanied the Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21-22), and the speaking Donkey (Numbers 22:30). These events, to mention a few, did disclose that the Creator has authority over His creation.

Chapter three describes the repetition of God's mission to Nineveh through Jonah. The same command "*Get up, Go!*" is found in chapter one and appears in Jonah 3:2. This repetition affirms that God's order came to Jonah as an imperative requirement. Baham (2020) puts this call as a strong and unquestionable call. Hess (2016) also explains that after Jonah experienced his salvation he responded to God's call and moved to Nineveh. The chapter narrates that Jonah's proclamation led the people of Nineveh to accept God and the king led his people in a national fast and repentance in response to Jonah's message. Because God's mission to the Ninevites was to give warning against evils (Jonah 1:2), He extended His mercy and secured them from destruction.

The last chapter discloses Jonah's struggle with God. He asks for death because God did not punish the Ninevites as he expected. In this case, he thought that the Ninevites were supposed to receive God's judgment as he proclaimed. In response to Jonah's perception, God challenged him by allowing the worm which destroyed the gourd which provided shade to Jonah. This event provides two supernatural happenings; the first is the gourd grows overnight to provide a shade to Jonah and the second is the worm that was assigned to destroy the gourd.

Missiological Features

The mission of God to humanity was not designed to be limited to the Israelites. In this regard, the Israelites were called to be God's witness to other nations (Kaiser, 2000). From this design, God calls Jonah to Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrians. This initiative discloses God's passion to all humanity. According to Kaiser, scholars favored viewing Jonah as a book of missionary activity. Some scholars like Papola (2016) affirm that Jonah was the only prophet who was sent directly to a hostile and pagan city to proclaim his oracle, unlike the other prophets who, while speaking words of condemnation against the nations did so from their land. This declaration is justified by the act of God sending Jonah to Nineveh, the heathen nation. Kaiser (2000) adds that Jonah's work resembles the work of an ambassador who works out of his homeland, to the outsiders.

At the very beginning of the Book, Jonah preaches to the sailors who asked him to introduce himself. As Jonah introduces himself as a worshiper of YHWH the creator of the sea and the dry land, the sailors who had different religious allegiances accepted the God of Jonah and decided to honor YHWH. This was the first missiological aspect of which the heathen people decided to honor God and sacrifice to Him who made the sea and the dry land.

Chapter four climaxes the mission of God through the show of mercy and pardon to the people of Nineveh. In this chapter, God's principle is revealed to all nations, that whoever turns from his evil deeds receives mercy and is pardoned. In connection to this principle, the book of Jonah stands as a witness to God's mission amongst the Gentiles. Kaiser reports that the ministry of Jonah though carried out under considerable pressure and narrow nationalism, was still blessed by God. Because of the mission, Jonah was troubled by questioning how God's grace should have been extended to their enemies who had exhausted so much havoc on his homeland (Kaiser, 2000). Despite Jonah's reluctance, his missionary work discloses that God intends to reach both ignorant and deliberate evildoers and the violent. This claim has been supported by Jenson (2016) who comments that:

“The non-Israelites in Jonah represent two possibilities when a Jew meets Gentiles. The sailors are ignorant idolaters, while the Ninevites are evil and violent. Ignorance is not the same as evil, and the sailors are earnest and scrupulously carry out their duties to the best of their abilities and knowledge. With the help of Jonah's testimony, they eventually come to a basic knowledge of YHWH, the true God of Israel, and end up sacrificing to him. The Ninevites begin in a far worse state, so evil that they are condemned to destruction. But when Jonah serves them notice of doom, they demonstrate a praiseworthy general moral and religious knowledge (p. 38).”

Thus, the book of Jonah gives a profound testimony of the desire of God towards humanity, the desire that seek life. The distraction of sinful Ninevites and the religious ignorance of the sailors were speared because God was acknowledged and He was at liberty to offer His grace to them.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCTRINE OF GOD IN RELATION TO MISSION

Religious practices hang on the doctrine of God (Erickson, 1998). The doctrine of God encompasses the studies of the existence of God and his relation to humans. According to Canale (2000), the view of God determines the entire corpus of Christian beliefs. In biblical theology, the doctrine of God has been regarded as the foremost study that begins the entire system of works on Christian dogmas (Berkhof, 1941). On the same note, Erickson (1998) opines that the doctrine of God is the central point of theological treaties because the view of God supplies the whole framework of theological construction in terms of life and ministry. In this case, the doctrine of God focuses on some fundamental questions which are; who is God, how can humans know God, and what is the evidence for God's existence? (Rice, 1985). Though the study of the doctrine of God encompasses several items, this section focuses on the nature of God and its influence on mission.

The nature of God as revealed in Scripture defines God as a self-existent being who transcends the entire universe (Hodge, 2005). He is the creator and sustainer of the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1, 2; Job. 40-41; Matthew 6:36). His essence is traced through His attributes which explain His intransitive and transitive qualities. The intransitive qualities describe God as independent (John 5:26; Revelation 4:11), Omniscient (Psalm 147:5; Hebrews 4:13), Omnipresent (Deuteronomy 4:39; Psalm 139:7-10; Proverbs 15:3), Eternal (Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 40: 28; Revelation 1:8), and Omnipotence (Genesis 17:1; 18:14; Job 42:2; Isaiah 43:13). These qualities distinguish God the creator from the created creatures.

Transitive qualities refer to the communicable attributes that are shared with humans (Berkhof, 1941). Explaining these qualities, Guley (2011) informs of God's self-

impartation. This means that God is close to humans and He imparts His communicable qualities which include love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5:22-23). Along with God's qualities, the names of God as used in scripture reveal God as Lord, Master, or Owner, *Adonai* (Psalm 8:1). Another name reveals God as the one who heals, *Jehovah Rapha* (James 5:14-15). Still, God is identified as the one who is present, *Jehovah Shamma* (Matthew 18:20; 28:20). He is also known as a being who is a shepherd, *Jehovah Roi* (Psalm 23; John 10:11). The same God is known as a God who sees *El Roi*. Lastly, He is a God who gives peace, *Jehovah Shalom* (Romans 5:1). These names reveal God's character of love and justice (Exodus 34:6, 7; Isaiah. 5:16). On one hand, God is loving, merciful, and forgiving, but on the second hand, He will also punish sinners for their sins (Exodus 34:67).

Therefore, scripture portrays God as the righteous judge and sustainer of all humankind. Thus, the mission of God focuses on His initiative to redeem the fallen humanity unto himself. This initiative is revealed after the fall in Genesis 3:9. The text reads; "But the Lord God called the man, and said to him, where are you?" This question unveils that God desired to bring back the running away Adam and Eve who diverted their allegiance to the Evil one.

Consequently, the nature of God as revealed through his actions enhanced Hebrews' worship in the Old Testament, for they were drawn closer to Him for peace and protection. This assertion is explicitly described in the story of Joshua's farewell message found in Joshua 24:15-18. In this event, the Israelites pledged to worship God after having proven how God delivered them from slavery, protected them in the wilderness, and drew away their enemies. Also, the Psalmist categorically declares that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

On the same note, the New Testament also reveals the love of God in the plan of redemption (John 3:16). God comes closer to humans through the ministry of His son Jesus and minister to those who are suffering from distress and diseases and deliver them (Luke 4:18, 19). The above ministries reveal that God is love (1 John 4:8), the nature which activates people's love towards Him and have life through the Son of God (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9). Also, John the revelator informs that the worship of God is enhanced by His nature as the creator and by his character of love and Justice, Revelation 14:6,7 says:

"And I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people saying with a loud voice, fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

Accordingly, this section concludes that the application of God's nature as the creator and sustainer of all enhances His mission. His manifestation through His works toward humanity has a great impact on the mission.

EXEGETICAL EXPLORATION OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF GOD IN JONAH'S TESTIMONY

When Jonah received a commission from God to Nineveh, he fled from the face of God aiming for Tarshish by ship (Jonah 1:3). When Jonah went onto the ship, the Lord opposed him by sending a great wind that stabled the ship which the sailors were unable to control (Jonah 1:4). The sailors' experience and struggle failed; therefore, they decided to seek their gods for help (Jonah 1:5). They were not aware that the presence of Jonah was the cause of the great storm.

The sailors' cry to their gods did not solve the problem but made it worse for they decided to cast some goods into the sea. Finally, the

captain approached Jonah who was sleeping on the downside of the vessel, and asked him to pray to his God hoping that they would be delivered (Jonah 1:6). The captain commanded Jonah saying; אֲלֵ-אֶלֹהֵיךָ קְרָא קוֹם “*Get up! Call on your god!*” (Jonah 1:6). The words קְרָא קוֹם “get up” are in imperative mood which implies a command to do something. Papola (2016) comments that out of their ignorance of the true God, the sailors express genuine religiosity by interpreting the storm as a sign of a deity. He justifies this claim by how the captain approaches Jonah, “What are you doing asleep? Arise, call upon your God! Maybe God will think of us and we will not perish” (Jonah 1:6).

Once again, Jonah receives a command to do missionary work for outsiders, the sailors. The first command was given by God, commanding him to arise and go to the Ninevites and the second command appeared to him from the captain who commanded him to get up and pray to his God for the sake of the sailors’ deliverance. They believed that the prayer of Jonah could bring relief from their distress.

The sailors believed that the storm came to them because of the evils of one among themselves. This led them to cast lots of which Jonah was found to be a cause of the storm. This step was followed by an interrogation that asked Jonah to introduce himself. In the course of his introduction, he proclaimed God the creator who deserves worship. This declaration reads; “And he said to them, I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Yahweh, the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land” (Jonah 1:9). At first glance, Jonah says that he is a Hebrew. Regarding the usage of the name Hebrew in his introduction, Pusey (2000), states that Hebrews were known to foreigners. The name also was used by both Hebrews and foreigners to show a contrast with other nations. In this case, Jonah brings this introduction as a spark to bring the attention of the sailors to know his identity

Jonah continues to give a profound testimony regarding his God, whom he placed before the

sailors as a more powerful God than the objects of their worship. He fearlessly introduced the God he served as the one who made the sea and the dry land, and who governed both. The inclusion of the kind of God he served, aimed to correct the general thoughts of the sailors on the God of the Jews. Jonah specifically explains that his God controls the creation for he had told them that he fled from his face and his God was opposing him by the great storm. He does not only introduce God but he also confirms that he worships him. The phrase יָרָא אֲנִי “*I fear*” (Jonah 1:9) is an absolute phrase that confirms his adoration to his God.

The word יָרָא “*fear*” might have multiple usages. It can refer to fearing God, afraid of something, respecting God, denoting those who revere God, referring to those who respect the commandment, or used to refer to those who fear oaths (Strong, 1999). In the case of Jonah, the word יָרָא “*fear*” is connected to the Lord God, the creator; therefore, it denotes respect and reverence to God. Jonah’s declaration of his God announces that his God requires homage from all creatures. His authority as the creator compels all creatures to obey Him. This assertion is justified by His authority over the storm.

In this regard, Jonah’s adoration is directed to this God who created the sea and the dry land. He aimed to tell the sailors that the object of his worship was the God who made all things, in whose hands are all things including the great storm. This testimony puts Jonah’s God above the gods of the sailors who did not manage to control the great storm. For they sought help from their gods at their initial point when the storm appeared but their gods did not answer their plea and ended up throwing their cargo into the sea. Scripture reports that “All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship” (Jonah 1:5). Throwing the cargo in the sea was the only remaining option for the sailors to save themselves from the great storm

after the failure of their gods because their gods were silent and were not able to settle their restlessness. At this juncture, the God of Jonah comes to the forefront as a champion over nature before the sailors for He was proclaimed as the creator of the sea and the dry land. Therefore, the sailors had no other option but to surrender their reverence to the God of heaven.

EXEGETICAL EXPLORATION OF THE RESPONSE OF THE SAILORS TOWARDS YHWH

This section explores the exegetical response of the sailors towards Jonah's testimony on the God who deserved worship. Scripture reports four positive responses from the sailors. First, they were exceedingly afraid because Jonah did not respond to the call of his God. The sailors' fear was felt because Jonah fled from the presence of His God whom he introduced as the creator. The Hebrew reading discloses that their fear came because Jonah had told them that he did not do what God desired him to do. To be specific, the word *כִּי־יָדְעוּ* "because they knew" in Jonah 1:10 gives the cause of the fear of the sailors. After the sailors knew what happened between God and Jonah, they asked a wondering question, *עָשִׂיתָ מֵהַנְּאֻת* "What have you done?" (Jonah 1:10). This question was not an inquiry into something unknown but rather a question that brings out a wonder of something done wrongly. It was a query that asked why Jonah fled from the face of God for Jonah had already explained to them that he fled from the face of God. The word *מָה* appears in the Old Testament to denote a wonder of something done that was not ought to be done. In this case, their fear was a wonder of why Jonah disobeyed His God who controlled the creation.

Second, they asked Jonah for the resolution of the great storm. The sailors asked Jonah, what shall we do to you? (Jonah 1:11). The statement discloses that the sailors did understand that the calmness of the great sea would be possible if the source of the problem would be settled. They already knew that the source of the great

storm was Jonah's disobedience, therefore, they sought what would be done to Jonah so that the sea might be calm. This assertion tells that the sailors believed that the God of Jonah was furious because of Jonah's flee, and He decided to oppose the course that Jonah took. After the conversation, Jonah proposed that the great storm would be calm if he would be thrown into the sea.

Jonah's proposal brings in the third positive response from the sailors. They did not take Jonah's idea at once; instead, they wanted to return to the land because they did not want to offend God with the death of Jonah. When the return to the land was not possible because of the great storm, they prayed to the Lord that they should not be accused because of Jonah's death.

The Hebrew phrase *אָל־יְהוָה וַיִּקְרְאוּ* "and they cried to the Lord" (Jonah 1:14) turns the religious perspective of the sailors. The first word in the phrase "וַיִּקְרְאוּ" comes from the root word *קָרָא* which may mean call, shout, name, proclaim, announce, or invite. Contextual analysis of the usage of the word suggests that the word was pronounced in the sense of a plea. The call was connected to the request which pleaded that they might be delivered from perishing. This plea is justified by the sentence that followed the call. The sentence states, *אָנָּה נֹאכְדָה אֶל־נַפְשֵׁנוּ יְהוָה* "Oh Lord do not let us perish" (Jonah 1:14). The first word is a particle of an appeal which is followed by a proper noun. Tucker (2006) comments that the word *אָנָּה* in the Hebrew language frequently appears at the opening of lamentations, it suggests the sense of prayer. Therefore, the sentence shows a solemn submission to the God whom Jonah had preached and made known to them, the God who reigns over the universe, the creator of the sea and the dry land.

Furthermore, the sentence discloses that the sailors understood that God had the power to bring distraction or save lives. In this case, they no longer trusted in their gods but turned their

focus and plea to YHWH. Observing this turn, Jenson (2008) comments that the sailors at this juncture mentioned the specific name of the God of the Hebrews on their lips which marked their true conversion.

This conversion was justified by the acts of the sailors which brought them to the fourth positive response. These acts are the fear of the Lord and sacrifice to the Lord. These two acts were preceded by the calmness of the sea. The first act is found in the phrase that opens verse 16 of the first chapter, וַיִּירָאוּ “and the men feared” The phrase tells that the following sentence comes as a result of the previous event. The phrase opens with the use of a sequential sense of wayyiqtol which can be translated as “and the men feared.” The usage of the vav conjunction “ו” can be applied to many translations which include *so, then, and, consecutive, so that, together with, and that is*. Many English versions suggest “then” as the proper translation of the used conjunction. This usage is directly connected to the previous act of the calmness of the sea which moved the sailors to submit their reverence to the YHWH who delivered them from perishing. The second act was sacrificed. The narrator reports that the sailors showed their reverence through the act of sacrifice to the Lord. This act is argued that probably the sacrifice was not possible on the ship, therefore, the following word states that they made a vow, suggesting that they promised to sacrifice. Commenting on this argument, Jenson (2008) comments that:

“The English translations vary the style but at the expense of removing the repetition, which is probably meant to indicate closure and completion. Sacrifice on the board of the ship might be implied, but these could hardly be those properly offered in the temple, and so the Targum inserts a future tense ‘they promised to present sacrifices before Yhwh’ (p. 56).”

However, he concludes that the more accurate and straightforward analysis of the text suggests that the sailors immediately offered a single corporate sacrifice (Jenson, 2008). He justifies his point by looking at the tradition that allowed the carrying of livestock on a ship that went on a long voyage. A closer look at the sentence supports Jenson’s conclusion. The sentence that supports Jenson’s conclusion reads, וַיִּירָאוּ לַיהוָה וַיִּזְבְּחוּ זֶבַח אֶת־יְהוָה גְּדוּלָה יִרְאָה הָאֲנָשִׁים “Then the men feared YHWH greatly and offered sacrifice to YHWH” (Johan1:16). The phrase וַיִּזְבְּחוּ “offered a sacrifice” is in imperfect sequential which suggests that the practice of offering was done immediately. This act justifies that the sailors’ faith turned from worshipping their gods and focused their religious awe on YHWH; hence Jonah’s proclamation was successful.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This paper sought to answer four key questions. The first question was, what is the historical context of the book of Jonah? The second question was how does the doctrine of God relate to mission? The third question was what was the significance of the doctrine of God in Jonah’s testimony to the sailors? The fourth question was, what was the response of the sailors towards YHWH?

On the first question, the book of Jonah shows that the historical, contextual, and missiological analysis of the book of Jonah is rooted in the *missio dei*. Its historical proof is affirmed by the existence of Jonah as a historical personage who ministered among the Hebrews (Tow, 2000; Matthew 12:38; Luke 11:29-30, 32). His existence before his missiological call affirms that what he encountered in the book are historically accurate for he was used to minister in the prophetic office during the time of Jeroboam II (2Kings 14:25). The book speaks of God’s desire that seeks to save humanity. The sinful Ninevites and the sailors who were idol worshipers were spared because they both acknowledged God and received God’s mercy.

The whole book of Jonah is rooted in a missiological context. The initial statement of the book tells the main objective of the book. Though Jonah hesitates to accept the mission, he finds himself among the sailors who did not know the God of heaven. In this event, Jonah is compelled to preach to the sailors. The mission thread stretches to the rest of the chapter in which God's objective is reached; Jonah proclaims the message to the Ninevites who finally received God's mercy.

Considering the second question, the result shows that the doctrine of God enhanced Hebrews' worship in the Old Testament. The passage in Joshua's farewell (24:15-18) informs that the Israelites pledged to worship God after having received the proclamation of the doctrine of God narrated from the beginning of the chapter (Joshua 24). In connection to God's majesty in OT, the NT reveals the loving character of God (John 3:16; 1 John 4:8-9) in relation to mission Gulley (2011). The Love of God drives individuals to accept him as their savior and King. Conceptualizing this attribute compels people in a loving relationship with Christ who are after reconciliation, become partakers in the kingdom of God (John 1:12; Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Ephesians 2:11-19). On the same note, Erickson (1998) comments that the view of God sets a framework for spiritual life and ministries. Moreover, the apocalypse of John informs the mission of God proclaimed by the angel (Revelation 14:6-7) is related to the doctrine of God. The call of the angel contends that humanity should worship the creator of the universe. The motivation for this worship is God's omnipotence. Thus, the doctrine of God is closely related to mission.

In answering the third question, the result shows that when Jonah introduced his God, the Sailors worshiped him. The exegetical study in the previous section informs that the doctrine of God which Jonah presented to the Sailors had a great impact on converting the Sailors. Jonah

presented his God who comes to the forefront as a champion over nature before the sailors (Jonah 1: 9). He proclaimed that he worships the God of heaven, the creator of the sea and the dry land. When the sailors got informed about this God who had control over the sea which troubled them, and when they realized that their gods had no power over the sea, they had no other option but to surrender their reverence to the God of heaven. Focusing on Jonah's reply to the sailors, Bruckner (2009) comments that Jonah proves his call as a prophet of God by declaring his God who deserves his worship and by confessing his sin.

On the last question, the sailors gave several positive responses based on the short proclamation of Jonah on the God of heaven who rules. The first response focuses on reverence. The sailors were exceedingly afraid because Jonah did not respond to the call of his God (Jonah 1:9,10). Another response focuses on dependence. The Sailors asked Jonah for the resolution of the great storm (Jonah 1:11) In connection to the previous response the sailors are moved to obey God for they did not want to offend God with the death of Jonah (Jonah 1:14). The last response is the acts of fear of the Lord and sacrifice to the Lord (Jonah 1:16). These responses resulted from the doctrine of God presented to them.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

This paper reveals that when the doctrine of God is properly presented to individuals and when God intervenes in people's needs, it results in a successful mission. The reluctant Jonah who tried to escape the mission handed to him by YHWH found himself proclaiming his God to the sailors who used to worship gods. Jonah declares that his God is the one who created the sea and the dry land, an attribute that puts Him above the gods' of the sailors. This

proclamation was enforced by his declaration that states that he was the worshiper of YHWH.

Recommendations

Jonah's proclamation was delivered to the sailors in the form of revealing God's nature and character which was positively received by the sailors who turned the object of their allegiance, from their gods to YHWH. This conversion was justified by acts of sacrifice and vows. Therefore, this paper recommends that missionaries should not only proclaim religious dos and don'ts but should also present the doctrine of God that reveals God's majesty, which includes His power over nature, gods, and superstitions. This may help people to experience God's immanence, thus, they may trust, obey, and revere Him and may also draw nearer to God as their sustainer and deliverer.

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