“And Many Beasts” (Jonah 4:11): The Function and Status of Animals in the Book of Jonah

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Abstract

This article examines the special role and function of animals in the book of Jonah. Throughout the book, all elements of creation (natural forces, flora and fauna) serve as emissaries of the Lord. Among animals, this applies specifically to the “great fish” and the worm. Their subjection to God's will contrasts with the behavior of His human messenger, Jonah, who runs away and tries to evade his mission. At the end of the book animals are viewed as part of the penitent community and an object for divine forgiveness, alongside the human citizens of Nineveh. In fact, the book's concluding words are “many beasts,” who also merit God's mercy. I believe there may be a link between the role of animals in the story as divine emissaries and their special status as members of the community and as worthy of divine compassion.
The simplest way to understand every book of the Bible: this guide sums up the Old and New Testaments in one sentence per book. (Great for adults and kids.) Fun fact: Most of the famous Bible stories you’ve heard about are probably found in the book of Genesis. This is where the stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Ark, the Tower of Babel, Abraham and Isaac, Jacob’s ladder, and Joseph’s coat of many colors are recorded. Learn about Genesis. 2. Exodus. Author: Traditionally Jonah. Learn about Jonah. 33. Micah. Micah confronts the leaders of Israel and Judah regarding their injustice, and prophecies that one day the Lord himself will rule in perfect justice. Author: Micah. Learn about Micah. Author: Jonah 1:1 identifies the book as telling the story of the prophet Jonah. Although the book is written in the third person, the traditional view is that Jonah is the author of the book, and there is no persuasive reason to theorize about an unknown author. Date of Writing: The Book of Jonah was likely written between 793 and 758 B.C. Purpose of Writing: Disobedience and revival are the key themes in this book. Jonah’s experience in the belly of the whale provides him with a unique opportunity to seek a unique deliverance, as he repents during this equally unique retreat. His initial dis... Many classify the revival which Jonah brings to Nineveh as one of the greatest evangelistic efforts of all time. Key Verses The book of Jonah is an Old Testament story which tells about how the prophet Jonah refused to follow the Lord. Through some supernatural events, God convinced him to obey and carry out the Lord’s plan. While Jonah eventually did what he was asked to do, the book closes with showing Jonah as a bitter man. God Calls — Jonah Disobeys. Jonah received a calling from the Lord to preach repentance to the people of Nineveh. Instead of obeying and going straight to Nineveh, he went to Joppa to board a ship to the city of Tarshish. Nineveh was inland from where Jonah lived and Tarshish was across the s