

Preaching Jonah



McMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE
Winter 2014

Course Designations

MS 3XJ3 / 6XJ6 PREACHING JONAH
OT 3XJ3 PREACHING JONAH USING HEBREW

Course Specializations

Biblical Studies
Pastoral Studies
Second Year Language Requirement (Hebrew)

Course Schedule

Saturday: 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

January 18
February 15
March 15
April 12

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Course Description

Why is there a book of Jonah, and what should it do when you preach it? Jonah is unique among all Biblical books. Among its distinctions are the conflict it has caused in interpretation and the vastly diverse creativity of sermons preached from it. This course will probe the intentions and purpose of the author of this prophetic composition, his method of accomplishing his goals, and how ministers can further his goals in their preaching. It will examine structure, genre, and setting in order to ascertain how this book was intended to teach about God and spirituality.

Course Objectives

Knowing

- To become familiar with the text of Jonah, including translation (exegetical) questions.
- To understand Jonah in relation to the other canonical prophets.
- To appreciate diverse perspectives of literary analysis of Jonah in Jewish and Christian traditions.
- To become familiar with interpretations of Jonah from early Christian times to the present.
- To know how the story of Jonah was employed to teach the doctrine of the resurrection.

Being

- Becoming Christ-like in forgiving others because they know not what they do.
- Responding to injustice and wrong without hate and a quest for revenge.
- Practicing love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us (Eph. 5:2).
- Dealing with anger in a mature and responsible manner.

Doing

- Preach and teach Jonah to challenge vengeful attitudes and inspire Christian perspectives.
- Correct false emphases on what is important in the book of Jonah.
- Demonstrate forgiveness with help from examples like those of Sokreaksa Himm (see below).

Course Topics

1. Review the uniqueness of Jonah as a canonical writing in the Book of the Twelve.
2. Study of the text and vocabulary of Jonah.
3. Analyse the structure of Jonah, its literary form, its setting and function.
4. Examine the interpretations of Jonah in Christian and Jewish and Christian traditions.
5. Skype interview with Sokreaksa Himm from Cambodia (survivor of the killing fields and a pilgrim in learning to forgive the executioners of his family).

Course Texts

1. Ehud Ben Zvi, *The Signs of Jonah: Reading and Rereading in Ancient Yehud*, JSOTSup 367, Sheffield Academic press, 2003.

2. Janet Howe Gaines, *Forgiveness in a Wounded World: Jonah's Dilemma*, Atlanta/Leiden: Society of Biblical Literature/Brill, 2003.
3. Sokreksa S. Himm, *After the Heavy Rain*, Oxford and Grand Rapids: Monarch Books, 2007.
4. Uriel Simon, *Jonah*, The JPS Bible Commentary, The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.

Textbooks are available from the College's book service, READ ON Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. For advance purchase, contact READ ON Bookstore, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON, M9C 5K1: phone 416 620 2934; fax 416 622 2308; e-mail books@readon.ca.

Course Assignments and Grading

1. Text and Literary Analysis (February 15)

Study the commentary by Simon. Analyse lexical, structural, narrative and other literary features of this story. This information must be prepared for class discussion on February 8. Present your own narrative analysis of Jonah, including the structure of the book and the various features that contribute to its literary impact. (6-8 pages)

Professional Degree Students: 20%

Research Degree Students: 15%

2. Setting and Intention (March 15)

With reference to the texts of Gaines and Zvi, and other articles or books of your choosing, review the setting and intention of the composition of Jonah. In particular evaluate the thesis of Zvi that the book was a self-reflection of the literati of Jerusalem. Defend your own proposal for the function of the book that led it to be in the canon. (10-12 pages)

Professional Degree Students: 30%

Research Degree Students: 15%

3. Jonah and the Resurrection (April 12)

Explain how the story of Jonah is used in the doctrine of the resurrection. Explain the hermeneutic assumptions and the function of the Jonah story to the gospel message. (5 pages)

Professional Degree Students: 10%

Research Degree Students: 10%

4. Application of Jonah (April 12)

Evaluate the modern examples of Gaines in the application of Jonah (Holocaust and South African apartheid). Give an example of how Jonah might be applied in a contemporary situation, such as the hostility between Israelis and Palestinians. (8-10 pages)

Professional Degree Students: 20%

Research Degree Students: 15%

5. Jonah Sermon (April 12)

Write out a 25 minute sermon on Jonah or an appropriately selected portion of Jonah.

Professional Degree Students: 20%

Research Degree Students: 15%

6. Research Paper (April 12)

Select a text portion from Jonah or a topic of interpretation or theology related to Jonah for intensive research. The paper should be about 4000 words with a thorough bibliography of relevant material.

Research Degree Students Only: 30%

Course Policies

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty.

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

Style

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/MDCStyleGuideMarch0413.pdf.

Bibliography (Select Monographs)

- Bewer, Julius A. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jonah*. ICC. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912.
- Bolin, Thomas H. *Freedom beyond Forgiveness: The Book of Jonah Re-Examined*. JSOTSup 236. Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.
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- Craig Jr., Kenneth M. *A Poetics of Jonah: Art in the Service of Ideology*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993.
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- France, R. T. *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1971.
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- Good, Edwin M. *Irony in the Old Testament*. 2nd ed. Bible and Literature Series 3. Sheffield: Almond, 1981.
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- Marcus, David. *From Balaam to Jonah: Anti-Prophetic Satire in the Hebrew Bible*. Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press for the SBL, 1995.
- Handy, Lowell K. *Jonah's World: Social Science and the Reading of Prophetic Story*. London: Equinox, 2008.
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Sherwood, Yvonne. *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Smith-Christopher, Daniel L. *Jonah, Jesus, and Other Good Coyotes: Speaking Peace to Power in the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2007.

Tucker, W. Dennis. *Jonah: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text*. Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2006.

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Disclaimer: This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.