



# **An Exposition of God's Mission Based on Jonah 1 and its Implications for the Church's Mission Ministry**

**Yunus D. A. Laukapitang<sup>1</sup>, Blake David Walburg<sup>2</sup>, Yosua Feliciano Camerling<sup>3</sup>, Sarah Citra Eunike<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1, 3, 4</sup>Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Theologia Jaffray, Makassar, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Bethlehem College & Seminary, Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States

## **ABSTRACT**

The Ninevites worshipped Dagon. Therefore, God sent Jonah to Nineveh to show His love to the nation. This discussion focuses on understanding how God used Jonah's disobedience to God's call for the salvation of Nineveh and how important it is for the mission ministry of the church today. The trajectory of this paper follows the descriptive, investigative, and exegetical theological research genre. This paper is divided into three parts. The first part is an investigation of the exegetical aspects of Jonah 1. The second part is an exegetical exploration of the significance of God's Mission in Jonah 1. The third part is the application of God's mission based on Jonah 1 to the mission ministry of the church. This study finds that mission ministry is the work of God, obedience to God's will, and mission ministry is cross-cultural. Based on Jonah 1, the involvement of God's servants are basic tasks in conveying and spreading the gospel in the salvation work.

Keywords: Church, God's Mission, Jonah 1, Mission Ministry

## **Article history**

Submitted: Sep. 20, 2024

Revised: Jan. 23, 2025

Accepted: Jan. 30, 2025

**Corresponding author: Yunus D.A. Laukapitang** (nus\_lau@yahoo.com)

## **How to cite this article:**

Laukapitang, Y.D.A., Walburg, B.D., Camerling, Y.F. & Eunike, S.C. (2025). An Exposition of God's Mission Based on Jonah 1 and its Implications for the Church's Mission Ministry. *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat*. 9 (1): 48-62. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46445/ejti.v9i1.851>

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## INTRODUCTION

The term “mission” has its roots in the Latin biblical text *missio* (to send), which is related to the Greek verb “*apostello*” (to send) (Schirmacher, 2017). In English, the term is known as “mission” or “missions”. Mission refers to a church or institution’s specific task to reach people for Christ through cross-cultural ministry. Meanwhile, missions include everything a church or institution does that leads to the kingdom of God (Camerling et al., 2020).

It is unfortunate that the church’s weakness in mission is very clearly visible lately, and is a big problem that ought to be corrected immediately, namely that there are still churches that neglect the Great Commission, carrying out the preaching of the gospel, and discipleship. Second, problems also arise in churches that preach the gospel but do not believe in miracles. They consider Jesus’ miracles fairy tales from the past that are not by the rationalistic modern era. To reach difficult areas and confront powers of darkness such as shamanism, the power of the Kingdom of God is very much needed. Third, some preachers and churches believe in miracles (such as miracles of divine healing) but do not evangelize areas that do not yet know the gospel. As a result, the miracles are turned for the glory of the preacher, not to expand the Kingdom of God (Antony, 2014).

Because of these issues, the author emphasizes this study on God's mission in Jonah 1 because the main theme of this book focuses on God’s mission to the Ninevites. This theme is evident in the opening sentence of the book: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” (NIV- Jonah 1:1, 2). Jonah did not respond to the call but went to Tarshish. Jonah's escape did not materialize because God surprised the ship with a strong wind, Jonah was left abandoned to a great fish which swallowed and then vomited him on the shore after three days. These strategies were God's initiative to compel Jonah to deliver a message to the Ninevites. Thus, God called Jonah again to deliver His message to the Ninevites (Jonah 3:1, 2). In line with the main theme of the book—the mission to Nineveh—the book reports the story of the sailors who abandoned their gods and worshiped YHWH (Mwita, 2023). The book of Jonah shows that God’s saving and transforming grace does, even in the OT period, extend beyond Israel's national and ethnic borders (Timmer, 2008).

There are various views regarding the interpretation of the Book of Jonah. In her doctoral thesis research, Zhu (2021) stated that after more than two thousand years of interpretation, “I am not the first to claim that the book of Jonah can be read as a folktale.” Although the development of folkloristics as a field is relatively new and the book of Jonah has not been historically understood in such terms, the text is often read allegorically, and folktales are rich in allegory.

In addition, there are three main views regarding how to interpret the Book of Jonah. Green (1984) explains these three views, namely: First, an allegorical (figurative) interpretation which reveals this story as a picture of the mission and failure of the Israelites as God's true people. Second, a parable interpretation that compares the book of Jonah with parables found in the New Testament (for example, about the good Samaritan, Luke 10:29-37). This parable aims to teach a moral/spiritual truth. The main interpretation in this group is that the author of the Book of Jonah intended to reject the fanatical nationalism of the Jews and emphasize the universal view of God, which includes all nations. Third, the historical interpretation is the traditional view, which believes that the prophet Jonah served in Assyria (Nineveh). The historical interpretation seems

to be the most meaningful explanation and has support from the fact that the Lord Jesus himself considered it to be an event that happened, such that it can be a picture of His death and resurrection (Matt.12:39-40; Luke 11:29-30). It is also clear that the Lord Jesus considered the conversion of the Ninevites as a historical fact (Matt.12:41), (Green, 1984).

From this interpretation, the book of Jonah is a historical fact showing God's love for the Gentile nations for salvation through the covenant that God made with Abraham, the ancestor of the Israelite nation. "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing" (Gen. 12:2). The Book of Jonah as a historical fact is also explained: One such scholar who holds the parable view is Pete Enns who I think would stand up for the Progressive Christian community and is linked with controversy regarding some unorthodox ideas (Townsend, 2023).

For centuries, the most common approach to Jonah was to understand it as a historical narrative. In more recent times, however, many have read Jonah as a parable: a story that is not true but is intended to convey a particular point. Scholars do not seem to have a sense of whether this nonhuman entity is merely an instrument of the gods or whether prophetic and divine interests ultimately triumph at the end of the book. There is much more to be said about this always fascinating book that seems to resist monolithic interpretation, and a brief look at the book's recent interpretive history suggests that scholars will continue to grapple with the book's specificity for some time to come (Tillema, 2023).

Robert Alan King also argues that with the available evidence, Jonah must be historical, including all of its more extraordinary aspects such as Jonah being swallowed by a great fish or whale. If it is not literal, then the story is completely meaningless and analyzes the history of much of the Bible by also ignoring the testimony of Jesus and others about many other major events in biblical history. If we reject the story of Jonah as a visual story in the face of Jesus' position that it is to be taken literally, then we must also understand the story of Adam and Eve, the trickery of the talking snake, the parting of the Red Sea, and almost every other major biblical event from the beginning (Bullock, 2007; King, 2017).

Regarding authorship of the book of Jonah, Bullock (2009) wrote, that there is no way to determine who might have written the book. In the narration, the third person is used. Perhaps Jonah himself was the author, in chapter 2, he composed a psalm. But there is no need to insist that Jonah wrote the book. Whoever the author was, he was a very skilled writer, had good Hebrew language skills and his literary ability to tell a story was not surpassed by any other writer in the Old Testament (Bullock, 2009).

The Book of Jonah has several main characteristics: First, this book is one of two Old Testament prophetic books written by a prophet who was raised in the northern kingdom of Israel (the other being Hosea). Second, this book is a masterpiece of the short prose story literary style; only Jonah's thanksgiving prayer (Jonah 2:2-9) was written in verse. Third, the book is full of supernatural acts of God; apart from the timing of the storm and the appearance of the great fish, there was the jatropha tree, a worm, and the east wind, and (most remarkably) the conversion of the entire city of Nineveh. Fourth, this book contains the clearest Old Testament message that God's saving grace is for Gentiles as well as Jews (Bullock, 2009).

Apart from that, the interesting thing about Jonah is that he was one of the prophets who was sent to the Gentiles with the message of repentance. This is in contrast to Hosea, another prophet from the northern kingdom who only focused on the Israelites.

Jonah is the only Old Testament prophet on record whom God sent to a heathen nation with a message of repentance. Nahum's later ministry to Nineveh consisted of announcing certain overthrow, although, had the Ninevites repented again, God might have relented. Jonah was Israel's foreign missionary, whereas Hosea was Israel's home missionary. Both of these prophets revealed important characteristics about God: Hosea, God's loyal love for Israel, and Jonah, His compassion for all people, specifically Gentiles (Olabiya, 2024).

There is no date for the author of the book of Jonah. To explain the year this book was written, Bullock (2009) wrote: "The Book of Jonah was probably written as early as the mid-eighth century. There are no compelling reasons that this should not be the case. It is possible, however, that it existed in its present form later, but before or soon after the fall of Samaria and the northern tribes. The story has a northern air about it, almost a boast in this prophet going on a mission to one of Assyria's main cities and preaching bad news. The fact that Yahweh preserved Nineveh after its conversion is a faithful testimony of His sovereign control over that foreign power" (Bullock, 2009).

Regarding the year of writing, Leslie C. Allen (1976) gives good information: "The date of the book of Jonah is by no means easy to determine. The period of the prophet of 2 Kings 14:25, c. 780 B.C., is not necessarily the time when the book was produced. Although it has often been assumed that Jonah was the author, the narrative is anonymous and has no direct reference to its author. Some clues point to a later date. The reference to Nineveh in 3:3 indicates that the city was only a distant memory in the author's time. Nineveh fell in 612 B.C. From this explanation it can be concluded that the date of writing of the book of Jonah could range from the 3rd to 8th century BC, "or approximately 760 BC." (Allen, 1976).

The reader of Jonah can see in general that the purpose of the book of Jonah is to reveal God's love to the Gentiles in fulfillment of His promise to Abraham to bless all nations. Other purposes that can be seen in this book are: First, to show Israel and the Gentiles how great and extensive is the action of God's saving love through the preaching of repentance. Second, to show through Jonah's experience how far Israel has fallen from the missionary calling to be a redemptive light to a people living in darkness (Genesis 12:1-3; Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:6). Third, to show backslidden Israel that God in His love and mercy has sent not one but many faithful prophets to bring His message of repentance to escape the inevitable punishment for sin.

Jensen (2024) argues that Jonah is Paul's typological opposite. "Indeed, in all of the Old Testament, it would be hard to find a more perfect antithesis to Paul than Jonah. While Paul covered the sea to carry out God's saving purposes for the Gentiles, Jonah covered the sea to avoid bringing God's mercy to the Gentiles. For that reason, it is easy to miss the crucial similarity between Jonah and Paul: they were both profound theologians of God's grace for the Gentiles. Jonah—not just the book of Jonah, but Jonah himself—anticipated Paul's crucial secret by hundreds of years. Jonah, like Paul, recognized that God's mercy for the wayward but transacting Jews was a sign and guarantee of God's mercy for the wayward but transacting Jews" (Jensen, 2024).

The main purpose of the book is to teach Israelites that God loves other nations beyond their own; or to teach the prophets who peddle selfishness that he loves other nations and people (Olabiya, 2024). This shows that in the Book of Jonah God wants to show the depth of His love for all mankind. Israel failed to carry out this task. But God never fails. He used Israel's failure to express His love for the salvation of the nations.

## **METHOD**

This study uses research materials from the book of Jonah in the Bible and other books and journals related to the book of Jonah. The trajectory of this paper follows the type of descriptive, investigative, and exegetical theological research (Mwita, 2023). This paper is divided into three parts. The first part is an investigation of the exegetical aspects of Jonah 1. The second part is an exegetical exploration of the significance of God's Mission in Jonah 1. The exegetical part refers to a method that explores the biblical passage by looking at its original intent which leads to theological significance. The third part is the implications of God's mission based on Jonah 1 for the church's mission ministry.

The data collection method used is by searching for literature studies and other documents related to the title of the study. The analysis method used is by using a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. According to Hikmat (2011), the descriptive method is a research method to create a picture of a situation or event so that basic data is collected that provides a clearer picture.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Exposition of the Book of Jonah 1**

This section focuses on explaining the calling of Jonah, which is divided into several parts, namely:

- 1:1-2: Understanding the Context of Jonah's Call to Service
- 1:3: Jonah's attitude towards the call to ministry
- 1:4-11: The Impact of Disobedience to the Call to Ministry
- 1:12-15: The Way Out of Disobedience to the Call
- 1:16-17: Positive Consequences of Disobedience to the Call to Ministry

### ***Understanding the Context of Jonah's Call to Service (1:1-2)***

Jonah's call to service in the context of the text includes the source of the call to service, the object of the call to service, the contents of the news of the call to service, and the background of the call to service. The source of Jonah's call to ministry came from GOD. The phrase "the word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amitai," shows this truth. This also shows God's sovereignty to call Jonah to go (Da Silva, 2019). The object of Jonah's call to ministry is clearly explained by God, namely, Nineveh, that great city (1:2). Regarding the city of Nineveh, it is explained, "Nineveh, powerful and famous, was the capital of the pagan Assyrian empire, Israel's constant enemy." (Guthrie, 1976). Nineveh is said to be a great city, in the text described in Jonah 3:3, "Nineveh was an amazing city, three days' journey in breadth." In another section, it is

explained about this city, namely: This was the capital of the Assyrian empire, one of the most ancient cities of the world, Gen. 10; and one of the largest, as it was three days, journey in circumference. Ancient writers represent it as long; being in length one hundred and fifty stadia, and ninety in breadth, the compass being four hundred and eighty stadia. Now as the stadium is allowed to have equal to or furlong eight of which make a mile, this amounts to fifty-four English miles. See on chap. 3:3. But we must not suppose that all this space was covered with compact streets and buildings; it took in a considerable space of the country, probably all the cultivated ground necessary to support all the inhabitants of that district (Botros, 2020). It is reported to have had walls one hundred feet high, and so broad that three chariots might run abreast upon them. It was situated on the Tigris, or a little to the west, or on the west side of that river. It had at this time one hundred and twenty thousand persons in it, reputed to be in a state of infancy, which on a moderate computation would make the whole number six hundred thousand persons. But some, supposing that person not being able to distinguish their right hand from their left must mean children under two years of age, and reckoning one such child for every twenty persons from that age upwards, make the population amount to two million five hundred thousand (Clarke, 2018).

The city of Nineveh is also historically described: Since 1100 BC, Nineveh was the residence of kings. During the reign of Sargon II (722-705 BC), Nineveh became the capital of Assyria. Sennacherib (705-681 BC) especially loved Nineveh and made it the main city of his kingdom (Frahm, 2008). “Therefore Sennacherib, king of Assyria, departed and returned and remained in Nineveh” (II Kings 19:36). Sennacherib made many improvements in Nineveh. He ordered the construction of giant walls and built the oldest aqueduct in the city's history. The aqueduct is part of a canal that carries water from mountains 56 km away (Packer et al., 2001). From the statements above, it show that the object of the prophet Jonah's call to service was the city of Nineveh, a city which was the centre of world civilization at that time with a large population and good urban planning in the fields of irrigation, governance and development.

### ***Jonah's Attitude Towards the Call to Service (1:3)***

Jonah's attitude towards God's call for him was to flee to Tarshish, far from the presence of God. The words “far from the presence of the LORD” are used twice in the text. The word “before” is explained.

Verse 3 begins to clarify Jonah's reaction. The first word in verse three, “wayyaqom,” exhibits two distinct characteristics. First, Jonah followed the instruction “qom” in verse 2 with the phrase “wayyaqom,” which is the root verb “qom” in its qal imperfect waw sequential form. Secondly, verse 3's opening waw consecutive denotes a contrast (Brown et al., 2011). This indicates that although Jonah did indeed obey the first command, his motivation for doing so was different. To go to Nineveh and proclaim to them, he disregarded the second and third orders. Far from the Lord's presence, he instead fled to Tarshish (v. 3a) (Prabowo, 2024).

Being far from the presence of GOD, also having an understanding of being far from God's himself. This shows that in Jonah's understanding, God was limited, so if he was far from the presence of GOD, then the call could not be carried out. It could be that in Jonah's thoughts, the presence of God only revolves around the Temple of God, so if he is far from the Temple of God, then God will not be able to realize His plans. Jonah went to the area of Yafo to go to

Tarshish (Pettengil, 2017). However, Baxter (2002) wrote a different understanding. Prophet Jonah knew very well that God was present in every place. It is also known that he could not escape from GOD's vision, but he was willing to bear God's vengeance as long as the Israelites were safe. Indeed, so that Israel could be saved that is why he fled! Never let him be labeled a narrow-minded nationalist, or a coward, who only remembers how to save himself. He was a prophet who loved his people and the reason he ran away contained elements of heroism, even though that reason misled him into disobeying God's commands (Baxter, 2002).

From these explanations, we can get a picture of an inner conflict experienced by Jonah regarding God's command to go to Nineveh. The conflict between obedience to God's commands, the characteristics of God who is full of love and merciful, who is long-suffering and abundant in steadfast love and who is sorry for the disaster that He is about to bring (4:2), love for Israel as his nation, hatred for Nineveh was a cruel nation that would punish its people. However, the reality is that Jonah chose to disobey God's commands for various human considerations. Jonah fled to Tarshish. Tarshish refers to the city of Tartessos at the mouth of the Guadalquivir in southwestern Spain. Tarshish, according to Jeremiah 10:9 and Ezekiel 27:12, was a place where silver, tin, iron, and lead were mined. The purpose of this reference probably indicates the westernmost point of the then known world (Jonker & Lawrie, 2005).

#### ***The Impact of Disobedience to the Call to Ministry (1:4-11)***

The impact of Jonah's disobedience to the call to service given by God had an impact on God's sovereign actions to realize His plans. The author uses strong language to convey God's disciplinary response when Jonah starts his voyage of fleeing from him (v.4). The narrator makes it very clear that God's reaction to Jonah's departure is the sea's fierce fury. The narrator starts where the preceding verse finishes by putting the subject *הַיָּם* before the verb, breaking with the prevalent Hebrew narrative grammar where the phrase starts with a verb. According to Tribble, this rhetorical strategy establishes "emphases and contrasts" and validates the divine direction and gravity of the circumstance (Tribble, 1994).

Yahweh is credited with sending the huge wind in response to Jonah's escape, which resulted in a tremendous storm and severely damaged the ship. The Hebrew word *טל* (Hifil; cf. vv. 5, 12, 15), translated as "he hurled," shows the powerful action of God expressed through the double use of the adjective *גָּדֹל* ("great") to describe the wind and the storm.<sup>2</sup> The powerful force of Yahweh's hurling is first felt by the ship. The narrator skillfully uses *כְּשֶׁנֶּחֱדָה* ("intended to") to give the sense of serious danger as the ship is about to be broken.<sup>3</sup> The powerful roaring of the sea reflects God's rage towards Jonah, and its initial result is destruction. God, moreover, reveals his sovereignty over nature in a series of events throughout the book: the storm (1:4), the fish (2:1, 10), the vine (4:6), the worm (4:7), and the east wind (4:8). As we continue, it is interesting to note that it is the sailors, not Jonah, who recognize first the anger of a deity (Botros, 2020).

What Jonah thought was different. God sent a storm into the sea, so there was a big storm. The ship was almost destroyed. The words "God sent down" indicate God's sovereignty over the wind, to carry out His will. This also shows that Jonah could not escape from God's presence. "The word bring down is translated from the Hebrew word *tuwl* which is translated to throw, throw out, throw away, throw it out, throw it, throw it, throw it down, bring it down, throw it

away, throw it away, lay it down.” This word denotes a situation that suddenly occurs as a sovereign act of God. Meanwhile, the word “big” is explained: The word big is translated from the Hebrew word *gadowl* meaning great, large in magnitude and extend, in number, in intensity, loud (in sound), older (in age), in importance, important things, great, distinguished (of men), God Himself (of God), great things, haughty things, greatness, haggadolom, the great man? father of Zabdiel (Anderson, 2012).

This indicates a wind condition of great intensity which causes storms and waves with large sounds. So it was explained that the ship was almost destroyed, due to strong storm winds that could destroy the ship. There were efforts made by the sailors to save themselves. Each of them cried out to his god, threw out all the ship's cargo to lighten it and through casting lots tried to determine who caused this (1:7). Shouting to one's god (1:5) is an expression of fear and hope for salvation from the god one worships. Dumping the ship's cargo (1:5), is a technical method commonly used to make it easier for the ship to move in accordance with the direction of the water current. If it remains heavy, it will make it easier for the ship to be hit by waves and cause destruction and through casting lots it is Jonah who is cast by lot (1:7) (Lovelace, 2019).

Jonah conveys his existence as the cause of disaster (8-10). In this part of the text, Yunus answers several questions from them, namely: (a) Because of whom have we been hit by this disaster? (b) What is your job? (c) Where do you come from? (d) What is your country and what nation are you? To these questions, Jonah gave an explanation: (a) I am a Hebrew. (b) I fear the LORD, the God of the heavens, who made the surface and the land. (c) I fled far from the presence of the LORD.

Jonah's explanations had the effect of fear. The Bible explains they were very afraid (v. 10). This is because they already had an understanding of the God of Jonah as the owner of the sky and the one who has made the sea and land, and now knowing that Jonah was the cause of the disaster because he ran away from God when God called him to go to Nineveh.

Though rebellious against God's command (cf. vv.2-3) Jonah responded to the sailors' barrage of five question by stating with no uncertainty his nationality (I am a Hebrew) and the worth and power of His God. Though disobedient to God, Jonah at least knew what He is like. Jonah said that God is the Lord (Yahweh), the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God of Israel. The prophet also said his God is the God of heaven (cf. Gen. 24:3, 7 and comments on Ezra 1:2), the one true Sovereign, in contrast with the sailors' many false gods (cf. Jonah 1:5). Jonah also affirmed that Yahweh is Creator, the one Who made the sea and the land (cf. Ex. 20:11); Ps. 95:5). As Creator of the world He can control nature, including storms on the sea (cf. Ps. 89:9). The sailors clearly acknowledged this fact in their question (Jonah 1:11). It may seem strange that Jonah claimed to worship this God when he did not obey Him, but this is often true of believers (Tiemeyer, 2017).

### ***The Way Out of Disobedience to the Call (1:12-15)***

Jonah was the one who conveyed the way to free them from disaster to their question, “What will we do with you so that the sea calms down and does not attack us again, because the sea is getting more and more stormy.” Jonah told him how to relieve the disaster caused by himself, namely by throwing Jonah into the sea (v. 13). However, in the text it is explained that

they did not immediately throw Jonah, but there were attempts to bring the ship to land but were unable to. Because the sea was getting rougher, the last resort was to throw Jonah into the sea. However, before doing this, there is a prayer for safety. The content of his prayer was a request “Don’t let us perish because of this man's life. Do not lay upon us the blood of innocent people, for you, LORD, have done as you willed.” The contents of the prayers of the ship’s crew show a new understanding of God, that God is a just God, and He rewards people according to His crimes. God is absolute sovereign. He does things according to His perfect will.

### ***Positive Consequences of Disobedience to the Call to Ministry (1:16-17)***

Apart from the negative impact of Jonah's disobedience which had a disastrous impact, there is a positive side. Jonah's disobedience had a positive impact on the people on the ship, in that they had a new understanding of the God of Israel as the God who created the heavens, seas and land. He is angry with people who are not faithful to His commands. So the effect was that they became afraid of the LORD, then offered sacrifices to the LORD and made vows. This was God's purpose for the Israelites, that the other nations would know God (Isaiah 43:21). “Utterly amazed at the sudden calm, they offered a sacrifice in praise to the Lord (Yahweh, Israel’s God) and promised (made vows) to continue their praise. Again the sailors are seen in contrast with their former passenger. Whereas Jonah was disobedient to God, they were praising Him!” (Anderson, 2012).

God again continued His plan through a big fish that swallowed Jonah. Jonah stayed in the fish's stomach for three days and three nights. Regarding the existence of large fish, there are several interesting views. “The Hebrew word translated “predestination” means “to provide,” not to specifically create. The fish is called a “big fish”, it could be a whale, shark or other fish.”

What is the concept of fish in the Nineveh/Assyrian understanding? There are several explanations given, including Assyrian culture tells of the Goddess Atorgis, the daughter of Queen Semiramis, who fell in love with a shepherd from the human world. In her search, the princess finally found the shepherd and finally they fell in love, the two of them spent their days together even though they met in secret. One day, the princess wanted to give a surprise to her lover, but unfortunately, the surprise brought by the princess was a dagger and accidentally stabbed her lover to death. The princess felt so lost and deeply sad, that in the end, she decided to commit suicide and jump into the lake to take the form of a fish. Miraculously, because the princess's beauty could not change into the shape of a fish, it only changed from back to feet, which finally became like fish fins. A folklore expert, S. Baring Gould, in his book entitled *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*, published in 1884, wrote that the story of the Mermaid began with the story of a god/goddess after fish in ancient religions. Gould wrote that the god Jannes from the Chaldeans and the god Dagon from the Philistines (Israel) had the appearance of a mermaid (Baring-Gould, 1906).

Dagon was also the first god of Syria and Mesopotamia. Further, it can be explained: that Dagon was found in Phoenicia and Mesopotamia; even in Mari, he was an important god. Dagon’s role in Ugarit is limited, but he is described as the father of Baal. Like Baal himself, he seems to have been a weather god who was also a god of fertility. The name Dagon may be related to the Hebrew word “*dagan*” which is “wheat”. In Palestine Dagon was worshipped by the Philistines

(cf. I Sam. 5, in Ashdod; and Judges 16:23, in Gaza). Presumably, he was an ancient god from the west Semitic region that was taken over by the Philistines when they entered the land of Kanan (Emanuel, 2016).

There is a testimony that states, “Recently I met a Diaspora Jew, he was wearing a gold necklace with a fish logo, it reminded me of the god Dagon, the male fish god and that informed me a little, that indeed the god Baal is still an idol.” In the end, God brought Jonah back to Nineveh to reveal His will for the people of Nineveh through a big fish determined by God Himself.

### **Implications For the Church’s Mission Ministry**

From the explanation of the book of Jonah, several principles can be applied in current church mission ministry, specifically in mission ministry, namely, mission ministry is God's work, mission ministry is obedience to God's will and mission ministry is cross-cultural ministry.

### ***Missionary Ministry is God’s Work***

The Bible testifies that mission work to bring about the restoration of the relationship between humans and God is God's initiative and work alone. In Genesis 3, when humans fell into sin, it shows the existence of this principle. This work of God is expressed by God calling Abraham, God making a covenant with humans (Genesis 3:15) and God making clothes from animal skins and wearing them on humans (Genesis 3:21). The mission work continued with Noah and his descendants. Specifically, God's initiative to make a covenant with Abraham, through which all the tribes were blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). “The LORD associates with His people in the covenant that He has established. We read about God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17), and then with Israel as a whole (Ex. 19-20). It is always emphasized that the provision of the agreement comes from GOD's side, not from humans.”

The writer of Hebrews clearly states God’s work through the prophets to reveal His will. But in these last days, he speaks through his son Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-3). Jesus Christ is the culmination of God's work for the salvation of humans from sin. Jesus came to be equal to humans to die for all human sins on the cross (John 3:16; Mark 10:45; II Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53). Missionary ministry is God’s work and is a continuity. Jesus said, “as you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world” (John 17:18). This work of God is continued by God’s church today to make disciples of all nations of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 28:19-20). To realize this task, Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to complete, give the power to seal, indwell, fulfil and lead believers in the task of sending (Ephesians 4:11-16; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 8; Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:25). God gave authority to the church today to send believers out into all the activities of life to bring each person to a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul explained the concept of sending very clearly in Romans 10:13-15, that is, the church sent, there were those who preached, there were those who heard about Him, believed in Him, and cried out to Him. This sending circle can be described as follows:

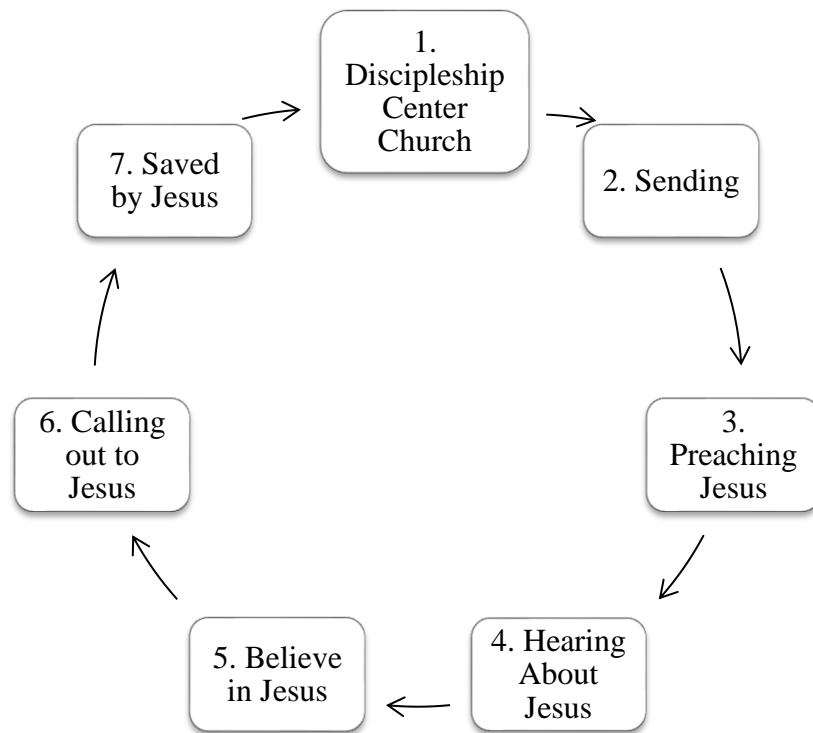


Figure 1. Circle of Sending

For this to be effective in a local church, four areas of knowledge need to continue to be developed to evangelize with God, namely: Getting to know Christ as Savior, getting to know the Gospel, getting to know the thoughts and attitudes of people who are still lost and getting to know basic communication skills (Daniels, 2003).

***Missionary Ministry is Obedience to God's Will***

From the book of Jonah chapter 1, the principle of mission ministry that can be applied in the church today is that mission ministry is a ministry of obedience to God's will. The Bible testifies that it is God's will that all people turn and repent and come to the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). Ezekiel 18:32, "For I am not pleased that anyone should die, says the Lord God. Therefore, repent, so that you may live." Obedience to God's will was demonstrated by Christ when He carried out God's will for the atonement of human sins through His death on the cross. The Apostle Paul explained in Philippians 2:8, "And being found as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

The Apostle Paul can also give an example of his obedience to God's will for him to be an apostle to the Gentiles. He testified to this obedience when he wrote to Timothy as a young man in ministry in the city of Ephesus. He wrote, "As for me, my blood has begun to be poured out as an offering and the hour of my death is near. I have fought the good fight, I have crossed the finish line and I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:6-7).

Obedience to God's will has an impact on God's glory as an incentive to realize the purpose of the sending. Metzger (2005) wrote:

The highest motivation in witnessing is to glorify God, to see His perfection realized through the joyful praise of His redeemed people. If this is not our driving force in the depths of our

hearts, if our testimony is driven by less than that motivation, our witnessing is not in harmony with the plan of salvation. The great goal of divine election is the glory of God (Romans 11:36; Ephesians 1:12). When we preach Christ without this primary motivation, we operate in a conflict of interest with our message and with the Spirit.

This explanation shows that obedience to God's call will have an impact on God's glory in the basis and goals of ministry. The call to mission includes awareness of the needs of, and concern for, a lost world; obedience to the commandments of Christ; radical commitment to God; your church's recognition of your gifts; a strong passion and yearning for missions; and gifts of the Spirit. The missionary call is God's method for mobilizing His children for intercultural ministry and sustaining them in the work He designed for them before the foundation of the world (Acts 17:26), (Sills, 2011).

The ministry of sending is the ministry of self-denial, carrying the cross and following the example of Christ. The Church today is called to obey God's will for the salvation of the nations. The church needs to prepare God's people to carry out this task through various mission trainings in both large and small groups. The Church has been sent by Christ into the world to be light and salt to the world. So, obedience to God's will that has been demonstrated by Christ becomes an example for the church to obey in carrying out God's will in the task of sending.

### ***Mission Ministry is a Cross-Cultural Ministry***

The principle of mission ministry that can be seen in the text of Jonah chapter 1 shows that mission ministry is cross-cultural (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19-2). Serving in missions means serving people who have a different culture from those sent to bring the message of salvation. mission ministry is a challenge because it is conducted with a different way of thinking from the group of people being served. The solution is an approach that is informed by local culture. Just as a news anchor is required to be able to understand the way of thinking of the people he is targeting. This way of thinking of the local culture is found in the language and cultural symbols of the group. The principle of cross-cultural ministry has also been demonstrated by God through Jesus Christ, incarnational ministry. Becoming the same as humans, sharing what humans experience and even dying as someone who was crucified for human salvation (Hebrews 2:14-18; John 1:14). Regarding the example of Jesus' ministry, it is explained:

“The Lord Jesus came to sinners. He is our example. The Lord Jesus is also the Great Communicator. The Lord Jesus communicated based on three main stages: First, the absolute or basic stage through teaching. Second, the illustrative stage through parables. Third, the personal stage when he speaks to individuals” (Daniels, 2003).

The Apostle Paul also took a contextualization approach when carrying out the missionary ministry in Athens (Acts 17:16-34). He explains the Gospel starting from inscription to an unknown God. “What you worship without knowing, that is what I proclaim to you” (Acts 17:23). Regarding the ministry of the apostle Paul in this text, Daniels (2003) explains Paul on Mars Hill. “The news delivered by Paul is not only an example of a seeker-sensitive message (in Acts 17:27, Paul talks about people who “seek” God), but is also an example of “contextualization” or cross-cultural testimony. The message “translated” the truth of the Gospel into a form that the people in that place could understand. This is not changing God's word or

compromising it. This is communicating God's truth according to the listener's level of understanding. Paul did it. The Lord Jesus also did it." (Daniels, 2003).

Regarding the contextualization of services, it is explained in fact, the purpose of contextualization is the same as the purpose of Jesus' incarnation. Just as God revealed Himself to humans through Jewish culture, so we want to reveal God to tribes who do not yet know Jesus through their culture. Therefore, contextualization is a divine principle that was manifested in the incarnation of Jesus (Hitchen, 2014).

In I Corinthians 9:19-23, the apostle Paul provides beautiful principles for cross-cultural ministry. He stated, "I do all these things for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in it" (I Corinthians 9:23). If the principles and examples of cross-cultural ministry that were implemented by Jesus and the Apostle Paul are implemented well by God's church today in the context of its mission, then God's salvation can be realized among the various ethnic groups in the world today. So that in the end all knees bow and all tongues confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2).

## **CONCLUSION**

God loves all ethnic groups in the world. The Book of Jonah proves this truth. God commanded Jonah to proclaim the news of God's judgment on Nineveh so that they might be saved. God was full of mercy, so Jonah ran away from God's presence in order to not carry out the command. God in His sovereignty used natural forces to bring Jonah back to His plan.

In Jonah's disobedience there was a positive thing that happened, when lots were cast and he was hit by the lottery, which showings that he was the cause of the incident. On that occasion, Jonah was able to testify about who he was, who God was whom he worshiped, what tasks God had given him, and his attitude towards the orders given. Jonah provided a solution for the safety of the many people on the ship, namely that he became a victim because of his mistake which had caused a big storm. After he was thrown into the sea, God chose a big fish to help him. This had the effect of people recognizing the God of Israel who was worshiped by Jonah as the true God, in contrast to the other gods worshiped by the people on the ship.

God's determination of the existence of a big fish, when connected to the beliefs of Nineveh at that time, can show a strategy that God used to make God's message effective for other nations who did not yet know the true God. As an implication of current mission ministry, from the Jonah incident the principle can be drawn that mission ministry is God's work, mission ministry is obedience to God's will and mission ministry is a cross-cultural ministry.

## **Competing interests**

The author has no competing interests.

## **Author contributions**

Y.D.A.L. formal analysis, writing original draft preparation. B.D.W., Y.F.C., S.C.E., conceptualization, methodology, writing review, and editing.

## Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

## Funding information

This research received no external funding.

## Data availability

The data supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## Disclaimer

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