

## **Preface To The Prophet Jonah (1532)**

There are some who would hold, as Jerome shows, that this prophet was the son of the widow at Zarephath, near Sidon, who fed the prophet Elijah in the famine (1 Kings 17:9 and Luke 4:26). They give as a reason that he here calls himself “the son of Amittai,” i.e., “a son of the True One,” because his mother said to Elijah, when he had raised him from the dead, “Now I know that the word of thy mouth is true.”

Let anyone believe this who will; I do not believe it. His father’s name was Amittai, Latin, Verax. German, Wahrhaftig, from Gath-Hepher, a town in the tribe of Zebulun (Joshua 19:13); for it is written in 2 Kings 14:25, “Jeroboam restored again the boundary of Israel from Hamath unto the Sea of Arabah, according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which He spoke by His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet of Gath-Hepher.” Moreover the widow of Zarephath was a Gentile, as Christ says in: Luke 4:26, but Jonah here admits that he is a Hebrew.

So we gather that this Jonah lived at the time of King: Jeroboam, who was the grandfather of King Jehu, in whose time King Uzziah reigned in Judah. At this time, too, the prophets Hosea, Amos and Joel were in the same kingdom, in other places and towns. From this we can readily gather what a splendid and precious man this Jonah was in the kingdom of Israel. God did great things through him, for it was through his preaching that King Jeroboam was so fortunate and won back all that Hazael, King of Syria, had taken from the kingdom of Israel.

But greater than all that he did in his own nation were his attacks upon the great and mighty kingdom of Assyria, and his fruitful preaching among the Gentiles, which accomplished results that could not have been accomplished among his own people with many sermons. It was as though God willed to demonstrate by him the word of Isaiah, “He that hath not heard, shall hear it,” as an illustration of the fact that they who have the Word richly despise it mightily, and they who cannot have it accept it gladly. Christ Himself says, in Matthew 21:43, “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to the Gentiles, who bear its fruits.”