

# JONAH

## INTRODUCTION

1. AUTHOR – Though Jonah is the main character, nowhere within the book is there a claim that he wrote it. Whoever did though must have received information directly from him. See 2 Kings 14:25.
2. DATE – It is hard to date this writing. See 3:3. But events seem to have been before the fall of Israel in 722 BC.
3. READERS – Jonah preached to the people of Nineveh of Assyria but the book is probably written to benefit the Israelites.
4. THEME – Jonah is a more personal book than any of the other prophets, actually centering more on Jonah than on his prophecies.
5. KEY VERSE – 3:1 "The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time."

## OUTLINE

1. Jonah rejects God's call to preach at Nineveh. CH 1:1-3
2. Jonah flees from God and God pursues him. CH 1:4-17
3. Jonah repents and prays for deliverance. CH 2:1-10
4. God sends Jonah a second time to preach to Nineveh. CH 3:1-9
5. Jonah grieves at Nineveh's repentance and learns of God's grace. CH 3:10 - 4:11

## IMPORTANCE OF JONAH

1. The greatness of God and His grace dominate the book. God as Creator uses the sea, storm, gourd and enormous fish to accomplish His purpose. God is also seen over the great foreign city of Nineveh.
2. God's grace is seen to Jonah personally in 3:1, but also to the sailors and the city of Nineveh in 3:10. See Romans 3:29.
3. The sign of Jonah is used by Jesus in Matthew 12:40 and Luke 11:29 to demonstrate the greatness of salvation through Jesus Christ and the importance of His mission.
4. The Book of Nahum is a follow-up to the ministry of Jonah 100 years later as the people of Nineveh turn away from the Lord again in future generations.

## JONAH

As you read this book, notice how it shows that God is Sovereign over all the events of this book and even more over the prophet's life. God wanted Nineveh to hear the message of repentance. He called Jonah. When Jonah ran away, he sent the storm, "appointed" the fish, caused the fish to vomit Jonah, and then called Jonah the second time to go to Nineveh. Then in chapter four, he "appointed" the vine to give Jonah shade and then a worm to chew the vine so it died and then intensified it by the scorching east wind and sun that blazed on Jonah. All of this was not only to benefit the city of Nineveh who did repent, but also for the benefit personally the prophet by learning the lesson that God's will is God's grace. "Should I not pity Nineveh?"

1 – The point of the book seems to be to demonstrate the grace of God, both to the wicked pagan nation and to the rebellious prophet of the people of God, Jonah. Chapter one talks about the wickedness of the nation of Nineveh and also the rebellion of the prophet Jonah who headed in the opposite direction when God called him to preach. V17 "And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." What an effective evangelist Jonah is. First he is the reason those on the ship are converted. V16 "Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows." It is interesting that all the participants in this chapter and the storm are convinced that it is because of someone's sin and presence on the boat that they struggle with the storm. In actual fact, how much more do we need to see this as true in day-to-day activities? It seems that this is the greatest fault that anyone could have today is to say that the reason someone suffers is because of their own sin. Sensitivity may impact the timing of when we say this but at some point do we not need to say this so people will repent and seek the Lord?

2 – Even from as far down as Jonah was under the just punishment of God (discipline) he still called on God to hear his prayer. What a remarkable statement is V8. "Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love." How amazing it is that God in his grace would answer this prayer of the rebellious prophet. V2 "He answered me...and you heard my voice." In V3 He attributes everything that has led to this point to God. "You cast me into the deep...all your waves and your billows passed over me." Note the repentance shows when Jonah turned toward the temple from which he had run away. V4 "I shall again look upon your holy temple." V7 "When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple." God delivered Jonah even though this prayer actually contains no petition to that effect.

3 – Jonah preached and there were great results. The entire city responded and turned to God in repentance. God's grace shows in V10. "When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it." Once again the most effective aspect of the story of the prophet is "the word of the Lord." See it in V1. "The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time." It is also in V3. "So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord." There is a clear statement of repentance in this chapter in V8-9. The people put on sackcloth and called out mightily to God. "Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands." The trust is that in this way "God may turn and relent." He did.

4 – Jonah explains his rebellion and turn away from Nineveh. V2 "And he prayed to the Lord and said, 'O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from sending disaster.'" It is interesting that the book ends with a question from God to Jonah. V11 "And should I not pity Nineveh?" Note the three times that this chapter relates, "God appointed." It is clear that God was in charge throughout this book and it is also clear that because he was in charge, he was operating in grace not justice. He was gracious to Jonah and to the people of Nineveh. Jesus claimed, "something greater than Jonah is here." (Matthew 12:41) Note that the response to Jonah's preaching happened because of God. Jonah did not want Nineveh to repent. He did not care for them or pity them. Yet God blessed his preaching with these results.