

JONAH (Teacher's Edition)

- I. The First Commission of Jonah 1:1--2:10
 - A. The Disobedience to the First Call 1:1-3
 - B. The Judgment on Jonah 1:4-17
 - 1. The Great Storm 1:4-16
 - 2. The Great Salvation of Jonah by the Fish 1:17
 - C. The Prayer of Jonah 2:1-9
 - D. The Deliverance of Jonah 2:10
- II. The Second Commission of Jonah 3:1--4:11
 - A. The Obedience to the Second Call 3:1-4
 - B. The Repentance of Nineveh 3:5-10
 - 1. The Great Fast 3:5-9
 - 2. The Great Salvation of Nineveh by God 3:10
 - C. The Prayer of Jonah 4:1-3
 - D. The Rebuke of Jonah by God 4:4-11

AUTHOR & WHEN THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN-

The matter of authorship and date are **closely related**. If Jonah wrote the book, which most scholars agree upon, then this would place its writing at about **760 B.C.**, since this prophet- "the son of Amittai" (1:1) is the same Jonah who prophesied during the reign of **Jeroboam II** of Israel, from 793 to 753 B.C. (2 Kings 14:25). His personal name means, "**dove**", and truly, his book is unique among the Minor Prophets in consisting of a short story about a prophet and in confining his message to **a sentence** (3:4).

Our hero or rather 'anti-hero' is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:23-29 as active in the reign of Jeroboam II (about 785-745 B.C.) making him a contemporary of Hosea and Amos (and possibly Joel). His **encouraging** ministry and prediction of national expansion for the Northern Kingdom expressed God's longing **to save** His people, **wicked** though they were. This theological background is important for the book.

ABOUT THE BOOK-

This book is very different in many ways than the other prophetic books. First, it is not **a prophecy**, but **a story**- the story of a prophet and God dealing with him in **his weakness**. Jonah is seen as strong-willed, fretful, pouting, hasty, and unable to see that God is the God of

not only **the Jews**, but also the **whole world**. Second, Jonah was the only prophet sent to preach to **the Gentiles**. Though Elijah was sent to live in Zarephath for a season and Elisha journeyed to Damascus, Jonah was given a message of **repentance and mercy** to preach directly to a **Gentile city**. The reason he did not want to go was because he was a strong **nationalist** and fully aware of the horrors the Assyrians had perpetrated against his people. And God called him to give the hated Assyrians **a chance to repent!** He couldn't **accept the fact** that God would offer mercy to people who "deserved severe punishment." Third, we don't have **a conclusion** to the story regarding Jonah! After his initial, willful disobedience, after his later reluctant obedience, and after his anger over God's mercy toward the Assyrians, all we are left with is the obvious **inconsistencies** of his faith. We never learn whether he **responded to** God's object lesson and correction! But one thing we do know: because of God's message and the ensuing revival through the unwilling prophet, Ninevah lasted for another 100 years!

BASIC THEMES OF JONAH-

One of the great truths emphasized by this book is that God can use people who do **not want to be used by Him**. Jonah was practically **driven to Nineveh** against his will, but his grudging message still struck a responsive chord in the Assyrians. This shows that revival and repentance **are works of God's Spirit**. Our task is to **proclaim His message**.

But perhaps the greatest insight of the book is that God desires to show **mercy and grace** to all the peoples of the world based on true repentance. No one nation or group can claim exclusive rights to His love. The task of the nation of Israel was to **preach this message** about God's universal love to all the world (Gen 12:1-3). But they forgot this **missionary purpose** and eventually claimed God and His blessings as **theirs alone**. The Book of Jonah cries out against this narrow-minded interpretation of God and His purpose. God rebukes Jonah because he expected **mercy for himself**- to get out of the fish and regarding the vine in the last chapter. But when it came to the people in Nineveh, he wanted nothing of that very same mercy. (You might say Jonah, like many Christians was willing to prophesy to Israel (or Christians to the church or fellow believers); he at first flatly

refused to become a **foreign missionary** (like many of us). In the last verse of the book, God makes it plain to Jonah that His mercy and compassion is as wide as the world itself: "And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and also much livestock?" (4:11).

Jonah shows the heart of God and the mission of the church. It is a wonderful picture of God's love for all mankind and of His readiness to pardon and save the heathen nations of the world if they will respond and repent. It is a call from God to **evangelism** and **missions**. He has given us the ministry and the message of **reconciliation** to the world. Each of us must do what we can to arise and **take it to the world**.

A POSSIBLE KEY WORD-

I believe the key word revolves around the key theme. God wanted a nation to repent and sent an unwilling messenger with His message. And the nation responded! This led to one of the greatest recorded revivals. Hence, I believe we should consider: **REVIVAL IN NINEVEH**.

KEY VERSE(S) AND CHAPTER-

For me the key verse has to be the truth that sets the world free, spoken right out of Jonah's mouth: **Jonah 4:2**. My key chapter speaks of the result of the preaching of the freeing truth of God's love: **Jonah 3**.

JESUS REVEALED IN THE BOOK-

- **Jesus said He would be in the tomb 3 days and nights like Jonah in the fish. The stilling of the storm happened in Jesus' ministry also**
- **4:2, 10-11 are like John 3:16- God showed His mercy and compassion for people through Christ, the willing messenger**

THE HOLY SPIRIT REVEALED IN THE BOOK-

- The prophetic ministry and gift of the prophet come from the Spirit
- The Spirit directed him and called him into the ministry in Nineveh
- The Spirit moved on the hearts of the Ninevites to cause them to receive the Word and repent
- The physical miracles regarding the fish, the storm and the vine were the working of the Spirit

SOME TRUTHS AND APPLICATIONS-

There are so many that we have discussed! Here I would like to depart from our usual format to have us consider in our own lives some of the comparisons and contrasts:

JONAH	THE SAILORS
He was a Hebrew with a history of God's faithfulness	They were Gentiles with no history of God
He supposedly had a relationship with the true God	They worshiped many false gods
He ran from God and was not spiritually sensitive	They were spiritual, coming and praying to God
Knowing God, he was indifferent to His will	Not knowing God, they were concerned before Him
He had no compassion toward Nineveh	They had compassion for him
He was rebellious, disciplined, but not destroyed	They were brought to commitment and worship

Jonah and the Plant

Jonah's concern for the plant is contrasted with God's concern for Nineveh. God stresses to Jonah that the prophet neither created nor sustained the plant about which he was so concerned. The many thousands of Ninevites, however, were created and constantly sustained by God. And God, who knows when a sparrow falls, is even concerned for the cattle of the city. Jonah's perspective was not what it should have been because it was not the same as God's.

GOD & NINEVEH	JONAH & THE PLANT
God cared for the people	Jonah cared for the plant
God was concerned with other's welfare	Jonah cared for himself
God created all in Nineveh	Jonah did not create or plant the plant
God tended Nineveh	Jonah did nothing for the plant
The people's eternity most significant was	The temporal plant was most significant
God's concern was and is for human life	Jonah's concern: personal comfort, selfish interest
God's concern for Nineveh displays love and propriety	Jonah's concern for the plant is wrong, selfish, and demonstrates an improper attitude on life