

# Book of Jonah

## Study BIBLE



## Introduction

Book No	32
Name	Jonah
Written By	Jonah
Testament	Old
Category	Minor Prophets
Date Written	Approx. 785 - 760 BC
Place Written	Jerusalem
Audience	To the people of Israel
Purpose	To show the extent of God's grace—the message of salvation is for all people
History Covered	785 - 760 BC
Chapters	4
Verses	481
Key Verse	And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle? (4:11)
Key People	❖ Jonah
Key Places	❖ Nineveh ❖ Joppa

## Purpose of the Book

The Book of Jonah, though placed among the prophets in the canon, is different from other prophetic books in that it has no prophecy that contains a message; the story is the message. That story recalls one of the most profound theological concepts found in the Old Testament. God loves all people and desires to share His forgiveness and mercy with them. Israel had been charged with revealing that message but somehow did not grasp the importance of it. This failure eventually led to extreme religious pride. In Jonah can be found the seedbed of New Testament Pharisaism.

Jonah was given such a task. Assyria—a great but evil empire—was Israel’s most dreaded enemy. The Assyrians flaunted their power before God and the world through numerous acts of heartless cruelty. So when Jonah heard God tell him to go to Assyria and call the people to repentance, he ran in the opposite direction.

The book of Jonah tells the story of this prophet’s flight and how God stopped him and turned him around. But it is much more than a story of a man and a great fish. Jonah’s story is a profound illustration of God’s mercy and grace. No one deserved God’s favor less than the people of Nineveh, Assyria’s capital. Jonah knew this. But he knew that God would forgive and bless them if they would turn from their sin and worship him. Jonah also knew the power of God’s message, that even through his own weak preaching, they would respond and be spared God’s judgment. But Jonah hated the Assyrians, and he wanted vengeance, not mercy. So he ran.

Eventually, Jonah obeyed and preached in the streets of Nineveh, and the people repented and were delivered from judgment. Then Jonah sulked and complained to God, “I knew that you were a gracious and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. I knew how easily you could cancel your plans for destroying these people ” (4:2). In the end, God confronted Jonah about his self-centered values and lack of compassion, saying, “But Nineveh has more than 120,000 people living in spiritual darkness, not to mention all the animals. Shouldn’t I feel sorry for such a great city?” (4:11).

Jonah’s story has much to say about the heart of God and the mission of God’s people. God desires to show His mercy and offer forgiveness to all peoples of the Earth. He has committed this ministry of reconciliation and the message of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18, 19) to the church. Just as Israel was commissioned to reveal God to the world (Gen. 12:3), so the church has been commissioned to go into all the world and preach

the gospel (Matt. 28:18–20). When the church has the attitude of exclusiveness exhibited by Jonah and Israel, it fails to accomplish its task. But, when the church takes seriously the command of God to arise and go to the nations of the world, those people who hear the Word and respond in faith experience the mercy and forgiveness of God in life-changing, culture-impacting measure.

As you read Jonah, see the full picture of God's love and compassion and realize that no one is beyond redemption. The gospel is for all who will repent and believe. Begin to pray for those who seem to be farthest from the kingdom, and look for ways to tell them about God. Learn from the story of this reluctant prophet and determine to obey God, doing whatever he asks and going wherever he leads.

### Overview

- ❖ 32<sup>nd</sup> book of the BIBLE, Old Testament, 5<sup>th</sup> of the 12 minor prophets and 10<sup>th</sup> of the 17 prophetic books
- ❖ Jonah was a prophet from the village of Gath Hopher, located some three miles north of Nazareth in lower Galilee.
- ❖ Today the village of Gath Hopher is known as Mash Had.
- ❖ The Pharisees were wrong in John 5:52, when they said “Search and look, for no prophet has risen out of Galilee.
- ❖ Jonah is the only prophet whom Jesus likened to Himself. Matthew 12:39-41
- ❖ Jonah's experience is a type of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
- ❖ Unlike all other Old testament books, Jonah revolves exclusively around a Gentile nation.
- ❖ Nineveh was a world empire for about 300 years. (900-60 B.C.)
- ❖ From Jonah's home:
  - Assyria was northeast.
  - Joppa was southwest.
  - Tarshish (Spain) was west.
- ❖ Jonah is the only Old Testament prophet whose ministry is entirely on foreign soil.
- ❖ Jonah was a contemporary of Jeroboam II of Israel. (782-753 B.C.)
- ❖ The Book of Jonah has four chapters:
  - Chapter 1 - Jonah is running FROM God.
  - Chapter 2 - Jonah is running TO God.
  - Chapter 3 - Jonah is running WITH God.

- Chapter 4 - Jonah is running AHEAD of God.
- ❖ Assyria's willingness to repent may have been helped by:
  - A plague in 765 B.C.
  - A solar eclipse two years later in 763 B.C.
  - Another plague four years later in 759 B.C.
- ❖ The repentance of Nineveh probably took place during the reign of Ashurdan III (773-755 B.C.).
- ❖ Upon Nineveh's repentance at the preaching of Jonah, the city was allowed to stand for another 150 years until the Babylonians rebelled against the Assyrians in 626 B.C. and overthrew the mighty city of Nineveh 16 years later in 612 B.C.
- ❖ Both Jonah and Nahum's ministries involved the same city – Nineveh.
  - Jonah preached repentance (God knew the city would turn to Him)
  - Nahum preached judgment (God knew the city later would not turn to Him)
- ❖ Jonah, like Habakkuk, consists largely of a dialogue between God and the prophet.
- ❖ The book of Jonah is one of three Old Testament books especially hated by Satan:
  - Genesis, which predicts the Incarnation of Christ from the lineage of the woman (Gen. 3:15).
  - Daniel, which predicts the Glorious Second Coming of Christ (Dan. 7:9-12) to destroy his enemies.
  - Jonah, which predicts (in type form) the Death and Resurrection of Christ (compare Jonah 2 with Matt. 12:38-41).
- ❖ Jonah is the only biblical prophet who made only one prophecy, and that prophecy was not fulfilled! (Compare 3:4 with 3:10.)
- ❖ He was also the only Old Testament prophet specifically commissioned to be a witness to the Gentiles, as was Paul in the New Testament (Gal. 1:16; 2:2).
- ❖ Jonah was the only biblical prophet to run from his call by God.
- ❖ He was one of four Old Testament prophets whose ministries were referred to by Jesus in the New Testament.
  - Jonah (Matt. 12:41)
  - Elijah (Matt. 17:11, 12)
  - Elisha (Luke 4:27)
  - Isaiah (Matt. 15:7)
- ❖ Jonah may be compared to Simon Peter on one occasion: In Joppa, God called Jonah, a Hebrew prophet, to minister to the Gentiles. He disobeyed (Jonah 1). In

Joppa, God called Peter, a Hebrew apostle, to minister to the Gentiles. He obeyed (Acts 10).

- ❖ Jonah may be compared to John Mark on one occasion: John Mark failed God the first time but was allowed a second chance and succeeded. (See Acts 13:13; 15:36-40; 2 Tim. 4:11.) Jonah failed God the first time, but was allowed a second chance and succeeded (compare 1:2, 3 with 3:1-3).
- ❖ The fourth chapter of Jonah along with 2 Samuel 11 are probably Scripture's two greatest examples proving the Bible is not a book edited by humans, but rather an unabridged account by God Himself.
- ❖ According to Jewish tradition, Jonah was the son of the widow of Zarephath whom Elijah raised from the dead (1 Kings 17:8-24). In keeping with this thought, there are those who believe Jonah died in the fish's belly and was raised again (see 2:2, 6).
- ❖ Jonah's testimony inside the fish is really a summary of the entire Bible. In despair he cried out: "Salvation is of the Lord." (2:9).
- ❖ This book, for its size, records more miracles than any other biblical book, no less than eight in 48 verses, averaging one miracle per each six verses! Note:
  - The wind (1:4)
  - The calm (1:15)
  - The sea creature (1:17)
  - The survival in the sea creatures (2:1)
  - The release from the sea creature (2:10)
  - The gourd (4:6)
  - The worm (4:7)
  - The east wind (4:8)
- ❖ This book also shows God's foreign mission program was in existence centuries prior to the Great Commission of Matt. 28:19-20.
- ❖ Jonah is read every year by the Jews on the Day of Atonement— Yom Kippur.
- ❖ Finally, the book of Jonah vividly demonstrates that out of all God's vast and marvellously created universe, the only speck of matter that can say no to His Creator is man.
  - The wind obeyed him (1:4; 4:8)
  - The ocean obeyed him (1:11)
  - The fish obeyed him (1:17; 2:10)

- The gourd obeyed him (4:6)
- The worm obeyed him (4:7)

## Hebrew Names of GOD used in Jonah

❖ ELOHIM

## Revelation of JESUS CHRIST

God's words to Jonah in 4:10, 11 are paralleled by Jesus' words in John 3:16. God is concerned for all the inhabitants of the Earth. It is true that Christ has a special relationship with members of His body, the church, but Christ's love for the world was dramatically demonstrated when He died on the Cross for the sins of all mankind. John the Baptist acknowledged the universality of this love when he cried, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). God's love for all men as taught to Jonah was demonstrated ultimately in Jesus Christ who declared a coming Day when the elect will be gathered from the north, east, south, and west (Matt. 24:31).

## Work of THE HOLY SPIRIT

God's Spirit inspired Jonah to prophesy that land and position would be recovered by Israel. This happened under the leadership of Jeroboam II (2 Kin. 14:25). When the Spirit directed Jonah to go to Nineveh and prophesy against the people there, the prophet refused to follow the Lord's guidance.

The Spirit of God did not cease His work, but continued to intervene in Jonah's life and induce him to do God's will. When Jonah relented, the Spirit worked godly sorrow in the hearts of the people and they responded to the message of judgment. When Jonah refused to accept this divine work, the Holy Spirit showed him the contrast between his concern for a gourd and God's concern for the inhabitants of Nineveh.

## Mega Themes of Jonah

### GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Although the prophet Jonah tried to run away from God, God was in control. By controlling the stormy seas and a great fish, God displayed his absolute, yet loving guidance.

Rather than running from God, trust him with your past, present, and future. Saying no to God quickly leads to disaster. Saying yes brings new understanding of God and his purpose in the world.

### GOD'S MESSAGE TO ALL THE WORLD

God had given Jonah a purpose—to preach to the great Assyrian city of Nineveh. Jonah hated Nineveh, and so he responded with anger and indifference. Jonah had yet to learn that God loves all people. Through Jonah, God reminded Israel of its missionary purpose.

We must not limit our focus to our own people. God wants his people to proclaim his love in words and actions to the whole world. He wants us to be his missionaries wherever we are, wherever he sends us.

### REPENTANCE

When the reluctant preacher went to Nineveh, there was a great response. The people repented and turned to God. This was a powerful rebuke to the people of Israel, who thought they were better but refused to respond to God's message. God will forgive all those who turn from their sin.

God doesn't honor sham or pretense. He wants the sincere devotion of each person. It is not enough to share the privileges of Christianity; we must ask God to forgive us and to remove our sin. Refusing to repent shows that we still love our sin.

### GOD'S COMPASSION

God's message of love and forgiveness was not for the Jews alone. God loves all the people of the world. The Assyrians didn't deserve it, but God spared them when they repented. In his mercy, God did not reject Jonah for aborting his mission. God has great love, patience, and forgiveness.

God loves each of us, even when we fail him. But he also loves other people, including those not of our group, background, race, or denomination. When we accept his love, we must also learn to accept all those whom he loves. We will find it much easier to love others when we truly love God.

## Life Lessons in Jonah

Truth	Lesson
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<p><b>Growing in Godliness</b></p> <p>Jonah was a Jew, one of God's chosen people; and a prophet, one through whom God spoke by His Spirit.</p> <p>However, as we see in Jonah's life, true godliness is about a heart of submission, obedience, humility, and mercy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Understand that it is not enough just to have a name and a calling. Earnestly seek God, and ask Him to develop in you the character you will need to walk in His gifts and calling.</li> <li>❖ Jonah's disobedience and immaturity affected not only him, but also those around him.</li> <li>❖ Do not allow anger or pride to remain in your heart. They led to Jonah's disobedience. Turn away from these attitudes, and seek to have God's character of mercy, grace, patience, forgiveness, and lovingkindness.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cultivating Dynamic Devotion</b></p> <p>The Book of Jonah portrays the Lord as the God of second chances.</p> <p>Because of God's mercy, Jonah's disobedience did not disqualify him from service to God. Instead, God pursued him and used this reluctant prophet to change a great city. Because of God's mercy, a wicked city was given a second chance through repentance. As you read this book, look for all the places in which God shows His mercy.</p> <p>May the depth of the revelation of God's mercy cause your heart to worship.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Ask God's forgiveness and for His heart of mercy toward any people or place you may have deemed deserving of judgment or too wicked to be worth saving. Begin to pray, worship God, proclaim His character, and cry out for His mercy, so that repentance may come to those people or that place.</li> <li>❖ Ask God for a second chance. You may have disobeyed the Lord to the point that you believe He can no longer use you. Look at Jonah! There is hope for you, too. Ask God's forgiveness for your sin; submit to His will for you. Draw near to Him through worship; praise Him for His mercy, grace, and forgiveness.</li> <li>❖ Tell Him you will follow Him fully, and do it.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Pursuing Holiness</b></p> <p>Ironically, the picture of holiness seen in the Book of Jonah is found in the ungodly Assyrians and not in God's prophet. Apparently, Jonah held on to his anger toward God and to his hatred of the Assyrians to the end.</p> <p>The Assyrians, on the other hand, responded to God's word, repented, humbled themselves, and put their hope in God's mercy. God continues today to respond with mercy to the repentant heart.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Follow Nineveh's example of response to conviction of sin. Jonah had only begun to prophesy when the people believed God and responded. Respond quickly to God's Word.</li> <li>❖ Fast, humble yourself, turn from your sin, and put your hope in God's mercy, grace, and forgiveness.</li> <li>❖ Receive God's grace and forgiveness. He desires to have mercy on you and for everyone to come to Him in repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).</li> <li>❖ His mercy triumphs over judgment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Walk of Faith</b></p> <p>Jonah's faith in God was unwavering. He knew without a doubt who God was and that God would be true to His character. Transforming faith, however, is more than just knowledge about God. It changes us and molds us into the image of the One in whom we place our trust, and it is expressed through our actions and our attitudes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Let your faith in who God is transform who you are. Pray and ask the Lord to conform you into His image.</li> <li>❖ Respond to God's instruction with a willing heart that is open to change. By faith, receive the Lord's instruction; and allow it to change the way you think, feel, and behave.</li> </ul>

### Praise Points in Jonah

- ❖ His sovereignty over heaven and sea and land (1:9)
- ❖ His great deeds that cause even the ungodly to acknowledge him (1:15-16)
- ❖ His protection (1:17)
- ❖ His attentiveness to our prayers (2:1-2)
- ❖ His patience with us, especially when he offers us second chances (3:1)

- ❖ His word, which brings us to repentance (3:4-9)
- ❖ His grace and compassion for sinful people (4:2, 11)
- ❖ His lessons that he teaches us through our experiences (4:7-11).

### Worship Insights in Jonah

In the book of Jonah, we have two remarkable cases of worship from those who were not descendants of God's covenant people. In the first instance, the sailors on the ship to Tarshish pleaded for the Lord's mercy and, after the storm ceased, sacrificed to him, vowing to serve him. In the second instance, the people of Nineveh, who lived in a violent, pagan culture, repented and turned from their evil ways upon hearing Jonah's message.

- ❖ God's mighty deeds can cause even the ungodly to humbly acknowledge his greatness (1:15-16).
- ❖ God can hear our prayers from anywhere, even from the depths to which our rebellion has brought us (2:1-2).
- ❖ It is good to recall how the Lord has shown us mercy and compassion, snatching us "from the yawning jaws of death!" (2:6).
- ❖ The Lord is merciful and responds to genuine repentance (3:10).
- ❖ Those who genuinely love and worship God should be moved with compassion for those who do not know him (4:11).

### An Outline of Jonah

#### I. Running Away from God: [Jon 1:1-16](#)

- A. Jonah's Call and Ours
- B. Tarshish and Nineveh—Rebellion or Response
- C. The Inescapable Presence
- D. When Narcissism Turns to Masochism
- E. Intervention

#### II. Running Back to God: Jon. 1:17-2:10

- A. Jonah's Prayer
- B. Jonah's Deliverance
- C. Back to the Beginning

#### III. Running with God: [Jon 3:1-10](#)

- A.** Recall to Missions
- B.** The Success of the Mission
- C.** The Results of the Mission

**IV.** Running Ahead of God: [Jon 4:1-11](#)

- A.** A Petulant Prophet
- B.** A Merciful God
- C.** Oh, for Pity's Sake!