

Welcome to the book of Jonah!

Jonah, being a prophet and a patriot doubtless knew that Assyria was destined to destroy Israel. (Is. 7:17-20) He also was aware to how exceptionally brutal they were. The prophet Nahum wrote of their blood-thirsty nature, "Woe to the bloody city". (Nahum 3:1-4)

Jonah is thought to have been a follower of Elisha and is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25 during the reign of Jeroboam 2 which places the time around 782-753 B.C.

JONAH Compassion's Voice

God speaks through a...

Storm	Fish	Prophet	Plant
1:9, 12	2:9	3:4, 10	4:2, 10
1	2	3	4

"Should I not have compassion." 4:10, 11

Also note the passages listed within the overview chart above. How does each passage relate to the corresponding section title? What do you think about the purpose of the book as it relates to Jonah? Why do you think Jonah is the central figure in the book? How does this differ from the rest of the prophets?

In Jonah we see a "reluctant prophet". What caused him to be reluctant? What do we learn from the book about God's sovereignty? In what ways do you see yourself as a "reluctant servant"?

We have chosen 4:10, 11 for the key verse because it represents the core of God's instruction to this prophet. It is the extent of God's compassion that forces Jonah to flee. This is the central message of the book. It is certainly a glimpse of Christ mirroring the words of Paul in Ephesians. 3:14-19.

Open Your Heart as You Read!

We cannot run from the Lord! Often God will request that we do things that we find distasteful or threatening. Yet the word of the Lord will be accomplished. We can either run or submit. His plans will be accomplished with or without our cooperation.

KEY BACKGROUND on the book of Jonah

The book of Jonah is unique among the books of the prophets in that it records only one sentence of prophecy, addressing itself rather to the conflict between God and the prophet Jonah. We should walk a few miles in Jonah's sandals before too self-righteously condemning his reluctance to preach to Nineveh. Nineveh was Assyria's crown jewel. Jonah, being a prophet and a patriot doubtless knew that Assyria was destined to destroy Israel. (Isaiah 7:17-20) He also was aware of how exceptionally brutal they were. The prophet Nahum wrote of their blood-thirsty nature, "Woe to the bloody city". (Nahum 3:1-4)

AUTHOR AND AUDIENCE

Jonah's name means "dove". He was the son of Amittai (2 Kings 13:25). There is an old Jewish tradition that Jonah's mother was the widow of Zarephath and that Elijah raised Jonah from the dead (1 Kings 17:8-24). He was a native of the Northern Kingdom and a prophet to his own people, though his recorded message and mission was in Nineveh.

"The city of Nineveh was quite large, having a circumference of sixty miles that took three days to journey through (3:33). There also was a minimum of 600,000 people (4:11). Before Jonah came to Nineveh, two plagues had swept the city (765 and 759 B.C.) and a total eclipse of the sun occurred in 763. These may give a clue to the city's sudden repentance. Israel's overthrow by Assyria is predicted in Isaiah 7:17-20. He (Jonah) was the only prophet told to prophesy outside of the land and the only one that refused." (Excerpted from class notes, Dallas Seminary, John D. Hannah.)

WHY STUDY JONAH?

God had a marvelous way of bringing His children great opportunities sometimes disguised as impossible situations. Are you ready for God to do the unexpected in you and through you? Jonah wasn't. Are you prepared to handle "impossible situations" (Luke 18:27) today? Jonah couldn't. This may mean a shift in plans, an interruption, or an imposition. You have a choice. These situations can be treated as enemies or opportunities.

God is a God of graceful providence in second chances. Possibly you've blown it before with God and feel you can no longer be used by God because of past performance. If so, Jonah is a man and book for you to consider.



Jonah Chapter Chart

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Chapter	Title	Key Verse
1		
2		
3		
4		

Here are some questions that will help you to dig deeply for interpretation in the book of Jonah. You may wish to answer these questions as you read and title chapters.

CHAPTER 1

Why did Jonah run away? What do you think that the phrase “from the presence of the Lord” means? In what ways do you think this chapter reveals God’s compassion?

CHAPTER 2

Would you view the fish as an instrument of punishment? In what ways can we draw a comparison between Jonah’s three days in the belly of a great fish and Christ’s three days in the heart of the earth? (Note Matthew 12:39-41)

CHAPTER 3

Did God change His mind in any way? Can you think of any reasons why the Ninevites would respond so strongly to Jonah’s simple message?

CHAPTER 4

What does verse two tell us about Jonah the man and Jonah the believer? What do you think that Jonah considered his “good reason” of verse nine?

WHAT ABOUT TODAY?

As you think about God’s compassion compared with your own, meditate on Matthew 24:12,13. Consider if you have good reason to harbor anger or if there is anyone from whom you are withholding God’s compassion!

Besides God’s obvious compassion on Nineveh, take note of his patience and gentle correction of Jonah. Call to mind some of the times that God has shown specific compassion on you!

Meditate on Jonah’s prayer by trying to put yourself in his place. Could you be thankful for being in the belly of a fish? God’s process of salvation and deliverance is not often what we would choose. Can you, like the Apostle Paul, honor God in all circumstances? (2 Corinthians 12:9,10)