



## Minor Prophets Part 1

### Lesson 7: Jonah

#### 1. Introduction to Jonah

Jonah was a strong-minded prophet. His journey to Nineveh was the first recorded missionary journey to the Gentiles.

This book gives us the wonderful assurance that God has always been willing to save the lost, regardless of personal prejudices.

The date of his ministry is contained in 2 Kings 14.

#### 2 Kings 14:25-27

The prophecies he brought forth came during the reign of Joash, the father of Jeroboam. Jonah prophesied that Israel would be restored under Jeroboam.

Elisha died during the early part of Joash's reign. So, Jonah appears to be the earliest of the minor prophets.

Some people have claimed that this book is mythical and not a real account. They claim the story is only told to prove a point. But Jonah was a real person, and everything truly happened.

#### 2. God's instructions to Jonah

**Jonah 1:1, 2**

#### 3. Jonah tries to escape.

- Jonah was called by God to be a prophet. He was commissioned to preach to Nineveh. God had compassion on the city's people.

**Jonah 1:2**

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Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, a rising world power. They were an enemy of Israel.

Nineveh had been the home of every evil - injustice, violence, and cruelty. The proud city sent armies into neighboring kingdoms because of their intense lust for conquest. Because of this, there was hatred from conquered nations. But the hour of judgment had arrived and within forty days, it was appointed that the city would come to ruins.

Jonah did not want to go to Ninevah because he knew, if the people repented, God would have compassion on them.

### **Jonah 4:2**

God was moved with compassion and desired that Ninevah come to a place of repentance through the ministry of Jonah. Jonah, however, wished for the destruction of Ninevah.

Jonah was prideful, and he also knew that God would be merciful. So, he refused to go.

He also felt that he had a good reputation as a prophet, and if he followed through with the mission that God gave him, his reputation would suffer.

Jonah was raised believing that the Jews were the salt of the earth, and all heathen people were outside of the scope of God's divine mercy.

Jewish prophets preached to Jews only. Their utterances concerning foreign nations were mainly words of judgment. What God asked Jonah to do was unheard of. It was unusual that a prophet would bring a message of repentance to a foreign country.

Jonah knew that God's purpose was to bring the Ninevites to repentance. If they repented, the destruction of their city would not occur. Jonah figured out that he was being sent on a mission of mercy to the heathen, which was a very strange idea during his time.

Jonah did not want Nineveh to repent and escape the judgment of God. If they repented, it would be a loss to Israel and to their security as a nation. The destruction of Ninevah would remove danger of Assyria from Israel.

About twenty years earlier, the prophet Isaiah had predicted the invasion of Israel by the king of Assyria.

### **Isaiah 7:17**

- Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah tried to flee on a ship bound for Tarshish.

To avoid carrying out the mission that God wanted him to do, Jonah went down to Joppa. This was the main seaport of Israel. He found a ship that was ready to sail westward. He paid the fair, went on board, and fell asleep.

He fled from the presence of the Lord for fear of his own reputation suffering. If Nineveh repented, he would not be popular with the people of Israel.

### **Jonah 1:3**

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### **Jonah 1:4, 5**

- The ship's crew questioned Jonah.

### **Jonah 1:6-8**

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### **Jonah 1:9, 10**

#### **4. Jonah's punishment and deliverance**

- Jonah was thrown into the sea by the ship's crew.

### **Jonah 1:14, 15**

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### **Jonah 1:17**

Some have said that this could never have happened. But Jesus authenticated the story. in the Gospel of Matthew.

### **Matthew 12:39-41**

This was not a whale. \_\_\_\_\_

Whatever type of fish swallowed Jonah, the disaster was Jonah's deliverance.

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We can tell from the following verses that there was a change in Jonah's heart.

**Jonah 2:9, 10**

**5. Jonah is recommissioned.**

- Jonah had learned his lesson. This time he obeyed God without hesitation.

**Jonah 3:1-3**

It is very possible that the people of Nineveh already knew him because he had prophesied in the past things that had come to pass.

Ninevah was an old city even in the day of Jonah. It was founded by Nimrod.

**Genesis 10:8-11**

It was a great city whose wealth had been built on the spoils of war. It was well fortified. The walls were 100 feet high.

Jonah began to preach to the people with no fear. He had just spent three days and three nights in the belly of a fish and, in a sense, was resurrected. He told them that in forty days they would be overthrown.

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- The king of Nineveh heard the message and ordered the people to repent with sackcloth and ashes.

**Jonah 3:6-9**

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**Jonah 3:10**

**6. An Old Testament revival that is a picture of God's New Testament grace.**

Jonah chapter 3 is the greatest revival recorded in the Old Testament.

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The book of Jonah shows God's love for both Jew and Gentile. Unlike any other story in the Old Testament, the Book of Jonah is prophetic of the New Testament preaching of the Gospel to the masses of people in cities and nations.

## **7. Backslidden Jonah**

In the last chapter of Jonah, Jonah becomes the person of the first chapter. He does not like that the people of Ninevah listened to him. He wanted them to ignore his message and anticipated God's judgment.

Politically it would have been better for Ninevah to be destroyed so that Assyria would be weakened. But God deprived Jonah of this patriotic satisfaction and even rebuked him.

### **Jonah 4:4**

Jonah sat on a hillside overlooking Ninevah. To screen himself from the burning sun, he built a booth, which only partially worked.

A plant grew in the night, and Jonah rejoiced in the shelter it gave him from the sun. But a worm came and damaged the plant so that that next day the plant was withered.

It was a message from God.

### **Jonah 4:10, 11**

Jonah was a typical bigot of his time.

Yes, he was a devout man. Even Jesus recognized him as a true prophet. But in his mind, he limited God's love and mercy to only the people of Israel.

In one sense, Jonah is a book about missions. It is good to be patriotic, but if we are only concerned about our own nation, then we do not have the heart of God. God loves all people.

God wants us to have a heart as big as his. His heart is as big as the world

## **8. Jonah chapter 2 is a picture of Jesus in hell.**

### **Matthew 12:38-40**

### **Jonah 1:17**

### **Jonah 2:1, 2**

Jonah is a prophet speaking as Jesus.

Definition of SHEAOL (Hebrew): \_\_\_\_\_

Jonah was not in Hell. He was in a fish. But he speaks prophetically about Jesus.

**Jonah 2:3**

This describes the judgement of God.

**Jonah 2:6**

This is speaking about the heart of the earth.

**9. What can we learn from Jonah?**

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Jonah flees in the opposite direction of Nineveh, yet the problem follows him onto the ship.

Ignoring hard responsibilities at work, in relationships, or in the ministry usually creates turbulence somewhere else.

- God's compassion is wider than our comfort.

Jonah's real struggles is that he knows God will forgive Nineveh, and that's exactly what he resents.

The book exposes how easily we limit compassion to people we think deserve it.

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Jonah is doctrinally correct in Jonah 4:2.

**Jonah 4:2**

Jonah is doctrinally correct but morally out of step with God's heart. The story warns that correctness without compassion can harden us.

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Jonah's anger over the plant reveals his misplaced priorities.

When something small makes us furious, it's often pointing to something deeper we are protecting.