

# Jonah

## Summary

God orders Jonah to go to Nineveh, one of the biggest and most prosperous cities in the Assyrian Empire, to tell them to repent of their evil actions. Jonah is frightened about going to a pagan nation and telling them to change their way of life. He believes they will not listen to him and possibly even harm him for his proclamation. Instead of answering God's call, Jonah flees by ship in the opposite direction. God then brings a storm to impede his progress. When it is discovered that Jonah is the reason for the trouble in the ship, Jonah tells them to throw him overboard so that they may be spared. God brings a large fish to swallow Jonah, and he remains in the fish for three days and three nights. While inside the fish, Jonah prays for a second chance. When it releases him, he finally goes to Nineveh and brings the message from God. The people respond to the message and repent of their evil actions. Although it was God's desire for the people of Nineveh to repent, Jonah is angered that God so readily spared them from all their evil actions. At the end of the book, God chastises Jonah for his selfishness and lack of grace.

## Author

The book does not identify its author, but tradition says Jonah wrote this brief prophecy

## Date

Most Old Testament scholars believe Jonah was written before the fall of Samaria in 722 to 721 B.C..

## Primary Characters

Jonah (Jonah 1-4)

The People of Nineveh (Jonah 3-4)

## Historical Moments

Jonah Flees from His Mission (Jonah 1)

The People of Nineveh Repent (Jonah 3)

## Major Theological Themes

**God Is Compassionate** - In the story of Jonah, it is clear that God cares not only for the people of Israel but for all people of the world. His compassion is not only for those who have already come to Him but also for those who rebel against Him. He asks Jonah at the end of the story, *should I not be concerned about that great city?* (Jonah 4:11). This question should challenge us to have hearts as boundless as the heart of God.

**God Does Not Desire Punishment** - In the story of Jonah, it is clear that God does not desire to bring judgment and punishment on the people of Nineveh, however, He does desire their repentance. When the people relent in their sin and rebellion against God, God responds with judgment. In the book of Jonah, God gives the people full assurance that He will respond to their change of heart and He follows through with His promise.

## Lessons Learned from Jonah

**We Cannot Run from God** - Jonah heard a message directly from the Lord, but he foolishly believed that he could run from the will of God. There are many times when God calls us to do something in our lives, but it is our responsibility to respond to His calling. If we do not follow this call, we will miss out on the amazing work that He wants to do in our lives.

**We Should Celebrate God's Forgiveness and Grace** - Jonah was called to ask the people of Nineveh to repent of their evil ways and to turn towards the ways of the Lord. As Christians, we should be passionate about helping people live in a way that is healthy for them and in a way that honors God. This means speaking truth into their lives, but it also means celebrating when they are moving in the right direction. We should never be jealous of any blessing that God gives to another because He has also given us infinite blessings through our own forgiveness.