

# THE BOOK OF JONAH

## *Introduction and Chapters 1-2*

*Teacher: John M. Brown, Flatwoods church of Christ. Wednesday Adult Class*

**AUTHOR:** Jonah (meaning "Dove")

1. Son of Amittai; hometown Gath-hepher (near Nazareth) in the Northern Kingdom.
2. Jonah lived during the reign of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:25).
3. Jonah is called to a particular mission, but initially refused compliance with the Divine purpose and plan.
4. Jonah is cast into the sea, but preserved by God, and repentant Jonah is restored.
5. Jonah is obedient to his mission to Nineveh and ultimately successful.

**DATE:** 780-730 B.C.

**THEME:** A call to repentance in view of the impending destruction of Nineveh (capital city of Assyria) by God.

1. Nineveh is one of the oldest cities in history, dating back to shortly after the flood (Genesis 10:8-12).
2. It was located on the Tigris River, some 250 miles north of Babylon (and about 220 miles north and west of present day Baghdad).
3. Greater Nineveh was a complex of several cities and suburbs, some 60 miles in circumference.

**PURPOSE:**

1. To show God's concern even for foreign nations.
2. To show that God is the only true God.

**HISTORICAL OR ALLEGORICAL ?**

Some have regarded the book of Jonah as mythological or allegorical, maintaining the events described therein were Jewish mythology, not actual happenings. But we must reject that view entirely! Jonah was an actual person (2 Kings 14:25) whom Jesus regarded as an historical person (Matthew 12:38-41; Luke 11:29-32).

**THE SETTING:**

1. Jeroboam II had re-established much of Israel's former glory and land holdings.
2. Assyria would eventually be increasing in power and come to take Israel captive.
3. Jonah preaches repentance to Nineveh toward the one true God they hadn't known.
4. Remember that Assyria was a war-like nation considered the scourge of the ancient world (read the book of Nahum for a further description).

**SHORT OUTLINE:** Someone has suggested the following short outline:

- I. RUNNING FROM GOD, 1:1-16
- II. RUNNING TO GOD, 1:17-2:10
- III. RUNNING WITH GOD, 3
- IV. RUNNING AHEAD OF GOD, 4

## JONAH Chapters 1 -2

### I. JONAH'S FLIGHT, chapter 1

#### A. Jonah disobeys the Lord's word, vv. 1-3

1. Jonah is to cry against Nineveh for her wickedness.
2. Instead, Jonah seeks to flee by ship from the Lord's presence (cf. Psalm 139:7-12).

#### B. God sends a great wind against the ship, vv. 4-11

#### C. Jonah is cast into the sea, vv. 12-17

1. The men on the ship knew that Jonah's actions had brought on this great wind.
2. Jonah is swallowed by a "great fish" prepared by the Lord.

### II. JONAH'S PRAYER, chapter 2

#### A. Jonah cried unto God from the fish's belly, vv. 1-9

1. The reason Jonah cried unto God: because of his affliction.
2. Previously, Jonah had sought to run from God; now he runs to God!
3. Jonah is penitent under chastisement.

*Note: "hell" in verse 2 is "sheol" (the grave) -Jonah is recognizing that he was at "death's door" when in the belly of the fish.*

#### B. God answers Jonah's prayer by having the fish spit him up on dry land, v. 10

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## *Chapters 3-4*

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### I. JONAH'S PREACHING, chapter 3

#### A. Jonah preaches unto Nineveh, vv .1-4

1. God again commands Jonah; this time he obeys!
2. His cry: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

#### B. The result, vv .5-10

1. The people of Nineveh believed God!
2. What had happened to Jonah (the miraculous interventions of God) must have been known by the people of Nineveh, for Jonah is called a "sign" unto them (see Luke 11:30).
3. A time of repentance (fasting) is proclaimed through the city.
4. The result -Nineveh is spared by God.

### II. JONAH'S LESSON, chapter 4

#### A. Jonah is very angry and complains to God, vv. 1-3

1. He didn't want Nineveh to be spared!
2. Yet Jonah knew of God's graciousness, mercy, patience, and kindness.
3. Jonah desires to die rather than live.

#### B. God's object lesson to Jonah, vv. 4-11

1. God asks Jonah if he has a reason to be angry .
2. Jonah sits himself under some branches to wait and see what would become of the city.
3. God causes large leaves to shadow Jonah to protect him.
4. Then God causes the leaf of the gourd to wither, and sends wind and heat against Jonah, and Jonah is angry that the plant died.
5. The point: Jonah was upset about the loss of a plant that was not his; shouldn't God be concerned about the potential loss of thousands of people, whom He had created?