

JONAH

- Jesus referred to Jonah (meaning “dove”) as a prophet (Mt 12:39-41) who came from Zebulun as did 11 of Jesus disciples. Jesus quotes from Jonah several other times as well (Matthew 16:4; Luke 11:29)
- Just as Israel was called to witness to the world, Jonah was called to witness to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Jonah’s ministry was ~760 BC which was approximately 40 years before Assyria invaded Israel in 722 BC.
- It is thought that Nineveh had been made ready for the message of repentance through two events: Famines in 765 & 759 BC as well as a solar eclipse on June 15, 763 BC. Jonah is mentioned during the reign of Jeroboam II (circa 783-743BC) – 2 Kings 14:25. Nineveh was destroyed by Babylon in 612BC.
- Nineveh had been founded by Nimrod (Gen 10:11), and their primary deity was Dagan/Assor (“the Fish god”) who was part man and part fish. Interestingly, “Oannes” was the name of the incarnation of Dagan; an “I” in front of the name spells “Jonah” in Greek.
- Nineveh was populous (600,000 to 1 million people) with walls that were 100 feet high and broad enough to ride three chariots abreast with 1500 towers along the wall which enclosed this city that was 60 miles in circumference.

18 Jonah 1-4

Read Jonah 1:1-3 ... Jonah Flees from Calling to Nineveh

- 1:1 The name “Amittai” means “my faithfulness” (2 Kings 14:25) while the name “Jonah” means dove which is the reason that some believe that Jonah represents the nation of Israel who is symbolized by a dove.
- 1:2 Unlike the great commission of Mk 16:15, Jonah is told to go address Nineveh’s sin by witnessing “against” them instead of “to” them. Nineveh was a large city on the Tigris River.
- The Hebrew term for “cry/call out” (qarā קָרָא) is the same term that the captain of the ship yelled to Jonah when the storm occurred – “*Call* to your god.”
- 1:3 Tarshish (2 Chron 9:21 – possibly Spain) was a land associated with wealth, and as such, Jonah chooses material over spiritual calling.
- Jonah goes “down” to Joppa (“fair”) and then “down” into the ship as if to hide (Ps 139:7-12).
 - Joppa became the modern city of Tel Aviv.
 - Over six centuries later, Peter would have the same choice to make in regards to taking the Gospel message to the Gentiles. As Peter stayed with the tanner in Joppa (Acts 9:36-43), a Roman centurion would send for Peter to convert the first Gentiles with the gospel (Acts 10:5, 8, 23, 32; 11:5, 13).
 - Jonah would indeed pay his own fare. (Psalm 139:7-12)
 - Phoenician ships had two decks with 30-50 rowers with the top being a half deck.

Read Jonah 1:4-10 ... God Hurls Storm at Jonah's Ship

1:4 This east wind used by God (Job 4:8) was prophesied centuries earlier to break those running to worldly gain instead of pursuing ministry (Ps 48:7; Gen 41:6; Hos 12:1).

1:5 Jonah's sin put others (sailors) in jeopardy – a person's sin is not their own.

- When the sailors became fearful, their first response to call to their false gods.
- The men experiencing God's judgment began throwing everything they owned overboard; God's judgment brings great loss. These men would not reclaim their losses although they would escape with their lives.
- While the sailors called to their false gods, Jonah does not talk with the true God; sin brings separation. Jonah seems to accept death or any divine discipline that is occurring.

1:6 So many people are not awake to their present dire situation; mankind should be calling out to God (John 11:49-51).

- The Hebrew term for "cry/call out" (qerā קָרָא) is the same action that God told Jonah to make towards Nineveh – "Call out against it."

1:7 There is no coincidence or luck (Prov 16:33). The sailors understood that God was judging someone on their ship.

- God answered the casting of lots even though the lots were cast by pagan sailors who were trying to know the will of God.
- The casting of lots is repeatedly used in Scripture to understand the will of God (Exodus 28:30; Joshua 7:14; 1 Samuel 14:40; Acts 1:26)
- The casting of lots could have taken several forms:
 - Several white rocks and a single black rock
 - Two rocks which have the words "Yes" and "No"
 - Some form of Spelling
- Lots were used at the crucifixion of Christ as well (Matthew 27:35; John 19:24)

1:8 When the sailors discovered (by lot) that the storm was directed towards Jonah, they wanted to know all they could about him. Their first question was about his occupation, and then of which people group he belonged.

1:9 Jonah claims to fear the LORD ("Yahweh") which was God's covenant name from the Hebrew term "To Be" (Exodus 3:14).

- This is the only time that the term Hebrew (עִבְרִי 'ibri) is used outside of the first two books of the Bible (Genesis 39:14, 41:12; Exodus 2:11, 21:2). This term 'ibri means "one who crosses a boundary" so it carries the inference of "foreigners" or "sojourners."
- The defining character of God that Jonah describes is that He made the sea and dry land. In the tumultuous sea, Jonah may have desired dry land at the time.

1:10 The sailors ask Jonah, "what have you done?" Jonah admitted his flight to the sailors. Just as would be with Nineveh, the pagan sailors appear more reverent towards God than God's prophet.

Read Jonah 1:11-16 ... Jonah Hurlled into Sea

1:11 The sailors trusted in the one who was to be sacrificed to tell them how to quiet the increasingly tumultuous sea around them.

1:12 Jonah did not jump into the sea on his own volition, but he did tell the men that if they sacrificed him, the sea would quiet down. Jonah was a foreshadowing of Christ being sacrificed for the people who killed him.

1:13 In spite of the sailors hearing that a single man must be sacrificed to save them, they continued with self-effort by rowing and throwing things overboard.

1:14 The sailors call out to “Yahweh” (spelled with capital letters “LORD”) three times in this verse.

- As with the purity of Jesus at His crucifixion, the sailors describe Jonah’s blood as innocent (Deuteronomy 21:8; Matthew 27:34-35) as they showed faith that the sacrifice of him alone would save them. Jonah was a foreshadowing of Christ in this sacrifice.

1:15 Just as the “great wind” had been “hurled” by the Lord upon the sea (Jonah 1:4), the sailors “hurled” Jonah into the sea.

1:16 The sailors had feared the storm, but as they witnessed the Creator God quelling the storm, their fear shifted from nature to the One Who created nature. The sailors had learned to fear Yahweh.

- The men offered a sacrifice to God on a wooden boat, so the sacrifice was without fire; it may have been a “sacrifice” of praise (Jonah 2:9).

Read Jonah 1:17 ... God Appoints Fish to Save Jonah

1:17 God appointed a great fish to swallow the sacrifice where Jonah remained for three days and three nights; this would be used to represent Jesus being in the “*heart of the earth*” three days and nights (Matthew 12:40).

- The records of the British Admiralty document that in February, 1891, an apprentice seaman on a whaler (James Bartley 1870-1909), was swallowed by a whale east of the Falkland Islands. The whale was captured, and after being in the stomach of the whale for two days, James Bartley was removed alive and went on to live 18 years.

Read Jonah 2:1-10 ... Jonah’s Prayer and Deliverance

- **Chapter 2 is a poetic prayer.**

2:1 This time Jonah instigated his own prayer without encouragement (unlike Jonah 1:6)

2:2 “*I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and He answered me.*”

- Sheol is the holding place of the dead. Sheol is synonymous with the New Testament concept of hades (Luke 16:23).
 - Rabbi’s believed that Sheol/Hades was divided into two sections: Paradise for the righteous (Luke 16:19-31) and Tartarus for the wicked (2 Peter 2:4).
 - This is not “hell” as no one is in hell until after the Judgment Day (Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14-15); another New Testament name for “hell” would be Gehenna.

2:3 Jonah understands that the Lord brought this disaster about as discipline and to make Jonah turn to Him.

2:4 Jonah understands that God has banished him contrasted to his fleeing from God (Jonah 1:3). Jonah longs to worship the Lord again in Jerusalem (at His holy Temple).

- 2:5 As Jonah fell into the waters, he may have sunk to the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea as the sea weeds engulfed him before the fish swallowed him.
- 2:6 God reclaimed Jonah's life from certain death. The term "pit" is used as a synonym for Sheol.
- 2:7 As Jonah began to drown, his small prayer was heard by the Lord. Once again, God's "holy temple" is identified (Jonah 2:4).
- 2:8 Jonah realizes that false idols are vanity while he is loved by a merciful God.
- 2:9 Jonah proclaims his gratitude and appreciation as a sacrifice to the Lord.
- 2:10 The instrument of death became the vehicle of life; Jonah would have never survived without the great fish carrying him to land (Mt 10:39, 16:25).

Read Jonah 3:1-4 ... Jonah Preaches to Nineveh

- 3:1 Just as the Word of the Lord came earlier; God calls Jonah again. God worked with the rebellious prophet until Jonah returned to the Lord.
- 3:2 God does not yet tell Jonah the message, but He tells Jonah to go to Nineveh and prepare to be the vessel of God's message.

Three "Great" Things of Jonah	
The "Great" Storm	Jonah 1:4
The "Great" Fish	Jonah 1:17
The "Great" City	Jonah 3:2

- 3:3-4 Jonah walked in Nineveh for 3 days preaching a 7-word sermon about God's wrath coming in 40 days (number of testing).
- Possibly the reason that Jonah's sermon was so potent was that Nineveh knew of his being thought dead for three days and then arriving to shore was a powerful testimony like Jesus in His resurrection (Mt 12:39).
 - The large city of Nineveh may have had a circumference of 60 miles (including surrounding communities) with 1500 towers in the city walls. Three chariots could ride abreast around the 100 feet high walls.
 - The Hebrew word for "overthrown" (haphak פָּהַק) is the same word used for judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:29).

Read Jonah 3:5-10 ... Nineveh Repents & God Relents

- 3:5 *"The people of Nineveh believed God."*
- The Hebrew word for "believed" ('a'āmin אָמֵן) is "amen" that is transliterated into Greek (and English) as the same word "amen."
 - Jesus uses the Ninevites as an example of faith (Matthew 12:41; Luke 11:32)
- 3:6 The king of Nineveh declared a national day of fasting to humble themselves before the living God.
- Nineveh's fast represented the act of not gratifying the flesh while the sackcloth represented humility.
 - God's purity burns all the dross of this world leaving nothing but ash (1 Cor 3:11-15).
- 3:7 The fast carried signs of mourning; it was a radical fast with food or water. The animals were included in the repentance and salvation (Jonah 4:11)
- 3:8 There was an individual responsibility was beyond turning from their evil and violence to a relationship as they called out and communed with God.

- 3:9 The king did not know whether God would relent of His judgment, but the king humbled himself as well as his people because he understood that God would be the only chance of salvation.
- The Hebrew term “relent” carries with it the meaning of a sigh (Jonah 3:9, 10, 4:2); the Hebrew name Nahum also carries the inference of a sigh.
 - This is an anthropomorphic statement as God is described within the boundaries of human intellect by using human characteristics to describe Him.
- 3:10 God witnessed the repentance of the wicked inhabitants of Nineveh, so He relented from His judgment.

Read Jonah 4:1-3 ... Jonah Is Angered by the Mercy of God

- 4:1 Jonah’s pride might have been breached as there is a possibility that he would now be discredited as a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:21-22 → Jonah 3:4)
- 4:2 Jonah’s envy of Nineveh’s salvation is symbolic of the Jew’s envy of Gentiles findings salvation (Romans 10:19, 11:11).
- The term “gracious” means giver of good things.
 - God is consistently compassionate (Ex 34:6-7; Numbers 14:18; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 86:5, 15; 103:8; 145:8). Jonah’s wording is very similar to Joel 2:13.
 - The Hebrew term for mercy or compassion is from the root “to love.” God has a love for all men – even Gentiles (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9)
 - The term “loving kindness” or “steadfast love” is the Hebrew term *hesed* (חֶסֶד) which is the “covenant” verb only used to describe God’s love for His people.
 - The term “*hesed*” is similar to the New Testament concept of “agape” which means that there will be faithful love (fidelity; loyalty) regardless of the conditions.
- 4:3 Unlike Jonah’s humility in the fish (Jonah 2:2), he now tells God to take his life (Jonah 4:8).
- There were several characters in Scripture who ask that God take their life: Moses (Numbers 11:15); Elijah (1 Kings 19:4). Others regretted the day they were born: Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:14-18); Job (Job 3:11)

Read Jonah 4:4-11 ... Jonah Struggles with the Sovereignty of God

- 4:4 Twice God asks Jonah if it is right for him to be angry (Jonah 4:9).
- 4:5 An answer from Jonah to the Lord is not recorded, but he went east of the city and sat under a makeshift structure.
- The same Hebrew word for “shelter” (*sukkah* סֻכָּה) is recorded for “booths” in the “Feast of Tabernacles” (Leviticus 23:40-42).
 - The difference between the shade and the sun is usually only 10-15 degrees, but in the mid-eastern deserts the difference could be two or three times that.
- 4:6 Jonah continued to struggle as he was more delighted in his comfort (the shade) than in others salvation (missions).
- The shade might also represent an impediment to truth while the sunlight reveals/uncovers truth.
- 4:7 God appoints parts of His creation for salvation and parts of His creation for destruction.

4:8 The Hebrew word for “appointed” is “wayman” (ַמְנִי) which is used only one other place in Scripture when the king gave daily rations to the subjects in His palace. (Daniel 1:5)

- God has four appointments in this book of Jonah – a fish (1:17), a plant (4:6), a worm (4:7), wind (4:8)

God’s “Appointed” in the Book of Jonah	
A Fish	Jonah 1:17
A Plant	Jonah 4:6
A Worm	Jonah 4:7
A Wind	Jonah 4:8

- The “scorching east wind” is called a “sirocco” that originates in the Sahara Desert and can gust up to 74 miles-per-hour.

4:9 God repeats His earlier question about Job’s anger (Jonah 4:4)

4:10 Although Jonah had not done anything to deserve the shade for the plant, Jonah was disturbed when it was taken from him.

4:11 The 120,000 might only refer to infants being under the age of accountability; however, this could also refer to adults who do not have any sense of morality because they did not have access the Law of Moses.

- God had compassion on the cattle as well; God loves His creation and cares for animals (Proverbs 12:10; 27:23; 50:10-11; Matthew 6:26-30; 10:29)