



THE
BOOK
OF
JONAH


**CALVARY
MEN**

2021 BIBLE STUDY
CALVARY CHAPEL GREEN VALLEY

JONAH 1:1-3

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ² “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.” ³ But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

Jonah: From the Hebrew name יוֹנָה (Yonah) meaning “dove”.

Amittai: Means “my truth” in Hebrew.

Nineveh: Nineveh was located east of the Tigris River in modern-day Iraq. It was more than 500 miles east of Jonah’s hometown. Tarshish, in contrast, was west of Gath-hepher. In fact, Tarshish stood more than 2,500 miles from Israel in the opposite direction of Nineveh. It was the most remote destination available to Jonah. Jonah was trying to put as much distance as he could between himself and the Assyrians. Whatever happened to Nineveh, Jonah would not be there to see it.

Jonah’s reason for running was that, quite simply, he did not like the Assyrians. Assyria was an idolatrous, proud, and ruthless nation bent on world conquest and had long been a threat to Israel.

Nineveh had long been an enemy of Judah and Israel, the people of God. In 722 B.C., the Assyrians defeated the northern kingdom of Israel, destroying its capital, Samaria. In 701 B.C., the Assyrians nearly conquered Jerusalem, the capital of Judah.

The book of Nahum provides additional clues regarding God’s anger with the Ninevites. Nahum 3:1 says, “Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims!” Nineveh was a city of violence, known for its brutal treatment of those it conquered. The Assyrians were notorious for amputating hands and feet, gouging eyes, and skinning and impaling their captives. The final verse of Nahum’s book emphasizes the violence of the Assyrians in the form of a rhetorical question: “Who has not felt your endless cruelty?” (Nahum 3:19).

Did you know?

This was the only case where God sent His prophet to a Gentile nation, instead of to Israel.

JONAH | *Questions & Comments*

1. Before we get into the study: Comment about your thoughts and understanding about Jonah and the big fish. Fact or Fiction, explain.

2. What command did God give to Jonah and why? When do you think God expected Jonah to respond to His instruction?

3. What was Jonah's response? Why do you think he responded in this way?

4. Would your response have been any different? Explain.

5. Imagine the world we live in today ... Do you believe it is in moral decay? Are there things that anger or frustrate you when you read, hear, or watch the daily news? What do you believe God's Word says to us regarding His calling in our lives, in relation to those around us? If possible, list the Bible references that support your conclusion.

JONAH 1:3-4

³ But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went **down** to Joppa, and **found a ship** going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went **down** into it, to go with them to Tarshish **from the presence of the LORD**.

⁴ But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.

Nineveh was located 550 miles northeast of Samaria. This would have required Jonah to travel more than a month, if he journeyed the usual 15-20 miles a day. So not only was the city the largest in the world at the time (second only to Babylon; probably with a population of ~600,000), and known for violence, but it was also quite a lengthy journey from where he was. Jonah had numerous reasons for not wanting to go, but none were GOOD reasons.

"The name Nineveh is thought to derive from "ninus," and means the residence of Nimrod or "nunu," which means "fish." The people worshiped the fish goddess Nanshe (the daughter of Ea, the goddess of fresh water) and Dagon the fish god who was represented as half man and half fish. Isn't it interesting that the Ninevites were fish worshipers, and Jonah was swallowed by a big fish? Anyway, this city was a center for idol worship, and was later destroyed for that very reason.

This is the only recorded instance of a prophet refusing God's commission. If the location is as suspected, it was as far west in the opposite direction as possible. Definite rebellion. H.C. Woodring says of it- "God wanted him to go to Nineveh, 500 miles northeast of Palestine. Instead of going east, Jonah went 2000 miles to the west. God wished Jonah to take an overland trip via the Fertile Crescent. Instead he took a distasteful sea voyage (the Jews hated the sea). God sent him to the greatest metropolis of the day. Instead Jonah headed for a remote trading post on the fringes of civilization. **The Lord wished to go with His prophet. Instead Jonah tried to flee from the presence and power of God.**"

JONAH | *Questions & Comments*

From Charles Spurgeon: In his sermon titled “Runaway Jonah, and the Convenient Ship”

1. WE MAY NOT FOLLOW OUR IMPULSES TO DO WRONG. Jonah felt it come upon him, all of a sudden, not to go to Nineveh, but to Tarshish. “Tarshish! Tarshish!” was constantly whispered in his ear, till he had Tarshish on the brain, and go he must.

WE MAY NOT TAKE A WRONG COURSE BECAUSE IT SEEMS EASY. Jonah says, “I will go to Tarshish.” And he goes down to the port of Joppa, and there he finds a ship just going to Tarshish. How easy a thing it often is to carry out an evil purpose! My dear hearers, whether you are Christians or are not Christians, I want to put you on your guard against the idea that, because a certain course in life is very natural and easy, you may therefore follow it, though it is not right. Remember that the way of destruction is always easy. “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, and many there be which go in.” The way to hell is downhill; and this is easy travelling.

2. Have you ever found it to be true that when you are fleeing God, it leads to a downward spiral and that the enemy often provides a ship going in the opposite direction? Jonah “paid the fare..”- has your running from God ever been costly?

3. Did Jonah succeed in fleeing from the LORD? Turn to and read Psalm 139:7-12. Comment on what you just read. Feel free to read all of Psalm 139.

4. What was the Lord’s response to Jonah’s disobedience? What did this display about the Lord’s character and His power? V4

5. How did this endanger others traveling with him? V4

JONAH 1: 4-5

But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.

⁵ Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

The mariners were probably Phoenicians, who believed in many gods, but not the true God. Phoenicians were known for their multi-theism and skill at sea. Note that the storm must have been very severe if such seasoned sailors were afraid because of it.

Psalm 107: 25-28 paints a vivid picture of the mighty tempest on the sea. “For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths; Their soul melts because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits’ end. Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses.”

From Jon Courson: Sometimes God sends storms of severity in order to bring His children into port safely. Such was Jonah’s case. This storm was not the result of God’s punishment of Jonah, but His patience with Jonah. You see, had Jonah listened, through the howling wind of the storm, he could have heard God’s voice saying,

‘I’m not going to let you go, Jonah. I love you too much. So blow, wind, blow.’

Not every storm, however, is the result of rebellion. Jesus sent His disciples straight into storms on more than one occasion not because they were sinning, but because they had need of strengthening – not to destroy them, but to develop them.

JONAH | *Questions & Comments*

1. Can you remember storms in your life that resembled the mighty tempest mentioned in Psalm 107? If so, how did you weather the storm?

2. What were the mariners' three responses to the storm? What does this say about the severity of the storm?

3. What was Jonah's initial response to the storm?

Comment: First Jonah went down to Joppa. Then he went down into the ship. Now we see that he went he even further down as he had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship. He was sinking, but he had not yet hit rock bottom. Disobedience to God always leads us down.

4. What does Jonah's initial response indicate about his character?

5. The Lord caused a great wind to rise up and stir up a storm large enough to threaten the ship Jonah was on as well as others traveling with him. Have you ever noticed that our sin splashes over to others? If so, please give personal examples, or examples of how someone's sin can splash over to others.

Matthew 8: 24-27: And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. ²⁵ Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" ²⁶ But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. ²⁷ So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

6. What hope can be gleaned from this passage?

JONAH 1: 4-9

But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.

⁵ Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that **was** in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

⁶ So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish."

⁷ And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble **has come** upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸ Then they said to him, "Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?"

⁹ So he said to them, "I **am** a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry **land.**" *(continue to read vs 10-16 for contrast)*

Jonah

- Did not appear to pray
- Deep in sleep
- Indifferent to sailors, their plight
- No great concern to save the sailors
- Wanted to die
- Wanted to persist in sin
- Disobedient though he knew much
- No worship
- Seemingly untouched by his sin

Mariners

- Prayed
- Active to save the ship and selves
- Compassion on Jonah
- Tried to save Jonah
- Wanted to live
- Wanted to find "sin"
- Obedient to what they knew
- Worshipped God
- Shattered at Jonah's sin

JONAH | *Questions & Comments*

Comment: I have often seen non-believers sometimes acting more like believers than those professing faith in Christ.

1. Can you share your thoughts?

2. Why did the captain approach Jonah? V6

3. What did the captain's question reveal about his faith in his people's gods? In Jonah's God? V6

4. How did they discover that the storm was Jonah's fault? V7

Food for thought:
"The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD."
 Proverbs 16:33

6. What did the outcome of casting lots reveal about God's character and power? V7

7. What was the mariners' response to the outcome of the lots? V8

*9*So he said to them, "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."

Notice that Jonah did not tell them that he was a prophet running from God. He said "I fear the LORD." The word fear means to stand in awe of.

8. Was Jonah acting like he feared the LORD? _____

9. How different is this response than the one Jonah gave: "The God Who made the sea and the dry land told me to go to Nineveh, But there's no way I'm going because I hate the Assyrians"?

JONAH 1: 10-16

Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, “Why have you done this?” For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. ¹¹ Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?”—for the sea was growing more tempestuous.

¹² And he said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me.”

¹³ Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. ¹⁴ Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said, “We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You.” ¹⁵ So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows.

After Jonah told the mariners about the God he served, and they put it together with what he had already told them of his flight from God’s presence, they became extremely afraid. They asked him how the sea could be made calm again, and he told them to throw himself into it. Fearful of exercising this solution, the men rowed for land using their own strength, but failed. The storm worsened. Left with no other option, they called to God not to hold them responsible for Jonah’s blood and threw him in. Instantly, the sea calmed. Seeing His power, the mariners feared God, offered Him sacrifices and made vows.

From Jon Courson: Folks, the problem with sin and rebellion is this: Innocent people get tossed around in our storms. You might say with great bravado, ‘I’ll pay the fare. I’ll pay the price for my sin’ – but remember: others will get beat up and go down in the process. Our friends, children, spouses, and parents often pay the price for our foolishness and rebellion.

JONAH | *Questions & Comments*

1. Why were the mariners so frightened at Jonah's response? What did the sailors say in response? V10

2. What did the mariners' question convey about their understanding of the situation? How had Jonah related to the sailors prior to the storm? V10

3. What did the mariners' questions reflect about their concern for themselves? What did the mariner's questions reflect about their concern for Jonah and their attitude of fair play? V11

4. What was Jonah's answer to stopping the storm? What did this say about Jonah's attitude concerning obeying the Lord? V12

5. How did the mariners try to solve the problem in their own strength? What was the result of the mariners' efforts? V13

6. How did the attitude of the mariners towards Jonah's life compare with Jonah's attitude towards the lives of the Ninevites? V14

Comment: These mariners went from being exceedingly afraid of the storm to fearing the LORD exceedingly.

7. How can that be?

8. What specific events would have indicated to them that Jonah's God was the true God, worthy of worship and praise? V16

JONAH 1: 15-17

So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

¹⁶ Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

¹⁷ Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Many Bible stories portray this great fish as a whale, but it was most likely not. Some think the fish was a giant shark, and while there are sharks big enough to swallow a man whole, it is unlikely that such a man would survive being swallowed by a shark because of the jagged teeth. One of the biggest fish ever caught was 38 feet long, 18 feet around, weighing an estimated 26,000 pounds. Its mouth opened about five feet wide and two feet high, plenty big enough to swallow a man. Numerous studies have been done to try to figure out what sort of fish this was, and how it swallowed Jonah.

But none of this really matters for the story. The fact of Jonah being swallowed is another miraculous event, which need not have a scientific explanation or historical evidence. God had something He wanted Jonah to do, and He rescued Jonah from drowning in the sea by sending a fish to swallow him. The question, however, is how to view the fish. Is God delivering Jonah, or disciplining him? Is God preparing Jonah for the next step, or punishing Jonah for his disobedience? The text does not give clear indications one way or the other, and is likely an combination of both. God's discipline sometimes comes through deliverance.

JONAH | *Questions & Comments*

From Jon Courson: Jonah was in a tight spot, no doubt about it! Tight spots are interesting because they will either make us bitter or make us better. The boiling water that hardens the egg, softens the potato.

1. How did God preserve the life of His prophet? V17

2. What aspects of this were miraculous? V17

3. How did this act display God’s mercy and grace in Jonah’s life and in the lives of the Ninevites? V17

Matthew 12 38-41: Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.”³⁹ But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.

4. “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” – What was the sign of the prophet Jonah? What are the implications for us today?

From Chuck Swindoll: Jonah was one of only four writing prophets that Jesus mentioned by name during His earthly ministry (Isaiah, Daniel, and Zechariah were the others). But Jonah received more than a mere mention. Jesus actually identified Himself with the prophet’s three-day sojourn in the belly of the great fish, noting it as a foreshadowing of His own death, when Jesus would spend three days “in the heart of the earth,” before His resurrection (Matthew 12:39–41). Jesus’ identification with the prophet at the lowest point of Jonah’s life finds echoes in the book of Hebrews, where it teaches that Jesus “had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest” (Hebrews 2:17). The book of Jonah stands

as an important link in the prophetic chain, giving readers a glimpse of Christ's death and resurrection hundreds of years before they actually occurred.

5. Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights because of his sin. Jesus was in the earth three days and three nights because of our sin. Because of God's great mercy and grace, neither one of them stayed there. – How are MERCY and GRACE seen in the Book of Jonah and in the life of Jesus?

6. In week one we asked for your comment about your thoughts and understanding about Jonah and the big fish. Have you gained any new thoughts or understanding about Jonah? If so, what?

JONAH 1:17-2:1

¹⁷Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

²Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly.

Jonah cried out to the Lord from the belly of the great fish. He acknowledged his desperate condition and his needy state, and his desire to return again to the Lord. He knew that the Lord, alone, had saved him.

Nowhere is outside of the Lord's presence, and He always hears the prayers of His children.

I am never so low, so desperate, so sinful that I cannot turn to Him in repentance, and He will hear me.

Salvation is from Him alone. I should not turn to others, or even myself for safety.

Even in my deepest affliction, I should give thanks to the Lord.

Being in the belly of the fish. What do you think that would have looked like, sounded like, smelled like, tasted like, felt like (tactile), felt like (emotional)? In week 2 we read Psalm 139. In light of this chapter, let's reread Psalm 139:7-12.

Where can I go from Your Spirit?

Or where can I flee from Your presence?

⁸ If I ascend into heaven, You **are** there;

If I make my bed in hell, behold, You **are there**.

⁹ **If** I take the wings of the morning,

And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

¹⁰ Even there Your hand shall lead me,

And Your right hand shall hold me.

¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me,"

Even the night shall be light about me;

¹² Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You,

But the night shines as the day;

The darkness and the light **are** both alike **to You**.

JONAH | *Questions & Comments*

Comment from "Great is Your Faithfulness": There is never a place where you cannot pray. If you are not praying, it is because you are choosing not to do so, not because you do not have opportunity....

As a refresher, **why was Jonah disobedient to God's word** to "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me"?

1. Without reading ahead, do you think Jonah had a change of heart regarding God's call to go to Nineveh? Why or why not?

2. **Matthew 6:6** But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. – Do you find it hard to pray? This may sound like a strange question, but where and when can we pray?

From Jon Courson: Jonah didn't pray the moment he was swallowed. Three days and three nights passed before he prayed.

3. Why do you think he waited so long?

From Charles Spurgeon: What a strange place for prayer! Surely this is the only prayer to God that ever went up to God out of a fish's belly. Jonah found himself alive--that was the surprising thing--and because he was alive, he began to pray. If we live with death so near and in so great peril, and yet do not pray, what is to become of us? This prayer of Jonah is remarkable because it is not a prayer at all in the sense in which we usually apply the word to petition and supplication. It is almost all thanksgiving and the best prayer in all the world is a prayer that is full of thankfulness.

4. Prayers of petition – supplication – thanksgiving. What's the difference?

JONAH 2:1-6

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly.
And he said:

"I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, and He answered me.

"Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, *and* You heard my voice.

³ For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me; all Your billows and Your waves passed over me.

⁴ Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.'

⁵ The waters surrounded me, *even* to my soul; the deep closed around me; Weeds were wrapped around my head.

⁶ I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars *closed* behind me forever; Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God.

What does this passage teach me about God?

He is omnipresent. We cannot escape from Him. He hears the cries of His children. He disciplines His children. He not only sometimes throws us into difficult situations, but He creates those situations for our good. He has brought up my life from the pit. He is in charge of creation, and it obeys Him. He is holy. Salvation is from Him.

How does this passage apply to my life?

I am never so low, so desperate, so sinful that I cannot turn to Him in repentance, and He will hear me.

Salvation is from Him alone. I should not turn to others, or even myself for safety.

Even in my deepest affliction, I should give thanks to the Lord.

JONAH | *Questions & Comments*

1. What did Jonah ask God for in this prayer? What is the general tone of this prayer? V1-9

2. Who was responsible for casting Jonah into the sea? Who caused the sea to be rough and dangerous? V3

3. What was Jonah's conclusion about his proximity to God after he was cast into the sea? Was his conclusion accurate? How did he respond to this conclusion? V4

From Jon Courson: Seaweed wrapped around his head, fish slapping him in the face, the temperature a stifling 98.6, Jonah felt as though he was in hell.

4. What are verses 5 & 6 describing? How did his near drowning affect Jonah?

5. What was God's reaction to Jonah's near-death experience? V6

JONAH 2:6-10

I went down to the moorings of the mountains;
The earth with its bars *closed* behind me forever;
Yet You have brought up my life from the pit,
O LORD, my God.

⁷ "When my soul fainted within me,
I remembered the LORD;
And my prayer went *up* to You,
Into Your holy temple.

⁸ "Those who regard worthless idols
Forsake their own Mercy.

⁹ But I will sacrifice to You
With the voice of thanksgiving;
I will pay what I have vowed.
Salvation *is* of the LORD."

¹⁰ So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry *land*.

From Matthew Henry: Men may shut us from communion with one another, but not from communion with God. To whom he prayed; to the Lord his God. This encourages even backsliders to return. What his prayer was. This seems to relate his experience and reflections, then and afterwards, rather than to be the form or substance of his prayer. Jonah reflects on the earnestness of his prayer, and God's readiness to hear and answer.

If we would get good by our troubles, we must notice the hand of God in them. He had wickedly fled from the presence of the Lord, who might justly take his Holy Spirit from him, never to visit him more. Those only are miserable, whom God will no longer own and favor. But though he was perplexed, yet not in despair. Jonah reflects on the favor of God to him, when he sought to God, and trusted in him in his distress. He warns others, and tells them to keep close to God.

Those who forsake their own duty, forsake their own mercy; those who run away from the work of their place and day, run away from the comfort of it. As far as a believer copies those who observe lying vanities, he forsakes his own mercy, and lives below his privileges. But Jonah's experience encourages others, in all ages, to trust in God, as the God of salvation.

JONAH | *Questions & Comments*

1. Last week we finished with this question: What was God's reaction to Jonah's near-death experience? V6

2. When did Jonah remember the Lord? V7

3. What does this indicate about man's typical response in times of distress? V7

4. What happened to Jonah's prayer? V7

5. What is the consequence of looking to idols for deliverance? V8

6. What are some examples of idols people today might have? V8

7. What impact does following these idols have on our relationship with God? V8

8. What was Jonah's choice, when faced with turning to idols or to God? V9

9. What was Jonah's sacrifice to the Lord? V9

10. Why was "the voice of thanksgiving" a sacrifice? V9

"But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed.

sacrifice = get rid of or put aside as though it doesn't exist, especially in comparison to putting God first

the voice of thanksgiving = worship Him

I will pay = make right, complete, do

what I have vowed = promised, give to God

11. How can we apply this concept to our lives? V9

JONAH 2:10

¹⁰ So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry *land*.

From Enduring Word Commentary (Jonah out of the fish): Jonah's deliverance came after Jonah's repentance was complete. Jonah wasn't just *sorry* for what he did; he was now *trusting* God again. In many believers today, there is a work of God, or an aspect of His deliverance that will remain undone as long as that believer resists Him and refuses to trust God.

Jonah's deliverance came after three days and nights had passed, providing a foreshadowing of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus said, *For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth* (Matthew 12:40).

When Jesus spoke of *three days and three nights* in Matthew 12:40, it does make a Thursday crucifixion necessary. Rabbinic literature from the time of Jesus explains that the phrase "so many days and so many nights" was a figure of speech that could refer to any part of a day and night. Ellison notes that Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah (around the year A.D. 100) said: "A day and a night make a whole day, and a portion of a whole day is reckoned as a whole day." This demonstrates how in Jesus' day, the phrase *three days and three nights* did not necessarily mean a 72-hour period, but a period including at least the portions of three days and three nights.

Pointing towards the Messiah to come, Jesus Christ, we see that Jonah's deliverance came after a remarkable demonstration of laying down one's life. Jonah gave his life to appease the wrath of God coming upon others. But death did not hold him; after three days and nights of imprisonment, he was alive and free.

It is commonly thought that Jonah was vomited out on the shores of Nineveh – but we are not told that this was the case, especially because Nineveh is about 375 miles from the Mediterranean Sea. If Jonah did walk into Nineveh right from the belly of the fish, it would have been a miraculous projection of the fish's vomit.

JONAH | *Questions & Comments*

Revelation 5:13

¹³ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

“Blessing and honor and glory and power
Be to Him who sits on the throne,
 And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

The LORD spoke to the fish. The fish worked at the command of God. Just as much as the fish was under the command of God when it swallowed Jonah, it was under His command when it let him go. If God can speak to a fish, He can speak to us.

1. Which is more likely to resist the will of God, fish or man?

2. Why is that?

And it vomited Jonah onto dry land. Sometimes we don't have much of a choice about how we will be delivered. Jonah might have preferred another method, but God had a purpose in this also.

3. If you are a child of God, what were you delivered from?

4. How were you delivered?

From Jon Courson: The whale suddenly felt the urge to regurge, and Jonah was deposited on the beach. You, who, like Jonah, feel that nothing is working out – with your job, your relationships, your family; that your life is going nowhere, that nothing is making sense – take heart! For even when we think nothing is working out, God has promised it's all working out (Romans 8:28).

5. Do you ever feel like nothing is working out?

JONAH 3:1-5

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ² “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.” ³ So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent. ⁴ And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day’s walk. Then he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

⁵ So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.

God was determined to do the work through Jonah, so He did not give up on the reluctant prophet.

From Charles Spurgeon: Suppose that the problem had been given to us to solve – how shall this city be moved to repentance? How shall its vice be forsaken, and the God of Israel worshipped by all its inhabitants from the highest to the lowest? If we had not been paralyzed with despair, which is the most probable, we should, nevertheless, have sat down carefully to consider our plans. We should have parceled it out into missionary districts; we should have needed at least several hundreds, if not thousands, of able ministers; at once, expenses would have to be incurred, and we should have considered ourselves bound to contemplate the erection of innumerable structures in which the Word of God might be preached. Our machinery would necessarily become cumbrous; we should find that we, unless we had the full resources of an empire, could not even begin the work. But what saith the Lord concerning this? Putting aside the judgments of reason, and all the plans and schemes which flesh and blood so naturally do follow, he raises up one man. By a singular providence he qualifies that one man for his mission.

Central Theme: God is a God of second chances.

JONAH | *Questions & Comments*

1. How many times did God give this command to Jonah? V1

2. What does this verse show us about God's character? V1

3. How is our command from the Lord similar to Jonah's? V2

4. What was Jonah's response to God's command this time? V3

"a three-day journey" V3 (60 miles, or 20 miles a day).

5. What do you think it means "And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk"? V4

6. Do you think Jonah obeyed God wholeheartedly in this verse? V4

7. Why do you think God gave 40 days before Nineveh would be overthrown? V4

Other times in the Bible where 40 days are mentioned? V4 (The time of rain during the flood- Gen 7:4; the time Moses spent on the mountain with the Lord- Ex 24:18 and Ex 34:28; the time the Israelites went to spy out the Promised Land- Num 13:25; the time Goliath challenged the Israelites- 1 Sam 17:16; Elijah's time of testing in the wilderness- 1 Kings 19:8; Jesus' time of testing in the wilderness- Matt 4:2, Mark 1:13 and Luke 4:2; Jesus' time of ministry on earth after His resurrection- Acts 1:3.)

8. What was the Ninevites' response to this warning? V5

9. What was the purpose of fasting and putting on sackcloth? V5

10. Who among the Ninevites was involved in these actions? V5

11. Have you ever needed God's second chance in your life? Has God given up on you?

JONAH 3:5-10

⁵ So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. ⁶ Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes. ⁷ And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying,

Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. ⁸ But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹ Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

¹⁰ Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

As soon as Jonah's proclamation reached Nineveh's king, he began mourning, and proclaimed that every man and beast in the land should refrain from eating food or drinking. Rather, they should cover themselves in sackcloth and call out mightily to the Lord. He urged everyone to truly repent, in the hopes that God would relent, turn from His fierce anger, and not destroy them. God saw their genuine repentance and relented from His course of judgment.

1. The word that Jonah was proclaiming reached the king of Nineveh.
2. When it reached him, the king arose, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.
3. The king issued a proclamation that neither man, beast, herd nor flock could taste anything, either food or water.
4. The king told every man and beast to be covered with sackcloth.
5. The king urged everyone to call out mightily to God.
6. The king told everyone to turn from his evil way and from the violence that he was doing.
7. They hoped that their repentance would cause God to relent.
8. They hoped that God's relenting would mean He would no longer be angry and destroy them.
9. God saw their repentance.
10. God relented from the disaster He said He would send and did not do it.

JONAH | *Questions & Comments*

⁵ So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.

1. What is the difference in these two statements? “The people believed God” “The people believe in God”
-

From Jon Courson: Six hundred thousand Ninevites believed God when He said in forty days judgment was coming. And the greatest revival in world history took place.

God softened their hearts, but He used Jonah’s experience in the belly of the fish to do it, I think. The Ninevites worshipped Nanshe, the fish goddess and Dagon, the fish god. The fact that Jonah was swallowed by a large fish [historically, others who were swallowed by fish had skin that bore the mottled markings of the fish’s digestive juices on it], and then was spit out by it, would seem to show that he or his God had conquered their god. This would give much more impact to his words.

2. What was the king’s response to Jonah’s words? V6

3. What did laying aside his robe, putting on sackcloth, and sitting in ashes represent? V6

4. What were the people supposed to do besides refrain from food and drink and cover themselves in sackcloth? V8

5. Why were they supposed to call on God earnestly? In calling out like this, what were the king and the people admitting? V8

6. What seems to be the motivation behind the repentant actions? What might this motivation indicate about their spiritual situation? V9

7. The Ninevites were a fierce, war-like people. They usually feared nothing. Why do you think they were afraid in this instance? What did that fear display about their heart? V9

8. How does 1 John 1:9 relate to v10?

JONAH 4:1-3

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. ² So he prayed to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. ³ Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!"

⁴ Then the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

⁵ So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city.

⁶ And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant.

Far from being pleased at the fruitful outcome of his preaching, Jonah was angry that the Lord had spared the Ninevites. One of the very reasons he had fled to Tarshish was so that the Lord would NOT be merciful to the Ninevites, because he knew that the Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness, and one who turns back from causing calamity. In anger, Jonah said he wanted to die, because death was better than life. God does not reprove, but questions him. Jonah doesn't even bother to answer God, but goes to choose a vantage point from which he can look at Nineveh and hopefully see the destruction of the Lord rain down on it. To teach Jonah a lesson, God appointed a plant to quickly grow up over him and shade him.

From Jon Courson: Forgiveness is the deepest need of man and the highest achievement of God. We have this picture that the Lord is just waiting for us to mess up so He can come down and deal with us. But Jonah knew otherwise. He knew that the Lord in His mercy would forgive the Ninevites if they called to Him.

JONAH | *Questions & Comments*

From Jon Courson: Mercy imitates God and irritates Satan. If you want to be like God, be merciful. Be forgiving. Be slow to anger, slow to criticize, slow to find fault.

1. Are there individuals or groups of people in our society today that brings out anger and frustration in your heart? How does the above quote relate to how you handle frustration?

From Jon Courson: The most wicked people group on earth repented of their wickedness and Jonah is exceedingly displeased and angry!

2. What greatly displeased Jonah? With Whom was Jonah angry? V1

3. What do you think was the root cause of Jonah's anger? V1

4. What is usually the root cause of anger? V1

5. How can we avoid having this kind of angry reaction? V1

6. What did Jonah know about God's character? What does it mean that God is gracious? What does it mean that God is compassionate? What does it mean that God is slow to anger? What does it mean that God is abundant in lovingkindness? What does it mean that God relents concerning calamity?

7. Why do you think Jonah wanted to die? V3

JONAH 4: 3 -6

³ Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!"

⁴ Then the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

⁵ So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city.

⁶ And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant.

From Enduring Word Commentary (God questions Jonah's heart):

Then the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" Jonah, in expressing his anger against God, was being honest about his feelings – something good; but we should not for a moment think that all of our feelings towards God are justified.

God likes to ask us questions, because they reveal our heart. It also puts us on proper ground before God, because He has every right to question us and we owe Him answers.

Where are you? Who told you that you were naked? What is this you have done? **(Genesis 3)**

Where is your brother Abel? What have you done? **(Genesis 4)** What have you done?

(1 Samuel 13:11) Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes?

(2 Samuel 12) Whom shall I send? Who will go for us? **(Isaiah 6)** Who do you say

that I am? **(Matthew 16)** What do you want Me to do for you? **(Matthew 20)** Are you

betraying the Son of Man with a kiss? **(Luke 22)** Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?

(Acts 9)

"Is it right for you to be angry?" This is the question we should and even must ask ourselves if we find ourselves angry with God. The answer must always be "No, LORD. All Your ways are right even if I don't understand them."

JONAH | *Questions & Comments*

From Jon Courson: There were 600,000 baby believers within the walls of Nineveh. Jonah should have been in the city teaching and discipling them, encouraging and ministering to them. Instead, he disengaged himself from people and sat on the sidelines.

Here is a guaranteed recipe for depression:
Do what Jonah did and remove yourself from people.

Here are ten steps to overcome depression:
Step one: Do something good for someone else
Step two: Repeat step one nine times.

1. Why do you think asking questions is sometimes more helpful than telling people? V4

2. What does this show us about the Lord's attitude towards His children? V4

3. Why did Jonah go sit east of the city? V5

4. What do you think Jonah was hoping would happen? V5

5. Why did God appoint a plant to grow up over Jonah? V6

6. What was Jonah's reaction to the plant? V6

7. Why was Jonah happy about the plant? V6

8. What was Jonah's part in causing the plant to grow? V6

9. Contrast Jonah's attitude towards the plant with Jonah's attitude towards the Ninevites. V6

Have you ever found it easy to see others who do worse things than us and want God to judge them?

- There is no one righteous, no not one - Psalm 53:1
- All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God - Romans 3:23
- God is kind, gracious, merciful and good - Psalm 145:8
- Because of His great love for the world, He sent His Son to die for all people - John 3:16

JONAH 4:6-11

⁶ And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. ⁷ But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. ⁸ And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

⁹ Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

And he said, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!"

¹⁰ But the LORD said, "You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹ And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?"

As we conclude our study in Jonah it is sobering to think what would happen in the church if God moved in a mighty way. Some would rejoice and some would leave! We are mistaken if we believe that all of God's people will celebrate the moving of God.

For that matter, we might hear some of the following: complaints about the influx or type of people coming into the church, accusations of a lack of authenticity, concerns about changes that might affect personal comfort levels, or divisions between the old and new members.

Most of those statements are revelations – they reveal the true heart of the person speaking. Jonah 4 pictures that reality.

JONAH | Questions & Comments

Reading verse 6, God had prepared a plant for Jonah that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from misery.

1. Why did the worm come to attack the plant? (Note, the plant was perhaps a fast-growing castor oil plant, known to grow rapidly in hot climates and have large, shady leaves.) V7

2. What was the result of the worm's attack? V7

3. What does this teach us about God's character? V7

4. Why did the wind come? (Note, the hot, scorching wind was usually called "sirocco," and blew off the Arabian Desert.) V8

5. How did Jonah handle his discomfort? V8

6. What did Jonah's reaction say about his character and attitude? V8

7. What lesson was God trying to teach Jonah through the plant? V9

God asked Jonah a penetrating question: "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" There is an analogy between Nineveh and the plant. Jonah loved his plant (air conditioner), but he did not love Nineveh. Jonah needed to learn **God's values** about things rather than to operate on the premises of his own values.

8. What can we learn from Jonah's lesson? V11

Jonah was more concerned about the plant than the 120,000 children in Nineveh who were too young to even know their right hand from their left. God would have loved him to rejoice for and have compassion on all of the Ninevites, but at least the children!

9. Do we care for the lost – lost souls, like God cares for lost souls?

10. What do you think is the ultimate lesson in this book?



Here is a perfect heart—perfect in generous love—not excusing, not harshly condemning. He is the weeping God of Jonah 4 in human form. . . . [And] Jesus did not merely weep for us; he died for us. Jonah went outside the city, hoping to witness its condemnation, but Jesus Christ went outside the city to die on a cross to accomplish its salvation.

Tim Keller

The Prodigal Prophet: Jonah and the
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