

JONAH.

Outline of Jonah.

The book of Jonah concerns God and His attitude to the world of sinful man. God is mentioned thirty eight times in this small book, it is about the will and desire of God and how a man responded to it, it also shows the love of God and how He is willing to fulfill His purpose.

Is Jonah a true story?

Look at [2 Kings 14:25](#)

Where we read *"according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hepher."* This tells us that Jonah was a prophet in the Northern Kingdom during king Jeroboam's II reign. Also consider that Jesus spoke of Jonah,

[Matthew 12:41](#):

[Luke 11:32](#).

During this period Hosea and Amos were denouncing the evil spreading through the Jewish nation and the surrounding nations. The action of Jonah being sent to Nineveh, a city of Assyria, by God, was an indication that God also cared and had compassion for the other nations.

Outline of Jonah

God gives Jonah his task:

The prophet rebels and disobeys God. [Jonah 1:1-3](#)

Jonah does not care. [Jonah 1:4-10](#)

Jonah has no regret for his action. [Jonah 1:11-17](#)

God has mercy on His servant.

God hears the prayers of Jonah. [Jonah 2:1,2](#)

God punishes Jonah. [Jonah 2:3](#)

God honours the faith of Jonah. [Jonah 2:4-7](#)

Jonah's confession. [Jonah 2:8,9](#)

God restores Jonah's ministry. [Jonah 2:10](#)

God reveals His power through Jonah.

God's mercy and love. [Jonah 3:1,2](#)

Jonah obeys God. [Jonah 3:3,4](#)

The people repent. [Jonah 3:5-9](#)

Judgement is suspended. [Jonah 3:10](#)

God cares for and looks after Jonah.

God listens to Jonah. [Jonah 4:1-4](#)

God cares for Jonah. [Jonah 4:3-8](#)

Jonah gets a lesson from God. [Jonah 4:9-11](#)

The prophet rebels and disobeys God.

[Jonah 1:1-17](#)

[2 Kings 14:25](#)

This tells us that Jonah had been used by God to predict that the Jewish nation would regain the land taken by her enemies. Jonah lived in a period that was peaceful and therefore Israel became rich and successful, unfortunately the nation was about to be judged for their attitude to God.

God gave Jonah an instruction to go to Nineveh, a city of Assyria, the enemies of Israel and warn them that their wickedness was about to be judged but Jonah decided that they were not to be warned, he preferred that they should be destroyed by God, he felt he knew better and so sets off in a journey which he expected to take him away from the city of Nineveh.

The Assyrians were known to be a very cruel nation who had previously attacked Israel. Jonah was a very patriotic Jew, he was prepared to fight for his country, unfortunately, this attitude was not in line with the

will of God, Who was was full of love for all people, including the people of Nineveh. Jonah thought that he could resign from being the messenger of God if he did not agree with His commands. Consider the words of Jesus,

[Luke 6:46](#),

"why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"

Jonah arrives at the port of Joppa, on the Mediterranean coast, finds a suitable ship sailing for Tarshish. It is thought that Tarshish was in Spain, over 1000 miles to the West, while Jonah was commanded to go East to Nineveh.

We are not told how long they had been at sea before God "sent out a great wind on the sea," but the sailors were very frightened, they try to make the ship float higher out of the water by throwing the cargo into the sea.

Jonah appears to have been fast asleep during this activity. The captain wakes him and tells him to call upon his 'god' for help, as the rest of the sailors were doing. Eventually they decided that someone was to blame for this storm. They now used some kind of lottery to identify the person, and it indicated Jonah. The sailors interrogate Jonah, his answer confirms that he is the problem, he is running from God. verse 8. "What do we need to do?" they ask.

Jonah is fully prepared to die instead of obeying the commands of God. *"Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you."* shows that the heart of Jonah is still bitter and against the will of God.

Consider the response of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane to the will of God the Father, *"O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done."*

[Matthew 26:42](#);

[Mark 14:36](#);

[Luke 22:42](#);

The sailors do not want to kill Jonah and attempt to row the boat to the shore, but the storm grows bigger. The sailors now realize that they must obey God and throw Jonah into the water, asking for forgiveness for his "murder"

God has already prepared the way out for Jonah, a very large fish of some sort, we are not told what kind.

God has mercy on His servant.

Jonah, who was expecting to die in the water, now finds himself inside the fish. He realized that God was very much at work and has graciously protected him from death.

Jonah starts back on the road to repentance, he prays for the help of God,

[Jonah 2:1,2](#).

Jonah has realized that though he was not dead, he has little apparent future, he will soon be digested by the fishes stomach and had no way of getting out, only God has the power to save him. His prayer came from the situation he was in, not a prayer of "delight in the Lord" but because of the danger he was in.

It is obvious that despite his situation Jonah is still not happy with the desires of God, he is only willing to submit to the will of God because he wants to get out of the stomach of the large fish, a dangerous situation. God had deliberately put Jonah into a helpless and hopeless situation, it was not the sailors, it was GOD. He wanted Jonah to experience what the people of Nineveh were about to go through, despair.

God hears the prayer of Jonah because Jonah has acknowledged that it was God's discipline on him, *"All Your billows and Your waves passed over me. Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight;'"* verses 3,4.

Compare [Hebrews 12:5-11](#).

How a believer should respond to the discipline of God, we can fight against it, verse 5. We can get discouraged and stop altogether, verse 5. Or we can resist it so much that God needs to increase the discipline, perhaps even death as the punishment, verse 9. Finally we can submit to the Father and grow in faith and His love.

God only disciplines His children, Jonah must therefore be a true child of God.

The faith of Jonah is rewarded.

[Jonah 2:4-7](#)

Jonah had planned to get away from God but since that decision he was going down fast, spiritually and physically. He went down to Joppa,

[Jonah 1:3](#),

Down into the boat, [Jonah 1:3](#),

Down into the sea, [Jonah 1:15](#);

[Jonah 2:6](#), now he had gone down into a fish,

[Jonah 1:17](#). This will always happen if you turn away from God.

When Jonah prayed he knew that God had promised to protect him.

See the request of Solomon, [1 Kings 8:38-40](#),

"prayer, whatever supplication is made by anyone, or by all Your people Israel, when each one knows the plague of his own heart, and spreads out his hands toward this temple: then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and act".

Jonah called upon this promise by faith, *"I will look again toward Your holy temple."* [Jonah 2:4](#), *"my prayer went up to You, into Your holy temple."* [Jonah 2:7](#).

Jonah looked up to God and God answered.

Jonah's prayer finished with a promise *"But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord."* *"I submit to your will Lord."* Only God was able to save Jonah, *"Salvation is of the Lord."* verse 9.

"So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land."

God reveals His power through Jonah.

[Jonah 3:1-10](#).

Jonah was now free to obey the Lord and take the message to Nineveh. *"Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time,"* Jonah receives his second chance, *"go to Nineveh."*

We should never take the fact that God will never leave His children as an excuse to go ahead and sin, thinking *"I know that God will forgive me."* This shows that we do not appreciate that God is pure and holy and cannot tolerate sin, God in His grace forgives sin, but He can determine that *"we reap what we sow,"* and this could be costly, Jonah paid for his rejection of God.

Note that though Jonah turned away from God, throughout this story, God never left Jonah, God controlled the storm, provided the fish, waiting for Jonah to turn back to Him, and then provided the way back to life.

Consider, [Romans 8:28-39](#);

[Hebrews 13:5](#),

[Isaiah 43:2](#).

When he reached Nineveh, the appearance of Jonah, after being in the stomach of the fish, must have been strange, the digestive juices would have had some affect upon his skin and clothes. Had anyone seen the man being vomited up by the fish on the beach? He would have been a talking point in the city, but it was the message he came with which caused the most effect.

Three times in the book we find that Nineveh is referred to as *"a great city"*

[Jonah 1:2](#);

[Jonah 3:2-3](#);

[Jonah 4:11](#),

This was very true as we are told that it took three days to walk across the city,

[Jonah 3:3](#).

Archaeologist believe that the city had a wall boundary round the city of about sixty miles and

[Jonah 4:11](#)

Suggests that it had a very large population. Nineveh was the leading city of the Assyrian Empire, it was built near the river Tigris and had the river Khoser running through it. The people were known to be cruel and violent, showing little mercy for their enemies. The Assyrian armies were feared everywhere and the people had very sinful lives, they were known to have no respect on age or sex, often killing babies and young children so they did not then need to care for them. However, their many merchants brought great wealth to the city, as they were known to travel all the empire.

Jonah now brings the warnings of the judgement by God to the wicked people of the great city of Nineveh.

The message of Jonah,

[Jonah 3:3-4](#)

Jonah travels about a day into the city, his appearance would have attracted the people to listen, the message was simple, *"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"* God gave the people of Nineveh forty days to repent and turn from their evil lives.

The number forty often appears in the scriptures, usually associated with a period of testing or judgement, lookup the following to see some examples,

[Genesis 7:4,12,17;](#)

[Exodus 16:35;](#)

[Numbers 14:34;](#)

[Deuteronomy 2:7;](#)

[1 Samuel 17:16;](#)

[Matthew 4:2.](#)

We are not told how long Jonah preached, but after the eight words of the recorded message we are told that *"the people of Nineveh believed God,"* verse 5. To achieve faith in the message from God they must have known about this God of the Israelite, how this happened we are not told but they paid attention to the warning, the people humbled themselves, the message even reached the king and national leader who proclaimed that the message must be immediately circulated. All the people, including the king put on sackcloth, the decree from the king said that all people are to *"put on sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands."* How had these people known that they were calling out to a merciful God? It can only be from Jonah.

"Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented." change His course.

Jonah is told that God had heard their repentance and would not destroy the city this time. Their repentance was genuine as Jesus referred to these people,

[Matthew 12:38-41](#)

The unhappy servant.

[Jonah 4:1-11](#)

We now see a different side to Jonah, he had just been involved in a wonderful outreach to a nation of sinful people, his message had made them turn to God, *"But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry."* this chapter reveals the thoughts and heart of Jonah, exposes his sins. Jonah had obeyed the commands of God, submitted to His will but his heart was not in it, *"in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."*

[Ephesians 6:6.](#)

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Jonah prays for the second time, and God listens to him. The first pray, in the belly of the fish, came from a repentant heart, asking for salvation. This second prayer comes from an heart of anger, and wants death, Jonah would rather die than not have his own way.

The prayer shows that Jonah has a great understanding of the attributes(properties) of God. *"You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness,"* verse 2. Jonah knew that if the people of Nineveh repented, God would have mercy and not punish them. The message Jonah gave only warned of the coming judgement, there was no mention of the way to prevent it. If the judgement did not now happen then Jonah could be called a "false prophet." Jonah is concerned about his status, not just with the Ninevites but his Jewish supporters who hated the Assyrians, if they heard that because of his preaching the Assyrians had been saved from judgement, what would be their attitude to him.

Where does your spiritual attitudes lie? Are you more interested in the pleasing of mankind than pleasing a merciful God?

God responds.

[Jonah 4:5-8](#)

Jonah now deserts his place of ministry, and goes outside the city to wait for God to act. He could have been teaching the people of the city about this wonderful, loving True God of Israel.

It is interesting how God now behaves towards Jonah, He knew that Jonah was physically uncomfortable sitting in his shelter, little shade from the heat of the sun, so God caused a plant to rapidly grow and give

Jonah the shade. Jonah is now pleased with his situation.

Think about [James 1:2-8](#).

God now moves on and uses a worm to kill off the plant and then makes a strong east wind to come, as the sun rises Jonah is now suffering from the heat and feels ill. Jonah again wants to die. Jonah is more concerned about himself than the will of God. The people of Nineveh, the vine, the worm and the wind had all submitted to the will of God, but Jonah still wants to disobey, he is selfish, I come first!!!!

God speaks to Jonah. [Jonah 4:9-11](#)

"Jonah, you had pity for the plant which only lasted a day. I have compassion for all those people, a whole city which turned to Me, Jonah, you had no love or compassion for the people who were heading for eternal separation from God."

The book closes without telling us what happens, it ends with a question from God to Jonah, *"should I not pity Nineveh,"* We have no record of Jonah's reply.

"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" [Romans 8:32](#).

"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."