



## BACKGROUND

“Jonah, the son of Amittai, from Gath Hopher in Galilee (cf. 2 Kings 14:25; Josh 19:13), prophesied during or shortly before the reign of Jeroboam II (793-753 B.C.). This makes it virtually certain that we should place the story of the book in the period of Assyrian weakness between the death of Adad-nirari III in 782 B.C. and the seizing of the Assyrian throne by Tiglath-pileser III in 745 B.C. During this time, Assyria was engaged in a life and death struggle with the mountain tribes of Urartu and its associates of Mannai and Madai in the north, who had been able to push their frontier to within less than a hundred miles of Nineveh. The consciousness of weakness and possible defeat would go far to explain the readiness of Nineveh to accept the prophet's message.”

-H.L. Ellison in The Expositors Bible Commentary

“As a prophet to the ten northern tribes of Israel, Jonah shares a background and setting with Amos. The nation enjoyed a time of relative peace and prosperity. Both Syria and Assyria were weak, allowing Jeroboam II to enlarge the northern borders of Israel to where they had been in the days of David and Solomon (2 Kings 14:23-27). Spiritually however, it was a time of poverty; religion was ritualistic and increasingly idolatrous, and justice had become perverted. Peacetime and wealth had made her bankrupt spiritually, morally, and ethically (c. 2 Kings 14:24; Amos 4:1ff.; 5:10-13).”

-John MacArthur in The MacArthur Bible Commentary

Jonah was a contemporary of Jeroboam II of Israel (782-753 B.C.) who ministered after the time of Elisha and just before the time of Amos and Hosea. Israel under Jeroboam II was enjoying a period of resurgence and prosperity (see 'Date and Setting' in Amos). Conditions looked promising after many bleak years, and nationalistic fervor was probably high. During these years, Assyria was in a period of mild decline. Weak rulers had ascended the throne, but Assyria remained a threat. By the time of Jonah, Assyrian cruelty had become legendary. Graphic accounts of their cruel treatment of captives have been found in ancient Assyrian records, especially from the ninth and seventh centuries B.C. The repentance of Nineveh probably occurred in the reign of Ashurbanipal III (773-755 B.C.). Two plagues (765 and 759 B.C.) and a solar eclipse (763 B.C.) may have prepared the people for Jonah's message of judgment.”

-Wilkinson and Boa in Talk through the Bible

6. What is the connection that God makes between the plant and the city of Nineveh? Be specific and thorough in your answer.
  
7. What was wrong with Jonah's understanding and estimation of himself? Of the Ninevites? Of God?
  
8. How do you view the lost— especially those dramatically different than yourself? Does your heart reflect the heart of God? How does it need to change?
  
9. How do we avoid the dangerous tendency that Jonah succumbed to? Be as specific and practical as you can.

# JONAH 4

Scripture to Memorize This Week: Ephesians 2:19

1. What was Jonah's reaction to the city's repentance (vs. 1-4)? Why?
2. What does Jonah say he knows about God (vs. 2)? Is this accurate?
3. Why did Jonah continue to sit outside the city to see what would happen to it? What was he waiting for?
4. Where did the shade plant come from? Where did the worm come from? Where did the scorching east wind come from?
5. What did Jonah think and feel about the shade plant (vs. 6)? How did he react when it died (vs. 8-9)?

## OUTLINE

- I. FIRST COMMISSION OF JONAH (GOD'S MERCY UPON JONAH)— 1-2
  - A. RUNNING FROM GOD'S WILL— 1
  - B. SUBMITTING TO GOD'S WILL— 2
- II. SECOND COMMISSION OF JONAH (GOD'S MERCY ON NINEVEH)— 3-4
  - A. FULFILLING GOD'S WILL— 3
  - B. QUESTIONING GOD'S WILL— 4

## THEMES

- Yahweh as Sovereign King and Judge
- The foolishness of disobedience to God
- The compassion and mercy of Yahweh
- Israel's God-given missionary role to the heathen nations

## QUOTABLE QUOTE

“How shall He not have pity [4:11]? If God should not spare, where then would be the hope for any in the world? No generation of men, nor all generations combined could find a way of escape from the wrath of God, had God not determined to have pity...

How shall He not have pity? How can God possibly fail to have mercy when He has stated so clearly that He delights to be entreated, that He intends to save Jew and Gentile in answer to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that He is rich in grace to all without difference?

How shall He not have pity? Because our eye may be evil, shall God cease to be good? (see Mt. 20:15). Because we have hedged men about with innumerable distinctions and have placed them in countless categories, shall God become a respecter of persons?...

Thank God forever more, He does have pity! But do we?"

-Charles L. Feinberg in The Minor Prophets

# JONAH 1

Scripture to Memorize This Week: Ephesians 2:13

1. What was God's command to Jonah? What was Jonah's response (note the relative locations of Tarshish and Niniveh)?
2. Why did Jonah try to run away from God's command for him to call out against the city of Nineveh (see 4:2)? What sins did Jonah commit in his attitudes and actions?
3. What was Jonah's view of the Ninevites and why? (Note: it may be helpful to use a study Bible or commentary to answer this question) Who do you tend to view in the same way? Explain.
4. What were the common perspectives on gods, their abilities and territories in the days of Jonah? How was Yahweh different (vs. 6-16)?
5. What is faith? How did the Ninevites exemplify it?
6. What is repentance? How did the Ninevites exemplify it (note Matthew 12:41)?
7. Does the fact that God relented from bringing disaster and wrath on the city compromise the authenticity of His words in 3:4? Explain.
8. How is God's heart towards the lost displayed in this chapter? Note at least one other reference in the Old or New Testament where this aspect of the heart of God is revealed.
9. How will your view of God, the lost, or yourself change as a result of this chapter? What application do you see for your life in this section?

## JONAH 3

Scripture to Memorize This Week: Ephesians 2:18

1. What is significant and sweet about the phrase “a second time” in verse 1? How are Jonah’s actions different this time?
2. How does Jonah’s experience in chapters 1-2 prepare him for his call and mission in 3:1? How does this parallel our own experience and mission?
3. Write down all the information we find about the city of Nineveh (note also 1:2 and 4:11).
4. What was Jonah’s message? Was this the totality of Jonah’s message or do you think there was more to it?
5. Describe the experience of the sailors and their response. What is admirable about the way their treatment of Jonah and their response to what they learned about Yahweh?
6. What might Jonah have been thinking in the middle of this storm? Why did he tell the sailors to throw him overboard?
7. What practical lessons do we learn from Jonah’s actions and God’s responses in this chapter?
8. What do we learn about God in this chapter? How does God display His character in His words and actions?

## JONAH 2

Scripture to Memorize This Week: Ephesians 2:14

1. What does God's use of the fish tell us about Him? Note both the fact that He used the fish and how He used the fish.
2. What would the environment within the belly of fish be like?
3. How does Jonah's prayer portray a picture his experience of being thrown into the ocean?
4. How does Jonah's perspective in this chapter differ from what we read in the opening verses of chapter 1?
5. How would you sum up the prayer of Jonah in chapter 2? What dominates Jonah's thinking as he prays?
6. Is the salvation that Jonah speaks of in chapter 2 referring primarily to his being rescued from physical death or to his being delivered from the wrath of God? What is the significance of this?
7. What do verses 8-9 tell us about salvation? How should these verses direct our view of the lost?
8. Does your response to salvation mirror Jonah's? How might you apply the perspective and words in Jonah's prayer to your own life?
9. What connection does Christ make between Himself and Jonah's experience in the belly of the fish in Matthew 12:39-41? How were Jonah and Christ different? How were they similar?