

## JONAH 1:1-4

### Introduction:

1. Most only know about the book of Jonah by the story of Jonah and the **whale**. The book of Jonah is often criticized because of the whale story. They say for Jonah to live 3 days and nights in the whale's belly was **impossible**, not true, a fantasy, a dream, or a religious myth. So most just **spiritualize** the passage and create their own scenario that fits their purpose.
2. But Christ validates Jonah and the whale ("great fish") by saying in Matthew 12:39-40 - *But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: Matt. 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*
3. There are only **3** verses out of **48** verses that talk about Jonah and the whale.  
  
\*People have looked so much at the "great fish" that they have failed to see the great **God!**
4. The author is Jonah. His name means "**dove**". The book was written around 800-**775** B.C. Jonah was an occupation prophet.

A. The call came to Jonah through God's Word to him.

Jonah 1:1 - Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

1. Back then, God communicated to His prophets through dreams, visions, signs, and the Spirit's voice.

Hebrews 1:1 - God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

2. Jonah was from **Galilee** and ministered during the reign of Jeroboam II.
3. Today, God speaks to us by the Spirit through God's **Word**.

I Corinthians 2:12-13 - Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 1Cor. 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

4. Remember how truth of God's Word has come to us:
  - a. Revelation - This is when godly men **received** the truth from God.
  - b. Inspiration - Men were supernaturally **guided** to write-record this truth.
  - c. Transmission - God's Word, in an articulate way, was **copied** repeatedly.
  - d. Canonization - The books that proved of themselves they were God-inspired and God-breathed were brought **together** and made into **one** unit of 66 books. The Bible!

- e. Preservation - The Holy Spirit throughout history supernaturally protected-preserved these 66 books (the Bible) from corruption, defilement, and destruction.
  - f. Translation - Having preserved pure manuscripts, it was followed by translation from these manuscripts into various languages.
  - g. Illumination - The author (Holy Spirit) helps believers to understand the Bible. He helps us to know that we have been given a Word from the Lord.
5. A word from God came to Jonah and God has given us His complete Word. The Word will stretch our minds to teach and instruct us. We are to always honor and yield to its authority.

Psalm 138:2b - [for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.]

B. God calls Jonah to an urgent-specific mission.

Jonah 1:2 - Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

1. The verbs, "Arise, go, cry", show it is an urgent command from God.  
  
\*Why would God be sending an Israel prophet to a Gentile city?
2. [that great city] For years, Nineveh was the capital of Assyria (present day Iraq). Assyria was Israel's constant enemy. It was a bloody city filled with fraud, robbers, violent crime, immorality, witchcraft, and idolatry. Their soldiers were well known for their cruelty and brutality. Often they would punish their enemy by burying them alive, skinning them while alive, or impaling them on a pole.
3. Jonah was to go to Nineveh to cry against her wickedness. It is interesting that Jonah had been crying out to many of the same sins in Israel! A question is, what was Nineveh's big sin? It was Baal worship.
4. Nineveh was a competitive rival commercially to Jerusalem.

\*Jonah had been ministering in the North Kingdom of Galilee in Israel. Remember, Israel had split into the 10 tribes in the North - Galilee and 2 tribes in the South - Judea (Jerusalem).

- a. Ironically, the very sin Jonah was to preach against in Nineveh is the very sin that will cause Israel to be taken into captivity later (75-100 years).
- b. Israel had not responded positively about worshipping the two golden calves in Dan (N. Galilee). They had not repented of their idolatry. So why would Jonah think that the dog Gentiles would hear a message of repentance? Why would God even send Jonah to the Gentiles if His own people were unrepentant?

C. God calls Jonah to an urgent-specific mission.

Jonah 1:3 - But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

1. Jonah does not flee because he was a **bigot**-racist concerning the Gentiles, nor was he fearful. So why did Jonah flee?

Jonah 3:10, 4:1-2 - And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not. Jonah 4:1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. Jonah 4:2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, *was* not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou *art* a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

- a. Jonah knew that if he went to Nineveh, knowing that God is a **gracious** God, Nineveh could repent and then God would not destroy Nineveh!
- b. There are two reasons Jonah felt this way:
  - (1) He knew in the book of Nahum that it had been prophesied that Assyria would **take** control of North Israel. So if he would not go there to preach perhaps that could help Israel.
  - (2) Jonah knew that If Assyria-Nineveh would **repent**, what would be the purpose of Israel?

\*According to God's Word, the Gentiles were to be saved through Israel with her presence and **rise**. How could that happen if Israel were taken over by the Assyrians?

Genesis 12:3 - And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Isaiah 60:3 - And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

2. So Jonah thinks God is seemingly stepping **outside** the Abrahamic Covenant, so he flees from his commission.

\*We know from history that because Nineveh **did** repent, God **delayed** Assyria's aggression for **100** years. But the prophecy was fulfilled later!

3. We will see that Jonah also is a **picture** of the nation Israel. Instead of obedience to God to fulfill His purpose for Israel to minister to other nations, they **despised** them and **rebelled** against God's wishes.
4. [from the presence of the Lord]

Habakkuk 2:20 - But the LORD *is* in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

- a. Jonah knew the manifestation presence was in the **Temple**. So some think that Jonah thought by leaving the city-country, he could get away from God (some commentaries say this).
- b. There's a problem with this. Jonah knew that in his time the Temple was in **apostasy**. He also knew the Psalms of **David** (what prophet would not).

Psalms 139:7-8 - Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

Psalms 139:8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*.

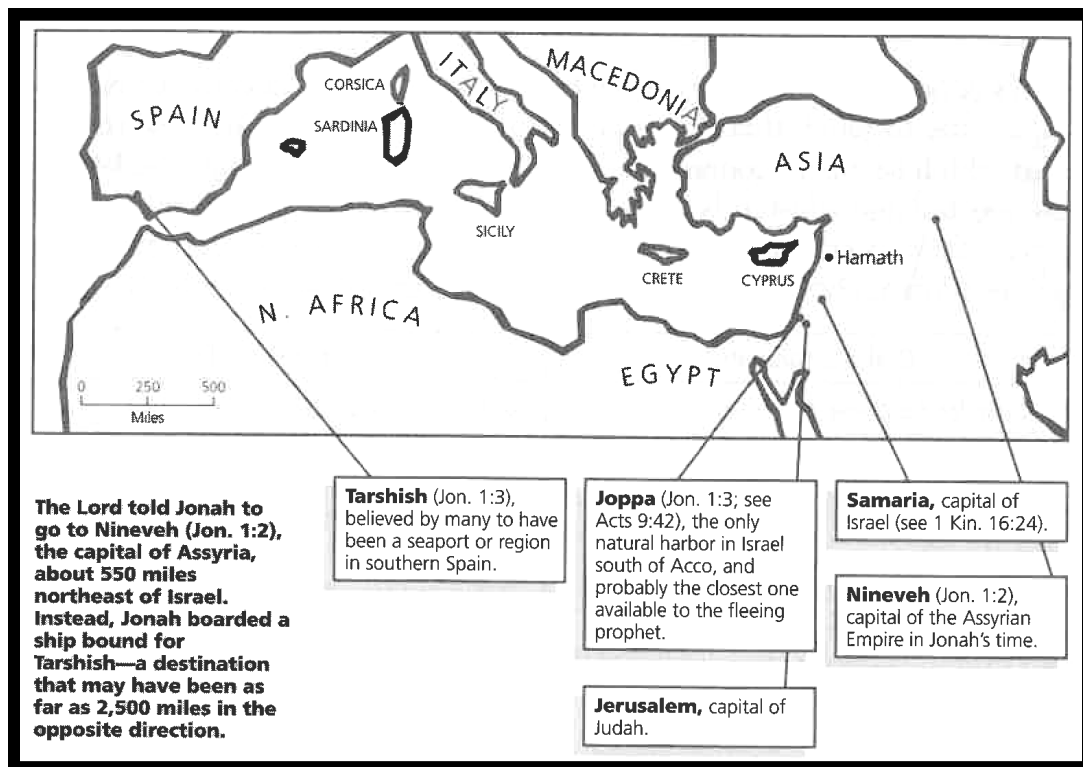
\*He knew it was impossible to get **away** from God. He thought if he could get as far away from Nineveh as he could, then God would not use **him** to preach to them. Perhaps he believed the spirit of prophecy would no longer be upon him.

\*Jonah is trying to **quit** his job.

- Jonah goes down to Joppa, finds a ship that is ready to sail, and boards that ship bound to Tarshish. Tarshish was a city in southern **Spain**.

Note: I Kings 10:22 - For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.

## 6. The Geography of Jonah



\*Jonah flees in the **opposite** direction of Nineveh. By his deliberate choice, being determined to go far away, perhaps God would use someone else. Jonah is trying to make it **impossible** for God to use **him**!

- D. God's call to Jonah is not up for discussion.

Jonah 1:4 - But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

- God is going to **chase** Jonah **down**. He is not going to let Jonah get away. He is not writing him off, but God is going to **deal** with him.
- [a great wind] This wasn't an ordinary storm. These sailors were accustomed to storms, but were **afraid** of this one (verse 5). This storm is so fierce that the ship is beginning to break up.

Applications for us:
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1. At special times, God's Word speaks to us to fulfill a purpose that God has planned. Has this ever happened to you?
2. At times, we need to have the perspective that lost-cruel-unkind people also need the Lord.
3. Why is it wrong for believers to run or neglect God's will in His Word? How do we run from God?
4. How does God stop us from fleeing His plan for us?