

JONAH

The book of Jonah is a stirring tale many find very interesting. Although written in the third person, it's likely Jonah himself wrote the book.

We don't know a whole lot about the prophet but we do know he came from the kingdom of Israel, one of the few in the days of the prophets. Likely written around 793 and 758 B.C., the book takes place before the fall of Israel. In fact, it was a time of great prosperity for the nation even though the people were living in disobedience. As we know, judgment would soon come.

But God didn't send Jonah to his own people; no, He had plans to send Jonah to a wicked nation of their enemies.

As the book goes, Jonah was called to go preach God's message to the people of Nineveh. They were a people group at odds with Israel and so when the call comes, Jonah isn't interested. Instead, the prophet chooses to flee in the complete opposite direction of Nineveh —Tarshish, in modern-day Spain. It was pretty much as far as Jonah could get from where God was asking him to go.

It was from a place of pride and fear that Jonah acted out in disobedience toward God. But he doesn't get far. While on the boat a great storm comes and Jonah knows it's God so he instructs the men to throw him overboard for their own safety. But God does leave him stranded in the open ocean. Instead, a great whale swallows him up and carries him to Nineveh.

Jonah's time in the whale is an intimate few days of repentance on Jonah's part. He realizes his sin and calls out to God. And then, he is vomited out exactly where God wanted him all along.

JONAH (CONT.)

What's interesting is that Jonah is one of the few prophets that Jesus mentions in the New Testament. In fact, he compares himself to Jonah, the prophet serving as a type of Christ. As GotQuestions.org tells it,

“In Matthew 12:40-41, Jesus declares that He will be in the grave the same amount of time Jonah was in the whale’s belly. He goes on to say that while the Ninevites repented in the face of Jonah’s preaching, the Pharisees and teachers of the Law who rejected Jesus were rejecting One who is far greater than Jonah. Just as Jonah brought the truth of God regarding repentance and salvation to the Ninevites, so too does Jesus bring the same message (Jonah 2:9; John 14:6) of salvation of and through God alone (Romans 11:36).”

While there, Jonah preaches and an incredible thing happens: the king and city repent! Considered one of the great evangelistic acts of the Bible, God saves a wicked city! Unfortunately, Jonah isn't entirely happy about this as he basically believes they don't deserve it. So God teaches him a lesson through the use of a plant and worm to show the prophet that no one is deserving, but that He is a merciful God.

What Can We Learn

At times we may want to run from God's call or directives for us. But God has called us to obedience. And if He has to, He'll use a vehicle to carry us there, often in a challenging or painful way. May we learn to walk in obedience and mercy.

Memory Verse

“When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.” Jonah 2:7