

Character Study: Jonah

Part 1 – A Prophet on the Run

Jonah 1:1-17

What's happening?

- Jonah was from Gath-hepher, a village in Galilee. He was a prophet who lived around the time of 800-750 B.C. (note II Kings 14:25).
- The Lord came to Jonah and gave him specific instructions. He was to go to Nineveh (a large Gentile city in Assyria) and let the people know that their wickedness had displeased Lord. (1:1-2)
- Jonah headed in the opposite direction out of fear. He tried to flee from “the presence of the Lord” by taking a boat to Tarshish. (1:3)
- The ride was interrupted as the Lord sent out strong winds that threatened the safety of the boat. The other people onboard cried out to their gods in vain, and tossed cargo overboard to lighten the ship. Before long, it was discovered that Jonah was to blame for their trouble. (1:4-10)
- Jonah told them the sea would become calm if he was thrown overboard. After realizing they could no longer fight the raging waters, they threw Jonah overboard while pleading for the Lord’s mercy. The sea became calm and the people greatly feared the Lord. (1:11-16)
- The Lord sent a big fish which swallowed up Jonah. Jonah found himself in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. (1:17)

What's God doing?

> God told Jonah to “arise” and “go.” It was not a suggestion, it was a command! We see here an Old Testament mission endeavor as Jonah (a Hebrew) was being sent to go across cultural barriers to a Gentile city. The question was how long would he resist his calling!

What's to learn?

→ With every step, Jonah thought he was getting farther from the Lord, but that was impossible. All he was doing was placing himself in a situation where God had to use more difficult extremes to get his attention.

→ Jonah called himself a God fearing person (1:9), though it was only the people on the ship who showed a genuine fear of the Lord. Throughout this chapter, Jonah shows no response that indicates any reverence for God. It is a shame when those who truly know the Creator of the Universe take His grace lightly and do not live for Him.