

Jonah



Not a false prophet - just a very bad one!

Bible Studies for
Ashfield Presbyterian Church
ashfieldpresbyterian.org.au

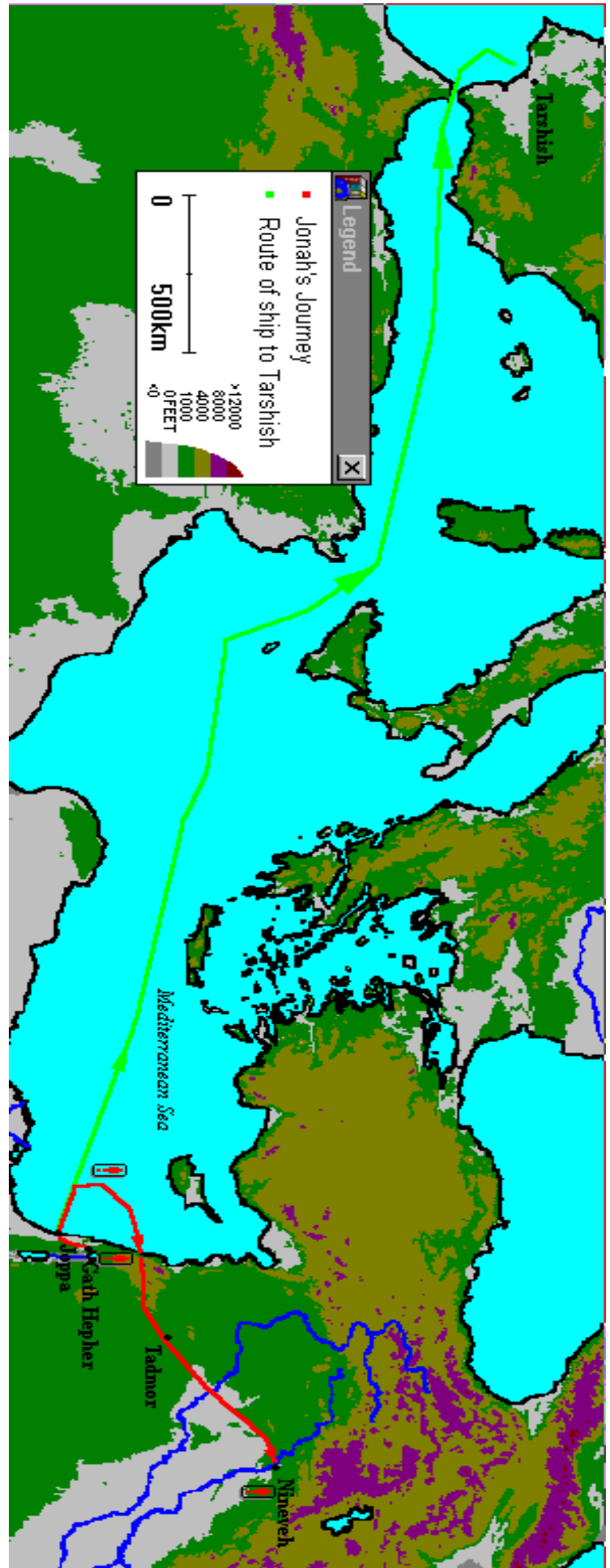
Introduction

The funny thing about Jonah is that it's not really prophecy at all! There are only eight words of prophecy in the whole book! (Jonah 3:4) It's more about the prophet than the prophecy.

But it's even more about God than about Jonah. God is the Creator and King of the whole universe, but he chooses to work out his purposes using people like Jonah. In fact, he does it **DESPITE** Jonah. And chooses whom he will show his compassion, love and forgiveness to.

2 Kings 14:25 is the only other Biblical reference to Jonah. It tells us that Jonah prophesied in the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of King Jeroboam II (793-753 BC).

Assyria was the most powerful nation of Jonah's day, and Nineveh was her capital. Assyria eventually captured Samaria, the capital of Israel, and conquered Israel in 722 BC.



Jonah 1: The One That Didn't Get Away

Nineveh was a wicked city. Read Nahum 3:1-7 to get a picture of Nineveh's wickedness.

1. **Read Jonah 1.** What is God's response (1-2)? What do we expect the content to be of his message to Nineveh?
2. How do you think Jonah would have felt when he heard God's call to Nineveh?
3. Find Israel, Nineveh and Tarshish on a map. What was Jonah's reply to God's call (3)? Why did he do it?
4. How does God respond (4)? What do the sailors do then (5-8)?
5. How does Jonah's declaration compare with his actions (9)?
6. What is significant about his description of the LORD?
7. What sort of picture is painted of the sailors? How do they compare to Jonah? (10-16)
8. What do you think Jonah was hoping to achieve by being thrown overboard? For himself? For the sailors?
9. In what sense are the sailors saved by the words and actions of Jonah (10, 16)? How is Jonah saved?
10. If God is the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land (9), why does he want Jonah to deliver his message?
11. How does this description of God help to explain his interest in Nineveh? How does Jonah misunderstand God's concerns?
12. What do we learn about God in this chapter?

To think about:

How do we limit God's vision and concern? How do we disobey God's call?

Prayer Points:

Jonah 2: The Difference Between Knowing it and Living it

1. **Read Jonah 2.** How would you describe this prayer? A psalm of thanksgiving? A call for help? Recommitment?
2. What characteristics of God is Jonah praising? These were all things Jonah would have known in Ch 1, but his actions said something different. How has he changed from Ch 1 to Ch 2?
3. Are there things about God which you only REALLY learn when things are tough?
4. In Ch 1, Jonah ran away from God, acting as if he was in control. How does his prayer in Ch 2 show a recognition that God is in control?
5. What does the temple have to do with Jonah's predicament? (4,7)
6. When did Jonah begin to pray? Look carefully!
7. A prophet's concern should be for the people, yet the only person Jonah prays for is himself. Who is left to pray for the people (1:14-16; 3:7-9)? In whom is Jonah REALLY interested? (What did God think of Jonah's prayer?! (10))
8. What is Jonah's "vow" likely to have been (9)?
9. What is Jonah's conclusion (2:9)? It is the literary midpoint of the book. Is there a sense in which these words have a bigger meaning than Jonah intended?
10. Jesus likens himself to Jonah (Mt 12:38-42) In what ways is he like Jonah? In what ways is he different? What is Jesus' conclusion in these verses?

To think about:

How has God rescued you? For what purpose? How do you need to change your thinking about God?

Prayer Points:

Jonah 3: The Call to Jonah Part 2

1. **Read Jonah 3.** To whom did God give a second chance?
2. How does Jonah respond to God's word? What's changed in Jonah?
3. What is different about Jonah's first call (1:1-2), and his second (3:1-2)? Is there anything significant there?
4. If a visit through Nineveh took three days, and Jonah only proclaimed his message on the first day (3:4), how did the message spread through the city?
5. How did the people respond to God's word? The king? Verse 5 says they "believed God". What did this involve?
6. Have YOU ever had to repent as seriously as the Ninevites? What was it like at the time? How did you feel afterwards? Have you ever had to CALL someone ELSE to repent like this? What was that like?
7. Even the animals fasted and were clothed in sackcloth (7-8)! What is the significance of this? (See 4:11)
8. There is no mention in the message (4) that God requires repentance, or even that he might forgive. Yet, if it wasn't a possibility, he wouldn't have bothered sending Jonah! How do you explain the people's response (5-9)? God's final response (10)? Does Jeremiah 18:7-10 help?
9. What do we learn about God from this chapter?

To think about:

Are you tempted to think that YOU deserve God's compassion while others deserve to miss out? God LONGS for ALL to turn to him – even Ninevites! Thank him for his grace.

Prayer Points:

Jonah 4: Man Spat out of Fish Spits Dummy

1. **Read Jonah 4.** How do you respond when things don't go your way?
2. What do you think of the theory that the end of Ch 3 would have been a better place to finish than Ch 4?
3. Why did Jonah run from God earlier (2)?
4. Why is he displeased and angry now?
5. Jonah's complaint is that God is compassionate and merciful (4:2) – and he is so angry he no longer values his life (4:3). How are these two verses ironic when we remember Ch 2? In what light is Jonah painted in Ch 4?
6. What is Jonah watching and hoping for as he sits outside the city?
7. To show him the foolishness of his position, God "provides" three things. What are they (4:6-8)? What else has God "provided" for Jonah (1:17)? What is God's point?
8. The last words of the story (in Hebrew) are "and many cattle". Is this a good ending? Why/ why not?

To think about:

Where do you fit on a line between God (who has a heart for the lost), and Jonah (who has no interest in the lost)? What are you DOING about your friends and family who aren't Christian? Pray about specific people you can share Jesus with.

Prayer Points: