



FOUNDATION BIBLE SCHOOL ARCHIVES

TOPIC: THE LIFE OF JONAH יוֹנָה (*Jona or Jonas*)

DATE: 8th OF JANUARY, 2018 – 2020.

ACTS AND LESSONS

CHARACTER: JONAH יוֹנָה (Jona or Jonas)

TEXT: JONAH 1 – 4

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decibels (anything over 120-130 is painful for humans). Only the sperm whale makes a louder sound.

The tongue of a blue whale weighs as much as an elephant and is so big a whole football team could stand on it.

Most blue whales migrate to cold waters to find food and to warmer waters to breed. Females usually give birth to a calf once every two or three years after a gestation period (pregnancy) of up to 12 months.

A blue whale calf can drink over 500 litres of its mother's milk every day. It is weaned after around six months.

The major blood vessel of a blue whale's heart is so big that a baby could crawl through it.

During their four-month migration, they eat very little, surviving mostly on reserves of blubber.

Although hunting blue whales has been banned for a long time, they are still an endangered species with an estimated worldwide population of 10,000 - 25,000.

Blue whales may be encountered on whale watching trips operating in locations such as Iceland, Canada (Gulf of St Lawrence), California, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Australia.

CCCSPOUI FBS DEPARTMENT

ABOUT THE BOOK

The Book of Jonah (Yonah יונה) is about one of the Prophets in the Bible. It tells of a Hebrew prophet named Jonah meaning “dove” son of Amittai meaning “Truth”, Born during the 9th century BCE and died during the 8th century BCE. He appears in 2 Kings 14:24-25 as a prophet and servant of God from Galilean city of Gath-Hepher in Zebulun (called Gittah-hepher in Joshua 19:10-13), about four miles north of Nazareth, *“therefore the statement of the pharisees in John 7:52 is not true because both peter and Jonah(2Ki. 14:25) came from Galilee”*. He is there described as being active during the reign of the second King Jeroboam (793-753 B.C.), king of Israel (cf. 2 Kings 14:24-25). Jeroboam II was northern Israel’s most powerful king, and during his administration, the borders of the nation were expanded to their greatest extent since the time of David and Solomon, and as predicting that Jeroboam will recover certain lost territories. According to tradition, Jonah was the boy brought back to life by Elijah the prophet, and hence shares many of his characteristics (particularly his desire for "strict judgment"). He was sent by God to prophesy the destruction of Nineveh but tried to escape the divine mission, *nevertheless Nineveh is the subject of both the books of Jonah and Nahum. (1:2; 3:2-7; 4:11; Nah 1:1; 2:8; 3:7) Zephaniah also makes predictions concerning the place (Zeph. 2:13). The name Jonah is spelled Jonas in the New Testament (Mt 12:39-41; 16:4; Lk 11:29-32). Peter's father was named Jona or Jonas (Jn 1:42; 21:13-17).* Jonah's story is told in short (just 48 verses).

AUTHOR

Jonah 1:1 specifically identifies the Prophet Jonah as the author of the Book of Jonah.

DATE OF WRITING

The Book of Jonah was likely written between 793-753 B.C.

PURPOSE OF WRITING

Disobedience and revival are the key themes in this book. Jonah's experience in the belly of the whale provides him with a unique opportunity to seek a unique deliverance, as he repents during this equally unique retreat. His initial disobedience leads not only to his personal revival, but to that of the Ninevites as well. Many classify the revival, which Jonah brings to Nineveh as one of the greatest evangelistic efforts of all time.

ACT ONE

Nineveh was founded or built by Asshur son of Shem (son of Noah) shortly after the Flood (Genesis 10:11-12); situated on the river Tigris and was first called Nina, from the patron goddess of the city. The principal goddess worshipped by the Ninevites at that time was Ashtoreth, but they also referred to the god Dagon who had a man's upper body and a fish's tail. And as capital of the Assyrian empire, it rose to power about 900 B.C. Years later, Assyria began the process of conquering Israel, and Jonah clearly saw this nation as an enemy and feared what it would eventually do. By 721 B.C. the Assyrian army had destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel.

The Assyrians were extremely brutal and cruel, even skinning their captives alive. The prophet Nahum describes them as lions, tearing and feeding on the nations (Nahum 2:11-13). Assyria, however, five hundred miles to the east, was a constant threat. The fact of the matter is, due to Israel's progressive rebellion, the prophets Hosea and Amos, contemporaries of Jonah, had declared that Jehovah would use Assyria as an instrument of punishment against his people (cf. Hosea 11:5; Amos 5:27). Any patriotic Israelite would have longed for Assyria's destruction! One can scarcely imagine, therefore, the consternation that must have filled Jonah's heart when he received the Lord's word instructing him to proceed to Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, with a divine message.

Jonah was known as a prophet and Servant of God, who can also be identified as an evangelist, commissional, as recorded in the book of Jonah. He was to convey a message from God to the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. Jonah found it difficult and agonizing to take a message of repentance to an empire destined to destroy his own nation and people. Out of patriotic zeal for his nation Israel, he fled in the opposite direction. He shuddered to consider the implications if Nineveh actually responded to his message: prolonging the life of a brutal, ruthless and bloodthirsty nation threatening the existence of God's people.

Jonah was aware of the fact that Jehovah is a "gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving-kindness" (Jonah 4:2). Hence, it was certain that if the inhabitants of that great city were responsive to his message, Heaven would certainly spare them. And Jonah did not want that.

FACTS ABOUT BLUE WHALES

Blue whales are the largest creature ever to have lived on Earth. Here are some amazing facts and figures about these incredible creatures.



Blue whale blow
WDE/LUCY MOLLESON

HOW BIG IS A BLUE WHALE?

Blue whales can grow to over 33 metres (around 100ft) in length, which is over twice as long as a trex dinosaur – and makes them the largest animal species on Earth! The calf of a blue whale is around 7 metres in length, around the same as an adult African elephant.

HOW MUCH DOES A BLUE WHALE WEIGH?

Female blue whales weigh more (180,000kg) than males (150,000kg). At around 2,700kg newborn blue whale weighs about the same as an adult hippopotamus. The heart of a blue whale can weigh 450kg.

HOW LONG DOES A BLUE WHALE LIVE?

The oldest known blue whale was around 110 years old; however, 80 or 90 years old is thought to be more normal.

MORE AMAZING FACTS ABOUT BLUE WHALES...

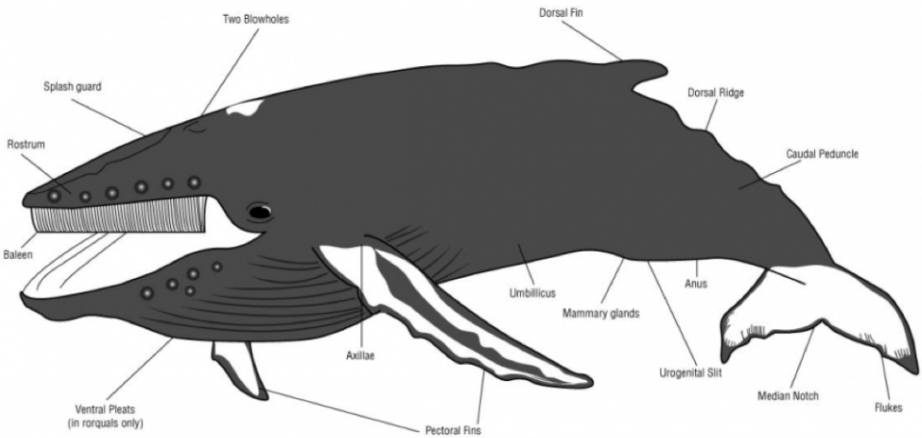
Despite their enormous size, they feed on tiny shrimp-like crustaceans called krill (as many as 40 million every day) which they scoop up in huge mouthfuls and sieve from the water using their baleen. They have loud, deep voices and can communicate with other whales hundreds of miles away. The sound they make can reach up to 188

songs only in warm waters where they breed and give birth. In cold waters, they make rougher sounds, scrapes and groans, perhaps used for locating large masses of krill (the tiny crustaceans that they eat).

WHICH WHALE MAKES THE LONGEST MIGRATION?

The humpback whales that feed in Antarctic waters and swim north to breed off the coasts of Colombia, Panama and Costa Rica make one of the longest confirmed migration of any mammal. Gray whales also migrate huge distances and some may even rival the humpback for distance travelled. Some travel a round-trip of between 16,000–20,000 km (10,000–12,400 miles) every year between their winter calving lagoons in the warm waters of Mexico and their summer feeding grounds in the cold Arctic seas, however a female grey whale has recently been recorded as having made an even longer round-trip of 22,500km (14,000 miles) migrating between the east coast of Russia and the breeding grounds of Mexico. To put this into perspective, the continent of Africa is approximately 8,000 km (5,000 miles) from north to south. In its lifetime – that’s about 40 years – a gray whale travels a distance that is equivalent to going to the moon and back! Despite their size, the fin whale, the second largest whale, is known as the "greyhound of the sea" and can reach speeds of up to 20mph (32kph)!

WHALE ANATOMY

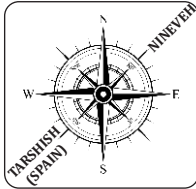


ACT TWO

Isaiah 55:8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.

The love God had for Israel is everlasting and His covenant over His people is forever. Jehovah will never abandon the Israelites or punish them unless they sin against Him and even when they sin against Him, He never stops keeping His promise not to wipe them out completely from the face of the earth.

Jonah's fear and pride caused him to run from God. He did not wish to go to Nineveh to preach repentance to the people, as God had commanded, because he felt they were Israel's enemies, and he was convinced that God will not carry out his threat to destroy the city because *Jonah's thought was that if Nineveh should repent, God was going to use Nineveh to punish Israel.* As a result, Jonah went to Joppa which is also known as Jaffa or Joppe where he boarded a ship and headed in a western direction to Tarshish, a Phoenician colony on the southwest coast of Spain some two thousand miles to the west. Instead of going northeast toward Nineveh. The express design of his trip was to flee



from the presence of Jehovah (Jonah 1:3), *Jonah paid the fare to get away from the presence of the Lord but it was to cost him more than that before the journey was over. Therefore, because of his sin through disobedience, he was to pay with his Life; and the cargo of the ship to be lost.* A great storm arose, and the inmates of the vessel feared for their very lives. Realizing that it is no ordinary storm, the seamen (mariners) became curious of the cause of the problem on the ship, they decided to cast lots which they did and it fell on Jonah. But the lot never told them (seamen) his sin; therefore they appealed to Jonah. Jonah confessed that he is a refugee from the Lord, and was the cause of the calamity.

Note that: when the captain became so afraid he told everyone to call upon their god; that they might be saved (Jonah: 1:5), Jonah would not have called upon God because he knew the cause of what was happening. He would rather prefer to die than to hear or follow God's intension of saving Nineveh through his obedience (Jonah: 1:11-12), while some of the mariners went into the side of the ship, they found Jonah lay and was fast asleep. Then, the ship master said to Jonah, "what is the meaning of what you are doing sleeping at this hour of trouble in which everyone might likely perish" Arise and call upon thy God to save us from perishing.

"This was the first huge thing they noticed about Jonah; because he was not afraid of the storm and the destruction about to happen and it was also the first time they approach him to "call upon his God"

If the mariners had waited for everyone's prayer they might have all died because the only person whose prayer is relevant (or one who serve the true living God) at that time was not willing and ready to pray at all not until the mariners decided to cast lots because it was getting worse to see who was the cause of the problem, then did they realized it was Jonah the sleeper, who was not afraid of the problem in the ship, then did they appealed to him again (1:8)

Tell us, we pray thee; For whose cause this evil is upon us,
What is thy occupation? Whence comest thou?
What is thy country? What people are thou?

But Jonah replied:

I am a Hebrew, I fear the lord, the God of Heaven which hath made the sea and the dry land (If he had truly feared Jehovah he would have obeyed Him (v9));
Jonah didn't truly fear Jehovah (v9) else he wouldn't have prefer to die than to go to Nineveh (1:11-12)
He fled from the presence of the Lord
And explain some further reasons.

When the mariner knew he was a messenger of God and had also disobeyed God to fury, they became exceedingly afraid, not knowing what to do because it was impossible for them to harm him being God's messenger lest God's wrath rose against them mightily (1:14). The mariner tried hard to row the ship to a dry land and prayed fervently to Jehovah hoping to save Jonah (1:13-14). But it was impossible to win their battle though, because they were dealing with a stubborn backslider in the hands of God.

The sailors tried to dump as much cargo as possible before giving up because they did not like the idea of throwing the prophet but they ultimately were forced to accept Jonah's suggestion that he be thrown overboard. At which point the sea calms.

Being in the presence of God is wonderful to one who loves Him, but a terrible thing if he is an enemy. Multitudes have longed for the presence of God, wanting to live in it all their days; but Jonah was willing to sacrifice this coveted place and even give his life to save his people from Nineveh and the Assyrians. The fact is he did sacrifice his life trying to save them when he was thrown into the sea (Jonah 1 vs 12-15) and right there he became a type of Christ. The sailors prayed to the Lord saying: We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. and they took Jonah and cast him into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging, then did the sailor feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered sacrifices to God and made vows.

Jonah was miraculously saved by being swallowed by a great fish in whose belly he spent three days and three nights.

pair weighing around a tonne.

WHICH WHALE HAS THE LONGEST TOOTH?

The male narwhal has two teeth. The left one pierces the animal's lip and grows to an incredible 2-3 metres. In Europe, these tusks were once sold as the horns of the mythical unicorn.

WHICH IS THE MOST ENDANGERED WHALE?

The North Atlantic and North Pacific right whales are among the most endangered of all whales. Only around 400-500 individuals currently exist with fewer than 100 North Pacific right whales remaining. The Western Pacific gray whale may be down to the last 150 individuals but perhaps the most endangered whale lives in the Gulf of Mexico. Here, a genetically distinct population of Bryde's whale has recently been discovered that may have fewer than 50 individuals remaining.

WHICH WHALE LIVES THE LONGEST?

In the wild whales live for a long time - generally the larger species living longest. Bowhead whales spend their lives in cold Arctic waters. They may be the world's oldest mammals and are the longest lived of all whales possibly over 200 years!

WHICH WHALE MAKES THE LOUDEST SOUND?

Beluga whales are known as the "canaries of the sea" because they make chirping sounds like the little yellow birds.

Sperm whales are the loudest whales, they have been recorded making sounds at 230 decibels. In comparison the call of the blue whale reaches levels up to 188 decibels. But while a sperm whale's sound lasts for only around 100 microseconds (a microsecond is 1 millionth of a second), a blue whale's call can last up to 30 seconds. Sounds over 120-130 decibels are painful to human ears.

Male humpback whales sing the most complex songs and have long, varied, eerie, and beautiful songs that include recognizable sequences of squeaks, grunts, and other sounds. The songs have the largest range of frequencies used by whales, ranging from 20-9,000 hertz. Only male humpback whales have been recorded singing. They sing these complex

The heart of a blue whale is about the size of a VW Beetle car and weighs up to 450kg. The aorta, a major blood vessel for the heart, is big enough for a human child to crawl through.

HOW BIG IS THE CALF OF A BLUE WHALE?

Blue whales are pregnant for 10-12 months. The newborn calf is about 7.5 m long and weighs about 5.5 – 7.3 tonnes. A baby blue whale drinks about 225 litres (about enough to fill a bath) of its mother's fat-laden milk (it is 40-50% fat) a day, gaining 3.7 kilograms an hour, until at age 8 months they are 15 m long and 22.5 tonnes! The mother and calf may stay together for a year or longer, until the calf is about 13 m long. Blue whales reach maturity at 10-15 years.

WHICH WHALE IS THE DEEPEST DIVER?

A Cuvier's beaked whale has been recorded to dive to a depth of 3km for over 2 hours. Sperm whales are also champion divers. Adults can stay underwater for almost two hours and dive to depths of 2,000 metres or more. They eat squid, which can live very deep in the ocean, so sperm whales have to dive down into the deepest parts of the sea to catch them.

WHICH WHALE HAS THE BIGGEST BRAIN?

The Sperm whales huge head, which is up to a third of its overall body length, houses the heaviest brain in the animal kingdom - up to 9kg. The head also consists of a cavity large enough to park a car inside that contains a yellowish wax called spermaceti that was much sought after by whalers.

WHICH WHALE HAS THE THICKEST BLUBBER AND LONGEST BALEEN?

The bowhead whale, which lives exclusively in the Arctic, has the thickest blubber of all whales. It can reach a whopping 70cm in thickness. These whales also have the longest baleen – the comb-like structures hanging down from their upper jaws used as a sieve to filter food from the sea-water. These baleen plates can reach up to 5 metres in length.

WHICH WHALE HAS THE LARGEST TESTICLES?

The southern right whale has the largest testes in the animal kingdom each

"Some baleen whales are up to 100ft. long and 40ft. around, weighing 300,000lbs. A Mediterranean fish was caught and exhibited in Beirut, which had a head that weighed 6 tons. A man standing on the lower jaw could not reach the upper jaw, the opening being about 8 ft. across. The April 4, 1896 literary Digest gave a story of a Mediterranean whale that demolished a harpoon boat. Two men were lost. One was found alive in the whale's belly a day and a half after it was killed. James Bartley Lived with no after effects except his skin was tanned by the gastric Juices. A pure fish was caught off the Florida coast that weighed 30,000lbs. It was 45ft. long and 8 ft. thick. It had a 1500lb. fish in its stomach besides a large octopus. A man could easily stand up in its stomach. which means it could have swallowed 10 Jonah's."

While in the great fish, Jonah prayed to God in his affliction and commits to thanksgiving and to paying what he has vowed. God commands the fish to spew Jonah out, and the fish vomits him up on dry



land (we wonder what took him so long to repent after 3 days). "Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: 'Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you'" (Jonah 3:1-2). This time, there is no arguing from Jonah, who, although he may be complying on the outside, is still stubbornly disobeying on the inside. Jonah then makes the 500-mile trip to Nineveh, a journey that would have taken more than a month and thus provided ample time for sober reflection. Jonah entered the great city with his blunt message (consisting of only five words in the Hebrew text): אַבְל אַרְבַּעִים יוֹם, וְאַתְּ נִינְוֵה יוֹפְלוּ. "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

Amazingly, there was mass repentance, from the king (Ashur-dan III, according to Assyrian records) down to the commoner. and leads the city in a great revival. The king of Nineveh puts on sackcloth and sits in ashes, making a proclamation, which decrees fasting, sackcloth, prayer,

and repentance. God sees their repentant hearts and spares the city at that time. The entire city is humbled and broken with the people (and even the animals) in sackcloth and ashes. Even the king comes off his throne to repent. To his utter chagrin, he finds not just the people from the king down, but their animals as well, clothed in sackcloth and sprinkled with ashes as an indication of their absolute acceptance of the prophetic word sent to them by God, their deep repentance, and their fervent anxiety to get right with the Lord (Jonah 3:5-10).

ACT THREE

This Repentance of the Ninevites does not suit our friend Jonah at all and he flies into a fury at God. Jonah was quite distraught at this turn of events and he despaired, even to the point of wanting to die. Resolutely, he perched himself on a hilltop nearby, eagerly watching the city in hopes that the Lord would yet destroy it! As he sat in the scorching sun, God caused a shady vine to grow up for his refreshment and the prophet was glad or sullenly grateful. On the following day, however, Jehovah sent a worm to smite Jonah's vine, and as the blistering sun beat upon his head, the man of God again lapsed into a state of abject depression. Then came Heaven's stinging rebuke. The Lord in effect said: "Jonah, why is it that you are so concerned with this vine a mere plant which is temporal, and for which you did not labor; and yet, you show utterly no concern for the hapless inhabitants of Nineveh?". *The God of Israel warns all men of their sinful ways, seeking to turn them from destruction. Jonah knew that his God was merciful and that is why he was fleeing; he did not want Him to show mercy to the enemies of his people. He wanted them destroyed (Jonah 4:2) but it would be unlike God to fail or refuse to warn man of coming destruction and give him an opportunity to avoid it (Jonah 1:2; Gen 19:20-22).*

BLESSING FROM JONAH'S SIN

THE LIFE OF JONAH LEAD TO TWO GREAT CONVERTS.

I. *The Mariner: They left their gods and prayed to JEHOVAH (v14) and when Jehovah answered their prayers, they feared Him exceedingly and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD and made VOWS to Him; probably to serve Him only all the days of their Lives seeing His work and how great His power is. But Jonah didn't care because all that matters to Jonah was his stubbornness of not willing and ready to go to Nineveh.*

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime [i.e., the Old Testament Scriptures] were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

3 MEMORY VERSE FOR THE LESSON ON JONAH'S LIFE

- *Psalm 119:105: Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*
- *Psalm 119:11: Your Word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against you*
- *Psalm 18:30: As for God, His way is perfect; The Word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.*

FACTS ABOUT WHALES

Whales are amazing! Here are some incredible facts about whales and their lives in the oceans.



*Humpback whale
TIM STENTON*

WHICH IS THE BIGGEST WHALE?

The blue whale is the largest animal ever to have lived on Earth; it is larger than any of the dinosaurs. The biggest recorded blue whale was a female in the Antarctic Ocean that was 30.5 m long (more than 3.5 times the length of a double-decker bus and as long as a Boeing 737 plane) with an estimated weight of 144 tonnes (almost the same as 2,000 men). The tongue alone of a blue whale can weigh as much as an elephant and an entire football team could stand on it!

the punishment of the wicked after death.

In graphically poetic language, the agonizing prophet described his horrible ordeal in the sea-monster's belly as an experience akin to being in "hell." He exclaims:

"I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord . . . out of the belly of hell cried I" (Jonah 2:2) .

The Hebrew term is Sheol. Here it denotes the abode of the wicked prior to the Judgement.

Since crying out by reason of affliction certainly indicates conscious suffering, one may conclude that the state of the wicked when dead is that of conscious torment—a truth affirmed elsewhere in the sacred record (cf. Luke 16:23; 2 Peter 2:9, ASV).

Conditional Prophecy

Jonah's message to Nineveh reveals that prophecy is sometimes conditional.

The prophet declared that the great city would be destroyed in forty days. But it survived for a century and a half beyond that time.

Clearly, therefore, the prediction of doom was conditioned upon Nineveh's response to the prophetic message.

Typology in the Book of Jonah

The book of Jonah presents a beautiful type of the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

Though some modernists argue that the concept of a bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead was unknown in Old Testament times, Jesus demonstrated otherwise. He declared:

"[F]or as Jonah was three days and nights in the belly of the sea-monster; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40) .

Clearly, the Lord viewed Jonah's three-day entombment as a foreshadowing of his resurrection from the grave, by which, of course, Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power (Romans 1:4).

Conclusion

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul wrote:

II. *Nineveh: though Jonah ended up to preach in Nineveh, but He was not happy with it anyway therefore, his preaching in Nineveh was with just 5 words, which means "YET FORTY DAYS, AND NINEVEH SHALL BE OVERTHROWN" though he might still say some words which where not written down but his great intension and hope after his evangelism was to see Nineveh destroyed within that "FORTY DAYS". Therefore his preaching could not have been kind for him to still hope for their destruction*

Even after these two great converts through Jonah's sin, the ending of the book of Jonah tells us that Jonah was still "UNHAPPY AND ANGRY". That was because of how the bitter hatred had grown in his heart for Nineveh.

- The Sin and mistake of one man can be a lesson for others not to follow his footstep.
- No matter how strong our will is, the Lord's will, will definitely over power ours.
- Disobeying God can make life miserable to him/her who disobeys because all thing and soul belong to God (Ex13: 2; 19:5; Lev25: 23; Dt32: 35; Job41: 11; Ps50: 10, 12; Pr8: 14; Eze29: 9; Hag2: 8; Jn16: 14; Ro12: 19; Heb10: 30)
- Letting the Lord’s will and command, to be our guiding rule is the best step any man can take in Life.
- Jonah never thought that he would ever reach that Nineveh since he was going in the opposite direction but at the end, what was the result of his effort disobeying God, "VAIN", and yet it cost him even his Life. He would have been honored for obeying Him.
- Jonah never wanted to hear from God because he wasn't ready to follow his instruction, but when he was swallowed by the whale and felt pain for 3 days, he repented at the very point of his death, the Lord heard his prayer and spoke to the fish to vomit him out, (2:9-10), therefore it is important for us to always understand that no matter our sin, in as much as we still have the strength to pray for forgiveness, it is important we pray because the Lord is always willing to forgive and He is always listening.
- Jonah’s judgement was based on his sight without looking into God’s plan.
- Jonah was not willing to listen to God because he had hardened his heart to his own understanding.

- Jonah’s disobedience led to his death and would have lead to the death of many in the ship if not that God was kind to them
- Jonah later surrendered to the will of God by repenting, but he was never happy about what the Lord had sent him to do.
- Jonah is an evangelist that didn't want his work to produce good fruit in the land of Nineveh.
- Jonah must have been thinking that they wouldn't repent because he was still looking forward to the fall of Nineveh even after his evangelism.

10 Lessons from the Book of Jonah
The Sovereignty of Jehovah

The book of Jonah demonstrates the sovereignty of the Almighty as he employs his creation to accomplish the divine plan. The Lord controlled the elements of weather (Jonah 1:4, 11, 13, 15; 4:8), and he prepared a sea-creature, a vine, and a worm to do his bidding (Jonah 1:17; 4:6, 7).

God’s Interest in All People

Though Jehovah was working primarily through the Hebrew nation as an instrument for the sending of the promised Seed (Genesis 22:18), nevertheless, his compassion for all the people of the earth was abundantly manifested. And the sending of the “missionary,” Jonah, to these Gentile Ninevites was a clear demonstration of this. God's love manifests itself in His accessibility to all, regardless of our reputation, nationality or race. The free offer of the Gospel is for all people in all times. Our task as Christians is to be the means by which God tells the world of the offer and to rejoice in the salvation of others. This is an experience God wants us to share with Him, not being jealous or resentful of those who come to Christ in “last-minute conversions” or who come through circumstances dissimilar to our own.

God Is in Control

Jehovah rules in the kingdoms of men and disposes them according to his divine standard (cf. Psalm 22:28; Proverbs 14:34; Daniel 2:21; 4:17). Those who think that nations stand or fall because of a “strong national defense” are woefully ignorant of biblical principles. Nineveh was given forty days to repent. As a result, the nation was spared destruction for about a century and a half. Later, however, when Assyria

degenerated again, she was destroyed and the prophet, Nahum, addresses this very matter. Nineveh fell to the Babylonians in 612 B.C. We cannot hide from God. What He wishes to accomplish through us will come to pass, despite all our objections and foot-dragging. Ephesians 2:10 reminds us that He has plans for us and will see to it that we conform to those plans. How much easier it would be if we, unlike Jonah, would submit to Him without delay!

Mankind Is Accountable to the Lord

The book of Jonah demonstrates that ancient people who were outside of that Mosaic covenant relationship with Jehovah were nonetheless accountable to Heaven's moral law. Jehovah looked down upon Nineveh and observed the wickedness of this people (Jonah 1:2). Since sin is the transgression of divine law (1 John 3:4; cf. Romans 4:15), the Ninevites were obviously subject to such.

People Can Change

This record reveals the power inherent within the word of God when such comes into contact with honest and good hearts (cf. Luke 8:15). Though Jonah's message was very brief, it produced the desired effect. Somehow or another the citizens of Nineveh had learned of the prophet's “resurrection” from the belly of the “fish,” for, as Jesus noted, Jonah was a “sign” to that generation even as the raised Lord would be to his (cf. Luke 11:30).

Repentance Requires Works

Jesus declared that “the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah” (Matthew 12:41), while the book of Jonah itself informs us that God “saw their [the people of Nineveh] works, that they turned from their evil way” (Jonah 3:10). Thus, repentance is not, as some allege, a mere sorrow for sin. Rather, it requires a turning away from evil conduct. Moreover, this passage reveals that repentance is a work, and since repentance is essential to salvation (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 17:30), it conclusively follows that salvation is not exclusive of all types of works!

The Punishment of Hell

An intriguing passage in the book of Jonah illustrates a vital point about