

**THE BOOK OF JONAH**  
Chapter One  
Dec 3, 2023, 9:45 AM  
Life BP Church, Adult Sunday School

**1. General Information**

1a. Read the book of Jonah 3 times. Read each chapter in one sitting.

1b. Commentaries

- Jonah — Geneva Series of Commentaries (Hugh Martin)
- Jonah, Micah & Nahum — Geneva Series of Commentaries (John Calvin)
- Preacher on the Run — The message of Jonah (Devotional — paperback (Gordon Keddie)
- Christ for us — Sermons of Hugh Martin (paperback)

**2. Introduction to the Book of Jonah**

2a. Writer

Jonah, was a prophet from Israel, the northern kingdom. His name means “dove.” His written prophecy is biographical and is about his ministry to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.

2b. Date written

No specific date given in the bible. However, in 2 Kings 14:23-29, Jonah was the prophet during the rule of Jeroboam II, the last King of Israel, therefore the possible date of writing is about 760 - 755 BC.

2c. Theme

The absolute sovereign rule of God over the natural and spiritual domain. However, the main theme is “Salvation is of the Lord” (2:9). It is highlighted in both Jonah’s undeserved deliverance from death and Nineveh’s underserved deliverance from judgment.

2d. Objective

To teach God’s people their responsibility to sow the message of redemption to all the people and Jonah’s experience “in the belly of the fish three days and three night” is to prefigure Christ’s death and His resurrection.

**3. Summary of Chapter One**

3a. God’s Directive

Jonah lived during the reign of Jeroboam II as recorded in 2 Kgs 14:25. The divine directive to Jonah was to “*arise and go to Nineveh*” (v.2) In the OT, this is a common directive for a prophetic assignment (cf. 1 Kgs 17:8). This was how God commanded His appointed prophets.

3b. The appointed place — Nineveh

Concerning Nineveh, the following descriptions were given:

*First*, it was a foreign city. The prophets of Israel usually did not leave their native land to pronounce the God’s judgment on Gentile nations. Elisha once visited Damascus in Syria (2

Kgs 8:7), but he was not sent there with a message for the entire city. This is the *first* of several unusual features in this book, namely) that God would dispatch a prophet to preach His word in a Gentile city.

*Second*, Nineveh was a “*great city*” (v.2) politically, demographically and geographically. It was one of the main centres of the Assyrian empire, although at the time of Jonah it had not reached the prominence which it later would receive under King Sennacherib (705 — 681 BC).

*Third*, Nineveh was a wicked city — “*their wickedness has come up before me*” (v.2). Their wickedness was so great that God himself had taken judicial note of it, and they will not be left unpunished. The wickedness of the Assyrians included idolatry and pride (Isa 10:5–19; 36:18–20), cruel oppression (2 Kgs 15:29; 17:6; Isa 36:16, 17), and especially inhumane warfare.

*Fourth*, Nineveh was a city under divine condemnation. Jonah was to “*cry against*” the place, i.e., announce God’s judgment there (1:2).

#### 4. **Theological Implication — Chapter One**

##### 4a. Jonah’s abandonment of his commission (vs.1-3)

- God is represented here as the Lord of all nations who holds every nation morally accountable. “*Their wickedness is come up before me*” (v.2; cf. Gen 18:20–21).

- Jonah became the first Israelite prophet to announce the divine word to a foreign city. He was called of God to be the first foreign missionary!

- Jonah rebelled against the directive of the Lord — flee “*from the presence of the LORD.*” He was resigning his prophetic office.

- Jonah paid the fare — the full fare (v.3) to embark on such a long and dangerous voyage is evidence of his stubborn determination to abandon his ministry.

##### 4b. Jonah’s Chastisement (vs.4-16)

- First miracle — the Lord “*sent out (hurled) a great wind into the sea.*” This produced “a great storm on the sea.” The Tarshish bound ship was “about to break up,” i.e., be dashed in pieces.

- The crew threw over board the cargo so as to lighten the ship in the hope they would be able to ride out the storm (5a). This is a picture of man’s foolish act of trying to save or to deliver himself from sin.

- Throughout this violent storm Jonah was asleep in the hold of the ship. Here is an illustration of the spiritual effects of sin upon one who is living in sin against God. When living in sin — sin can numb our spiritual sensitivity to God and the things of God.

- The captain’s humble submission to the sovereign decisions of God stands in stark contrast to Jonah’s arrogant refusal to submit to God’s will (1:6b).

- Jonah learned that his disobedient actions were placing many other lives in jeopardy. Our sin always affect others one way or another.
- Jonah knew he was the guilty party, yet, like Achan at Ai, he did not confess until God directed (Prov 16:33) the lot to fall on him (Jonah 1:7).
- Despite his reluctance to preach to Gentile, Jonah, under the pressure of the moment, was bearing witness to the claims of God to a group of pagan men. His confession of faith in God is at the same time an admission that God is responsible for the storm.
- The captain and the sailors finally turned to the God of heaven in prayer.
- First, they prayed that they might not perish in the storm.
- Second, they asked that they might not be held guilty of shedding innocent blood.
- Third, they acknowledged that all that had befallen them had been the will of God — that God had the right and prerogative of doing as he pleased.
- These heathen men experienced a kind of conversion. The very thing that Jonah did not want to happen at Nineveh was starting to happen on board that ship first (1:13–14).
- The sailors picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea. Immediately the sea stopped its raging. When the sailors witnessed the instantaneous calming of the water, they “feared the LORD exceedingly/greatly,” i.e., they worshiped God.

Unknown to Jonah, he has been the instrument to bring the knowledge of the true God to a number of Gentiles (1:15–16).

#### 4b. Jonah’s deliverance (v.17)

- God “prepare” a great fish to swallow Jonah. This word, is better to be rendered as “appoint.” The Creator of the sea is also the Master of its creatures. They do his bidding.
- The Lord saved this rebellious prophet from certain destruction in the water of the sea (1:17a). Jonah survived three days and nights in the stomach of the fish.
- Jonah actually spent that amount of time in the sea creature. God left the prophet in the fish long enough to establish the fact that his survival was totally a supernatural event. It was a miracle (1:17b).
- The great fish event occupies only three of the forty-eight verses in the Book of Jonah. Obviously the author did not see this as the main emphasis of his book.
- G. Campbell Morgan (a British evangelist, preacher, a leading Bible, observed that “men have been looking so hard at the great fish that they have failed to see the great God” which is the main burden of the book.<sup>7</sup>

Let us remember, we have a great God who is able to show us “great and mighty things” which we know not (Jer. 33:3).