

Jonah 1
Preached at Calvary Rio Rancho
October 27, 2021
By Aaron R. Force

Jonah 1:

Jonah's Disobedience

1 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amitai, saying, **2** "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." **3** But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

The Storm at Sea

4 But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.

5 Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

6 So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish."

7 And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble *has come* upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. **8** Then they said to him, "Please tell us! For whose cause *is* this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?"

9 So he said to them, "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry *land*."

Jonah Thrown into the Sea

10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why have you done this?" For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. **11** Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?"—for the sea was growing more tempestuous.

12 And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest *is* because of me."

13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. **14** Therefore they cried out to the Lord and said, "We pray, O Lord, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You." **15** So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. **16** Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows.

Jonah's Prayer and Deliverance

17 Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.¹

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jon 1:1-17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

OUTLINE:

V. 1-2: God called Jonah to Nineveh (God says "Go")

V. 3: Jonah disobeys (Jonah says "No")

V. 4-17 – God disciplines Jonah

- **Reasons why God disciplines us:**

V. 4-12 – To get our attention

V. 13-17 – To get the attention of others

INTRO:

V. 1-2: God called Jonah to Nineveh (God says "Go") Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amitai, saying, ²"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me."

V. 2 – Nineveh

The city of Nineveh was located on the east side of the Tigris River about 550 miles northeast of Samaria (see the map "The Assyrian Empire"). That distance required a journey of more than a month, if Jonah traveled the normal distance of 15–20 miles a day.²

² "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city - The great city was second in size only to Babylon.

The Lord had given Jonah a specific task, he was to go and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me."

Nahum 3:1 (NLT) - ¹What sorrow awaits Nineveh,

the city of murder and lies!

She is crammed with wealth

and is never without victims.³

- Nineveh is constantly talked about throughout the Bible as an evil city and an enemy of Israel.

The population of 'this great city' of Jonah's history (1:2; 3:2) is given as 120,000, who did not know right from wrong.⁴

- The Assyrians were brutal and were master torturers.

² Hannah, J. D. (1985). Jonah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1464). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). Holy Bible: New Living Translation (Na 3:1). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁴ Wiseman, D. J. (1996). Nineveh. In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, & J. I. Packer (Eds.), *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed., p. 826). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

- Archeologists have found many stone carvings of the Assyrians beheading, flaying, impaling, and dismembering their victims.

The wickedness of Nineveh did not go unnoticed by the Lord and so he calls His prophet Jonah to cry out against it.

Jonah was called to a people who were not his own. He was called basically as a missionary to one of the enemies of Israel.

V. 3 - Jonah disobeys (Jonah says "No") - ³ But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

Q: When God said "Go", why did Jonah say, "No"?

A:

- 1) **He thought that he could run from the presence of the Lord** (V. 3).

I'm sure we all see the foolishness of that because God is everywhere and He made everything. In fact, David wrote:

Psalm 139:7-10

⁷ Where can I go from Your Spirit?
 Or where can I flee from Your presence?
⁸ If I ascend into heaven, You are there;
 If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.
⁹ If I take the wings of the morning,
 And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
¹⁰ Even there Your hand shall lead me,
 And Your right hand shall hold me.⁵

APPLICATION

I think we tend to laugh at this part of Jonah's story because we think, "oh, how stupid can a guy be – that he thinks he can escape the presence of the Lord!"

- But don't we do that all the time?
- We go places or do things and think that God is not watching.
- There are times when we know God has called us to do a work, a service, a ministry, etc. and we simply don't do it. We suppress the call. We ignore the call.

Sometimes it is disobedience to God's Word:

- Maybe we are single and we are a believer and we meet somebody who isn't.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ps 139:7-10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

- We know the Bible says not to be unequally yoked with an unbeliever.
But then we justify our disobedience by saying things:
 - But he/she is such a nice person.
 - I'm never going to find someone better.
 - Time is running out for me to find someone.
- Maybe it's an attitude we have:
 - How many times do we justify our sinful behavior by saying things like:
 - That's just the way I am.
 - That's not my problem.

Q: When God said "Go", why did Jonah say, "No"?

A:

- 1) **He thought that he could run from the presence of the Lord** (V. 3).
- 2) **He didn't want the people of Nineveh to have an opportunity to repent:**
 - **Jonah 4:2** - Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.⁶

Maybe like Jonah, God has called you to share God's truth with someone you don't really like and maybe even rather see them burn in hell than repent.

- "WE SHOULD LOVE THE LOST MORE THAN OUR OWN COMFORT." – Pastor Troy Warner

V. 4-17 – God disciplines Jonah

- **2 Reasons why God disciplines us:**

V. 4-12 – To get our attention

⁴ But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.

⁵ Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

⁶ So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish."

⁷ And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸ Then they said to him, "Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?"

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jon 4:2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ So he said to them, "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."

Jonah Thrown into the Sea

¹⁰ Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why have you done this?" For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. ¹¹ Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?"—for the sea was growing more tempestuous.

¹² And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest *is* because of me."

V. 4 - Notice where this storm comes from – it comes from the Lord:

⁴ But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.

But we should also understand that the God who stills the storm, also sends it (v. 4).⁷

Q: Why would the Lord cause such a storm to take place?

A: V. 10b - For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

It's important to note that we often bring suffering upon ourselves because of our own disobedience.

But suffering from disobedience has a purpose:

- **2 Reasons why God disciplines us:**
1) V. 4-12 – To get our attention

"God whispers to us in our pleasures; he speaks to us in our work; he shouts at us in our pain." – C.S. Lewis

- Every one of us knows that there have been times when we would not listen to God or pay any attention to what His Word was saying, until finally He used severe discipline to get our attention so that we would listen.

One of the ways God gets our attention is by having unexplainable things happen to us so we know it's from God.

- Jonah is in the middle of nowhere, among people who don't know him, a storm arises while he's sleeping and he wakes up to find the sailors, after they cast lots, saying "we aren't sure why, but we think this storm is because of you."

⁷ Mackrell, P. (2007). *Opening up Jonah* (p. 26). Leominster: Day One Publications.

If you are God's child, I've got some good news for you that can be both scary and reassuring all at the same time:

God won't let you get away with anything...because He loves you.

Proverbs 3:12 –

¹² For whom the Lord loves He corrects,
Just as a father the son *in whom* he delights.⁸

Deuteronomy 8:5-6

⁵ You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you.

⁶ "Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.⁹

Numbers 32:23 – ²³ But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out.¹⁰

In this case, the Lord used the stupid method of these sailors to find out that Jonah was the problem:

Proverbs 16:33 –

³³ We may throw the dice,
but the Lord determines how they fall. ¹¹

STORY ABOUT PHOENIX AIRPORT – I remember coming back from a pastors conference and being delayed for several hours at the Phoenix airport. I was at this little station along with several other people charging our cellphones when for I started a conversation with this young man. He shared with me that he was leaving the oversight of his parents to go to visit some family where he had plans to party and be with women. In short, he had an agenda to sin. When he found out I was a pastor he began to talk about the Lord. As the Holy Spirit brought conviction on this young man's life I said "You're the reason my flight is delayed!" I honest believe that God had delayed my flight so I could talk to this young man about Jesus. In the end me and my group prayed for him and I hope he made the right choice.

- Sin has a way of finding us out.
- Jonah's life was no different. Surrounded by strangers, God reveals to them that he's the reason for the turmoil.

APPLICATION

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Pr 3:12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Dt 8:5–6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁰ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Nu 32:23). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Pr 16:33). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

I'm sure many of us have sat in a sermon or been in a conversation with someone where we feel they somehow know all of our dirty laundry. Have we ever considered that it might just be the Holy Spirit trying to get our attention because of some unconfessed sin we have in our life? Maybe you feel the Holy Spirit putting His finger on something that needs to be dealt with in your life today. I pray that you will respond to him humbly and appropriately.

I'm not sure Jonah's response was the best response:

V. 12 - ¹² And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest *is* because of me."

- It doesn't say he repented at this time or that he prayed.
- It says he wants them to throw him into the sea.
 - Jonah, as we will see later on in the book, has a tendency toward depression and dark thoughts. It almost appears as though he has suicidal notions at this moment.
 - One of the most life threatening things that could happen to you at sea in a storm is to go overboard.
 - It appears that he opts for suicide rather than repentance.

Let it be an important lesson for us not to take matters into our own hands, but to allow the sufferings we bring upon ourselves to force us back to the arms of our heavenly Father.

V. 4-17 – God disciplines Jonah

- **2 Reasons why God disciplines us:**

V. 4-12 – To get our attention

V. 13-17 – To get others attention

¹³ Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. ¹⁴ Therefore they cried out to the Lord and said, "We pray, O Lord, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You." ¹⁵ So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows.

Jonah's Prayer and Deliverance

¹⁷ Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

One thing I find fascinating is that Jonah didn't have to go on a boat with a bunch of other random people. I'm sure he could have bought a little skiff and set sail somewhere by himself, still ran into a storm and still gotten swallowed by a big fish. But God allowed Jonah to set sail with a bunch of people and God didn't allow the opportunity to reveal Himself go to waste.

V. 4-17 – God disciplines Jonah

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The end of Jonah chapter 1 is awesome in the sense that these sailors got to see and experience the hand of the one and only true God and it shook them to their core.

1 Timothy 5:20 when speaking about leaders in the church. It says:

²⁰ Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.¹²

- Let us learn from the life of Jonah.
- Let us be better men and women for the Lord.
- People who are willing and honored to do whatever task God wants us to do
 - no matter how big or ugly the task may be.

How is the Lord trying to get your attention today?

¹² [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (1 Ti 5:20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

EXTRA NOTES:

According to Gn. 10:11 Nineveh was one of the N cities founded by *Nimrod or Ashur after leaving Babylonia.¹³

Archaeology

Archaeological remains such as the city walls, sculptures, gardens, squares, palaces, and temples demonstrate that Nineveh was an impressive city at the height of its glory (the Neo-Assyrian period). Nineveh was first excavated by Botta in 1842 and later by Layard in 1847. Layard's excavation has become the most well-known because of his 1851 book entitled, *Nineveh and Its Remains: A Narrative of an Expedition to Assyria*, which circulated in Great Britain. The book contained several of Layard's personal drawings of the reliefs, edifices, and colossal statues that he had found. He often depicted the scale of the finds by including the excavator in the image. The image entitled "The Gigantic Head" displays two excavators astonished to find that the head of the statue is larger than they are (Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, 66).

The most engaging find for Layard was Sennacherib's palace. The reliefs that covered the walls of the palace contained scenes of conquest and Assyrian power. Layard was able to remove these reliefs and send them to the British Museum. Layard also discovered several colossal bull figurines that guarded the entrances to important rooms in the palace, which were also sent to the British Museum. Nineveh's reliefs and bull statues were impressive in size and craftsmanship. Rassam, who succeeded Layard, discovered the palace of Assurbanipal and limestone reliefs elaborately depicting that monarch's lion hunt. Akkadian cuneiform script was deciphered for the first time during Rassam's tenure at Nineveh. Thus, Rassam turned his attention toward the inscribed clay tablets left in Ashurbanipal's library. In 1872, Smith recognized that an account of a flood from this library resembled the flood account in the Old Testament. This sparked interest throughout the West, and Smith was commissioned to go to Nineveh and find the missing pieces of the narrative (Stronach and Lumsden, "UC Berkeley's Excavations at Nineveh," 227–30).

Recent archaeologists have focused on preserving ancient Nineveh as the modern city of Mosul threatens to overtake the area. In the 1960s, Dr. Tariq Madhloom worked to restore the ancient city wall and its seven gates. The wall around Nineveh surrounded approximately 1,700 acres. In the 1980s and 1990s, UC Berkeley worked toward excavating the gates, marketplaces, lower townships, and various other quarters of Nineveh. Berkeley's excavations have paid close attention to the city's layout—especially Sennacherib's royal road, which was paved in stone and lead from the Nergal Gate to Sennacherib's palace. The Nergal gate was the only gate in seventh century Nineveh to display mammoth stone sculptures of half-

¹³ Wiseman, D. J. (1996). [Nineveh](#). In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, & J. I. Packer (Eds.), *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed., p. 825). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

man/half-beast gate guardians (Stronach and Lumsden, "UC Berkeley's Excavations at Nineveh," 230–33).

Biblical Relevance

Nearly every reference to Nineveh in biblical literature is an indictment of its evil or a declaration of its impending destruction (Jonah 1:2; Nah 2:8; 3:7; Zeph 2:13). Second Kings 18–19 contains a partial account of Sennacherib's military campaign through Judah during the reign of King Hezekiah. Sennacherib apparently laid waste to much of Hezekiah's kingdom, including the southern walled city of Lachish. Sennacherib also moved to attack Jerusalem, but the biblical account states that Yahweh killed 185,000 of the Assyrian soldiers while they slept, so Sennacherib and his forces returned to Nineveh. This miraculous event is recorded three times in the Old Testament (compare Isa 37; 2 Chr 32).

The reliefs from Sennacherib's palace partially uphold the biblical narrative. These reliefs display the conquering of Lachish; they depict naked Judaeans impaled on poles, siege ramps built by conscripted Judaean slaves (who were forced to attack their own kinsmen), and lines of deportees being dragged along, overseen by an Assyrian guard wielding a truncheon. Assyrian reliefs depict the cruelty with which Assyrian forces treated defeated people groups. Assyrians commonly impaled, dismembered, decapitated, and disfigured defeated peoples. These reliefs also provide insight into the life of ancient Palestine at the time of Assyrian dominance. The Assyrians were ruthless and harsh overlords.

Jonah

Understanding the historical background explains why the eighth century bc Israelite prophet Jonah would be reluctant to preach repentance to Nineveh. By the time Jonah was incorporated into the Old Testament canon, Nineveh epitomized a great and evil city. Jonah 3:3 describes Nineveh as "an exceedingly great city, three days journey in a breadth." This description is probably an example of the exaggerated image Nineveh had become. Though Nineveh was a large city for its time, its circumference of 7.7 miles would not have taken three days to traverse. Understanding this historical background also emphasizes the miraculous nature of their repentance.

Nahum

Jonah provides the only biblical word of hope for the city of Nineveh. Yet, this hope is soon eclipsed by Nahum's prophecy, which speaks in gory and metaphorical images about Nineveh's fall. In Nahum, Yahweh leads the besieging army which is responsible for Nineveh's demise. Nahum describes bodies piled high, glittering swords, and rushing chariots—images that mirror Assyrian reliefs. The majority of Nahum was probably written shortly after the fall of Nineveh; in this case, the prophet interprets Nineveh's destruction at the hands of the Medes and Babylonians as Yahweh's just judgment.

New Testament

In the New Testament, Nineveh's miraculous repentance overshadows the gory description of the city's destruction. For example, in Matt 12:41 and Luke 11:32, Jesus chastises the group around Him by saying, "The men of Nineveh will stand in

judgment against the current generation because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, but now, one greater than Jonah is here" (NIV). The New Testament thus acknowledges Nineveh as a paradigm for repentance. It also depicts Jonah's preaching repentance to the wicked is an analogy for Jesus' ministry on earth. For more information on scholarly debate surrounding the presentation of Nineveh in the Bible, see this article: Nineveh, Critical Issues.¹⁴

INTRO:

Illustration 72

Unfolding Grander Vistas

Topics: Abundant Life; Calling; Conversion; Destiny; God; Growth; Illumination; Meaning of Life; Mysteries; New Life; Potential; Promises; Purpose; Revelation; Riches

References: Genesis 21:1–7; Acts 9:1–19; Ephesians 3

On my desk I like to display, on a bookstand, the kind of gift books you put on the coffee table—those filled with professional photos of nature or tourist destinations. My current book is *America's Spectacular National Parks* by Michael Duchemin. For several days I have had the book open to a photo of the Grand Teton Mountains, an extra-wide photo that fills the left page and crosses the fold to take up half of the right. It is a majestic display of deep blue sky; rugged, gray, snow-capped mountains; and a calm lake in the foreground.

This morning I decided to turn the page to the next photo, and as I did I discovered that I had missed something important. The right page of the Grand Tetons photo was an extra-long page folded over, covering part of the Grand Tetons. So when I opened it up, it added some sixteen inches to the width of the photo. Wow! The Grand Tetons became even grander.

The Christian life has unfolding moments like that, when we discover there is much more to God and his kingdom than we knew, much more to his purpose for us than we imagined. Abraham experienced that at age seventy-five, Moses at age eighty, the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus. Again and again in the Bible, when God met people, he opened a glorious page for them that had previously been folded.

—Craig Brian Larson, Arlington Heights, Illinois¹⁵

V. 4-17

¹⁴ Sieges, A. (2016). [Nineveh](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

¹⁵ Larson, C. B., & Ten Elshof, P. (2008). [1001 illustrations that connect](#) (p. 49). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

"This storm was sovereignly designed by God to get Jonah back on the right track for his life. The storm we find Jonah in is for his good and God's glory. I call this a *correcting storm*. We don't criticize a father for disciplining his children. He does it to protect them from future harm. God the Father loves you more."¹⁶ - Ed Taylor

Our sin can put others in danger.

¹⁶ Taylor, Ed (2020). *God's Help for the Troubled Heart*. Pg. 63.