

THE BOOK OF JONAH

Lesson 1 - Chapter 1

For many, when they hear the name Jonah, the first thing that comes to mind is a really big fish. If that were all we remembered, we would miss the intention of the book. For this is a story of a God we cannot run from; a God who desired to reveal through Jonah that He is a *gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness. One who relents from doing harm* (Jonah 4:2). We all desire for God to be this for us, but do we want this for others? Do we desire to share the grace and mercy of God with the wicked or those who hurt us? Let us never forget that we were once like them, walking in sin and alienated from God, until He revealed His mercy to us. May we learn the lesson of Jonah as we study this short, little book.

Begin your study with prayer...

Memory Verse – This week’s memory verse is Hebrews 10:31.

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Read Jonah 1:1- 3.

As we open this Book of Jonah it is good for us to know that Nineveh was a city of the Assyrians. The nations feared the Assyrians because they were astonishingly cruel as conquerors. Understanding this is important for us to better understand where Jonah was coming from, but also to better appreciate the merciful heart of God for the people of Nineveh.

1. The book of Jonah begins when *the word of the LORD came to Jonah, the son of Amittai*. This is not the first word Jonah had from the Lord.

a. According to 2 Kings 14:25, how is Jonah described?

b. Define prophet.

2. From Jonah 1:2 answer the following.

a. What did God tell Jonah to do?

b. Why?

3. Jonah 1:3 begins with the words, “*But Jonah...*”, which implies Jonah did something other than what the Lord asked.

- a. What did Jonah do?

- b. What was Jonah fleeing from?

NOTE: Tarshish was 2500 miles in the opposite direction from Nineveh.

4. In Psalm 139 David poses a question that applies to Jonah’s situation.

- a. What question did David pose in Psalm 139:7?

- b. What was David’s conclusion from Psalm 139:8-12?

- c. What are your thoughts about this?

5. For David, and for us, this conclusion is a beautiful thing, a comfort when you walk to please the Lord. For Jonah this was a fearful thing because he was fleeing in disobedience.

- a. What are some reasons believers disobey God?

- b. What does John 14:15 tell us about why we do obey?

6. What do the following scriptures say about obedience?

- a. Joshua 1:7

- b. John 15:10

- c. 1 John 5:3

7. Read Matthew 7:24-27.

- a. What picture does this give you for obedience?

b. What picture does this give you for disobedience?

c. Can you think of a real-life example or another scriptural example of someone who disobeyed God? Write about the consequences here.

Read Jonah 1:4-9.

1. Jonah 1:3 began with the phrase, *But Jonah*, and we saw what Jonah did. The next verse begins with the powerful words, *but God!*

a. What did God do?

b. How do you see the sovereignty of God in verse 4?

2. *Then the mariners were afraid.*

a. What did the mariners do in Jonah 1:5?

b. Where was Jonah and what was he doing?

c. In verse 6, what did the captain tell Jonah to do and why?

d. We do not read of Jonah doing this. Why do you think this is?

3. The mariners believed that the trouble was because of someone on the ship, *so they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah*. When they asked Jonah who he was, how did he describe himself in Jonah 1:9?

4. Jonah stated that he *feared the LORD*. What do the following verses teach about the *fear of God*?

a. Deuteronomy 5:29

b. Deuteronomy 10:12-13

5. Consider what you know about the *fear of God* or the *fear of the Lord*.
 - a. Explain the fear of God in your own words.

 - b. Do you see the fear of the Lord in Jonah's actions?

6. Jonah was asked to identify himself in Jonah 1:8. How did he identify his God in verse 9?
 - a. Why do you think Jonah chose to use this description of God?

 - b. We often choose a characteristic of God that fits our dilemma. List a few characteristics of God that you cling to in times of trouble.

 - c. How does it help you in a difficult situation to remind yourself of God's character?

Read Jonah 1:10-16.

1. Consider Jonah 1:10.
 - a. What was the men's response to Jonah's word?

 - b. What information is revealed at the end of verse 10 that would indicate why the men reacted this way?

2. Record the words of Hebrews 10:31.
 - a. What truth from Hebrews 12:5-6 should the believer always remember when fearing God's chastening?

 - b. Write a definition for chastening.

 - c. How does this help you understand God's intention for Jonah?

3. In Jonah 1:11, the men asked Jonah, "*What shall we do to you that the sea might be calm for us?*" What was Jonah's answer in verse 12?

4. *Nevertheless...* What did the mariners do in verse 13 instead of what Jonah said?

- a. What happened?
- b. Who is in charge of the sea?

5. *...the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. Therefore...* Consider what happened next in Jonah 1:14.

- a. The men first sought Jonah's solution. Then they sought their own solution. Finally, they *prayed*. Why do people often wait until man's solutions fail and the situation *grows more tempestuous* before they pray?
- b. What do you notice on this boat about who prays to the Lord and who doesn't?
- c. What does Philippians 4:6-7 say will come through prayers in stressful times?
- d. What is the glorious assurance of Hebrews 4:16?

6. In Jonah 1:15, what did they do AFTER they prayed?

- a. What was the result?
- b. When the mariners saw this result, what effect did it have on them from Jonah 1:16?

Read Jonah 1:17.

1. God is executing His plan to "encourage" Jonah to obey Him. What had God *prepared* for Jonah?

- a. What did the *great fish* do?
- b. How long was Jonah *in the belly* of the fish?

c. Record the words of Matthew 12:40.

2. Many have denied the truth of Jonah and the great fish.

a. How does Genesis 1:1 help in believing the truth of this account?

b. How do the words of Jesus in Matthew 12:40 above confirm this event?

In closing...

1. Sadly, we have all found ourselves attempting to flee from the presence of God. What has this lesson taught you about that?

2. Our lives sometimes *rage* unnecessarily, like the storm, because we do not pray. What can we learn from the example of the mariners in this chapter?

3. We can see in this book how Jonah's disobedience caused great problems not only for Jonah, but it also caused great problems for other people, like all the others who were on the boat with him in the storm. Think about your own life and who might be affected by your choices to disobey God, to sin. Share your thoughts on this below.

4. Although there is certainly a lesson set forth in this chapter, what encouragement did you get from this study?

Memory Verse

*"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
Hebrews 10:31*