

## “Let’s Study Together” The Book of Jonah



JONAH: God’s compassion extends to all!

### Course Introduction

The book of Jonah is small in size but gigantic in impact. Jonah, the prophet, is used to save a dying city and point the city towards a living God. It is relevant and applicable even today. The story of Jonah has been read and utilized throughout generations. It has been referred to as a “whale of a tale”. It has been used in mainstream literature and has been characterized as fiction, folklore and entertainment.

The story of Jonah nestled in the Old Testament

prophet books. Although it is named after its main character, Jonah, there is no evidence that identifies Jonah as the author. It was written around the 8th century during the reign of King Jeroboam II, (782-753 B.C., 2 Kings 14:23-28).

Jonah, a prophet, has been commanded by God to go and pronounce judgment on the city of Nineveh. Jonah decides to flee and is eventually swallowed by a fish. After being spat out he goes to complete the task that he was commanded to do in Nineveh, and he is surprised at the people’s response to his warning.

The theme of the book of Jonah is that God’s compassion is endless. It is not limited just to his chosen, but his grace and mercy is available to all.

### Course Objectives

- We will learn that God’s grace is for everyone.
- We will learn that God’s grace is much bigger than we can comprehend, and much more expensive than what we are comfortable with.
- We will learn why Jonah should be approached from an historical interpretation and not allegorical or parabolic within the prophetic literature.

## Outline of the Book

### PART 1: Jonah, the sailors and the Sea

- God's word comes to Jonah (Jonah 1:1-2)
- Jonah responds (1:3-5)
- The response of the sailors (1:6-7)
- The sailors begin to serve the LORD (1:8-16)
- God teaches grace to Jonah through the fish (2:1-10)

### PART 2: Jonah, the people and the city

- God's word comes to Jonah again (3:1-2)
- Jonah responds (3:3-4)
- The response of Nineveh (3:5-9)
- God changed his mind (3:10)
- Jonah pouts (4:1-3)
- God teaches grace to Jonah through the plant (4:4-10)

### Class Schedule

- |          |         |           |                                       |
|----------|---------|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| • WEEK 1 | June 9  | Chapter 1 | God commands and Jonah responds.      |
| • WEEK 2 | June 16 | Chapter 2 | God teaches, and Jonah learns at Sea. |
| • WEEK 3 | June 23 | Chapter 3 | Jonah warns, and Nineveh responds.    |
| • WEEK 4 | June 30 | Chapter 4 | God shows compassion and Jonah pouts. |

Our goal is that you would passionately seek out your next step in Christ as we explore the passages in Jonah. It is paramount that you grow in the word so that you can help someone else in their walk.

## I. Week One -- God commands and Jonah responds!

### A. WHAT DO WE SEE?

#### Jonah Chapter 1

#### Jonah Flees the Presence of the Lord

1 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.” 3 But Jonah rose 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, away from the presence of the Lord.

4 But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. 6 So the captain came and said to him, “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.”

#### Jonah Is Thrown into the Sea

7 And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So, they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” 9 And 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.” 10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing 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 quiet down for us?” For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. 12 He said to them, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.” 13 Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. 14 Therefore they called out to the Lord, “O Lord, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.” 15 So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. 16 Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

### **A Great Fish Swallows Jonah**

17 And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

## **B. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

- **TERMS**

- **Nineveh** – capital of the Assyrian Empire and a wicked city that had been an enemy of Israel. It was a city on the east bank of the Tigris River located in modern day Iraq.
- **Joppa** – or Jaffa; is southern and oldest seaport of the modern-day Palestinian city Tel-Aviv.
- **Tarshish** – specifics are unknown, but it was a place navigable by the Mediterranean Sea and where Israel and Phoenicians traded goods.
- **cast lots** – similar to rolling dice but biblical and ancient civilizations used lots to reveal the will of God (or their gods)
- **a great fish** – not an existing whale but an arranged or provided fish large enough for Jonah to remain alive inside of.
- God saves the sailors from drowning at the Sea and in sin.
- God uses something unlikely in nature to save Jonah.
- The God of creation is still creating...Psalm 51:10!
- Three days and three nights...Matthew 12:39-41

## **C. HOW DOES IT RELATE TO US?**

- We run from God because we believe the lie that we cannot trust God’s commitment to our good.
- God continually extends mercy to us in new ways, even though we do not understand or deserve it.

## **D. HOW DO WE APPLY?**

- Homework:

## II. Week Two – God teaches, and Jonah learns at Sea.

### A. WHAT DO WE SEE?

#### Jonah Chapter 2

##### *Jonah's Prayer*

*1 Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, 2 saying,*

*“I called out to the Lord, out of my distress,  
and he answered me;*

*out of the belly of Sheol I cried,  
and you heard my voice.*

*3 For you cast me into the deep,  
into the heart of the seas,  
and the flood surrounded me;  
all your waves and your billows  
passed over me.*

*4 Then I said, ‘I am driven away  
from your sight;  
yet I shall again look  
upon your holy temple.’*

*5 The waters closed in over me to take my life;  
the deep surrounded me;*

*weeds were wrapped about my head*

*6 at the roots of the mountains.*

*I went down to the land*

*whose bars closed upon me forever;*

*yet you brought up my life from the pit,*

*O Lord my God.*

*7 When my life was fainting away,*

*I remembered the Lord,*

*and my prayer came to you,*

*into your holy temple.*

*8 Those who pay regard to vain idols  
forsake their hope of steadfast love.*

*9 But I with the voice of thanksgiving*

*will sacrifice to you;*

*what I have vowed I will pay.*

*Salvation belongs to the Lord!”*

*10 And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.*

### B. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- TERMS

- **Jonah prayed** – Jonah prayed the psalms back to God!

- **Sheol** – substitute for Hades; which means hell

- God saves Jonah from a grave mistake and a watery grave.

- God will continuously work through our deficiencies.

### C. HOW DOES IT RELATE TO US?

- When we reject and disobey God, as Jonah did, it takes radical measures to reach us!

- Prayer changes things!

- There is nowhere that God cannot reach us!

D. HOW DO WE APPLY?

- Homework

### III. Week Three – Jonah warns, and Nineveh responds.

A. WHAT DO WE SEE?

#### Jonah Chapter 3

##### *Jonah Goes to Nineveh*

*1 Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’ journey in breadth. 4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” 5 And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put-on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.*

##### *The People of Nineveh Repent*

*6 The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7 And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, 8 but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 9 Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.” 10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.*

B. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- TERMS
  - **The LORD spoke to Jonah a second time** – God speaks to prophets and gives assignments (Jeremiah 1:17, Ezekiel 2:7).
  - **Sackcloth/burlap** – a coarse garment made of goat or camel hair; worn to symbolize death; the mourning of their sinful nature
  - **Heap of ashes** – pile of ashes after a fire; where the lowest of people would go. It indicated sorrow and shame.
- God changes hearts.
- God saves the ungodly from His judgment.
- God changes his mind (Numbers 23:19, Exodus 32:14, 2 Kings 20:5)

C. HOW DOES IT RELATE TO US?

- Only God saves, so if we can’t join God in saving then why do we try and join him in judging.
- Repentance is how we get God’s attention.
- Righteousness is how we please God.

D. HOW DO WE APPLY?

- Homework

### IV. Week Four – God shows compassion and Jonah pouts.

A. WHAT DO WE SEE?

#### Jonah Chapter 4

##### *Jonah’s Anger and the Lord’s Compassion*

*4 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly,<sup>1</sup> and he was angry. 2 And he prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I*

*knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. 3 Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” 4 And the Lord said, “Do you do well to be angry?” 5 Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. 6 Now the Lord God appointed a plant<sup>2</sup> and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. 7 But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. 8 When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, “It is better for me to die than to live.” 9 But God said to Jonah, “Do you do well to be angry for the plant?” And he said, “Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.” 10 And the Lord said, “You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. 11 And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?”*

#### B. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- TERMS
  - **Leafy plant** – created by God outside of His creation story for a reason/lesson.
  - **Worm** – created by God outside of His creation story for a reason/lesson.
- God uses something unlikely in nature to save Jonah.
- God saved Jonah from his hardening heart...Exodus 4:21 and Romans 2:5.
- God later sent a greater and better Jonah...Matthew 9:35-38.

#### C. HOW DOES IT RELATE TO US?

- God is sovereign...Ephesians 3:20.
- We should be careful not to grumble over generosity.

#### D. HOW DO WE APPLY?

- Homework

## V. Resource list

- Bruckner, James (2004). *The NIV Application Commentary: Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI.
- Gowan, D. E. (1998). *Theology of the prophetic books: the death and resurrection of Israel*. Westminster John Knox Press.
- H., W. C. J. (2014). *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament*. IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press.
- Keller, Timothy (2018). *Rediscovering Jonah: The Secret of God’s Mercy*. Penguin Books: New York, NY.
- Sanford, L. S. W., Hubbard, D. A., Bush, F. W., & Allen, L. C. (1996). *Old Testament survey: the message, form, and background of the Old Testament*. W.B. Eerdmans.
- Wiersbe, W. W., & Baugh, K. (2010). *Be amazed: restoring an attitude of wonder and worship: Ot commentary, Minor Prophets*. David C. Cook.