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Jonah 3

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Jonah 3.

Topics.

- Jonah goes to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD.
- The people of Nineveh repented.
- The king calls Nineveh to repent and fast.
- God relented of the disaster he said he would do to Nineveh.

INTRODUCTION: because the story of Jonah contains the story of a fish swallowing a man, many dismiss the book of Jonah as fiction, but (2 Kings 14:25) mentions Jonah as living during the reign of Jeroboam II (about 793–753 B.C.) and Jesus himself considered Jonah a historical person (Matt. 12:39-41). Unlike other prophetic books, the book of Jonah focuses on the prophet himself rather than on his message. When God sent Jonah to Nineveh he rebelled, was swallowed by the fish, repented, was restored, and preached to Nineveh and they repented and the LORD relented from destroying the city. Since only Jonah himself could have known all the facts the story records, the book lists no author.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

JONAH 3:1-4

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Jonah goes to Nineveh, According to the Word of the LORD.

- **Jonah 3:1-4:** 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."
³So 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. ⁴Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

This is the second time the LORD tells Jonah to speak out against all the evil corruptions of Nineveh, the first time of course was in chapter one when he fled from God and was swallowed by a great fish. The fact it took three days to walk from one side of Nineveh to the other side shows that it was a very great city and would have had an equally great population.

It is interesting to notice that in the previous two chapters:

- God never told Jonah Nineveh would repent.
- God never told Jonah He would relent from destroying the city.
- God only told Jonah to speak out against Nineveh saying, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

Knowing these three truths helps us to understand why when the word of the LORD came to Jonah the first time he attempted to flee from the land of Nineveh to avoid speaking against such a powerful and corrupt nation. Now after being delivered from the storm and the belly of the whale Jonah knows he cannot escape the LORD and goes to the city of Nineveh and begins to proclaim God's message, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" Imagine how Jonah would have felt. It would be like a servant of God going into the middle of Washington in America and

beginning to proclaim to the people on the street, "Thus saith the LORD, in forty days God will destroy the city of Washington" and his message reaching the White House. Perhaps even today the people of Washington and the White House would need to have heard on CNN News that this prophet of God had been swallowed by a fish and survived or some other great miracle before they would even consider believing such a dramatic and fearful message.

JONAH 3:5-6

The People of Nineveh Repented.

- **Jonah 3:5-6:** 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. ⁶The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

Though the people and the king may not have had a clear understanding of the God of creation and of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob they did have a right heart attitude when confronted with their sin which shows that they did know that the God Jonah spoke of was a Holy God who judges sin. Even today there are many men and woman in the world today like the people of Nineveh who look at the heavens and creation and seeing their wonder believe in God and His awesome power, but that is the only solid understanding they have of God the rest is created by their imagination according to how they imagine God should be, until they discover differently as the people of Nineveh did.

JONAH 3:7-9

The King calls Nineveh to Repent and Fast.

- **Jonah 3:7-9:** And he (the king) 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, ⁸but 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. ⁹Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish."

The king of Nineveh said, "God may turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish" and verse ten says, "God relented of the disaster he said he would do." These two verses clearly show that the word overthrow carries the idea of utter destruction. The king said to the people, "Who knows maybe the LORD will relent if we change our ways." If Jonah had told the king or the people of Nineveh that God would save them if they repented the king would have known that the LORD would repent and would not have made such a statement. Jonah's message was, "yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" and not, "repent turn from your wicked ways or God will destroy the city." It was the king of Nineveh who told the people to turn from their wickedness and their violence in the hope God would turn from his anger toward them (v9). Even though Nineveh did not have a clear understanding of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the king did believe in his power and understood that He is a Holy God who is not only against all forms of wickedness, but will also withdraw his judgment if people repent and turn from their wicked ways.

JONAH 3:10

God relented of the Disaster He said He would do to Nineveh.

- **Jonah 3:10:** 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.

Though Jonah was not told God would relent, the following chapter shows that he did know that God was gracious, merciful and abounding in steadfast love and does relent from disaster meaning God will turn from his judgment if people respond to the message of repentance. Jonah suspected the LORD might change His mind if Nineveh did the right thing before God (Jonah 4:2), but it is not recorded that the LORD told Jonah He would relent, so all Jonah could tell the people was that Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days. Some people are amazed and awestruck at the fact Jonah survived being swallowed by a fish, but I think what is even more amazing is that fact the king of Nineveh (the capitol city of Assyria) and its inhabitants believed the message of Jonah and repented and turned from their wicked ways. This shows that in these ancient times the majority of people (or at least those in the city of Nineveh) had a consciousness of God and a consciousness that their sin and wrong-doing was against God and that they would be rightly judged by God for it.

To put the wonder of this story of Jonah into context today it would be something like Washington in America listening to a prophet of God speaking against all that is corrupt in the government and amongst the population and them turning toward God in repentance, forsaking everything that is corrupt, and turning from violence, oppressing the poor and taking the teaching of evolution that denies the existence of God out of the schools and turning from crime and such like things how amazing would that be, certainly a far greater miracle than a man surviving being in the belly of a monster fish for three days. I suspect before the people of Washington would even begin to take notice of what they would consider an outlandish message God would have to perform some great miracle like he did with Jonah before anyone in Washington especially the leaders of the White House would even consider such an extreme and dramatic message.

FOOTNOTE

All we are told concerning the fish is that it was a great fish and that the LORD prepared and appointed it to swallow Jonah. (Jonah 1:17) Throughout history there has been many speculations concerning what kind of fish this was, but it is possible God created an enormously large fish for this specific purpose, especially when it is considered God also appointed a plant to instantly grow during the night to give Jonah shade over his head (Jonah 4:6) and then over the next night appointed a worm to destroy it (Jonah 4:10) added to these, Jesus who had all the power of God available to him created full grown fish in an instant from nothing for five-thousand people to eat.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
