

JONAH

“The word of the Lord came to Jonah ‘Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.’ But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish where he found a ship bound for that port. Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. The captain went to him and said, ‘How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us, and we will not perish.’”

“The sailors said to each other, ‘Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity’ and the lot fell on Jonah. So, they asked him, “Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?’ Jonah answered, ‘I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land.’ This terrified them and they asked, ‘What have you done?’ (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.)

“The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So, they asked him, ‘What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?’ Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.” (Jonah 1:1-11, 15-16)

“The Lord provided a great fish to swallow Jonah where he was for three days and three nights. Then he prayed to the Lord his God. He said: In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. I called for help and He listened to my cry. ... When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs. ... Salvation comes from the Lord.” (Jonah 1:17- 2:1-2, 7, 9)

Comment: Jesus was in the grave three days and nights. (Matt 12:40)

“Now that the Lord has his attention, He again says ‘Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.’ Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. He proclaimed: in ‘Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.’ The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. The king took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust and issued a proclamation in Nineveh: Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.” (Jonah 3:2-9)

“When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened. But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the Lord, ‘O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.’”

Comment: Jonah’s attitude was not of love but hate, probably because they were not Jews.

“Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. Then the Lord God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, ‘It would be better for me to die than to live.’ But God said to Jonah, ‘Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?’ ‘I do,’ he said. ‘I am angry enough to die.’ But the Lord said, ‘You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?’” (Jonah 4:5-11)

Key Points from Jonah

- God said to Jonah and to Christians go preach against sin and wickedness.
- Jonah refused to go and attempted to hide from God.
- Again, God said go, and Job reluctantly went and preached God’s message.
- The people heard God’s message, believed it and repented.
- Jonah was not concerned about the physical or spiritual well-being of the Ninevites. He did not want them spared.
- God is compassionate and merciful about those who hear, believe and repent.
- God’s message under the covenant given through Moses was to the Jews, now under Christ’s message, salvation is offered to all mankind.
- All God’s servants are to proclaim His message to repent and obey Him before it is too late for them.