

## *Introduction to Jonah*

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The Book of Jonah is an unusual book detailing the events of Jonah and his attempt to run away from his duty of preaching the word of God to a wicked city. Jonah would have known of the wickedness of the inhabitants of the city of Nineveh and naturally would have been concerned for his well-being. The book of Jonah is simply a historical event that describes Jonah and his reluctance to preach to wicked people. Second, it is a book that details the wickedness of Nineveh and shows us the power of the word of God. Third, this extraordinary book helps us see God in a magnificent manner in which we see His love, mercy, forgiveness, and patience with His servant Jonah and the people of Nineveh.

The book of Jonah fills the skeptic's mind with outrageous reasons for believing that a whale could swallow a man and then spit him back out three days later, and the man would be alive. Throughout the ages, men have sought to discredit the book of Jonah because, in their minds, it is nonsense to believe such an event could take place.

“Jargon, not argument, is your best ally,” said Screwtape to his diabolical apprentice, Wormwood. Screwtape has long been busy convincing humans to dismiss the Book of Jonah as nothing more than an amusing story about Jonah and the “whale.” It is easy to assume that a story about a man who though swallowed by a fish, lives to tell the tale can safely be ignored. But Screwtape's jargon must not be permitted to win the day.

Christians recognize this as a great miracle. How could one believe in the miracles which Jesus performed and other miracles which the apostles performed and not believe in the miracle of Jonah being swallowed by a great fish God prepared? “*Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights*” (Jonah 1:17). There is nothing that God cannot do. Jesus refers to this event and compares it to His being in the belly of the earth, three days and three nights. “*For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*” (Matthew 12:40).

Jonah was a prophet during the reign of Jeroboam II, the son of Nebat, according to 2 Kings 14:24,25. From this, we also learn that his home was in the village of Gath-Hepher. The date of the book is around 780 B.C. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, a Gentile city, and was an abomination to God. By sending Jonah to preach repentance to them, God showed He was a merciful God, full of compassion and willing to forgive all those who would genuinely repent.

*(continued next week)*