

Lesson #22

PREPARATION FOR LESSON: read the book of Jonah**BACKGROUND****Author:** Jonah**Date and Place of Ministry:** preached some 35 years in Israel c. 790-755 BC; 8 years after Elisha cf. 2 Kings 13:13-14
his experience in this book lasted some 30-40 days c. 759 or 758 BC.**Theme:** God's compassion and mercy**Purposes:** To show that God wants to deal with everyone in mercy and kindness.

To rebuke Israel: 40 days of preaching to pagans brought repentance

100 years of blessing, miracles and preaching to Israel brought no repentance.

To picture the death and resurrection of Jesus Matt. 12:40

To picture the Jewish nation who refused to give God's salvation message to the world.

They were swallowed as a nation by the Gentiles, but preserved as a people within Gentile nations. When there is national repentance, God will use them again as His messengers.

Scripture background: 2 Kings 14:23-27**OUTLINE**

Mercy to Jonah

in spite of disobedience 1

Jonah is grateful 2 a Psalm of praise

Mercy to Nineveh

because of repentance 3

Jonah is angry 4

**HISTORICAL SETTING****The Nations****Israel:** had been defeated, but under Jeroboam II, God returns all her land plus control over the north.
takes the blessings of God, but rejects the worship of God; they continue in idolatry and immorality.**Assyria:** a wicked empire to the northeast; eventually God will use her to punish Israel.
is notorious for her brutality to captured nations.**The prophet Jonah****Birthplace:** Gath-Hepher in northern Israel**Messages to Israel:** in his beginning ministry - Jeroboam II will regain Israel's land that had been conquered
in his later ministry - unless they repent, God will send foreign nations to conquer them**Message to Nineveh:** 40 days and Nineveh will be destroyed; he was also a sign to them Luke 11:30**Reason** for his disobedience: he is trying to save and protect his nation

If Nineveh is warned, she might repent and Assyria will be spared.

Later, God will use her to destroy Israel.

If Nineveh is not warned, God will destroy her and Israel will be spared.

DEFINITION: Jonah ran away from the Lord; literally, he ran from the face of the Lord 1:3, 10

It means to run away from his ministry - from representing God's face to others; he quit being a prophet.

APPLICATION: Jonah gives us encouragement and warning**Encouragement:** When we are willing to obey, God will show us mercy. **It is never too late to be used by God.****Warning:** Sometimes those we love willfully rebel against God and He begins His discipline in their life. In compassion, we try to rescue them or soften their trouble. We ask God to remove the discipline or problems. Our motive of love is admirable, but misguided. Getting in God's way when He is disciplining others can lead to our disobedience, resentment of God and inability to hear God's answers. If we cannot accept what God is doing, in the way He is doing it, then He will have to discipline us as well. Too often we try to change what God is doing. We need to learn,**It is not for us to change God; it is for God to change us.**

EXPLANATIONS**The story of Jonah – fact or fiction**

Biologically it is possible for a large fish to swallow or eject a person whole

Daily Mail, an English newspaper on Dec. 14, 1928, describes the experience of G. H. Henn. He saw the carcass of a whale displayed on land with its mouth propped open. He and others walked into the mouth, thru the throat and entered the stomach. It was like a fair-sized room.

Books: *The Cruise of the Cachalot* by Frank Bullen - the cachalot, sperm whale, always ejects the contents of its stomach when dying. He saw this happen and it included solid masses 8 x 6 x 6 feet.

63 Years of Engineering, by Sir Frances Fox, manager of a whaling station - the cachalot can swallow lumps of food up to 8 feet in diameter.

The same manager describes an experience which was investigated by the scientific editor of a Paris newspaper, as well as another scientist.

In Feb. 1891, the whale ship Star of the East was in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands and the look-out sighted a large sperm whale 3 miles away. Two boats were lowered....The second boat attacked the whale but was upset by a lash of its tail...One (man), James Bartley, disappeared....

The whale was killed and in a few hours the great body was lying by the ship's side and the crew busy ... removing the blubber.... The next day they attached some tackle to the stomach, which was hoisted on deck. The sailors were startled by spasmodic signs of life and inside was found the missing sailor, doubled up and unconscious. He was laid on the deck and treated to a bath of sea-water which soon revived him; but his mind was not clear and he was placed in the captain's quarters, where he remained 2 weeks a raving lunatic...

(He) gradually gained possession of his senses and at the end of the 3rd week had entirely recovered from the shock and resumed his duties.

During his sojourn in the whale's stomach, Bartley's skin, where exposed to the action of the gastric juice, underwent a striking change. His face, neck and hands were bleached to a deadly whiteness....Bartley affirms that he would probably have lived inside his house of flesh until he starved, for he lost his senses thru fright and not from lack of air.

from *Explore the Book*, Jonah chapter 1, by J. Sidlow Baxter, an Englishman

Belief of Jews and early Christians from 25-500 AD

Philo, Josephus, Irenaeus, Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine and records from the Roman catacombs all considered Jonah to be historical and factual.

Teaching of Jesus: Matthew 12:38-42 In answering the religious leaders...

...Jesus used Jonah to prove the certainty of His resurrection and of their judgment.

...He could only use him as proof if both He and the Jews believed Jonah was fact - an historical event.

Our response to the story of Jonah is determined by our concept of God.

If God can only do what we can do, then Jonah and much of Scripture has to be fiction.

If God can do anything, then Jonah can be historical and God could have ...

...sent a fish, controlled its digestive juices, or even raised Jonah from the dead if Jonah died.

The real issue of this story is not Jonah or the fish; the issue is God. **How big is my God?**

The city of Nineveh was enclosed by a wall 8 miles around it.

Greater Nineveh was a combination of Nineveh and 3 other cities.

They had a circumference of 60 miles (3 days journey) with 600,000 people.

God had already been working thru circumstances, sending omens of judgment.

Recently Assyria had several unexpected losses in battle.

She had gone thru 2 severe plagues - from 765 to 759 BC (fatal disease).

During this time there had been a solar eclipse.

2 Perspectives

Jonah is concerned about his **physical** welfare. God is concerned about the Assyrians' **spiritual** welfare.

Jonah is concerned about a **plant** that dies. God is concerned if 120,000 **children** die.

Jonah wants to spare a **plant**. God wants to spare the **people** of Nineveh.

