

Bible Studies

Jonah 1



Read 2 Kings 14v25-26

Jonah was a prophet in the Northern Kingdom. Gath Heper is not far from Nazareth. He prophesied shortly after the time of Elisha, before or during the reign of Jeroboam II. According to tradition he was part of Elisha's school of the prophets.

What does this passage tell us about Jonah and his prophecies?

Jonah is called the servant of God, he spoke the word of God and his prophecy was fulfilled. It also reminds us that Jonah's ministry was greater than just the events recorded in his book.



Read Jonah 1v1-4

**What was the word of the Lord that came to Jonah?
What did Jonah do instead?**

Nineveh was one of the leading cities of the Assyrian empire, at times it was its capital city. Assyria was rapidly becoming Israel's natural enemy.



**What was Nineveh like?
What happened to Israel?**

Nahum 3v1-4 & 19
2 Kings 17v3-6

The Assyrians had a reputation for brutality, beyond the brutality of the day. At present there was no conflict between the Assyrians and the Israelites but you did not prophesied to realise that there would be. At the time, Nineveh was being threatened by the hill tribes of Urartu to its north. Jonah wanted only harm for Nineveh, he wanted to prophesy as Naham had. He did not what to give his natural enemy a chance to repent. Jonah understood the risks of preaching repentance - they might repent.

How do we know this was going through his mind? Jonah 4v2

Asking Jonah to preach to Nineveh is like God asking you to witness to your worst enemy, just on a much larger scale.

There are going to be times when your opinion of what should be done and God's are different. If you are going to serve God, you must serve Him totally. If you are going to obey God, then you must do so in all things. We need to submit to the will of God.

"The man who questions the wisdom of God really claims to know more than God."

Do you ever know better than God?

When you don't want to do what God tells you to, how will you respond, run or obey? To run away from God's commands is to do a Jonah!



**What spiritual challenges faced Jonah?
What physical challenges faced him?
What might God want you to do that you are unwilling to do?**

In each of our lives there is a critical barrier, a point where our love for God and our desire to obey Him reach their limits. Beyond this barrier self interest and preservation rule. We serve and obey up to this barrier but we are reluctant to go beyond it. When God calls us to do so we procrastinate, find excuses and sometime we just flatly refuse. God wants all of our lives so He will constantly be working to push that barrier further out. Calling us out of our comfort zone, stretching us.

What is a comfort zone? Why are comfort zones dangerous?

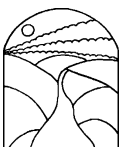
Why did Jonah feel the need to run? (Why couldn't he just disobey where he was?) It is possible that it was due to bad theology. Most of the pagan religions saw their gods as territorial, they had no power or diminished power outside of their domain. 1 Kings 20v28. Jonah wanted to get away from the God of Israel by leaving Israel. Generally one would hope for better theology in a prophet! Maybe he hoped God would give up on him.

Can you escape from God? Psalm 139v7-12

But Jonah ran away from the LORD Jonah 1:3

As a general rule you carry with you the problems you run from. They tend to follow you and recur in your life. God calls us to face our problems not to run from them.

In what ways do we run from God?



Sometimes we move, sometimes we remove ourselves from situations or relationships. We try to ignore God or keep Him at a distance. We deny God's will, we delay and we involve ourselves with other things. Sometimes we backslide. Most of us do an Adam and try to hide from God. This is just as futile as running.

It is possible that running was a spur of the moment reaction, he just didn't think, he wanted to put as much space between him and the problem as possible. Running is often a consequence of disobedience.

Why do you think this is?

When he ran, God could have found another prophet, why didn't He?

Jonah rejected his God given responsibility



"The book of Jonah is a rebuke to every Christian who does not have a passion to win men to Christ. The book of Jonah is a rebuke to those who long for the conversion of sinners providing that only certain types of sinners get saved."



For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" Esther 4v14

Why did Jonah run to Tarshish?

Tarshish is in the opposite direction from Nineveh, In the Jewish mind of the time it was the end of the world. Tarshish means to smelt or refine. When you run from God, Tarshish is always where you run to!



For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver. Psalm 66v10

*See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. Isaiah 48v10
Therefore this is what the LORD Almighty says: "See, I will refine and test them, for what else can I do because of the sin of my people? Jeremiah 9v7*

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, Malachi 3v2-3

The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the heart. Proverbs 17v3

What does it mean when God refines us?

How does He do it?

What does He want to achieve?

Read Hebrew 12v5-6. What is likely to happen when we go away from the Lord?

Having disobeyed God Jonah went down at every step.

Down to Joppa, down into the boat, down below deck, down into the water, and down into the fish. (The first three instances use the Hebrew 'yared') **What does this tell us?**

When you observe a trend like this in your life, what should you do?



Read Jonah 1v4-17

What happened to Jonah as a result of his disobedience?

What happened to the sailors as a result of Jonah's disobedience?

What were the potential effects of Jonah's disobedience for the Ninevites?

Why do you think Jonah was asleep?

Where did the storm come from? Why did God send it?

Does God still send storms into the lives of his people? Why?

What lesson did Jonah learn from this? Jonah 1v9

The sailors cast lots to discover who had caused the storm, they already knew Jonah was running from God. v10. The God who manipulated the storm manipulated the Lot.

You may be sure that your sin will find you out. Numbers 32v23

Can you avoid the consequences of your sin?

One of the themes behind the book of Jonah is the interaction between Jews and Gentiles. God is calling Israel through Jonah to reach out to the nations around her. Most Jews had low expectation of gentiles.

How well did the gentiles in this passage behave?

Does this have a lesson for us in our dealings with those around us?

What have you learned from this chapter of Jonah?

What is the spiritual equivalent for us of not going to Nineveh?

In Matthew 28v18-20 Jesus gave us a command, if you have not taken it seriously, then you are doing a Jonah.

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Jonah 2



Read Jonah 1v4-17

Jonah the first thing Jonah did when he got on board was to pay the fare. There is something symbolic about this, when you run from God there is always a fare to pay. Jonah did not realise the cost of His actions.

Read Luke 14v25-33



What are the two costs we need to count?

What is the cost of following Jesus?

What is the cost of not following Jesus?

What is the cost of disobeying Jesus?

Do you always know what the cost is going to be in advance?

Jonah ran from his calling and he ran from God. He paid the fare but he did not realise the cost of his actions. You have to count the cost of your actions.

What did the sailors do when the storm hit?

When the storm hit the boat the sailors did the sensible thing, they prayed (all be it to the wrong gods). They sought to find out what the problem was and they took physical measures to ensure their survival. Jonah was conspicuous by his absence.

Jonah is typical of many Christians, when people around us are in trouble we are asleep. Self absorbed and indifferent, asleep in the light. The sleep of a seared conscience.

For the sailors finding the problem did not solve the problem. Action had to be taken.



Whose idea was it to throw Jonah into the water?

What did the sailors think about the idea?

Why were they reluctant to throw Jonah in?

Why did Jonah suggest that he be thrown in?

The sailors were reluctant to take a life, but if Jonah was a prophet even a disobedient one God might hold them accountable for his blood! How much did Jonah know about what would happen when he was thrown in? He knew the sea would become calm and he knew he was responsible for the storm. Did he ask to be thrown in because he felt guilty? Or because he knew it would save the sailors? Did he want to die, (but not kill himself?)

The sailors probably saw throwing Jonah into the water as a kind of sacrifice. Jonah may well have seen himself as a substitute for the crew, saving their lives.

Did the sailors expect Jonah to survive? v14

Did Jonah expect to survive?

When most people talk about being a Jonah, they mean being the one that brings bad luck.

Is this justified?

Some people for a variety of reasons live in fear that they might be a 'Jonah' for a church.

Why might they think this?

How might they act as a result? What would you say to such a person?

In biblical terms to be a Jonah is someone who runs from their calling, who runs from God.

But the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights Jonah 1:17

Even in the worst situations, God is able to save, even when we have sunk beneath the surface and all hope is gone. **Why do you think God rescued Jonah?**

What swallowed Jonah?

Why do people say it was a whale?

There is no specific word to distinguish fish from whale in Biblical Hebrew. It could have been a whale. Rabbi Eliezer taught that this fish had been created from the beginning of the world, just to swallow Jonah.

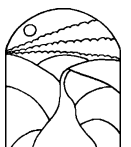


Read Matthew 12v39-40 (cf Mark 9v31, John 2v19-20)

What did Jesus compare to Jonah's time in the fish?

Jesus was buried before sunset on Friday and he rose again in the early hours of Sunday. **How many days and nights was he in the tomb?**

This has been a stumbling block for many. Some people say he was crucified on the Thursday, but this is unlikely. Rabbi Eleazer Ben Azaraia (c 100 AD) said "A day and a night makes an Onah (ie a period of 24 hours) and a portion of an Onah is recognised as a



complete Onah.” In terms of the culture in which the Bible was written it is accurate to say that Jesus was in the tomb three days and three nights. The same may be true of the time Jonah spent in the fish. In modern empirical terms, Jesus not in the grave for three days and nights, however we must interpret the Bible in the culture in which it was given. It is unlikely that Jonah knew exactly how long he was in the fish.

Why do you think Jesus made this comparison?

Probably to highlight the similarities of his mission with Jonah's, maybe specifically his outreach to the gentiles.

What do you think was the sign of Jonah?

There is a credible story of a whaling ship in the 19th century, catching a whale and finding a live man inside. He was in the whale for a shorter period than Jonah but had been bleached white from the acid. This could help explain the willingness for the Ninevites to repent.

What are the chances of surviving three days in a whale?

For many the credibility of this story is a stumbling block. (others respond, *'if the Bible said Jonah swallowed the whale I'd believe it'*) There are two possible explanations.

- 1** It was a miracle
- 2** Jonah was dead in the whale.

The second of these is not as surprising as it may sound, remember the parallel with Jesus. It is based on the line that says that Jonah prayed from Sheol or the grave. As you read the prayer through you will notice other lines that can be interpreted this way.

How do you think Jonah felt when he was swallowed by the fish?



Read Jonah 2v1-10

When Jonah was in trouble what did he do?

This is the prayer to pray when you are in pain in the stomach. This is another background theme of the book. The worse the mess the harder we pray. Sometimes it is the only time we pray seriously. Someone once pointed out, *sudden prayers make God jump.*

What other times in the book of Jonah did people turn to prayer?

Jonah had run from God now he needs to run to God.

Do you think this was what God planned?

According to this passage who brought Jonah into the sea? v3

This was God's plan and Jonah knew it. When we rebel or backslide God will often engineer a situation where we have no choice but to turn back to Him and rely on Him fully. The prodigal in the pig pen is another example of this. Even so it is amazing how often people stubbornly refuse to repent. God brought Jonah to a place of surrender, a yield point. He broke Jonah's disobedience and made him fit for further and greater use.

This prayer contains all the classic themes that need to be found in such a situation: *Thanksgiving & Praise. Confession & Repentance. Rededication, Commitment & Faith*. This prayer is made up of quotations from the Psalms about 90% of its content are direct quotes out of the Psalter.



Jonah had a choice: repent or perish. **What is repentance?**

Is it enough to repent to get out of a difficult situation?

What effect did repentance have on Jonah's situation?

Never underestimate the power of repentance, never think you are too far gone for to repent. The New Testament talks about *repentance unto life*. Acts 11v18

Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs. Jonah 2:8

There is a Jewish tradition that the sailors throw their idols into the sea once it was calm.

What would have happened if the sailors had clung to their idols, not God 1v5

What idols do you think Jonah had been clinging to?

Jonah did not worship physical idols, he was a prophet, maybe his idol was his free will, his choice to disobey God, maybe it was his limited view of God, or his ideas about the his role as a prophet.

What do you think *forfeit the grace that could be theirs* means?

It means their future, their relationship with God and the blessings He has for them.

And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. Jonah 2:10

Jonah went from being fish food, to being something else.

We usually assume that the fish spat Jonah out next to Nineveh, However Nineveh is on the Tigris River, 700km inland from the Persian Gulf, Joppa and Tarshish are on the Mediterranean Coast. To get from one to the other, you would need to circumnavigate the whole continent of Africa. Chapter 3 makes it clear that Jonah did not go immediately to Nineveh, he probably went home. Jonah decides he will never eat fish again.

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Jonah 3



Read Jonah 3v1-10

The fish spits Jonah out on to the dry land. Thrown into the water, thrown onto the land. As we have seen, the fish did not take Jonah to Nineveh as we usually think. Jonah found himself on the Mediterranean coast, maybe at Joppa, maybe Jonah went home.



What happened next?

What did Jonah do?

Why did Jonah obey God this time, what had changed?

In the end Jonah still had to obey God. All of his running achieved nothing, he still had to obey. Jonah has changed He now understands that he has to obey God, We would like to think that this was a change of heart and perhaps, at least towards God it was. Jonah was humbled before God and a changed man, he walked with Jacob's limp. He was forgiven for his disobedience and reconciled to God. It becomes clear that the one thing that has not changed is Jonah's attitude to the Ninevites. He obeys God but against his wishes.

Do you think it is strange that God was prepared to use Jonah again even after his failure?

God does not bear grudges, His aim in forgiveness is to restore us. The Enemy will come along and brand us as second rate Christians. Tried and found wanting. By grace we are still saved, but we are no longer fit for use in God's kingdom.

Do you think God takes this attitude?

What attitude does God take?

God's attitude is found in the parable of the prodigal son, He welcomes us back with open arms and restores us to our position. At the same time, this requires a change of heart on our part. It may take time for us to find our way back to where we were. There is always a need for fruit of repentance.

It would have been easy for Jonah to see this second call as a test. "Yes lord I have learned my lesson, I will always obey you, I don't really need to go do I?" God's concern with perfecting Jonah is secondary, His primary concern is with Nineveh.

What do you think would have happened to Jonah if he had refused this time?

Probably it would have been much less spectacular this time. Jonah would have stayed put and just ignored God's command. God would probably left Jonah to come to his senses. Spiritually he would stagnate, physically things would have gone down hill, until he repented. *Therefore God gave them over... Romans 1:24* is one of the scariest verses in the Bible.

The danger here is not that this might happen to us, but that it is perhaps happening to us now and we have not yet realised!



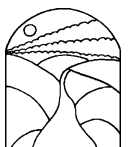
What would be the solution to this problem?

What would you do if it was no longer possible to obey what God had told you to do?

God is not concerned that we learn academically but that we learn practically. Often he will bring us back to our place of failure to give us a chance to show that we have learned from our mistake.

Jonah started out for Nineveh. Nineveh is about 700 km from Israel, a journey of several months. A journey not to be undertaken lightly. Nineveh itself was a large city, according to the Bible it contained more than 120,000 people. The archaeologists have found the inner city to be a rectangle with a wall length of 12km. The whole city may have been 12 km across. It could have had a population as high as 170,000. It was an impressive city the walls are reputed to have been 30m high and three chariots wide. The KJV suggests that the city was so large it took three days to cross. The NIV correctly explains that this does not indicate the dimensions of the city but the amount of time it took the prophet to deliver his message across the whole city.

How do you think Jonah felt confronted with this great city?



*Lord, are you sure this is the right place?
Lord, these are a ruthless people are you sure?
Lord, they might tease me, (not to mention skin me alive, pull out my tongue etc.)
They seem to have quite enough gods of their own Lord.*

What message did God tell Jonah to proclaim?

How well do you think that Jonah preached his message?



What was the response of the people?

Do you think Jonah expected this response?

How would you characterise the peoples repentance?

The Bible tells us that the people believed God. They fasted and humbled themselves. It also tells us they turned from their evil ways and their violence. The people, rich and poor responded voluntarily but the king also commanded the people to repent. A proud people humbled themselves. Did the people forsake their idols and worship God only? Probably not. From a Jewish point of view, keeping the laws of Noah would have been sufficient. Some people have found significance that up until this point YHWH, the specific name of God has been used, but now, Jonah uses 'Elohim' a more general name. Their repentance was sufficient to satisfy God.

The Ninevites had to repent to believe, Jonah had to repent to obey.

There are two practical reasons why the people may have repented so readily.



The account of the man swallowed by a whale in the 18th century records that the man was bleached white. If this happened to Jonah then he must have been an impressive sight, almost ghost like. His appearance alone may have been sufficient.



At the time Nineveh was being threatened by the hill tribes of Urartu to it's north. It has been suggested that these armies were now very close to Nineveh. So when Jonah proclaimed Nineveh's destruction, the people knew this destruction was close at hand.

If Nineveh was confronted by an advancing army at this time it is possible that their repentance was accompanied by victory on the battle front. If so Jonah's words received vindication.



In addition to this there is a spiritual reason. There are times when God pours out a spirit of grace and supplication, Zech 12v10, that enables people to come to the place of repentance. Another example of this is the Day of Pentecost. The theologian call this preventiential grace. Sometimes the most unlikely people repent.

What priority did the Ninevites put on repentance?

Repentance came before, business, leisure, family and pride

What was God's response to the Ninevites actions? 3v4

Does this surprise you? Romans 9v15, 2 Peter 3v9, Jeremiah 18v8

Jonah seems to have suspected that this was the way the Ninevites were going to react and that God would then forgive them. 4v2. God prevented the imminent destruction of Nineveh. On this Jonah is different from us. Most of us assume that the people we talk to about the Lord are not going to want to respond.

What effect does this assumption have on us?

What does it fail to take into account?



Read John 15v18-21

What does this passage tell us?

Therefore this is what the LORD says: "If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them. Jeremiah 15:19

In what way is Jonah's message similar to ours?

In what way are we like Jonah?

Lifestyle evangelism and loving people into God's kingdom are very important. It is true that listening is often as effective as talking. But in the end a person needs to hear the Gospel. *Unless a man is born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God.* John 3v3

When is the right time to present the Gospel to someone?

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Rom 10v14-15

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Jonah 4



Read Jonah 4v1-11

This passage is full of butts, each one indicates a point where Jonah and God disagreed with each other. Jonah has gone to Nineveh and preached the message God has given him. The people, from the king down, have believed his teaching and responded by repenting and humbling themselves. God spares them.

How would you have expected Jonah to respond to this success?

What would you expect Jonah to do next?

This was Jonah's moment of glory, you would think he would be at least flattered by the response to his words, basking in his new found fame, enjoying drinks at the palace. From a spiritual point of view it is very clear what he should be doing, he should be in Nineveh teaching the people the fear of the Lord. After repentance, there is a need for people to form a relationship with God. The same is true for people who get saved today.

What should you do when someone you have witnessed to becomes a Christian?

What is likely to happen if you don't?

Do you think this would be likely to happen in Nineveh?

Jonah's obligation to Nineveh was clear. He failed to follow up his work. Nineveh's repentance was shallow and short lived. Had it been otherwise the course of history would have been different. Nineveh was destroyed 150-200 years later, as Nahum prophesied.

What did Jonah do?

What was his mood?

Who was he angry at?

What did he want to happen to Nineveh?

Jonah did not like the Ninevites and he could not leave quickly enough. Jonah went and sat outside Nineveh to watch. Maybe God would realise how false the people repentance was. Maybe when God saw that they continued with their evil, He would still destroy them. Certainly if any people deserved to be destroyed, the Ninevites did. Jonah could only hope!



Read Jonah 4v1-4

What was Jonah's complaint against God?

Do you think Jonah understood the concept of grace?

He probably did understand the concept of God's grace, he just did not like it, or agree with it!

What was the root cause of Jonah's anger?

There were many reasons Jonah was angry, as we have seen Jonah had good reason for wanting Nineveh destroyed, they were Israel's natural enemies. Maybe he was worried about the reception he was going to get back home. "*you did what?*" Some people think Jonah was worried about being labelled a false prophet. But the root cause of his anger was that he did not get his own way. God did not do what Jonah wanted. It becomes clear that when Jonah ran from God, it was not only because he did not want to obey. He was deliberately trying to frustrate God's plan. **Did Jonah have the right to be angry?**

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love... he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. Psalm 103v8-10

What are the dangers of our anger?

Ephesians 4v26, James 1v20

What was Jonah's solution?

Like Elijah before him Jonah was so disillusioned he wanted to die. He had an attack of the spiritual sulks, spiritual thumb sucking, a spiritual tantrum.

What dangers do you think faced Jonah in his current situation?

At the end of a long day when everything has gone wrong and it seems like the whole world is out to get you and God is nowhere to be found. **Do you have the right to be angry?**

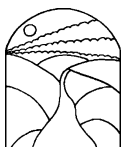
Is sulking a mark of spiritual maturity?

So often when we do not get our own way, when God does not do what we had hoped or expected, we do a Jonah and sulk. **What should we do?**



Read Jonah 4v5-11

Jonah sits in the sun and God provides a vine or gourd (or castor oil plant?) to give him shelter him from the heat.



How does Jonah feel about the vine? How does Jonah feel about God?

The identity of the plant is not important, it is another example of God's control over nature, like the fish and the storm. Next God sends a burning east wind and a worm to kill the vine. ("anyone can train a whale," says God).

How does Jonah feel about the vine? How does Jonah feel about God?

This incident is an acted parable. God has a message for Jonah through it. It works on two levels.



It relates to Nineveh. The vine was a blessing from God, a good thing to be enjoyed. Destroying it was futile and senseless, bringing only harm and distress.

God is saying to Jonah that he should rejoice that Nineveh has repented and been saved the same way he rejoiced over the vine. To destroy Nineveh once they had repented would be as senseless as destroying the vine. It would benefit no one, not even Jonah. God is calling Jonah to see things His way. To take joy in what was good.

God wanted Jonah to reassess his ideas about judgement, grace, justice and vindication.

Did Nineveh deserve to be spared? Why did God spare them?

Our attitude is often quite different.

Read Luke 9v52-56

He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3v9

What attitude did James, John and Jonah all share?

The account of Jonah also parallels the parable of the workers, it demonstrates how God will show mercy to whoever He wants and that we have no right to complain.



It relates to the book as a whole. The subject of this parable is one of the themes of the book. Jonah was happy with God, as long as God did what Jonah wanted, agreed with, understood or found acceptable. The moment God acted

outside of Jonah's paradigm, or in a way that Jonah considered contrary to his best interests, Jonah balked. First he ran, then he got angry and sulked.

Notice that although Jonah outwardly obeyed God on his second call and went to Nineveh, God was not content with an outward or coerced compliance. He wanted Jonah's heart and attitudes to be changed. Jonah's outward compliance had done nothing to change his heart. It is for this reason that God speaks to Jonah through the vine and the worm. God loved Jonah enough to show him his fault.

The wall Jonah hit is one that will face every Christian at some point in their spiritual walk. When God steps out of line. When instead of removing a problem from our lives God says walk through it. When God allows something terrible to happen. Like Jonah we end up getting angry with God. Angry enough to die. Angry enough to quit. Angry enough to sulk.

Is it safe to be angry with God?

The vine was a microcosm, it demonstrated to Jonah his bad attitude and character faults.

Have you noticed how often the things that God provides to bless us with become our rights?

How quickly we turn and resent God if something challenges us?

How so often the small things cause us the biggest griefs?

"The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." Job 1v21

"Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" Job 2v10

In what ways might we need to accept trouble from God?

God does not make us suffer, (evil KJV adversity NKJV) but there are clearly times when as a Christian we need to face adversity for the sake of the gospel. 2 Timothy 2v3 Hebrew 12v7. If following Christ means sacrifice then so be it. For Jonah following meant doing something he really did not want to do, the same may be true for you. Hopefully your attitude will be better than Jonah's



In the end God's sovereignty must be acknowledged by us, we must obey and accept even when we do not agree.

Blessed are those who grumble, for they shall not be left with nothing to grumble about.

Why is it significant that Jonah was not responsible for the vine growing?

Nineveh was not Jonah's problem, it was God's problem. God made the Ninevites and God loved them. It was God who called them to repentance and caused them to repent, not Jonah. Nor was Jonah responsible for their subsequent actions. All Jonah needed to do was obey God willingly.

What attitude did God rebuke Jonah for?

Why did God spare Nineveh?

It must be noted that God could only spare them because they repented, Jonah does not preach universalism.

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Jonah 4b

What is the Book of Jonah about?

This may seem like a strange question but it is obvious that the book of Jonah is there to make a point. But what is the point. There are several to choose from;

- 1** The Book of Jonah called on the Jews of the day to reassess their attitude to the gentiles, who are consistently shown in a good light.
- 2** The Book of Jonah serves as a rebuke for those who only want good people to get saved, or who discount people as unreachable to the Gospel.
- 3** The Book of Jonah establishes God's control over all things. If God is sovereign over fish and worms, storms and wind. Then God should be obeyed by His servants.
- 4** The book of Jonah is a parallel for Christ's life, specifically that His mission was to reach out to the gentiles John 10v16 this must have helped the early Church to understand an idea that was foreign to them.
- 5** The book of Jonah demonstrates how God will work in a person to change them and bring them round to His way of seeing thing.
- 6** The book of Jonah provides and illustration for the words of Jesus in Matthew 28 and a rebuke for those who run from them.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Matthew 28v19

Can you think of an other messages the book has to tell us?

- ?** Which of these do you think is the most important?
Which of these spoke to you the most?

