

OVERVIEW: Book of Jonah (NIV based)

BOOK OUTLINE

THEME: The Sovereign, Merciful, Compassionate Lord

- I. The Lord is in control (1:1-2:10)
 - A. Of sending to Nineveh His messenger Jonah (1:1-3)
 1. Who disobeys the Lord (1:1-3)
 2. Who flees from the Lord (1:3)
 - B. Of the storm (1:4-16)
 1. To entrap Jonah (1:4-5)
 2. To expose Jonah's sin (1:6-13)
 3. To place Jonah's life in a precarious situation (1:14-15)
 4. To bring the ship's crew to salvation (1:16)
 - C. Of a big fish (1:17-2:10)
 1. To swallow Jonah (1:17)
 2. To shelter Jonah while he repents (1:17-2:9)
 3. To save Jonah from drowning and release him (2:10)

- II. The Lord displays His mercy to Nineveh through Jonah (3:1-4:1)
 - A. Who is recommissioned and obediently goes to Nineveh (3:1-3)
 - B. Who preaches the Lord's message (3:4-10)
 1. Which is heard by the Ninevites (3:4-6)
 2. Which causes the Ninevites to repent (3:6-9)
 3. Which results in deliverance of the Ninevites from impending judgment (3:10)
 - C. Who gets angry at the Lord (4:1)

- III. The Lord displays His compassion (4:2-11)
 - A. By patiently listening to angry Jonah (4:2-5)
 1. Who requests to die (4:2-4)
 2. Who sits outside the city to await its destruction (4:5)
 - B. By providing an object lesson for Jonah using a vine (4:6-7)
 1. Which grew quickly (4:6)
 2. Which shaded Jonah from the sun (4:6)
 3. Which withered and died early the next day (4:7)
 - C. By bringing Jonah to a point of need and dependence using a scorching wind and heat (4:8)
 1. Which causes Jonah to grow faint (4:8)
 2. Which aggravates Jonah's desire to die (4:8)
 - D. By reasoning with Jonah's attitude (4:9-11)
 1. Toward the vine (that is not a living being) (4:9-10)
 2. Toward the people of Nineveh (who are living beings) (4:11)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

AUTHOR: The author does not identify himself in this writing. Chapters 1,3,4 are written in the 3rd person and chap. 2 (Jonah's prayer) is written in the 1st person suggests that Jonah might have shared his experience in complete detail with someone who wrote it down for him. The descriptiveness of his prayer in chap. 2 suggests that Jonah had a very close involvement in the recording of this event or that he wrote it himself in the 3rd person.

DATE OF BOOK: Jonah is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25 as being a prophet during the reign of Jeroboam II, son of Jehoash, king of Israel. Both Jonah and Jeroboam have been dated in about the period of 793-754 b.c.

PURPOSE: This book describes the historical events of Jonah, his ministry to the people of Nineveh, and his communication with the Lord. In Matt.12:39-41, Jesus speaks about Jonah as being a type of Christ. This book contains many spiritual lessons about service to the Lord, attitudes towards one's fellow mankind, the character of the Lord, etc.

NINEVEH: Nineveh was a great city (1:2) and was very important (3:3). A 3-day walk was required to pass through it (3:3) and it was inhabited by 120,000 people as well as many cattle (4:11).

The Book of Nahum reveals Nineveh as being wicked (1:15), vile (1:14), a "city of blood" (3:1), and a place with temples for the pagan gods (1:14). The Ninevites carved images, cast idols (1:14), engaged in prostitution and witchcraft (3:4), and behaved with endless cruelty (3:19; Jonah 3:8).

Nimrod founded Nineveh (Gen. 10:8-10) in about the 21st century b.c. According to excavations, the city was about 8 miles in circumference and located on the east bank of the Tigris River. Nineveh became the capital of the Assyrian Empire and was obliterated by an alliance of Babylonians, Medes, and Scythians in 612 b.c. (Unger 705, 924-925).

Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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File name: Jonah-BookOverview.____ (.htm, .doc, .pdf)

Translation used: NIV, quoted or referred to in various places within this document

Source: www.BelieverAssist.com

Updated: 12-29-14