

## **WALKING IN GOD’S PATH: THE BOOK OF JONAH**

This is one of the smallest books in the OT. It is laid in 4 simple chapters, with rich and expensive teachings. The story is about NINEVEH, a city famous in the ancient world because it was a center for the worship of Ishtar: the fertility goddess, love and marriage. The city of Nineveh is also described in **Genesis 10:11** as having been founded by Nimrod, the hunter who built the tower of Babel and led the world into a rebellion against God.

The book of Jonah has two basic parts. In the first part, Jonah rebels against his first commission to preach to Nineveh. In the second part, Jonah fulfills his second commission to preach to Nineveh. This section takes place right in Nineveh (3–4). In each chapter, Jonah seems to have been saying, “I will not go” (1), “I will go” (2), “I went” (3), and later regrets saying “I should not have gone” (4)

Others who reject the bible as the word of God have understood the book of Jonah as a myth. But the three days symbolizes Nineveh the city of three days journey, while his being vomited out symbolizes the prophet going out of the repentant city because he was out of place as a righteous man. The name Jonah which means “dove” was chosen because Nineveh was the chief sanctuary of the goddess Ishtar whose sacred symbol was the dove:

The book of Jonah is rich with so many lessons

### ***LESSONS from Jonah***

- 1. *Our God is a Sovereign God:*** In International law a state does not just declare itself a state. A sovereign state should have a permanent population, defined territory, one government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other sovereign states. With God, He is sovereign! He is independent, he is awesome! The sovereignty of God is seen when God governs every

aspect of his creation, “hurling a great wind upon the sea,” (1:4) and then calming it in an instant (1:15). He “appoints a great fish” to swallow his rebellious prophet, (1:17) “speaks” to it again and has him vomit Jonah onto dry land. (2:10) But he is not only master of the great forces of nature; he also “appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah,” (4:6) and the next morning “appointed a worm that attacked the plant so that it withered.” (4:7) God’s sovereignty also extends to the human heart, for he changes a collection of pagan sailors (1:5) into those who fear the Lord (1:16) He disciplines his wayward child into submission to his will, (1:1-3:4 and brings a miraculous movement of repentance to the godless, bloodthirsty city of Nineveh. (3:4-10) Jonah fled from the presence of God in hope that God would leave him alone, but instead God summons a great storm to harass the ship. God controls the wind and waves. In the ancient world the sea was thought to be the seat of chaos. No one could tame the oceans. But coz God is sovereign, he overrides all those!!

- 2. *When the time for ministry comes, do not take a different direction:*** The Lord sends a great wind on the sea; remember He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm. When the finger of God points at your face, no-one can bend it; even the dry land will produce fruits; even non-believers will have to look for you! Deep down the ship, where Jonah was fast asleep, probably in first class he was called to come and call on his God. He probably had forgotten **(Ps.139:7-10)** *“Where shall I flee from your presence? If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there, If I dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me”* The Lord is all knowing; Remember this is someone who knows us before we were conceived! Can u hide from him?

3. *When God opens your lips, you must say something about Him!* When God sends you cannot pend! *(In 1968 a Malawian priest who had been running away from a divine call, met his God right in a police cell during the leadership of Kamuzu Banda, while reading the book of Jonah/ again My Uncle Jonah)* So disobedience to God creates turmoil in the life of a believer. This priest was a Shepherd boy, then he became a guerrilla general, then a detainee, and finally little did he know that while he was a Shepherd boy in the bush God was training him to be a Shepherd of a congregation. He finally arrived at the heart of the matter. But God's control is not simply over the waters of nature, it is over all of nature. For God controls a great fish and a small worm (4:7). He can control the mightiest of creatures and the smallest of invertebrates. He controls all living things, including plants (4:6).

He makes them grow at his command, so that the plant that he gives to Jonah "springs up overnight." God doesn't even need to obey the so-called laws of the universe. He is above them all. None of the living things on earth can stay his hand, as King Nebuchadnezzar testified (**Daniel 4:35**). The Bible from beginning to end paints us a picture of the God who controls the seas. He hovers over the face of the waters, he parts seas, he causes waves to crash over his enemies. He even has the power to turn the sea into dry land (**Psalm 66:6**) God can literally make the sea no more if he so chooses. **Psalm 89:9** assures us that God rules over the raging of the sea, and when its wave rises He stills them. This is, of course, precisely what Jesus does in the New Testament. He stills the raging sea as a testimony to who He really is: the sovereign God of the universe (**Mark 4:39-41**)

**4. *If God can control the weather, then he controls our destiny:*** Our destinies have not been left to chance! It is God who makes the sun to shine and the wind to blow. God controls even the details of the climate. Jonah certainly knew the truth about God, but he sought to suppress the truth of God's control with his sinfulness (**Romans 1:18**). We can be like that. We think that ultimately we should be the Lords of our lives and the judges of our morals. Like Adam and Eve we demand to take God's place as sovereign one. Like Jonah We run from his Lordship and try to flee. At other times we simply doubt God's control. We live with anxiety and fear. We tremble at the thought of an unknown future, we are stressed about finances and family. We worry about jobs and security. But in the midst of all the necessary responsible steps we must ask: how am I trusting God in this moment? Remember Jesus is not one among many options

**5. *It is not God's intention for you to go to hell:*** The bible tells us in Jonah 3:10 that *"When God saw what people had done, how they turned away from their evil ways, He changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them and he did not do it"* You might be lucky today for you have the opportunity to hear the gospel, and once you hear it, do not hesitate to break the heart of stone! It is not God's intention that you should go to hell. The bible says in Matt.25:41 *"Then he will say to those at his left hand, depart from me and go into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels..."*

So this fire is not prepared for you and I, it is for Satan and if you go, it seems that it will be by choice. That is why when Jesus talked about the rich man and Lazarus, and then the rich man asked that Lazarus should rise and

go to his five brothers, to warn them about hell, Abraham said, *“They have Moses and the prophets, let them listen to them”* (Lk.16:29)