

CITYWEST CHURCH

05.05.2025 - 10 AM

JONAH PART 1: WHO IS JONAH?

The LORD gave this message to Jonah, son of Amittai: **2** “Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are.”

3 But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the LORD. He went down to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board, hoping to escape from the LORD by sailing to Tarshish.

4 But the LORD hurled a powerful wind over the sea, causing a violent storm that threatened to break the ship apart. **5** Fearing for their lives, the desperate sailors shouted to their gods for help and threw the cargo overboard to lighten the ship.

But all this time Jonah was sound asleep down in the hold. **6** So the captain went down after him. “How can you sleep at a time like this?” he shouted. “Get up and pray to your god! Maybe he will pay attention to us and spare our lives.”

7 Then the crew cast lots to see which of them had offended the gods and caused the terrible storm. When they did this, the lots identified Jonah as the culprit. **8** “Why has this awful storm come down on us?” they demanded. “Who are you? What is your line of work? What country are you from? What is your nationality?”

9 Jonah answered, “I am a Hebrew, and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land.”

10 The sailors were terrified when they heard this, for he had already told them he was running away from the LORD. “Oh, why did you do it?” they groaned. **11** And since the storm was getting worse all the time, they asked him, “What should we do to you to stop this storm?”

12 “Throw me into the sea,” Jonah said, “and it will become calm again. I know that this terrible storm is all my fault.”

13 Instead, the sailors rowed even harder to get the ship to the land. But the stormy sea was too violent for them, and they couldn’t make it. **14** Then they cried out to the LORD, Jonah’s God. “O LORD,” they pleaded, “don’t make us die for this man’s

sin. And don't hold us responsible for his death. O LORD, you have sent this storm upon him for your own good reasons."

15 Then the sailors picked Jonah up and threw him into the raging sea, and the storm stopped at once! **16** The sailors were awestruck by the LORD's great power, and they offered him a sacrifice and vowed to serve him.

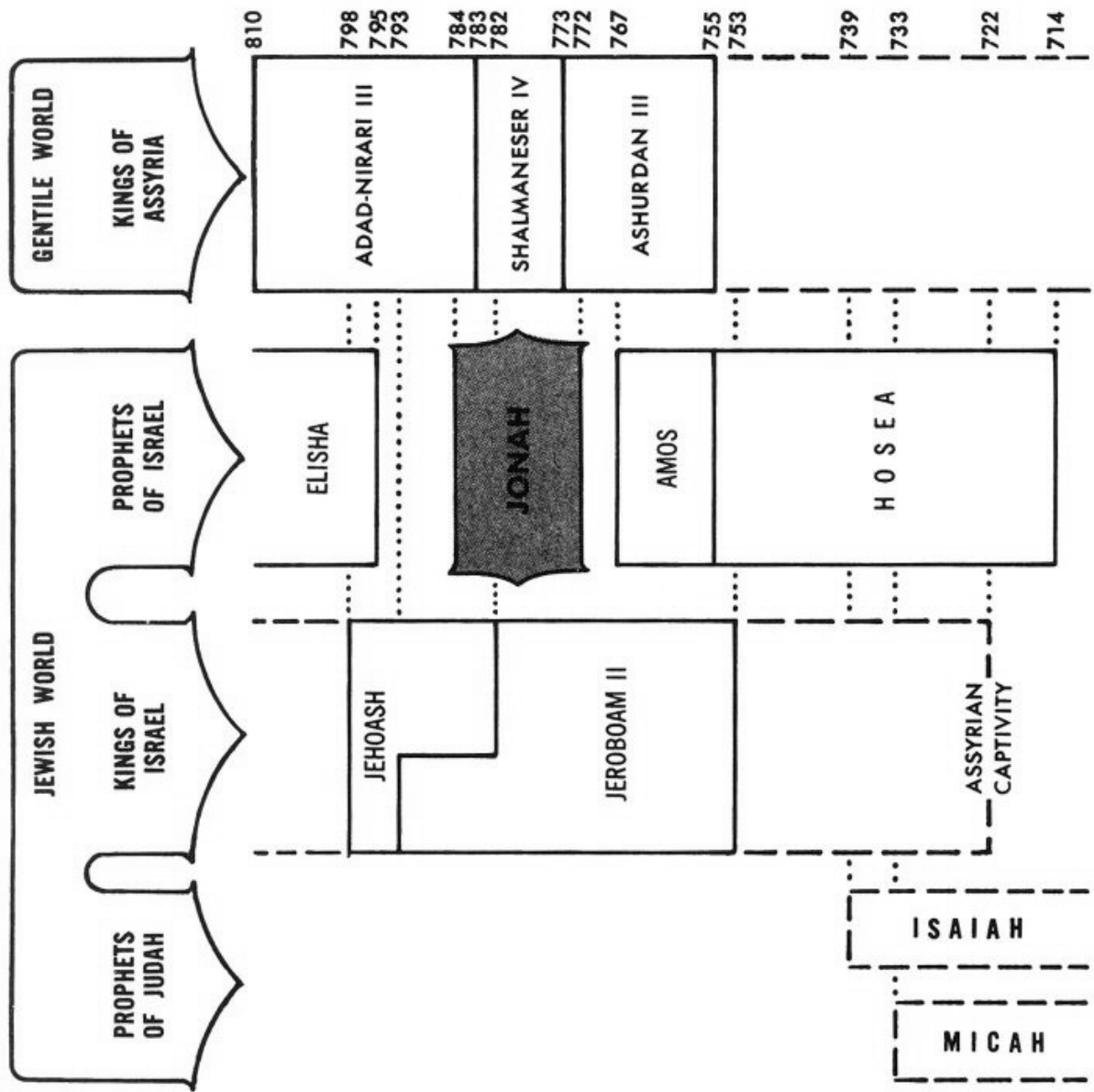
17 Now the LORD had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

Jonah 1:1-17 (NLT)

Ok church, here we go into a series of Jonah. The reason we are looking at Jonah for the next 4 weeks is because we are coming back to our key theme for our year, where we echo the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Here I am, Send me."

Jonah is a story worth looking into because Jonah doesn't echo the cry of Isaiah right away (Isaiah hadn't happened yet). And in the midst of Jonah and his decisions, we see the extent of the grace and love of God for the individual (Jonah) and the masses (Ninevah)

So lets put Jonah into the stroy of the bible for a moment.



Jonah is a prophet in the time of King Jeroboam 2. (2 Kings 14:23-25)

Jonah is the 5th of twelve minor prophets.

Jonah name means dove.

His key message as a minor prophet is that God's grace is universal in it's sweep.

For those of us who have been around for a while can dilute Jonah down to a kids story, something that grabs their imagination, but its length, one and half page, and its stigma needs to be set to the side as we look deeper at the poetry and reading of Gods word and the book of Jonah.

Jonah was a prophet from the village of Gath Hepher, located some three miles north of Nazareth in lower Galilee.

- *Today the village of Gath Hepher is known as Mash Had.*
- *The Pharisees were wrong in John 5:52, when they said “Search and look, for no prophet has risen out of Galilee.*
- *Jonah is the only prophet whom Jesus likened to Himself. Matthew 12:39-41*
 - *Jonah’s experience is a type of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.*
 - *Unlike all other Old testament books, Jonah revolves exclusively around a Gentile nation.*
- *Nineveh was a world empire for about 300 years. the capital of Assyria. The enemies of Jonah and his people.*

Before we go any further, although the book is called Jonah, although Jonah is the character the story revolves around the main character of the book of Jonah is not Jonah, its God.

In the book of Jonah, we see the mission heart of God and we see the missionary heart of Jesus at work in this book, we see that God is patient and gracious towards those of us who would run away from the plan God has for us.

So who is Jonah:

1. JONAH IS JONAH.

Now we have covered this already pretty well, but we must take on face value that Jonah was a real person, a prophet chosen by God to deliver a message to the city of Ninevah.

He was a historical person, who lived about 800 years before Christ. From the book of Jonah we can ascertain that Jonah has belief in God and his providence but not much evidence of a daily walk with the Lord. He knew Psalm 103 which quotes Moses in Exodus 34 about what God is like and his character.

2. JONAH IS ISRAEL.

Jonah embodies the nation of Israel. He is a picture of the Old Testament church. Israel was meant to be a guiding star in a dark world but it had become inward. Jonah is in the Bible not to make fun of him or to cause conjecture about the whale and Jonah, that's not the point of this story.

Jonah - his record of failures - was meant to enlarge the sympathies of Israel and lead the chosen people back to the the great missionary task of proclaiming the truth to a hurting world.

The book of Jonah is the Old Testaments anticipation for the parable of the prodigal son, the gentiles being the ones who forfeited their rights, but the Father is waiting to welcome them home.

3. JONAH IS US.

Truthfully if you read Jonah eventually, you will see yourself. Jewish people today on the day of atonement will read the book of Jonah and then at the end they will declare as a congregation, we are Jonah.

Jonah's fight illustrates how we as Christians respond when God doesn't fit into the square we have allotted or expect him to be in.

*If you treasure some of God but not all of him, you are like Jonah.
If you want to receive God's grace without being changed, you are like Jonah.*

4. JONAH IS A FORERUNNER TO JESUS.

When scribes pharisees and sadducees demanded that Jesus give them a sign to validate his claimed identity he said:

*"Only an evil, adulterous generation would demand a miraculous sign; but the only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah. **40** For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.*

Matt 12:39-40 (NLT)

Jonah is Jonah, but he is also a symbol. His time in the belly of a fish is prophetic model of Jesus and his three days in the tomb, in the depths, rising victorious

Jonah is an interesting contrast in that his life is a prophetic example of Jesus to come, Nineveh is a gentile city that turns to God as a forerunner for Pentecost (which we will celebrate in a few short weeks.)

The book of Jonah is also the Old Testament anticipation of the prodigal son.

Jonah a guilty man, offers himself for innocent men (on the boat) Jesus an innocent man offers his life for the guilty of the whole world.

The picture of Jesus from the book of Jonah is that he JESUS not Jonah is the greatest missionary.

Three takeaways for you today:

1. RESPOND WITH OBEDIENCE, NOT RESISTANCE.

Just like Jonah, we're often tempted to run when God calls us to something uncomfortable. In 2025, let's be a church that responds like Isaiah— "Here I am, send me"—even when the assignment is hard.

2. EMBRACE GOD'S MISSION BEYOND YOUR COMFORT ZONE.

Truth is, everything you do for God, will take you out of your comfort zone. To say here I am send me is to say, take me out of my comfort zone.

3. GOD'S GRACE IS TOWARDS YOU, EVEN IF YOU RUN.

Jonah ran. Jonah failed. But God still pursued him with grace—through the storm, the sailors, and the fish.

"You can't stay away from the Ninevehs of your life. God will send storms. He will bring you low. Not to pay you back, but to bring you back."

— Tim Keller

CONNECT GROUP QUESTIONS:

Where are you tempted to “go to Tarshish” instead of obeying God’s call to Nineveh?

What does Jonah’s story show us about God’s character—and how does that challenge your view of Him?

In what ways do you relate to Jonah—spiritually, emotionally, or behaviorally?