

## *Major Messages from the Minor Prophets*

Studies in the Minor Prophets

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

Jersey Shore Baptist Church

Pastor Phil Erickson

Began July 12, 2017

### **Message Five – *Jonah***

#### **Memory Verse**

*"Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." - (Jonah 1:17)*

*"For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." - (Matthew 12:40)*

#### **Introduction**

The Book of Jonah is the most well-known of all of the Minor Prophets, but it is also the most unbelieved. There are even some Christians that deny the reality of the events that are described in Jonah, claiming that the book is only an allegory. There are ten miracles recorded in this writing, including the survival of the prophet for three days in the belly of the whale. However, the greatest miracle recorded in this book is the conversion and salvation of thousands of people who were previously destined for Hell. This Book demonstrates that God has always had his eye of compassion on the whole world, not just Israel. Jonah is the first prophet to preach repentance to the Gentiles.

#### **The Miracles of Jonah**

- 1 1:4 "the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea"
- 2 1:7 "the lot fell upon Jonah"
- 3 1:15 "the sea ceased from her raging"
- 4 1:17 "the LORD had prepared a great fish"
- 5 1:17 "to swallow up Jonah"
- 6 2:10 "the LORD spake unto the fish...it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land"
- 7 3:10 "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way"
- 8 4:6 "the LORD God prepared a gourd"
- 9 4:7 "God prepared a worm"
- 10 4:8 "God prepared a vehement east wind"

An interesting note – the word “great” appears many times in this Book: great city (1:2,3:2, 3:3, 4:11); great wind (1:4); great tempest (1:12); great fish (1:17); great kindness (4:2)

## **I The Prophet – Jonah**

Not a whole lot is known about Jonah, except:

- 1 He was the son of a man named Amittai.
- 2 He was from Gath-hepher (near Nazareth in Galilee).
- 3 He was a prophet to the northern kingdom during the reign of Jereboam II who reigned from 782 – 753 BC.
- 4 He was contemporary with Amos and Hosea from the north, and Isaiah and Micah from the south.
- 5 His name means “dove”.

An unconfirmed tradition claims that Jonah was the son of the widow woman from Zarephath whom Elijah raised from the dead. (1 Kings 17:8 – 24)

The prophet Jonah was referred to by the Lord as a picture, or type, of His own resurrection from the dead. (1:17; Matthew 12:40; Luke 11:29 - 30) Jesus was in the tomb for three literal days and nights, just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale. Jesus also noted in Matthew 12:41 that the people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah.

## **II The People – The Assyrians (Ninevites)**

The Assyrians were a polytheistic people that had been demanding “gifts” (taxes) from the Israelites for some time. Eventually, in 722 BC, they would completely conquer the northern kingdom, and even threaten the City of Jerusalem in Judah. The Assyrians were a very cruel people, especially to those who were taken captive, and they were hated by the Israelites. Jonah, no doubt, looked forward to the judgment of God upon the people of Nineveh, and the last thing he wanted was for the Ninevites to be spared that judgment.

## **III The Place – Nineveh**

Nineveh was originally built by Nimrod (Genesis 12:10) and became a very important city situated on the Tigris River, which eventually (700 BC) became the capitol city of the Assyrian empire. At this point in history, though not the chief city, Nineveh was a very wide, wealthy, and wicked city. The circumference of the city was 60 miles, which is a three-day journey on foot (3:3). The city walls were said to be wide enough for several chariots to ride abreast.

The name Nineveh, is thought to derive from “ninus,” i.e., Nimrod, and means the residence of Nimrod or “nunu” (Akkadian for “fish”). The people worshiped the fish

goddess Nanshe (the daughter of Ea, the goddess of fresh water) and Dagon the fish god who was represented as half man and half fish. (MacArthur, John (2006-10-10). The MacArthur Study Bible, Thomas Nelson.)

Note – Nineveh was also a place where the false gods Ishtar and Assur were worshipped.

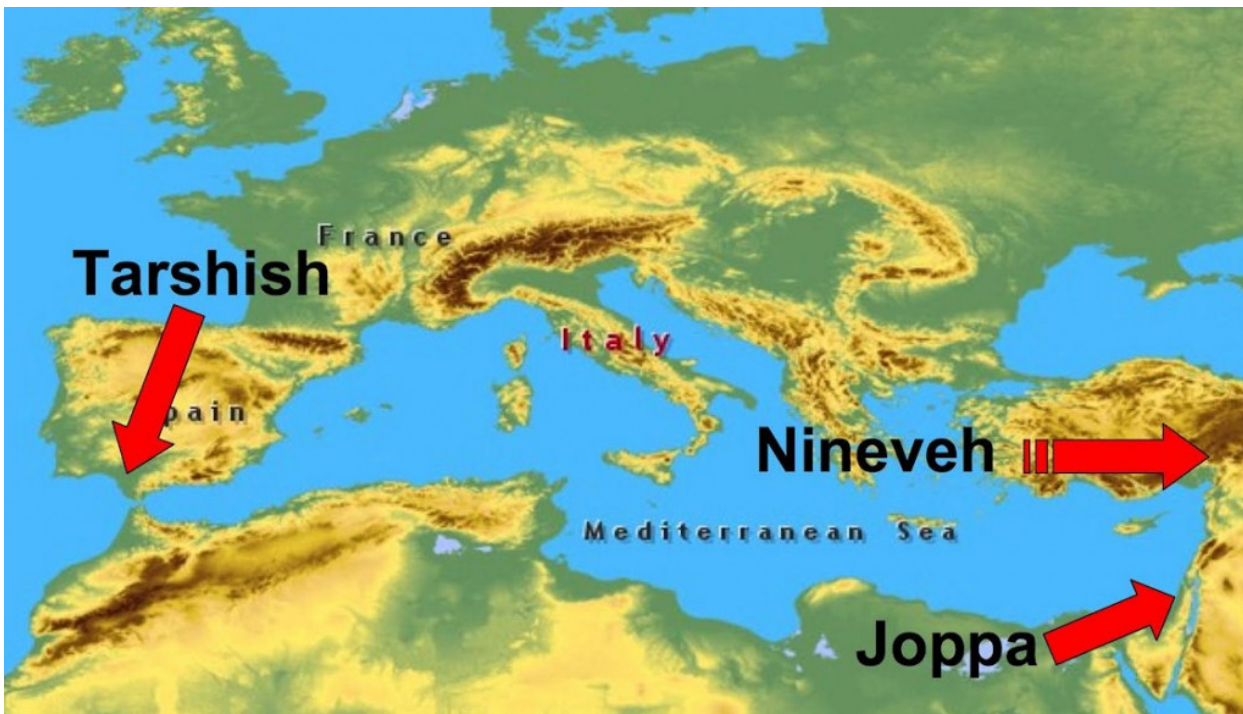
#### IV The Prophecy

##### A A Reluctant Prophet (1:1 – 17)

1 A Clear Command (1:1 – 2)

2 A Direct Disobedience (1:3)

Tarshish was about as far away from the will of God (geographically speaking) as Jonah could get.



3 The Sailors' Salvation (1:4 – 16)

4 A Persistent Pursuer (1:17)

God was not about to let Jonah back out of what he was calling him to do.

*"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."* - (Romans 11:29)

Spurgeon said that God never allows his children to sin successfully. God causes the fish to swallow Jonah, which will serve three purposes:

- a. It will cause Jonah to remember who he was, and more importantly, Who God is.
- b. It will serve to transport Jonah back to where he needed to be.

c. It will chasten the backslidden prophet.

*"If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" - (Hebrews 12:7)*

### **B A Remembering Prayer (2:1 – 9)**

Notice Jonah's prayer from the whale's belly. In v. 7, he says that he remembered the Lord, and in v. 9, he says that he will "pay that that [he had] vowed". And it seems that just when Jonah was on the same page with God, the whale vomited him up. (See 1 Kings 8:38 – 40)

### **C A Returning Preacher (2:10 – 3:4)**

On what "dry land" did God place Jonah? It could be, he ended up where he started from. It could also be that God took Jonah and the whale around the bottom of Africa, into the Indian Ocean, into the Arabian Sea, into the Persian Gulf, and finally into the Tigris River. God can do what He wants to do.

Notice the extent of Jonah's message in v. 4: *"Yet forty days, and Ninevah shall be overthrown."* That's the entire message from Jonah for the Ninevites – 8 words.

### **D A Repentant People (3:5 – 9)**

The entire city, beginning with the king, and including all of the people repented, prayed, and fasted. This was a true revival.

*"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." - (2 Chronicles 7:14)*

### **E A Repealed Punishment (3:10)**

Because the people repented, God postponed the judgment that would fall upon the City of Nineveh. Later on, God would judge the Assyrians at the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Nahum prophesied about the destruction of the city, which finally came in 612 BC, 150 years after Jonah's prophecy. (Nahum 3)

### **F A Real Pity (4:1 – 11)**

Jonah is distraught because God temporally spared possibly as many as 1 million people, and eternally saved the vast majority of them. Jonah committed suicide in chapter 1, and now he wants to die, all because he did not see things God's way. He let his prejudice keep him from having compassion on a very needy people that God wanted to redeem.

### **1 An Enraged Preacher (vs. 1 – 3)**

Jonah is irate because the people repented at his reaching, and he knew that God would be merciful to them.

Who would you be unwilling to go to preach the message of salvation?

Another Race

Another Culture

Another Social Circle

Maybe someone who has hurt you or your family in the past. Someone that you have not forgiven, and you wouldn't want God to forgive also.

2     **A Reasonable Question (v. 4)**

3     **A Refusal to Answer (v. 5)**

4     **A Revealing Illustration (vs. 6 – 8)**

5     **A Repeat of the Question - God drives home his point (vs. 9 – 11)**

### **Conclusion (Practical Thoughts)**

God has a plan, a calling for your life.

Generally speaking, much of what God has called you to do is revealed in His Word.

God has something specific for you to do, and he has a specific place for you to do it.

Whatever God calls you to do, He will equip you to do. (Romans 12:3 – 8)

*"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4:13)*

Whatever God calls you to do, He will supply whatever you need to do it:

*"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."  
(Philippians 4:19)*

Usually God will call you to do something that you will desire to do.

*"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Philippians  
2:13)*

However, there may be times when God will pull you out of your comfort zone, and sometimes He will ask you to do something that you downright do not want to do.

Your job is to discern the will of God for your life, as well as the specific wills of God for tomorrow, and then cheerfully submit to what He wants. Even Jesus prayed, *"not my will but thine be done"*. (Luke 22:42) Your life will be miserable until you do.