

Jonah: The Rebellious Prophet

2. Jonah: The Call of Jonah Chapter 1:1-6



Why did God call Jonah to the city of Nineveh?

There are many skeptics of the book of Jonah, the words of Jesus are enough to satisfy those who take the Bible literally. It is enough to say, Jesus saw Jonah as a real person, who had a real ministry to the city of Nineveh. His message was judgment was coming so the city better repent. He actually hoped the city would not repent and God would judge it. So Jonah actually becomes part of the message, demonstrating the nature and character of God. Jesus even tells us that in the judgment, the men Nineveh will accuse those of Capernaum because they repented at the preaching of Jonah.

Therefore, if Jonah did not preach in Nineveh, either Jesus did not know or Jesus was lying. Jesus modeled His ministry after the sign of Jonah "being in the fish for 3-days and 3-nights". Jonah was called to the Gentiles after he was vomited out by the fish. Also Jesus like Jonah delivered his message to the Gentile world (the nations) after Israel rejected him. Jesus emerged from death, like Jonah emerged from the fish, to deliver a message to people receptive to His words, the nations. Jonah preached to a receptive audience; unlike Israel the people of Nineveh were waiting for the words of Jonah. The people in Israel rejected Jesus, but the Gentiles, the Greeks and Romans were waiting for the words of salvation.

Of all the people to send to Nineveh, why would God send someone who really did not want to go? He hated the people of Nineveh and wanted them destroyed. Though it does not say explicitly, we can infer the reasons God sent Jonah. Jonah is a Biblical book that speaks to many people. Jonah prophesied the expansion of Israel's border (2 Kings 14:25) in the reign of Jeroboam II. Even though Israel was blessed in the physical realms, spiritually they were a bankrupt. They continued to exist on the mercy of God. Jonah not only personifies Israel's call to reach the nations, he personifies every "Believer's" call to reach lost people.

Jonah did not see the big picture, Jonah was comfortable living in a "apostate" nation connected to the truth, while he was surrounded with pagans and lost people. Jonah was comfortable with God, he did not feel the urgency to go beyond Israel. Like Jonah, and Israel, it is very easy to become comfortable with our position. We might be "saved", "born again" and comfortable with our salvation, so comfortable we know where we are going, but have no desire to reach those around us. We know we are going to heaven and that's all that matters! Jonah did not have an urgency for the lost, he was comfortable with his salvation in the Lord. In the "fish" Jonah repents of his rebellion, he is now willing to be obedient and proclaim the message. Even in the end, Jonah still did not understand God wanted the people of Nineveh to know Him.

Jonah could also have been called to Nineveh because he was the most able. Jonah lived in the Israelite city of Gath-Hepher not far from the coast, near the Phoenician (Lebanon) border. Jonah would have been familiar with the culture and language of Assyria and Phoenicia. Jonah's ability to talk with those on the ship and in the city of Nineveh demonstrates his competence to communicate God's Word. When the time of action was needed Jonah was called, God was able through Jonah to demonstrate His

character and nature for generations to come. God loves people, He is reluctant to judge, Jonah is an example of God's nature.

Why the city of Nineveh?

With all the cities to choose from, why did God send Jonah to Nineveh? Because God responds to people, when people seek God, he answers their prayers. We know from history outside of the Bible about what took place in Nineveh before Jonah's arrival. Three events in particular stand out, there were two plagues in the years 765 and 759 B.C. in Nineveh, sandwiched between them was a solar eclipse on June 15th, 763 B.C., an ominous sign for a kingdom. These events could have caused fear and dread in the city. Making a people cry out for help.

When our security is removed, and our pride is broken, we can hear God better. The people of Nineveh could have been calling out to God. God sending Jonah was an answer to their yearning, Jonah was the most able person who knew the "Truth". By using Jonah, God reveals more about His character and about us as fallen people.

In the Acts of the Apostles, Cornelius was a Roman Centurion, who yearned to know the true God. God answered his prayer by first sending an angel and then sending Peter with the Gospel. Many consider Cornelius the first Gentile convert to Christianity. Its interesting to note that Peter, was in the city of Joppa, when God called him to go and see Cornelius who was living in Caesarea. Joppa is the same city Jonah used to escape God's call to the gentiles. Peter like Jonah was not too keen on hanging out with the Gentiles, Peter when he meets Cornelius cannot but help him to know how he feels. *"You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean"* Peter and Jonah are both Jews, called to reach Gentiles, they both have problem with it. Later on, Paul had to rebuke Peter because he openly rejected fellowship with gentiles because of peer pressure (Galatians 2:11-14)



Cornelius the Centurion calls for Peter

- 1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment,
- 2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.
- 3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"
- 4 And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.
- 5 "Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter.
- 6 "He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do."
- 7 And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually.
- 8 So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa.
- 9 The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.
- 10 Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance
- 11 and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth.
- 12 In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.
- 13 And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."
- 13 And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."
- 14 But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."
- 15 And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."
- 16 This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.
- 17 Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate.
- 18 And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.
- 19 While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you.
- 20 "Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them."

21 Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?"

22 And they said, "Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you."

23 Then he invited them in and lodged them. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

24 And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends.

25 As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.

26 But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man."

27 And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together.

28 Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

29 "Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"

30 So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

31 "and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God.

32 'Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.'

33 "So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."

34 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.

35 "But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

36 "The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all

38 "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

39 "And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree.

40 "Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,

41 "not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

42 "And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.

43 "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

45 And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered,

47 "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

Jonah 1

1 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me."

3 But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

4 But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.

5 Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

6 So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish."

(Vs.1) Jonah was a prophet during the reign of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:23-29), it was one of the most prosperous times in Israeli history, Assyria was weakened. The problem was judgment was coming and Jonah knew it through his fellow prophet Hosea who warned of the Assyrian judgment on the land (Hosea 11:5).

Word of the Lord: This term is used 243 times in the Old Testament, the message is being given to Jonah directly from God. The first time we see it is in Genesis 15:1, when God appears to Abraham

Gen 15:1 ESV

(1) After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."

God has a message for Jonah to deliver to the people of Ninevah.

Jonah the son of Amittai: The name Jonah is translated Dove, the symbol of peace used throughout the world today. The dove in Genesis 8, brought Noah an olive branch, the first signs that life was returning to normal

after God's judgment on the earth. Amittai means truth, we do not see the name anywhere else but its association with Jonah.

(Vs. 2) Arise: We could picture Jonah sleeping comfortably waiting to start the day when all of a sudden he hears from God, we don't know if it was a dream or vision but it was clear. God told him to get up and go! The message was for one of the capital cities of his hated enemy Assyria, Nineveh. Jonah was to **Cry out against it**, Jonah did not want to go, so he rebelled, he is going to go in the exact opposite direction. Now Assyria was a cruel nation that loved to inflict pain and destruction on its enemies. Its power was growing, although it was weakened during the time of Jonah. It was for their **Wickedness** God was bringing judgment. Jonah probably thought it's about time! In this image from the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser the III (858-824 BC) King Jehu of Israel is bowing.



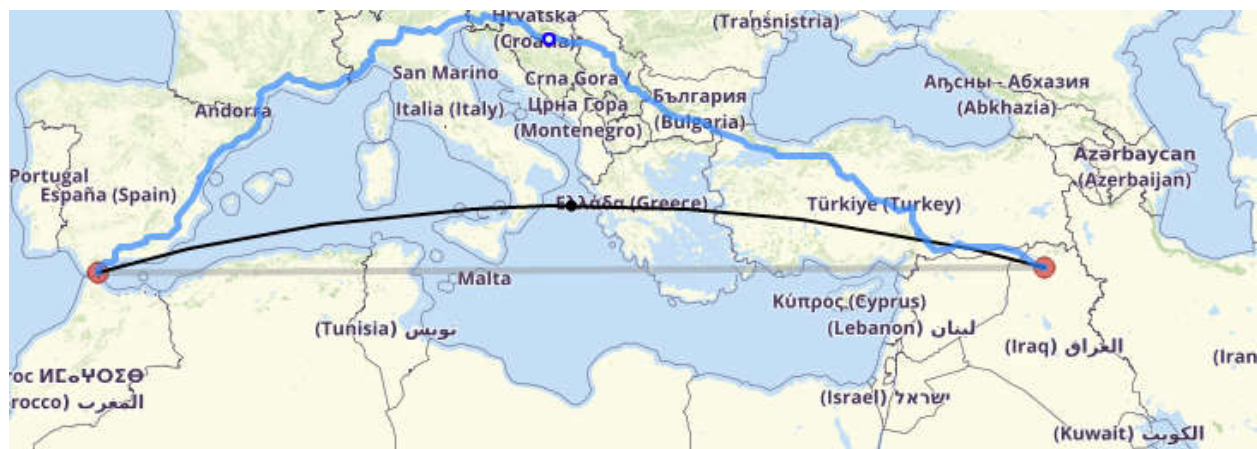
Only now at this period was Assyria finally weakened, who know what happened in Jonah life to bring this hatred of Assyria, but their cruelty is well document in their own relief pictures. They were proud of punishment and torture they inflicted on their enemies.



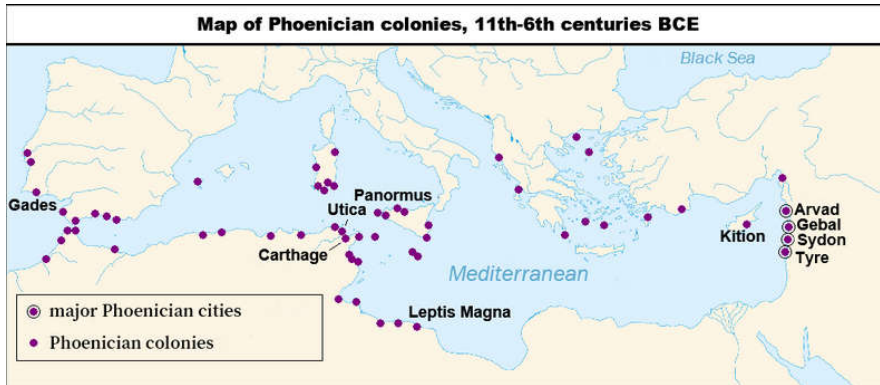
(Vs.3) Jonah at this point thought please Lord, destroy, and judge this nation. They deserve it! The last thing Jonah wanted to do was prevent the judgment on Assyria and Nineveh.

Tarshish is located in the exact opposite direction of Nineveh, it's a place Paul wanted to go, it is associated with the area of Spain and Portugal. The two places are located almost 2600 miles from each other. Jonah had planned to go to the outter

parts of the known world rather than deliver a message to Nineveh.



The Phoenicians were traders and Colonists who founded many cities that we know of today, their trading outposts extend to Tarshish and beyond. Jonah thought perfect I know just the way to escape the call of God. He went to the city of **Joppa** in Israel. It was a port city, goods and ships from the Mediterranean were continually present, so he decided to the farthest place they would go, to the end of the sea. **Tarshish** has been associated with Spain and Gibraltar, also known as the Pillars of Hercules. These ships for the most part are not cruising vessels, they were cargo ships. It didn't matter to Jonah, he hated the Assyrians, so he was in utter rebellion against God's plans. He wanted nothing to do with the **presence of the Lord** at this point.



(Vs.4) Sometimes we underestimate the nature and power of God. This was the case with Jonah, Jonah was on this boat, in his rebellion against his call, thinking that the end of that. Jonah is probably feeling guilty in his rebellion, but his feeling is secondary to his hatred of Assyria. So, God changes the weather for Jonah sake. He causes **A Great Wind** like of a hurricane, like what Paul went through on his voyage

from Jerusalem to Rome (Acts 27). These great tempests are known as Medicanes or Cyclones in that part of the world were the cause of many shipwrecks at the bottom of the sea.

The storm was so bad, the ship was about to be destroyed or **broken up**, so it could not get worse than it possibly was, it was the end of the line. Everything was at stake, the people on the ship were about to die. Imagine being in airplane that is about to crash, it has to one of the most horrifying experiences someone could go through, because you feel death is coming and you cannot do anything about it.

(Vs.5) Even though Jonah was in rebellion against God, he still was at peace with his knowledge of God. We see the **mariners** or ship crew were no different than anybody else about to die. Everybody was doing everything possible, valuable cargo was being thrown overboard, but since Jonah a paying passenger it was not his responsibility, all around him was chaos. People desperate for their lives, in the midst of the storm they were struggling to bring the cargo to the top of the ship to throw it out. They were all crying out to their **god** in midst of the chaos, utterly terrified of their impending death. Even after the **cargo** was thrown into the **sea**, **Jonah** was **fast asleep**. Why was Jonah fast asleep? A couple of options. One, Jonah so despised the Assyrians he was not concerned about the impending doom of the ship and the crew, Jonah could have well been on a suicide trip, knowing it would end in his death and rebellion against God. Regardless he thought, better his life than Israel be destroyed by the Assyrians. Or maybe Jonah was in a depression sleep, its hard to tell, but it seems the first option seems more viable. Jonah was at the bottom of the ship in the **lowest parts**.

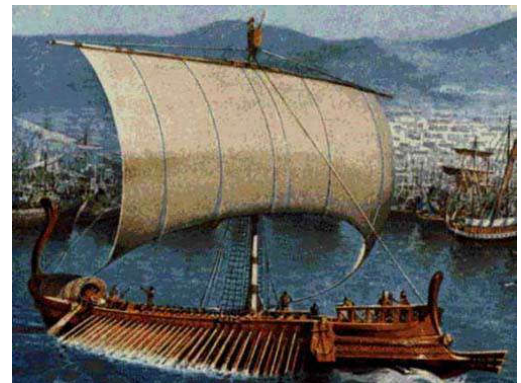
(Vs. 6) The captain of the ship cannot believe himself, how can anybody be relaxed and in comfort in such a situation? Is this guy crazy how can he be sleeping in comfort when he is about to die. The least he can do is call on his god.

6 So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish."



The Phoenicians

ancient region corresponding to modern Lebanon, with adjoining parts of modern Syria and Israel. Its inhabitants, the Phoenicians, were notable merchants, traders, and colonizers of the Mediterranean in the 1st millennium BC. The chief cities of Phoenicia (excluding colonies) were Sidon, Tyre, and Berot (modern Beirut).



It is not certain what the Phoenicians called themselves in their own language; it appears to have been (Kena ani (Akkadian: Kinahna), "Canaanites." In Hebrew the word kena'ani has the secondary meaning of "merchant," a term that well characterizes the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians probably arrived in the area about

3000 BC. Nothing is known of their original homeland, though some traditions place it in the region of the Persian Gulf.

At Byblos, commercial and religious connections with Egypt are attested from the Egyptian 4th dynasty (c. 2613–c. 2494); extensive trade was certainly carried on by the 16th century, and the Egyptians soon established suzerainty over much of Phoenicia. The 14th century, however, was one of much political unrest, and Egypt eventually lost its hold over the area. Beginning in the 9th century, the independence of Phoenicia was increasingly threatened by the advance of Assyria, the kings of which several times exacted tribute and took control of parts or all of Phoenicia. In 538 Phoenicia passed under the rule of the Persians. The country was later taken by Alexander the Great and in 64 BC was incorporated into the Roman province of Syria; Aradus, Sidon, and Tyre, however, retained self-government. The oldest form of government in the Phoenician cities seems to have been kingship—limited by the power of the wealthy merchant families. Federation of the cities on a large scale never seems to have occurred.

The Phoenicians were well known to their contemporaries as sea traders and colonizers, and by the 2nd millennium they had already extended their influence along the coast of the Levant by a series of settlements, including Joppa (Jaffa, modern Yafo), Dor, Acre, and Ugarit. Colonization of areas in North Africa (e.g., Carthage), Anatolia, and Cyprus also occurred at an early date. Carthage became the chief maritime and commercial power in the western Mediterranean. Several smaller Phoenician settlements were planted as stepping stones along the route to Spain and its mineral wealth. Phoenician exports included cedar and pine wood, fine linen from Tyre, Byblos, and Berytos, cloths dyed with the famous Tyrian purple (made from the snail Murex), embroideries from Sidon, wine, metalwork and glass, glazed faience, salt, and dried fish. In addition, the Phoenicians conducted an important transit trade.

𐤀	𐤁	𐤂	𐤃	𐤄	𐤅	𐤆	𐤇	𐤈	𐤉
aleph	beth	gimel	daleth	he	waw	zayin	heth	teth	
'	b	g	d	h	w	z	h	t	
𐤊	𐤋	𐤌	𐤍	𐤎	𐤏	𐤐	𐤑	𐤒	𐤓
yod	kaph	lamed	mem	nun	samekh				
y	k	l	m	n	s				
𐤔	𐤕	𐤖	𐤗	𐤘	𐤙	𐤚	𐤛	𐤜	𐤝
ayin	pe	sade	qoph	resh	shin	taw			
'	p	s	q	r	sh/s	t			

In the artistic products of Phoenicia, Egyptian motifs and ideas were mingled with those of Mesopotamia, the Aegean, and Syria. Though little survives of Phoenician sculpture in the round, relief sculpture is much more abundant. The earliest major work of Phoenician sculpture to survive was found at Byblos; it was the limestone sarcophagus of Ahiaram, king of Byblos at the end of the 11th century.

Ivory and wood carving became Phoenician specialties, and Phoenician goldsmiths' and metalsmiths' work was also well

known. Glassblowing was probably invented in the coastal area of Phoenicia in the 1st century or earlier.

Although the Phoenicians used cuneiform (Mesopotamian writing), they also produced a script of their own. The Phoenician alphabetic script of 22 letters was used at Byblos as early as the 15th century. This method of writing, later adopted by the Greeks, is the ancestor of the modern Roman alphabet. It was the Phoenicians' most remarkable and distinctive contribution to arts and civilization.

Phoenician religion was inspired by the powers and processes of nature. Many of the gods they worshiped, however, were localized and are now known only under their local names. A pantheon was presided over by the father of the gods, El, but the goddess Astarte (Ashtart) was the principal figure in the Phoenician pantheon. See also Lebanon, history of: Phoenicia .



 **Greek and Phoenician Colonies and Trade.** The Western Mediterranean was first colonized by Phoenicians and Greeks who together controlled trade throughout the region.