

# **“The Book of Jonah”**

## **Grappling with God’s Glorious Sovereign Grace**

### **Chapter 1: Running from God’s Sovereignty**

- Notice the references to going up and down. Up is closer to God; down is farther from God.
- Why would Jonah flee from God’s sovereign plan? Was he afraid of the Assyrian Ninevites?

#### **The Purpose**

- To send Jonah to Nineveh to preach repentance to the Assyrians so that God could display his sovereign mercy while preparing judgment for Israel.
- To reveal Jonah’s lack of trust in God’s plans and joy in God’s sovereign mercy.

### **Chapter 2: Relenting under God’s Sovereignty**

- Notice the references to going up and down again. But this time it is God who brought Jonah down and Jonah relents and repents by looking up toward God.
- What happens when man’s will doesn’t agree with God’s?
- Does Jonah realize his own idolatry in v. 8? Does he think he has “paid” for his salvation in v. 9?

#### **The Poetry**

- Jonah’s prayer of deliverance is expressed in poetic form, but that doesn’t mean that this portion of the story in the belly of the fish is not real history. Jesus treats it as real history in Matthew 12:40.
- Many of the phrases from the poem are taken from the Psalms. Jonah knew Scripture.
- In the original Hebrew, there are many wonderful literary devices such as onomatopoeia (words that sound like the object they describe). Many words in the poem sound like water or gurgling noises.

### **Chapter 3: Responding to God’s Sovereignty**

- Notice Jonah was in the belly of the fish repenting for 3 days, then he went into the “belly” of Nineveh (a 3-days journey from end to end) preaching repentance.
- Jesus was in the tomb for 3 days and he descended into Hell where he preached to the demons. (1 Peter 3:18-20)
- Nineveh repented temporarily, not because they loved YHWH but in order to avoid destruction.

#### **The Prophecy**

- Jonah preaches repentance to the Ninevites. And we know from Amos and Isaiah that God is going to use the Assyrians to judge Israel.
- Jesus reveals a secondary fulfillment of Jonah’s prophecy in Luke 11:30.

### **Chapter 4: Rejoicing in God’s Sovereignty**

- Jonah was angry that God is gracious and merciful, quoting Exodus 33:19 and 34:6-7. The Pharisees were also angry with Jesus for revealing God’s mercy towards humble, repentant sinners.
- Jonah hated the Ninevites and knew that God would use the Assyrians to judge Israel. What if God is raising up the wicked in our day in order to purify his church and lead others to repentance?
- God exposes Jonah’s heart of entitlement and self-righteousness by providing a shade tree, then taking it away from him. Jonah pitied the plant because he directly benefitted from its shade. But he wouldn’t pity a city filled 120,000 children. God grew the plant and the city for his own sovereign purposes.
- After each chapter, there is repentance (the sailors, Jonah the Prophet, the Ninevites). But will there be repentance after chapter 4? Will Jonah repent from judging God’s sovereign mercy?

**The Principles**

- Those who know they have received mercy from God celebrate when God grants mercy to others. The self-righteous only want condemnation and justice for others. (See Luke 15)
- God the Father is merciful, even to his enemies. Jonah was not. God the Son, obediently trusts the Father's plans. Jonah does not. God the Spirit helps people make peace with God through repentance and faith. Will Jonah live up to his name? Will we live up to our name (Christians)?
- Only the cross explains God's justice and mercy. The Gospel is our life and our message.