

Jonah 3 - Jonah Preaches at Nineveh

II. Jonah reluctantly obeys his divine commission to preach to Nineveh (Jonah 3:1—4:11)

(1) Preaching prophet (3:1-10)

(A) Jonah's re-commission(3:1-2)

(B) Jonah's proclamation to Nineveh (3:3-4)

(C) Nineveh's repentance (3:5-10)

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II. Jonah reluctantly obeys his divine commission to preach to Nineveh (Jonah 3:1—4:11)

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(A) Jonah's re-commission(3:1-2)

1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the **secondtime**, saying,

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1 This message from the LORD came to Jonah a second time:

1 And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,

— "...second time" - throughout Israel's history, they always seem to get it right the second time (Cf. Acts 7)

— God does not always give us a second chance to obey Him after we refuse to do so initially. Often He simply uses someone else to accomplish His purposes instead.

— Perhaps that is what Jonah hoped that God would do relative to his commission

— In Jonah's case, God sovereignly chose to use Jonah for this mission—just as He had sovereignly sent the storm and the fish to do His will

2 "Arise, go to **Nineveh**, the great city, and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you."

2 "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you."

2 "Get up and go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you."

2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

— "...Nineveh" - 550 miles NE of Samaria; a little less than a month traveling by camel or donkey, and a little more than a month walking

(B) Jonah's proclamation to Nineveh (3:3-4)

3 So Jonah got up and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk.

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3 So Jonah got up and went to Nineveh to do what the LORD had ordered.

Now Nineveh was a very large city, requiring a three-day journey to cross through it.

3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey.

4 Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Forty more days, and Nineveh will be **overthrown**."

4 Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown."

4 As Jonah started into the city on the first day's journey, he proclaimed the message, "40 days more and Nineveh will be overthrown!"

4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

- It's probably safe to say that this wasn't the content of Jonah's entire message

— Note that his message was an announcement of impending doom, not a call to repent and believe in the God of Israel

— Physical deliverance rather than spiritual salvation was what the people of Nineveh would have wanted

- "...overthrown" - *haphak*, destroyed; describes the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:25)

(C) Nineveh's repentance (3:5-10)

5 Then the people of Nineveh **believed in God**; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.

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5 The people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least important.

5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

- This verse is a general statement about the repentance of Nineveh; v6-9 is a more detailed account of what happened

- "...believed in God" - the one condition for salvation, throughout history

— This, not Jonah's time in the belly of the fish, is the greatest miracle in this book

6 When the word reached the **king of Nineveh**, he got up from his throne, removed his robe from himself, covered *himself* with sackcloth, and sat on the dust.

6 When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat on the ashes.

6 When the message reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne, removed his royal garments, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat down in ashes.

6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

- "...king of Nineveh" - probably the king of Assyria since Nineveh was a leading city in that empire

7 And he issued a proclamation, and it said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: No person, animal, herd, or flock is to taste anything. They are not to eat, or drink water.

7 He issued a proclamation and it said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water.

7 Then he had this proclamation published throughout Nineveh:

"By decree of the king and his nobles:

No man or animal, herd or flock, is to taste anything, graze, or drink water.

7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

- This verse describes how seriously the king and his nobles regarded their situation, and to what extent they went to encourage city-wide repentance

8 But every person and animal must be covered with sackcloth; and *people* are to call on God vehemently, and they are to turn, each one from his evil way, and from the **violence** which is in their hands.

8 But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands.

8 Instead, let both man and animal clothe themselves with sackcloth and cry out to God forcefully. Let every person turn from his evil ways and from his tendency to do violence.

8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

- "...violence" - *hamas*, refers to the overbearing attitude and conduct of someone who has attained power over others and misuses it

9 Who knows, God may turn and relent, and turn from His burning anger so that we will not perish."

9 Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish."

9 Who knows but that God may relent, have compassion, and turn from his fierce anger, so that we are not exterminated?"

9 Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

- Jonah's announcement of judgment on Nineveh sounded unconditional (v4), but it was not accompanied by a formal indication from God that it was a decree

— For this reason, the king of Nineveh responded appropriately in hopes that judgment may be averted (v9). He repented on speculation.

10 When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their evil way, then God relented of the disaster which He had declared He would bring on them. So He did not do *it*.

10 When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do *it*.

10 God took note of what they did—that they turned from their evil ways. Because God relented concerning the trouble about which he had warned them, he did not carry it out.

10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

- When God saw genuine repentance, on speculation, of the Ninevites, and their sincerity, He changed His "announced" intention of destruction, much to Jonah's dismay

— Jonah anticipated this outcome, which is why he ran away in the first place (Cf. 4:2)

- It is amazing that God brought the whole city to faith (in what Jonah said) and repentance through the preaching of a man who did not love the people to whom he preached

— Ultimately salvation is of the LORD (2:9). It is not dependent on the attitudes and actions of His servants, though our attitudes and actions affect our condition as we carry out the will of God.

Notice that in this section of verses (v5-10), the name "God" (Heb. *Elohim*, the Strong One) appears exclusively. However, the name "LORD" (Heb. *Yahweh*, the covenant keeping God) occurs frequently, both earlier and later in the story. Jonah did not present God, and the Ninevites did not fear God, as the covenant-keeping God of Israel, but as the universal Supreme Being. Likewise, God did not deal with the Ninevites as He dealt with His covenant people Israel, but as He deals with all people generally. Thus the story teaches

that God will be merciful to anyone, His elect and His non-elect, who live submissively to natural divine law (Cf. Gen 9:5-6).