

## JONAH - STUDY PART 3

Jonah 3:3 – 4:5 (NIV)

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3:3 *Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it.*

4 *Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown."*



5 *The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.*

6 *When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.*

7 *This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh:*

*"By the decree of the king and his nobles:*

*Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink.*

8 *But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence.*

9 *Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."*

10 *When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.*

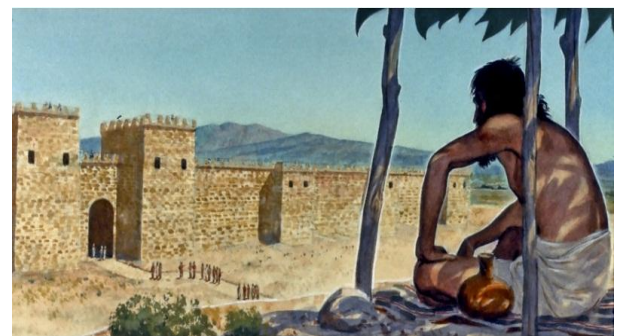
4:1 *But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry.*

2 *He prayed to the LORD, "Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.*

3 *Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."*

4 *But the LORD replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?"*

5 *Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city.*



It was Sennacherib (reigned 705–681 B.C.E.) who made Nineveh a truly magnificent city. He laid out new streets and squares and built within it the famous "Palace without Rival." The plan of this impressive structure has been mostly recovered and has overall dimensions of about 503 by 242 meters (1680 by 810 ft). It comprised at least 80 rooms, many of which were lined with sculpture. A large number of cuneiform tablets were found in the palace.

In Sennacherib's time the total area of Nineveh comprised about 1,800 acres (7 km<sup>2</sup>). The city's walls featured 15 great gates. An elaborate system of 18 canals brought water from the hills to Nineveh, and several sections of a magnificently constructed aqueduct erected by Sennacherib were discovered at Jerwan, about 40 km (25 miles) distant. The enclosed area of the city had more than 100,000 inhabitants, possibly as many as 150,000, about twice as many as Babylon at the time, placing it among the largest settlements worldwide.



The Sennacherib Prism at the Oriental Institute in Chicago which describes the siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C

*29 As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.*

*30 For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation.*

*31 The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom; and now something greater than Solomon is here.*

*32 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and now something greater than Jonah is here*



King Sennacherib in Royal Dress

**Overarching idea:** in love, God responds to our repentance.

3:3 – 3:5 Jonah duly proclaims, “40 days more, and Nineveh will be overthrown.” The people believe God. This pivotal event in the story is followed by the proclamation of a fast, and everyone donning sackcloth.

**Questions to consider:**

What do you think is going through Jonah’s mind as he prophesies?

Why do the people respond en masse to God?

Can you think of any turning points in your life, your church’s life, or the nation’s life where this has happened?

3:6 - 3:10 The King leads by example and then issues an edict, demanding that all, even the animals, should fast and cry out to God for mercy. In response to this universal and wholehearted repentance, God relents.

**Questions to consider:**

What is the importance of the King in this story?

What are the outward signs of repentance?

How would you describe repentance to someone who did not know what it meant?

4:1-5 Besides feeling humiliated, his nation’s enemies have been reprieved.

Hence, Jonah is angry with God.

Self-absorption brings depression.

Sitting in his makeshift booth, he clings to a forlorn hope that God might still overthrow the Babylonians.

**Questions to consider:**

What do we make of Jonah’s anger?

How is Jonah’s understanding of God challenged by the unfolding events?

Have you ever found your beliefs about God shaken? If so, how did your picture of God change?

**Prayer:**

You may wish to start by reciting together as a prayer a few times:

*“You are a gracious God and merciful,  
slow to anger and abounding in love.”*

Then, in silence reflect upon your lives. Round off the time of silence by praying the serenity prayer:

*“God grant me the serenity to accept  
the things I cannot change;*

*courage to change the things I can;*

*and wisdom to know the difference.*

*Amen.”*

**For next time:**

Identify five adjectives that you would choose to describe God.