

The Book of Jonah

- I. JONAH PROTESTING (DEMONSTRATING GOD'S PATIENCE) (CHAPTER 1).
 - A. God orders his prophet to proceed to Nineveh and preach out against the city's exceeding wickedness (1:1-2).
 - B. Jonah refuses and buys a ticket on a ship headed for Tarshish (Spain) (1:3).
 - C. God suddenly flings a terrific wind over the sea, causing a great storm (1:4).
 - D. The frightened sailors pray to their various pagan gods and frantically throw the cargo they are carrying overboard to lighten the ship (1:5).
 - E. During this time, Jonah is sound asleep in the ship's hold. Upon hearing this, the captain awakes him and orders that he, too, make prayer to his God for salvation (1:5-6).
 - F. In desperation, the sailors cast lots to determine who among them had brought the storm by offending his God. The lot falls upon Jonah (1:7).
 - G. Jonah admits to them his nationality and sin of disobeying God. He then advises them to throw him overboard (1:8-12).
 - H. After further useless struggles, the sailors cry out a prayer for forgiveness for what they have to do with Jonah and quickly throw him overboard into the sea (1:13-15).
 - I. Immediately, the raging waters become calm as the storm ceases. The amazed sailors give thanks to Jehovah God (1:16).
 - J. Jonah is swallowed by a huge fish, which God had prepared (1:17).
- II. JONAH PRAYING (DEMONSTRATING GOD'S PARDON) (CHAPTER 2).
 - A. The petition (2:1-8).
 - 1. Jonah immediately begins an earnest and all-out one-man prayer meeting (2:1-5).
 - 2. Some believe Jonah's language seems to indicate he actually died and was later resurrected by God (2:6-7).
 - 3. Jonah renounces his sin, remembers his vow of service, and reconsecrates his life to God (2:8-9).
 - B. The pardon (2:9-10).
 - 1. He ends his prayer with a five-word summary of the entire Bible and, indeed, the very plan and purpose of God: "Salvation is of the Lord" (2:9).
 - 2. He is then vomited up on dry land by the fish (2:10).
- III. JONAH PREACHING (DEMONSTRATING GOD'S POWER) (CHAPTER 3).
 - A. The warning (3:1-4). "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (v. 4).
 - B. The transforming (3:5-9).

"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" (3:10).

Two phrases in this verse deserve a brief comment:

- 1. "God repented"--that is, God changed his previously intended course of action. (See also Gen. 6:6; Ex. 32:14; 2 Sam. 24:16.)
- 2. "Of the evil." While it is true the Hebrew word ra (here translated evil) is usually connected with sin, it can also be (and is often) translated by such words as affliction, calamity, distress, grief, harm, trouble, and sorrow. The context would show that the latter meaning is meant here in Jonah 3:10. See also Jonah 1:7-8 and Isaiah 45:7 for similar examples.

- IV. JONAH POUTING (DEMONSTRATING GOD'S PITY) (CHAPTER 4).
 - A. Lamenting over a city (4:1-3).
 - 1. This chapter, along with 2 Samuel 11; 1 Kings 19; Genesis 9, 13, and others, demonstrates beyond any reasonable doubt that the Bible is not a book man would write if he could. Here God's chosen minister is presented as a petty and pouting prophet, sitting on a hill outside Nineveh and hoping the city will refuse his previous message and be destroyed.
 - 2. He reluctantly acknowledges the grace, mercy, and goodness of God, and then in brazen desperation and disappointment dares to pray: "Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live" (4:3).
 - B. Learning under a gourd (4:4-11).
 - 1. Jonah makes a leafy lean-to shelter and continues to sit sulking on the hillside (4:5).
 - 2. When the sun has withered the leafy shelter, to Jonah's surprise and relief, God arranges for a vine to grow quickly and shade him (4:6).
 - 3. But God also prepares a worm, which soon eats through the vine's stem and kills it (4:7).
 - 4. Finally, the Lord subjects his prophet to a scorching east wind, until he once again cries out for God to kill him (4:8).

5. Jonah is asked then if he regretted the destruction of the vine (4:9). The prophet loudly assures God he did, indeed, and the divine trap is sprung. God's final recorded words to Jonah must have softened his stubborn and carnal heart (4:10-11).