

STUDY QUESTIONS

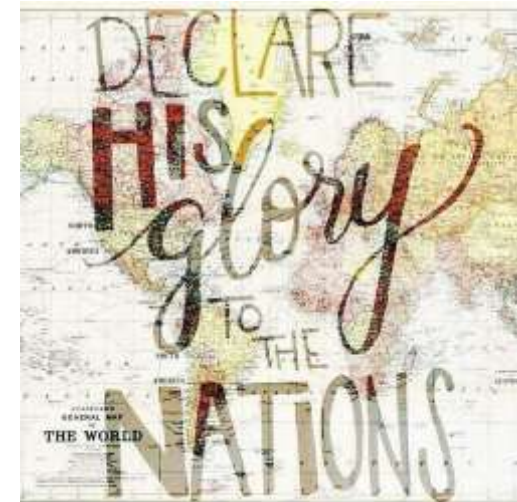
- 1) How might we discern God's call to serve Him today?
- 2) Why did God choose Jonah?
- 3) What was the purpose of Jonah's mission in verse 2?
- 4) How did Jonah respond to God's call? How can we relate that to our own obedience towards God?
- 5) Why did Jonah take such drastic action so that he did not have to go to Nineveh?
- 6) What does this passage teach us about God's purposes in mission? How does that involve us?



“The word of the Lord came to Jonah...”

INTRODUCTION & STUDY 1

Reading: Jonah 1:1-3



*God says “Go”; Jonah says
“No”!*

Home Fellowship Group Bible Study Questions

Tuesday 17th/Wednesday 18th September 2019

Introduction to Jonah

Mention Jonah and immediately people think about a man being eaten by a fish. However, the book named after this man is much more than that.

Jonah is raised up by God to preach at a critical point in the history of the nation of Israel. Jeroboam II is a wicked king. However, God demonstrates His mercy on His people by giving them a period of prosperity.

Everything we know about Jonah before we start this book is found in one verse in 2 Kings 14:25. He comes from Gath-Hepher, a town in Galilee; four miles north of Nazareth. He's a contemporary of the prophets Amos and Hosea. Jonah has prophesied that God will restore Israel to her former boundaries. Sure enough, this is what has happened.

At this time, the main enemy of Israel is the mighty empire of Assyria, with Nineveh as its capital city. Considered the greatest city in the world at the time; it is evil, and God is against it (Jonah 1:2).

So, what is this book all about?

Warren Weirsbe writes: *"What is the book of Jonah about? It's not about fish, for the great fish is mentioned only four times. Jonah is named eighteen times, but the Lord God is mentioned thirty-seven times!"*

This book is primarily a study of the character of God. On seven occasions in this short book we find the word 'great'. We will see a 'great city'; a 'great wind'; a 'great tempest'; even a 'great fish. But threading its way throughout the text we see most prominently, a 'great God'!

We see His holiness, sovereignty, justice, providence, patience, mercy and grace. As someone has put it: *"Jonah is actually a unique prophetic presentation of the universal scope of God's redeeming love"*. It's a story about missions, with God calling Jonah to go to a pagan, Gentile city and warn them of God's judgement. It's a call to repentance and salvation.

But should God's mercy reach that far? Jonah, for one, doesn't want their repentance. He wants their doom.

The book of Jonah is set around 3000 years ago. Forty verses tell the complete story; with eight additional verses of poetry devoted to Jonah's prayer of thanksgiving in chapter 2. You may find it helpful to read the whole book through before our first study together.

Many modern biblical scholars have assumed that the book of Jonah is an allegory or parable and therefore has no basis in historical fact. In response to this we can point to Matthew 12:39-41 where Jesus refers to Jonah and treats the story as a true historical event.

It's a book that still speaks to us today of God's mercy and grace. It shows our need to have a mission heart and how God deals with his people, for his purposes.

Suggested further study:

Books:

New Bible Commentary (IVP)

'Opening up Jonah' by Paul Mackrell (Day One Publications)

'Jonah – Preacher on the Run' by Gordon J. Keddie (Welwyn Commentaries)

Online:

Matthew Henry
www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete

John Calvin
www.studydrive.org/commentaries/cal.html