

Book of Jonah

Historical Background

During Jonah's years as a prophet, Israel was strong and safe politically, but not so spiritually. The reign of Jeroboam II (793-753 BC), an evil king, saw Israel's borders expand to their greatest extent since the time of Solomon. The increased prosperity resulted in a materialistic culture that thrived on injustice to the poor and oppressed. To this end, Jonah's prophetic contemporaries, Amos spoke directly to his own people living in the northern kingdom of Israel. As for Jonah, he addressed the same concern to people living in the Assyrian city of Nineveh.

How is the book of Jonah relevant to us today?

Jonah's prophetic ministry to the Assyrians is an example of God's care for all the nations of the earth to turn from their sin and idol worship and to recognize God as the one true living God. (In the New Testament, Jonah is one of only three writing prophets whom Jesus mentioned by name during His earthly ministry: Isaiah, Daniel and Jonah)

Jonah 1 (Compassion)

Observation: How similar or different God's compassion and our compassion reflected in this passage?

Interpretation: What does compassion mean to you?

God loving Us: How has God gifted us with compassion even before you knew God?

God Meeting Us: In the life of the saints who were/are compassionate, when and where did you experience their compassion?

God Refining Us: What are some people or means to help you cultivate compassion in your life?

God Inspiring Us to Serve: What are some ways in which you can practice/demonstrate compassion in a community, in a church, in the world?

Real Life Today: What kind of community would you like to play a role in practicing/demonstrating/cultivating compassion in the future?

Jonah 2 (Christian maturity)

Observation: When did Jonah feel inspired to pray to God?

Interpretation: How did Jonah face affliction? What does Jonah's prayer say about God and his relationship with God? What would it take for Jonah to pray at a such time?

God loving Us: How has God gifted us with people who are matured to guide and care?

God Meeting Us: In the life of the saints who were/are matured Christians, when and where did you experience their Christian maturity?

God Refining Us: What are some people or means to help you cultivate Christian maturity for God in your life?

God Inspiring Us to Serve: What are some ways in which you can practice/demonstrate Christian maturity?

Real Life Today: What kind of community would you like to play a role in practice/demonstrate/cultivate Christian maturity in the future?

Jonah 3 (Christian guidance)

Observation: How did Jonah respond to God's call this time? How did Ninevites respond to God's message? Any similarities or differences?

Interpretation: Why did Jonah respond to God's call? Why did Ninevites respond to God's message? Any similarities or differences?

God loving Us: How has God gifted us with guidance and/or advices through people we trust and love?

God Meeting Us: In the life of the saints who possessed/possesses wisdom and maturity to guide when and where did you experience their guidance and/or advices?

God Refining Us: What are some people or means to help you cultivate Christian guidance in your life?

God Inspiring Us to Serve: What are some ways in which you can practice/demonstrate Christian guidance?

Real Life Today: What kind of community would you like to play a role in practicing/demonstrating/cultivating Christian guidance in the future?

Jonah 4 (Mercy)

Observation: How did Jonah respond to God when God granted mercy over judgment?

Interpretation: Why did Jonah respond to God in the way he did?

God loving Us: How has God gifted us with mercy before we even knew God?

God Meeting Us: In the life of the saints who demonstrated/demonstrate God's mercy when and where did you experience their practices?

God Refining Us: What are some people or means to help you cultivate God's mercy in your life?

God Inspiring Us to Serve: What are some ways in which you can practice/demonstrate God's mercy?

Real Life Today: What kind of community would you like to play a role in practicing/demonstrating/cultivating God's mercy in the future?