

TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY



Jonah

This wasn't the first time God had called on Jonah to deliver a message from God, but it was the first time that he, or any other prophet had been sent to give warning to the ungodly enemy. It just didn't seem right.

Nineveh was a major Assyrian city, and would later become its capital. The Assyrians were people well known for their evil doings, and violent cruelty. A clay relief depicting Sennacherib's later siege of Lachish in Judah, found in excavations at Nineveh, show Israelites impaled on poles. (Ussishkin 16-39) I'm not sure if Jonah knew what the future held for Israel, but we do. It would only be some 40 more years before the nation of Israel was taken captive by these people. If God destroyed Nineveh, that would be 120,000 less of the enemy to destroy God's chosen people.

How is Nineveh described in Nahum 3:1-4? _____

These were the people to whom Jonah had been called to speak! Read Jonah chapter 4. Do you think Jonah was more reluctant to go to Nineveh because he was afraid of their reaction to God's message of warning, or because he was afraid that God would relent from destroying them? _____

Contrast Jonah's attitude toward the Ninevites who were in danger of perishing, and his attitude toward the sailors who were also in danger of perishing. What made the difference? _____

To whom was Jonah willing to give access to HIS God? _____

Who are we willing to share God's redemptive grace with? The serial killer on death row? The terrorists who endanger our nation? An ex-spouse? An obnoxious co-worker? Do you ever find your own sense of justice in conflict with God's mercy and compassion? Are there people and places you refuse to deliver His message to? How active is your local congregation in reaching out to the "unworthy"?



"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."

2 Corinthians 4:7

READ:

- Jonah

Chronology:

- 785-775 BC
- 722 BC Exile of Israel to Assyria
- 614 BC Fall of Nineveh

Running from God

What do you think Jonah hoped to do by going the opposite direction of Nineveh?

At what point do you think he realized that he was not going to “get away” with it?

Why do you think he was sleeping in the boat during the storm?

When the lot, and the blame, fell to Jonah, the sailors wanted to know more about him. What was very appropriate about his answer to them in 1:9?

What was Jonah’s response to God’s second command to go preach His message to Nineveh? (Jonah 3:1-3)

In what way did Jonah want to “run” again after he realized that God would relent from destruction in 4:1-3?

At this point, Jonah had already done the task that he had been assigned in order to save the thousands in Nineveh. How did God deal with this single wayward man, Jonah?

In what ways has the “word of the Lord” come to you as well?

Is there a time that you have run from a task that God has set before you?

What did you learn from the experience?

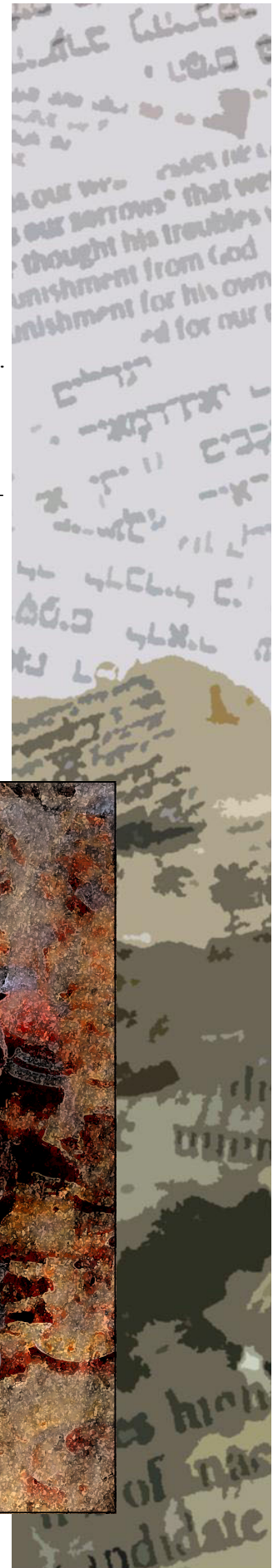
How do you feel about the way the book of Jonah ends?

What do you think became of Jonah after this?

“Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.”
Psalm 139:7-10



Artwork by Kelsi Ausherman



Belly Belief



It is amazing how much more real God becomes to us, or perhaps how much more aware we are of our need for Him, when we are in immediate danger. The sailors were not overly concerned that Jonah was running away from his God until the violent storm came up and it became apparent that Jonah's God, was also **the** God that controlled the sea they were now at the mercy of. Realizing that he would be the cause of the death of all of them, Jonah told them to throw him overboard. If it was frightening to be **on** this sea in a boat, I can't imagine what it would have been like to be **in** the sea without a boat! Swimming seemed to be out of the

question, even though the sea calmed. Perhaps Jonah had never learned how. Perhaps he just knew he had been had and didn't even try. How did Jonah describe his predicament after the fact in Jonah 2: 1-6? _____

How thankful does Jonah feel about rescue from certain death? _____

How does his attitude toward God differ at this point from the end of chapter 4 where he is relatively safe outside the walls of Nineveh? _____

God's care for Jonah's heart

In 2 Kings 14:24-25 we learn Jonah had already been chosen as a prophet. What message had he given to the nation of Israel, even though they still followed the evil ways of the first Jeroboam? _____

It was a good time for Israel, and perhaps, a good time for Jonah. But God knows the heart of the matter, and I suspect that Jonah's heart needed a makeover.

I know that God cared about the people of Nineveh, but I think in his Sovereign design this was also about his care for Jonah. Jonah obviously didn't have a "heart" for the Assyrians. He didn't feel a "burden" to go to all the world. He was happy to stay where he was at. God wasn't willing to leave him there. Jonah was not the man for the job, but this was just the job for the man. God knew this task was bound to crash into some stubborn places in Jonah's heart. God cares about our spiritual well being enough to put us up to some really difficult tasks, if that is what we need to accomplish His purposes in our heart. Sometimes, we just have to obey his command even if it makes little or no sense to us, or even challenges our own perception of right and wrong. What has an example of this been in your own life? _____

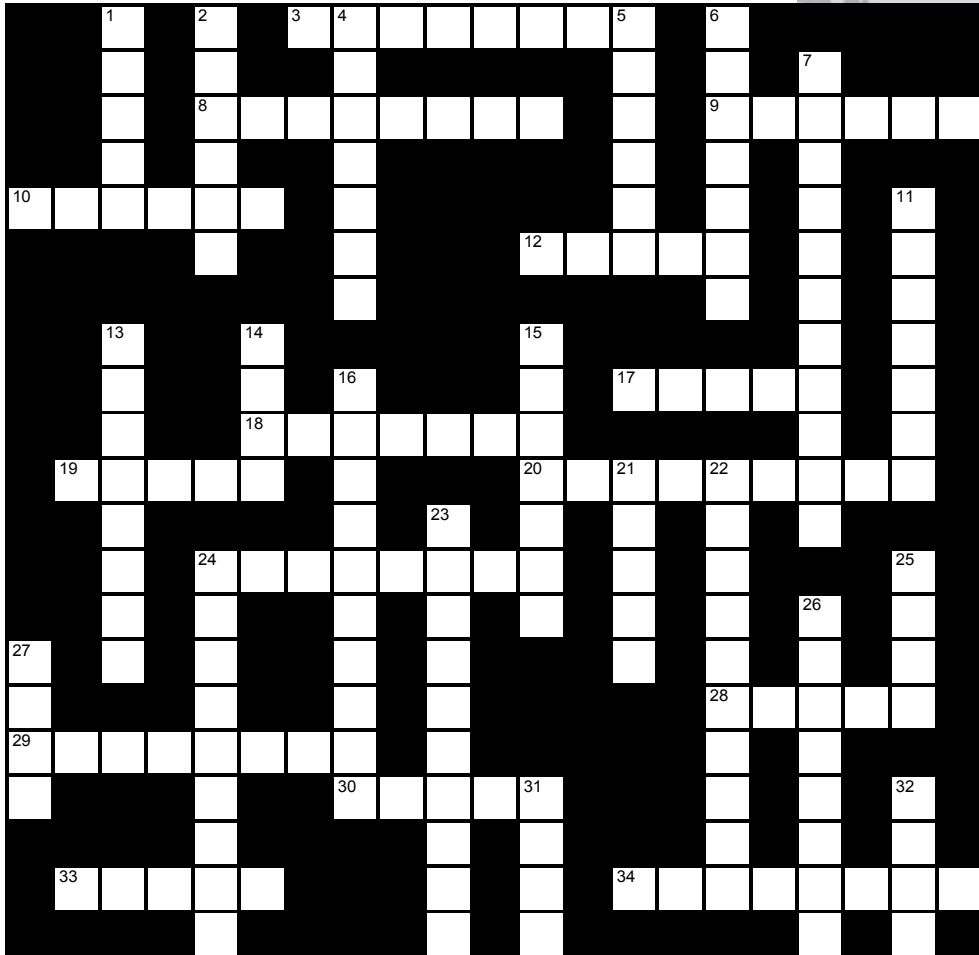
PUZZLE PAGE



Clues

Across

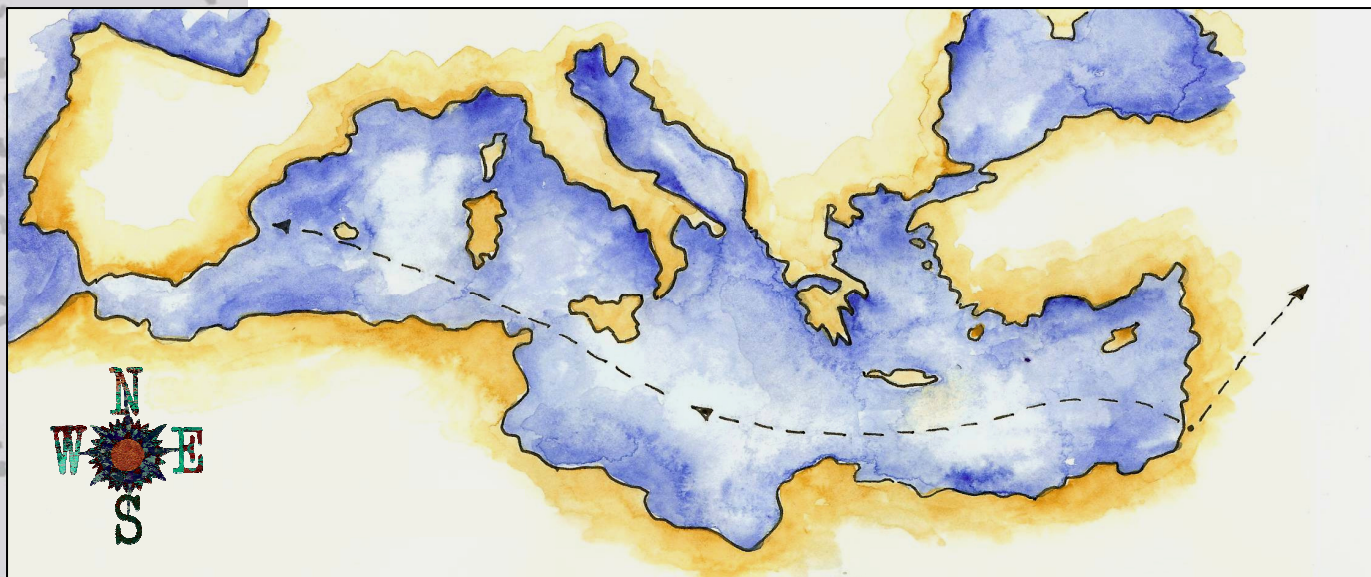
- 3 where he tried to go instead (8)
- 8 how the Ninevites responded to God's warning (8)
- 9 he finally did this with God's instructions (6)
- 10 what he did while he was in the fish (6)
- 12 number of days and nights he was in a fish (5)
- 17 he accepted _____ for the storm (5)
- 18 were afraid (7)
- 19 Jesus compared himself to this man Luke 11:29 (5)
- 20 the king of Nineveh put this on (9)
- 24 he was doing this during the storm (8)
- 28 threatened the ship (5)
- 29 he was disappointed that God is so _____ (8)
- 30 what the vine provided him (5)
- 33 those who cling to worthless idols forfeit this (5)
- 34 the sailors considered him to be _____ (8)



Down

- 1 port that he left from (5)
- 2 how he identified himself (6)
- 4 his father (7)
- 5 he was from Gath _____ 2 Kings 14:25 (6)
- 6 his calling (7)
- 7 God relented from bringing this on Nineveh (11)
- 11 Where God called him to preach (7)
- 13 prophesied the restoration done by this Israelite king 2 Kings 14:23-25 (8)
- 14 swallowed him (4)
- 15 God had one for Jonah to deliver to Nineveh (7)
- 16 the _____ of the Ninevites had come up before God (10)
- 21 thrown into the sea (5)
- 22 what the Ninevites hoped for from God (10)
- 23 what he felt about God's compassion toward Nineveh (10)
- 24 the sailors offered this to the Lord (9)
- 25 what happened to the sea when he was thrown overboard (4)
- 26 was to be given up by king's decree (8)
- 27 Jesus said Jonah in the belly of a fish was a miraculous _____ Matt. 12:38-41 (4)
- 31 what side of Nineveh did he sit on? (4)
- 32 destroyed by a worm (4)

Map



Joppa is present day Jaffa, just south of Tel Aviv. It is one of the few port cities on the coast of Israel. It was one of the 70 cities captured by Sennacherib of Assyria in 701 BC.

Tarshish was the destination of the ship that Jonah boarded at the port in Joppa in his flight from God. It is mentioned several times in the Bible, (see Isaiah 23:11-15 for example) but scholars are not sure of its exact location. There are several possible sites, one of the most likely being the one marked on the map above in southwest Spain. In Jonah's day, that would practically have been traveling to the ends of the earth! Sea travel in this time period was no luxury cruise. It was dangerous, and at best uncomfortable. It would have been months, or even years before he would be able to return to his home. Jonah **really, REALLY**, didn't want to do what God was asking him to. Have you ever felt like that? How easy is a life that is in rebellion to God? How easy is life in obedience to God?

According to 2 Kings 14:25, where was Jonah from? _____

In Joshua 19:13-16, what tribal territory did Jonah's hometown lie in? _____

Swallowed up

There is much speculation about what exactly swallowed Jonah. We don't know. It may have been a whale, even though whales do not frequent the Mediterranean Sea. Historically, there have been incidents reported of men being swallowed whole by huge sharks. Additionally, there is ambiguity in the Hebrew about the word translated "inside". Jonah may have been in the stomach, or in the mouth. What I find interesting is the word for "swallow" in Jonah 1:17. This word can mean to destroy or overcome, both literally and figuratively. What implication is there in God providing a fish to "overcome" Jonah?

Puzzle answers:

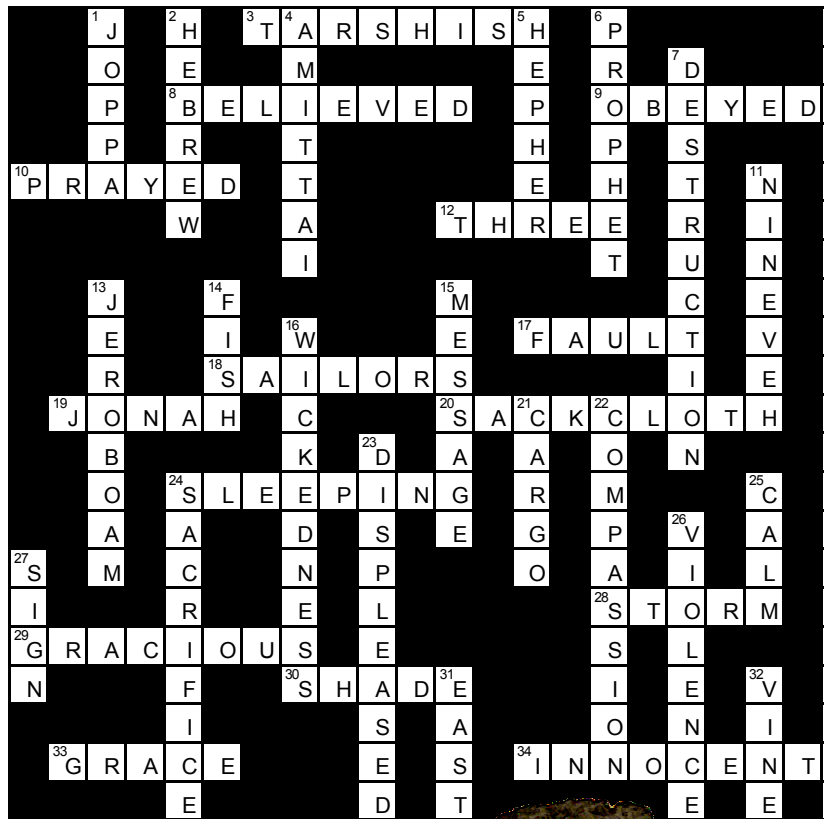
"Those who cling to worthless
idols forfeit the **grace**
that **could** be theirs."

Jonah 2:8

NEW TESTAMENT JONAH

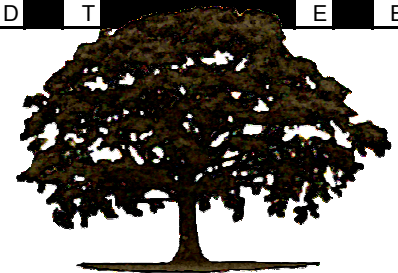
What comparison did Jesus make between himself and Jonah in Matt. 12:38-41? _____

What does He say about what happened to the people of Nineveh who listened to Jonah? _____



In light of God's dealings with Jonah, what is your reaction to these words of Albert Sweitzer?

"Until he extends his circle of compassion to include all living things, man will not find himself at peace."



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Sources:

p.1

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