

# *Jonah*

## *"More Than a Whale of a Story"*

### **Background Information**

We do not know who penned this book, but since it common for Hebrew writers to pen in the third person, it is possible that Jonah wrote it himself.

Jonah's name means "dove," and he is also mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25.

In the days of Jesus, the Pharisees claimed, "no prophet has arisen out of Galilee" (John 7:52). They were wrong, since that is where Jonah was from.

Jonah's life of prophecy was probably to the 10 tribes of the northern kingdom, but this book reminds us that God cares for all nations, so this prophet is sent to Nineveh, capital of Assyria.

### **Time Covered and Outline**

The events seem to happen in rapid succession, so likely no more than a few weeks pass during the unfolding of Jonah. Almost every scholar puts the events of this book in or around the year 760 BC.

The four chapters of Jonah provide a good outline of the events.

- I. Running from God (1)
- II. Submitting to God (2)
- III. Doing God's Will (3)
- IV. Questioning God's Mercy (4)

### **Major Themes**

God's Mercy to All Nations

God's Will

Repentance

Prejudice

## God's Character in Jonah

Merciful (4:2)

Providence (1:4, 15)

Wrathful (4:2)

## Jesus in Jonah

Jonah is the only prophet with whom Jesus specifically identified Himself by name. He compared the time Jonah spent in the belly of the sea creature with the time He would be in the tomb (Matthew 12:39-41).

## Key Words in Jonah

Prepared (Hebrew *manah*) 1:17; 4:6-8

Slow to anger (Hebrew *'erek 'appayim*) literally, "the nose burns." 4:2

## Elsewhere in the World...

Near the same time, China documented the first solar eclipse among its records.

## Elsewhere in Scripture...

Jonah falls during the reign of Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26) and was near the same time as Hosea the prophet (though likely slightly before).

### Fish or Whale?

Many argue over whether the creature that swallowed Jonah was a fish or a whale. The Hebrew word means "fish," but the Jews used the word to describe any creature of the sea. Literally, the term means "an aquatic creature." In the end, the key is not whether this was a fish or a whale, but that it was a creature that God "appointed" or "prepared" for this amazing purpose.