

# Jonah

## Original Historical Setting

**Author:** Likely Jonah

**Written:** Probably during the reign of King Jeroboam II (~792--753 B.C.)

**Audience:** Although the people of Ninevah were the recipients of the message of Jonah, the first audience to read the narrative was probably the people of Israel living in the Northern Kingdom.

**Occasion:** The book does not explain why it was written. Even though it is a prophetic book, it is essentially a narrative about Jonah's life intended to impact the Israelites.

### **Timeline:**

- ~792 BC – King Jeroboam begins his reign
- ~746 BC – Jonah goes to Ninevah

## World Events that occur simultaneously

- 775 B.C. – Solar eclipse confirmed in Chinese history
- 705 B.C. – Assyrians choose Ninevah as capital and start rebuilding it

## Features and Structure

- Jonah can easily be divided into 2 main sections
  - Jonah's flight from his command to go to Ninevah
  - Jonah's obedience his command to go to Ninevah
- The four chapters of Jonah can be organized around Jonah's movements which encompass a vast amount of area:**
  - Ch 1**–Jonah travels west to Tarshish (probably in Spain)
  - Ch 2**–Jonah in the belly of the fish
  - Ch 3**–Jonah travels east to Ninevah
  - Ch 4**–Jonah waits outside Ninevah for its destruction

## Key text(s)

**1:17** – The LORD prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah

**2:9** – Salvation is of the LORD

**4:2** – I know that you are a gracious and merciful God

## Genre/Literary style

Short narrative written in Hebrew

## What to look for

- Notice that even though the book of Jonah contains almost none of the elements of Hebrew prophecy, it is still listed with the prophets. It is because its main character is a prophet and it issued a call of repentance.
- Note the one sentence of prophecy found in 3:4
- Don't lose sight of the fact that this story revolves around God's compassion on people other than His chosen people of Israel. God's grace is extended to all who come to Him in repentance

## Interesting facts

- Some liberal scholars suggest that the story of Jonah is just an allegory because of the unlikelihood that a man could live through being swallowed by a big fish. But Jesus, when comparing His actual death and resurrection to Jonah being inside the big fish, referred to Jonah's account in a historical affirming way. Jonah is mentioned as an actual person in 2 Kings 14:25
- The Assyrians, to whom Jonah was to deliver this message, were ruthless. For entertainment, Assyrian soldiers would cut open a live prisoner and insert a live cat. They would quickly sew the stomach up and watch the cat claw its way out.
- Around this time the Ninevites experienced a plague, then two years later a solar eclipse and four years later another plague. Maybe they were ready to listen.

## Memory Verse: Jonah 2:9