



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Jonah Proclaims the Truth in the Capitol!

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Jonah 3:1-4

“And the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time saying: 2) Arise, walk to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the proclamation which I (Myself) tell you. 3) And Jonah arose and walked to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. And Nineveh was a great city to God, a walk of three days. 4) And Jonah began to walk into the city a walk of one day and he proclaimed and said, ‘Still forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!’”

“HE WAS ABOUT TO ENTER, UNPROTECTED, A CITY, WHOSE INHABITANTS WERE PRE-EMINENTLY WICKED AND VIOLENT; AND HE WAS TO THREATEN THEM IN THE NAME OF THE ALMIGHTY WITH SPEEDY AND COMPLETE DESRUCTION. IT WAS AS GOING INTO THE LION’S DEN. NOTHING BUT AN IMPLICIT RELIANCE ON THE PRESENCE, THE FAITHFULNESS, THE POWER AND THE PROTECTION OF GOD COULD POSSIBLY BEAR HIM THROUGH, IN THE CALMNESS AND COURAGE BEFITTING AN AMBASSADOR OF GOD.” HUGH MARTIN

Why is there no reminder of Jonah’s former failure by God in this second commission? Are there significant differences between the two similar commissions to Jonah? Is Jonah allowed to present his opinion along with God’s message? Why is Nineveh referred to as a “great city to God?” Do we find elsewhere in Scripture such an emphasis on the greatness of a city? Does Jonah immediately proclaim God’s message, or does he wait a while? Where is mercy or grace in this message?

FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES:

- FEBRUARY 21: JONAH 3:5-10 *REPENTANT LEADERSHIP: THE GREATEST REVIVAL IN HISTORY!*
- APRIL 17-19: JONAH 4:1-5 *THE BLESSED PROPHET ANGRY WITH GOD!*

Jonah had been given a difficult commission and he had immediately demonstrated his complete rejection of it by fleeing from it. There would have been many reasons why Jonah ran. First and foremost, he was being sent to those whom he hated for their merciless cruelty to all whom they conquered. Second, they had conquered most of the known world of Jonah’s day and had the strongest empire ruling the nations. Third, they were a serious and close threat to the northern kingdom of Israel where Jonah lived, just a little north of Nazareth. Fourth, Jonah’s former prophecies to Israel had been to declare God’s will in expanding their borders, even to the north, representing a positive military strength for God’s people whom he served. Fifth, Jonah wanted nothing to do with these murderous Assyrians and especially their cold-blooded capitol, where they constantly paraded their bloodthirsty, inhumane exploits! Besides, what would the vicious rulers of such a pitiless empire do to a prophet from enemy territory, openly proclaiming before all their highest officials, their immediate, absolute demise, right in their magnificent capitol? Obviously, Nineveh was the very last place that Jonah would ever want to preach! But God had just protected him in the most impossible ride of his life to the roots of the mountains inside a fish and had delivered him on dry land again, fulfilling his prayer!

“THERE IS HERE SET BEFORE US A REMARKABLE PROOF OF GOD’S GRACE,---THAT HE WAS PLEASED TO BESTOW ON JONAH HIS FORMER DIGNITY AND HONOR.” JOHN CALVIN

I. A SECOND CHANCE JONAH 3:1

Jonah had died a thousand deaths inside that “great fish” as he had fought for every breath of air, continuously submerged for three days. He had finally prayed as he reached the end of his human endurance and gave thanks

BIBLE STUDIES

THURSDAY @ 6:30AM –PRAYER MEETING – GAB 3RD FLOOR WEST CONFERENCE ROOM

THURSDAY @ 7:00AM –BIBLE STUDY – GAB 3RD FLOOR WEST CONFERENCE ROOM

Virginia

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for God's abundant loving kindness which he had foolishly forsaken as he had pursued his own vain vanities. He now delighted in God's sovereign saving work, declaring, "*Salvation is of the LORD!*" And God graciously, once again, commissioned him and restored him to his original office, without even mentioning his sin! His repentance had been accepted and he was so forgiven that his sin was completely forgotten by God! And now, he is even more equipped to do God's service! Thus, "*the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time,*" providing for him the greatest opportunity of a lifetime!

"IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS, AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS." I JOHN 1:9

II. A SOVEREIGN COMMISSION JONAH 3:2

God gives Jonah precisely the same three imperatives He had given initially: "*Arise, go (walk) to Nineveh that great city and proclaim,*" but the emphasis is different after the three commands. The former said to "*cry (proclaim) against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.*" Now there is a substantial difference: "*cry (proclaim) to it the proclamation which I (Myself) tell to you.*" The former emphasis on Jonah being "*against*" their "*wickedness*" is replaced with his proclaiming "*to*" them the precise "*proclamation*" of only God's Word! His opinion is irrelevant. His experience doesn't count. Jonah will only proclaim the precise message of the Word of God which has the power to convict the heart and save the sinner by God's power!

"THE GREATEST REVIVAL IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD CAME TO NINEVEH BECAUSE JONAH PREACHED GOD'S MESSAGE, AND NOT WHAT THE PEOPLE WANTED TO HEAR."
O.S. HAWKINS

III. A SUBTLE CHOOSING JONAH 3:3

Jonah was quick to obey and "*arose and walked to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD.*" Nothing is said of the hardships involved in at least a 400 mile walk across enemy territory. Only God's Word holds Jonah's complete focus, devotion and trust. Then we are given a hint of God's plans for this capitol. "*And Nineveh was a great city to God.*" The word "*great*" is only used of two cities in Israel, Gibeon (Joshua 10:2) and Jerusalem (Jeremiah 22:8), "*neither of which was large. The adjective referred rather to their status as royal cities.*"¹ Both of these cities had strategic political importance and had been loyal to the true God, but Nineveh is given an even greater emphasis with the words "*to God.*" **This capitol was important to God!** The significance of their repentance would be a testimony to the whole world of Jonah's day! It was also a large city, "*a walk of three days.*" The city wall was reported to be 100 feet tall in places, wide enough for two chariots abreast on top, about 60 miles in circumference and protected by 1500 towers!

"THEREFORE HATH HE MERCY ON WHOM HE WILL HAVE MERCY, AND WHOM HE WILL HE HARDENETH."
ROMANS 9:18

IV. A SEISMIC CHANGE JONAH 3:4

The first day Jonah proclaimed in Nineveh only five words in the Hebrew: "*Still forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!*" "*Overthrown*" meant "turned or overturned."

"THIS SAME VERB IS USED TO DESCRIBE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITIES OF SODOM AND GOMMORRAH . . . BY BRIMSTONE AND FIRE FROM HEAVEN."
WILLIAM BANKS

¹ Joyce Baldwin, (quoting Wiseman), *The Minor Prophets*, vol. 2, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1993), 576.

Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Have you turned to God in repentance and found His mercy and forgiveness?
- 2) Do you proclaim the Word of God in our Capitol and does it hold your complete focus, devotion and trust?
- 3) In the testing of your life are you being turned by the Word of God from sin or will you be overturned by God's wrath?