

## The Book of Jonah

### Chapter 3

**Verses 1-2:** Jonah knew that he deserved to die. He had not obeyed God. But God had saved him from death by the fish.

The whole book is about God's great love and great patience. He loved Jonah. He did not even mention Jonah's first failure to obey him. He loved the people of Nineveh. He did not want them to die. Now God repeated his original command to Jonah to go to Nineveh. God wanted him to warn the people of Nineveh. He wanted Jonah to tell the people to turn back from their evil ways. They must turn away from their evil ways and turn back to God. Jonah must speak the words that God gave him to say, and not use his own words.

**Verse 3:** This time Jonah obeyed God. It was a long way to Nineveh, about 500 miles (800 kilometres). It would take Jonah a long time to walk there. When Jonah reached the district around Nineveh, it would still take him three days to walk across it. We now know that the city itself was only 8 miles across. But the officials of Nineveh also governed the large district around the city. This was about 50 miles across. That would certainly take Jonah three days to walk across. (The people of Assyria had two words for 'city'. One word meant the city itself. The other word included the much larger area around the city that the city officials governed.)

**Verse 4:** Jonah was tired and dusty after his very long walk. He was a foreigner to the people of Nineveh. And he would have looked strange. But they did not laugh at him as he shouted out his warning.

**Verse 5:** Jonah's message from God was a shock to the people. They surprised Jonah because they listened to his warning. His message frightened them. They realized that they were really in serious danger. At once, they did things that showed that they were very

sorry for the way that they had been living. To show that they were sincere, they put on

sackcloth (a very rough dress) and stopped eating for several days. Everybody did the same, from rich and important officials to the poorest people.

**Verse 6:** The news of Jonah's warning came to the king of Nineveh. At once, he acted in the same way as his people. He was the king. But he realized that God was much greater than any king.

The king of Nineveh was much wiser than an evil Jewish king, Jehoiakim (he was king of Judah, 609-597 BC). When Jeremiah warned Jehoiakim from God to change his evil ways, Jehoiakim only laughed (Jeremiah 36). Soon afterwards, God punished Jehoiakim. A powerful enemy captured Judah. Jehoiakim died. Judah was never again a free country (2 Chronicles 36:6-16).

**Verse 7:** The king of Nineveh hurried to call his important officials. They immediately advised the king to make a royal declaration. Everybody must show that they were really sorry for their bad lives.

**Verse 8:** They must put on sackcloth instead of their ordinary clothes. They must not eat or drink. They must cry with loud voices to God to forgive them. They must stop all cruel actions. They must put sackcloth even on their animals. The animals could not understand the reason. But they soon added their loud cries. They were hungry!

**Verse 9:** God's warning through Jonah had frightened the king and his officials and all the people. Perhaps God would notice that they had really changed the way they lived. Then he might decide not to destroy them.

**Verse 10:** God saw what the people of Nineveh were doing. They were showing that they were really sorry for their sins. God saw that they meant what they had said. Although they did not deserve God's love, he was

generous. He forgave them their sins, and did not destroy their city.

God intends his love to be for everybody. He loves even evil and cruel people. God has great patience. He pities and loves all who sin. God does not want anybody to die because of their sins. He wants everybody to turn to him (2 Peter 3:9). Jesus said that the people of

Nineveh were an example to everybody (Luke 11:32).

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Mark Kirkpatrick

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