



Overview for Jonah

Purpose: The purpose of the prophecy of Jonah is two-fold. First, it shows the sovereignty of God working in the life of an individual—Jonah. It also serves to display God’s merciful concern for a heathen nation and people.

Author: Jonah

Date Written: Approximately 785-760 B.C. 2 Kings 14:25 indicates that one of Jonah’s prophecies was fulfilled during the reign of Jeroboam II, who reigned from 793-753 B.C. Since it was written in the third person, it is assumed that this book was written after Jonah returned from his evangelistic trip to Assyria, and his subsequent humble response to God’s rebuke.

Setting: Nineveh was the ancient capitol of the Assyrian Empire. Located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River, it was the largest city in the world during this time. Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah chose to head the opposite direction and set his sights on Tarshish. Tarshish was located on the western edge of the Mediterranean region, possibly on the Atlantic coast of present-day Spain.

Key People: Jonah, the heathen sailors, and the Ninevites.

Summary: God displays His ever-merciful treatment of unregenerate man in this book. Being a heathen city, Nineveh had no one to tell its people what was right and wrong according to God’s law. Rather than destroying them without giving them an opportunity

to repent, God called Jonah, a prophet in Israel, to go and preach to these people.

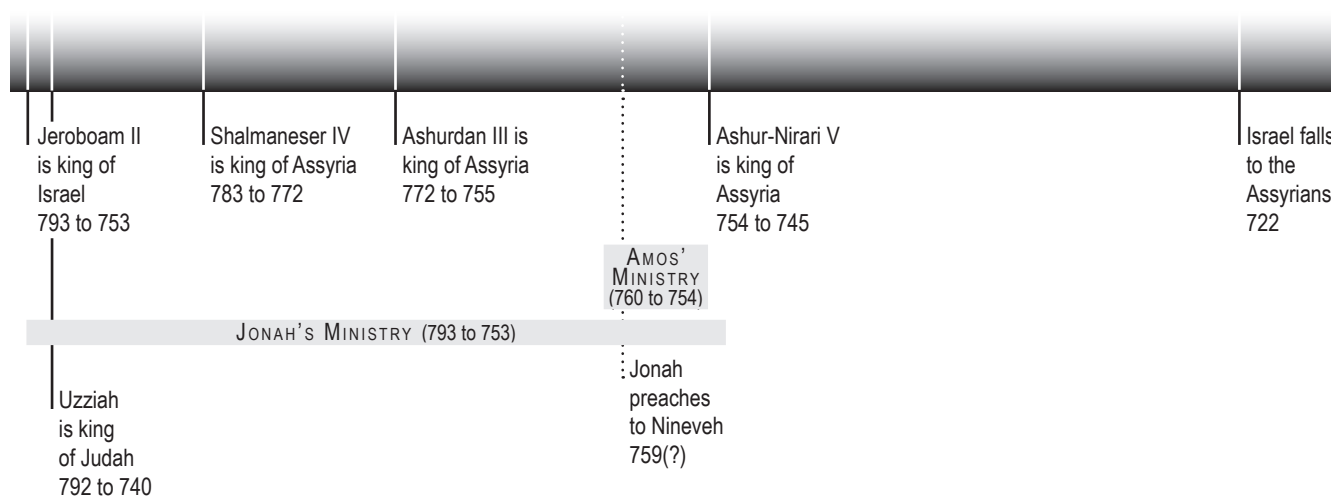
The Assyrians were a mighty people and a great threat to Israel. It would have been easier for Jonah to go with a message of destruction, offering no hope of mercy to these people, but God wanted to give them a chance to do right. Though Jonah fled from his initial call, God used a storm and a great fish to bring him to obedience.

Ninevah had a population of 120,000 children (“sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand”—Jonah 4:11). This would indicate that the total population was somewhere near one million. God, not willing that anyone should perish, set in motion a plan which would offer a means of escape for these people. Because of the size of the city, it took Jonah a while to make his way through the city with his message from the Lord. Soon, however, the people began to respond to Jonah’s message and humble themselves before God, repenting of their evil ways, and God stayed His hand of judgment.

The book ends with the disgruntled prophet being rebuked by God. Jonah thought that the Ninevites deserved to die, as they were an enemy of God’s chosen people. However, God will spare no effort to get His message to everyone—even if that means using the very forces of nature to bring it to pass. The response of the people of Nineveh was remarkable in that all levels of the social structure chose to repent.

Timeline

Some dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.



Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. The disobedience of Jonah (1:1 — 2:10)
 - A. The commission (1:1-2)
 - B. The disobedience (1:3)
 - C. The consequences (1:4-17)
 - D. The results (2:1-10)
- II. The obedience of Jonah (3:1 — 4:11)
 - A. The recommission (3:1-2)
 - B. The obedience (3:3-4)
 - C. The consequences (3:5-10)
 - D. The results (4:1-11)