

Jonah Student Guide

Theme: God's Mercy and the Prophet to Nineveh

I. Introduction: The Flow of Sin, Israel, and Prophets

Key Points:

1. **Sin Enters the World** (Genesis 3–4)
 - Sin spreads from individuals → families → cities → nations.
 - Example: Cain kills Abel and builds a city where sin multiplies.
2. **God Begins a Redeemed Family** (Genesis 12+)
 - Abraham is called to start a family that will bless all nations.
 - Israel is meant to be holy and distinct.
3. **Israel and Judah Receive Kings** (1–2 Kings)
 - Saul → David → Solomon.
 - Solomon's reign shows drifting toward idolatry.
 - Division of the kingdom: Northern (all kings fail), Southern (some faithful).
4. **Prophet Purpose**
 - Prophets call God's people back to faithfulness and covenant obedience.

Historical Context: In 2 Kings 14, Jeroboam II reigns over Israel, and God raises Jonah as a prophet.

II. Jonah as a Mirror of Israel

- Jonah is a prophet sent to Nineveh, a wicked city, capital of Assyria.
- Nineveh represents cruelty, oppression, and idolatry, historically tied to Nimrod and the Babylonian tradition (Gen 10:8–12).

Scriptures Highlighting Israel's Rebellion:

Hosea 8:1–4

Set the trumpet to your lips! One like a vulture is over the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed my covenant and rebelled against my law. To me they cry, "My God, we—Israel—know you." **Israel has spurned the good; the enemy shall pursue him.** They

made kings, but not through me. They set up princes, but I knew it not. With their silver and gold they made idols for their own destruction.

Hosea 8:8–10

Israel is swallowed up; already they are among the nations as a useless vessel. For they have gone up to Assyria, a wild donkey wandering alone; Ephraim has hired lovers. Though they hire allies among the nations, I will soon gather them up. And the king and princes shall soon writhe because of the tribute.

Jeremiah 51:34

Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon has devoured me; he has crushed me; he has made me an empty vessel; **he swallowed me like a monster**; he has filled his stomach with my delicacies; he has rinsed me out.

Connections to Jonah:

- Hosea and Jeremiah describe Israel and the nations using imagery of **swallowing, destruction, and exile**.
- Jonah is a **living parable** of this pattern:
 - **Disobedience → Danger → Repentance → Mercy**
- Jonah's being swallowed by the fish mirrors Israel's experience: sin leads to judgment, but repentance opens the way for God's mercy.
- Both Hosea and Jeremiah emphasize that **God's judgment is serious**, but His mercy is greater.

Reflection Question: How does seeing Jonah in the context of Israel's story help you understand God's mercy?

- **Answer:** Jonah represents God's covenant people. Even when His people fail, God's mercy is greater than human rebellion, and He calls for repentance.

III. Jonah's Calling (Jonah 1:1–2)

“Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ‘Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.’”

Notes:

- God sends Jonah to call Nineveh to repentance.
- Reflection: Why send an Israelite prophet to a wicked, foreign city?

- **Answer:** Israel is God’s covenant people; His mercy extends beyond them (Gen 12:1–3, Isa 49:6). Jonah’s mission demonstrates that repentance is for all nations.
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IV. Jonah Flees (Jonah 1:3)

“But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord... away from the Lord.”

Notes:

- Jonah descends “down,” symbolizing deeper rebellion.
- He avoids Nineveh because he doesn’t want them to receive God’s mercy.

Reflection: Have you ever tried to flee God’s calling?

- **Answer:** Fleeing is ignoring God’s commands. His presence is inescapable (Ps 139:7–10).
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V. The Storm (Jonah 1:4)

“But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest...”

Notes:

- God uses the storm to redirect Jonah toward obedience.

Reflection: What “storms” in life redirect us toward God?

- **Answer:** Storms can be discipline, warning, or providential redirection (Heb 12:5–11).
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VI. Jonah’s Confession (Jonah 1:9)

“I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven...”

Notes:

- Jonah identifies as a covenant person but acts in rebellion.

Reflection: How do we sometimes profess faith but act in rebellion?

- **Answer:** Knowledge without obedience is not true faith (Rom 3:23, James 2:14–26).
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VII. Jonah’s Refusal (Jonah 1:12)

“Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down... for I know it is because of me...”

Notes:

- Jonah resists God’s plan, preferring death over obedience.

Reflection: Are there times we resist God’s plans?

- **Answer:** Resisting God prioritizes self over God’s glory; God’s mercy provides opportunity to turn back (Isa 1:19–20, 2 Pet 3:9).
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VIII. God’s Mercy Through the Fish (Jonah 1:14–16)

“...So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased... And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah...”

Notes:

- Gentile sailors worship God, while Jonah resists.
- God accomplishes His plan even through human rebellion.

Reflection: How does Jonah’s story challenge your influence?

- **Answer:** Obedience brings blessing; rebellion brings chaos. God can work through anyone (Rom 8:28).
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IX. Jonah’s Prayer in the Fish (Jonah 1:17–2:10)

(Jonah prays in the fish)

Notes:

- Jonah's lowest point highlights God's mercy.
- Foreshadows Christ: swallowed by death, rescued after three days.

Reflection: How can you find God's mercy at your lowest point?

- **Answer:** Turning to God in faith and repentance opens the door to mercy (Ps 34:17–18, 2 Cor 12:9).
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X. Nineveh Repents (Jonah 3)

"...Jonah arose and went to Nineveh... And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth..."

Notes:

- Nineveh responds quickly and humbly, in contrast to Israel.

Reflection: What can we learn from their response?

- **Answer:** Repentance is a matter of the heart, not heritage (Acts 10:34–35). God values humility and obedience.
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XI. Jonah's Anger (Jonah 4)

"...Jonah was angry... for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful..."

Notes:

- Jonah values comfort over people's lives, showing selfishness.
- The story ends unresolved, prompting reflection on mercy.

Reflection: How do we sometimes value our plans more than others' lives?

- **Answer:** God calls us to care for others as He does (Ezek 33:11).
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