

# JONAH - PREACHER ON THE RUN

By Craig Botha  
Christian Centre Abbotsford

10 March 2024

---

## Introduction

Jonah is a great missional book that will arouse us to reach our city and helped to shape our DNA as missionaries within our city. It is also book that will change us as we see how God dealt with Jonah's sin and His great grace.

The theme of this book is God's compassion for all nations (Genesis 12:3) and His compassion for us as He deals with us as a loving Father. God is the hero of the story and Jonah comes off badly - the writing of this book was probably part of his repentance. This book is different from the other prophetic books in that, it focuses on the prophet himself and his reluctance to carry out his newest assignment from God. Jonah is a country boy from Israel who is called to go and preach against Ninevah - the capital and leading city of Assyria in the eighth century BC. Perhaps the greatest city on Earth at that time. Nineveh is modern Mosul in modern day Iraq.

Assyria - like Rome a few centuries earlier, conquered most of the known world and was known for its pride and cruelty. They were arch enemies of God's people and would be used by God to destroy the 10 tribes of Northern Israel in 722 BC because of sin and idolatry.

This book is a narrative (OT story) that gives us a picture of God at work in His creation and among His people. We have much to learn from Jonah. He was saved for many years, a prophet in Israel, but his life was characterised by disobedience... we also have much to learn about God who pursues us when you're on the run and may send storms to get our attention.

### 1. What do we know about the prophet Jonah?

Jonah was a country boy who loved Israel and was happy to prophesy within Israel even in that time of the evil King Jeroboam II. 2 Kings 14:23- 25. Now God asks him to go on a very different mission to his enemy the Assyrians. He was patriotically nationalistic and racist and hated the Assyrians and wanted them to go to hell - perhaps knowing prophetically that one day the Assyrians would destroy his future grandchildren - which they did after this in 722 BC. Ninevah was a Gentile metropolis of wickedness, but a city that mattered to God but not to Jonah.

Jonah was a prophet/seer who spoke by the Spirit - an interesting one who was quite emotional. He runs, he hides, he disobeyed God, he's a racist, he's extremely happy and loses his temper the same day and yet God loves him and worked with him. Most prophetic books contain a message - this one is about the messenger: How far he strayed from God, how he sinned, and how gracious God was to him. Finally we see how Jonah influenced the city - he touched the social life/violence.

### 2. We are Jonah.

Why was God so patient with Jonah? God understands jealousy – Jonah was jealous for Israel. **He didn't love** or even like the Assyrians – **loved his 'plant' more than people!** He was more self-absorbed than city absorbed. Yet God used this man.

'In Jewish tradition, Jonah, together with the final three verses of Micah, forms part of the Day of Atonement when Jews in repentance confess their sins to God'. In response to the reading of Jonah the people reply, **'We are Jonah'**. The truth is: We are Jonah. Jonah receives the Word of the Lord. We have the Word of the Lord. Jonah is called to a great city. We are called to a great city. Jonah runs. We run. Jonah's sin affects others. Our sin affects others. God uncovers Jonah's sin. God will uncover our sin. Jonah knows a lot about God but doesn't truly believe what he knows. We know about God but don't believe it. Jonah's repentance begins with confession. Our repentance begins with confession. God pursues Jonah for His purposes and Jonah's good. God pursues us for His purposes and our good.

**God's grace wins in** the end!