

Key to JONAH

1. STATISTICS:

Writer, Jonah (II Kings 14:25), one of the earliest of writing prophets; time of writing, 785-767 B.C., during reign of Jeroboam II; Jonah's home in Gath-Hepher in Northern Kingdom; key word, Nineveh (capital of Assyria); key verse, 3:2; time, soon after Elisha.

2. THEME:

Assyria, a rising world power, was idolatrously wicked before GOD. Jonah, a prophet of Israel, was commissioned to offer Nineveh GOD's ultimatum. However Jonah, willing that Nineveh should be destroyed so the threat to the well-being of Israel might be removed, took a ship in the opposite direction. GOD changed his direction and Jonah went to Nineveh; and his preaching brought complete repentance.

3. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Jonah was the only prophet in the Bible who endeavored to conceal his message.

Here is a prophet of Israel, called of GOD to prolong the life of a Gentile nation.

Except for the miracle of the fish experience, the people of Nineveh would have paid little attention to Jonah.

The book closes with a beautiful lesson on GOD's care and compassion for little children (4:11).

4. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

There is no problem with the "fish" part of the story when we understand that GOD "prepared" it (1:17);
GOD prepared other things also (4:6-8).

The heart of the story revealed that Nineveh's sin and impending destruction became a giant object lesson to Israel who was committing the same sins.

Another lesson: GOD desired to show His compassion for other nations so that Israel would understand the gospel of CHRIST ought to be preached to all nations.

Jonah's story is proof of the foolishness of trying to escape from GOD. He has thousands of ways at His command to bring about willing obedience.

5. INTERESTING FEATURES:

Tarshish possibly refers to Tartessus, a city in Spain.

Nineveh was a huge city, thought to be 60 to 90 miles, in circumference, with walls enclosing gardens and pastures.

6. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

There is absolutely no difficulty in accepting and understanding the narrative of the book if your concept of GOD is large enough. Surely, a GOD who could make a world could also "prepare" a fish to bring about the completion of His will.

~ end of Jonah ~

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