

## JONAH 1:1-16 (With comments)

**INTRODUCTION:** The incidents depicted in this small book took place about the year 780 B.C. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. The author is anonymous but many references in the book seem to point to an author who was living at a date remote from the time in which Jonah ministered. The author's intention was not to teach a history lesson but to use his material to teach his people about the all-inclusive character of God's love. Bear in mind, however, the book of Jonah presents a real prophet and real historical events.

1. Read 1:1-3. How do the author's opening words serve to elicit a positive attitude from his Judean readers to his story? (v 1). What was to be Jonah's message and how much hope does he promise the Ninevites? (v 2) How would a **prophet** be expected to respond to this mission from God? (v 3) Instead, what did Jonah do? (v 3)

**(They are a typical opening for a prophetic oracle (cf. Jer. 1:4; Hag. 1:3). Jonah was to go 550 miles to denounce the wicked city of Nineveh. No hope is promised. The readers of this book would expect Jonah enthusiastically to go to Nineveh to pronounce its destruction. {Read Amos 3:8} Instead of obeying God, Jonah went toward Tarshish {2500 miles in the opposite direction} to get as far away from Nineveh as possible.)**

2. Read 1:4-6. How do you think the readers of Jonah would react upon reading verse 4? What do the sailors do when the storm hits? What does Jonah do? (v 5). What does the captain expect from Jonah? (v 6)

**("Hooray! God is now showing his power—punish disobedience!" The sailors, apparently from various countries, cry out to their gods and do all they can to protect their ship. Jonah goes below and sleeps. (I have found it is possible to sleep even in the midst of a typhoon!) The captain realized this is no ordinary storm and wanted everything possible to be done--both what was in their power and seeking supernatural assistance.)**

3. Read 1:7-8. What motivated the sailors to "cast lots" and what was the result? (v 7). Can you think of other times the Bible mentions the casting of lots? What was the sailors' purpose in asking all the questions of Jonah? (v 8)

**(They were sure this was a supernatural storm, ergo it must be a god punishing someone's sin. {Lots: Proverbs 16:33. Lev 16:8; Nu 26:55; Josh 18:10; Mt 27:35; Ac 1:26. Should we cast lots to choose our leaders or even to choose a spouse? They accepted the result of their lot-casting—now they want to know the man Jonah and understand why he and they are being punished.})**

4. Read 1:9-11. How truthful was Jonah's answer to their questioning? (v 9). Did you expect this response considering his actions so far? Describe the sailors' reaction to Jonah's declaration. (vv 10-11)

**(He was very open about his faith and his belief in Yahweh—despite this, he had disobeyed! It seems they were more terrified of Yahweh than was Jonah and wondered what to do to appease Him!)**

5. Read 1:12. In light of Jonah's actions so far, what might the readers have expected Jonah to respond to their question of verse 11? How did he?

**(He had sought to evade God's mission—out of cowardice? Yet here he is willing to be sacrificed to save the ship and crew--certainly not the act of a coward. Was Jonah conscience-stricken? Seeking to avoid his commission to denounce Nineveh he has jeopardized these innocent sailors.)**

6. Read 1:13-14. Instead of doing as Jonah suggested, what did the sailors do? What is surprising about the way they refer to Jonah in their prayer?

**(They tried to row back to land. Then they prayed to Jonah's God. When they called Jonah "innocent" they may have meant: "IF he is innocent, please don't add to our guilt!")**

7. Read 1:15-16. What happened when they finally followed Jonah's suggestion? (v 15). As a result, what three actions did the sailors take? (v 16)

**(The sea calmed. They feared Yahweh, they made sacrifices and they made vows. Fear in Scripture = awe, wonder, humble adoration. I wonder, what were the vows they made?)**