



## **Jonah - The Prophet Who Tried to Run!**

**By Keith Greer**

The book of Jonah contains four chapters and 48 verses. The book's theme could be summed up in eight words: "Yet, forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." {Jonah 3:4} The book is more about the man Jonah than about his message of doom to this Assyrian city. His name means "dove." Many have called this book a book of preparations. Why? God prepared a fish (Jonah 1:7); a plant (Jonah 4:6); a worm (Jonah 4:7); a vehement east wind (Jonah 4:8). It could be said that these things were also "preparing" Jonah for the mission on which God sent him. Let us examine some practical lessons from this wonderful book.

God loves all people. Jonah and the gospel of John teach the same truth. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." {John 3:16} Even though the Jews were God's chosen people, He sent Jonah to call the Gentiles to either repent or perish. Nineveh was involved in "wickedness which had come before God." God was willing to grant them reprieve, if they would repent!

It is folly to run from God. "But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD." {Jonah 1:3} Jonah ran in the opposite direction from where God told him to go. Did he really think he could run fast enough and far enough to get away from God? He could not escape God's all-seeing eye; and neither can we! "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." {Hebrews 4:13}

When God assigns a difficult, disagreeable task, we'd better do it -- not run from it! God gave Jonah a grave task, and he could not avoid or escape doing it. We cannot avoid or

escape the responsibilities He has given us. As parents, we have duties associated with raising our children (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21). In marriage, we have duties as husbands and wives (Ephesians 5:22-33). As God's people, our Master charges us with carrying out certain tasks (Matthew 5:13-16; 6:33; Romans 12:1,2; 1 John 2:15-17). Jonah couldn't run from his task, and neither can we.

There is a tendency to value things more than we value people. "But the LORD said, 'You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left -- and much livestock?' {Jonah 4:10,11} There was no love lost between Jonah and the wicked people of Nineveh. Why did he run? He knew that if the people repented, God would relent and not punish them. Jonah didn't believe they deserved to be saved! He had more compassion for a little plant that protected him from the sun's glare than for the souls in Nineveh. When we choose to spend all our time and money on ourselves and have no desire to try to share the gospel of Christ with dying sinners, how different are we from Jonah?

In conclusion, if you choose to run away from your problems and leave God out of the solution -- your problems have multiplied! Maybe we need a "great fish" to help us change how we look at His will in our lives! \*\*\*