

Jonah in Nineveh (Jonah 3:1–10)

Grace Chapel September 10, 2008 Dr. John Niemelä

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

Jonah 1:1–16

Jonah 1:17–2:10

NEW EXPOSITION:

God again commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh to preach (judgment against it) (3:1–2)

Jonah went, as the Lord commanded, to Nineveh a city that God regarded as great: a three-day visit (type of city) (3:3)

God graciously allows Jonah another opportunity to obey

Jonah obeys this part of God's instruction (going to Nineveh)

An exceedingly great city: a three-day journey [The meaning of *three-day journey*?]
Jonah's trip to Nineveh would take longer than three days (almost 600 miles)

Nineveh's wall was 7.3 miles around. (He could circle it three times in a day)

Nineveh did not have extensive suburbs requiring three days to traverse

(If it did, Jonah would have been in the outskirts in Jonah 3:4a)

It was to be a formal state visit: Day one to arrive at the palace, days 2–3 for transacting business, and leave on the third day

Douglas Stuart in the Word Biblical Commentary, says, "Nineveh was a 'three-day visit city,' a major diplomatic center of the ancient world, a city where a formal protocol was observed by official visitors, whose business could not be accomplished hastily, as if it were a small town."

The day Jonah entered Nineveh, he proclaimed (to a lower official) that Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days (3:4)

(We will explain later how we presume the proclamation was made to a lower official)

The people of Nineveh believed God (that He would destroy Nineveh) so they proclaimed a fast, and everyone put on sackcloth (3:5)

Jonah's appearance

Background events: (this is 759 BC)

June 15, 763 a complete solar eclipse (mentioned in official records: Statements like, "the king will be deposed" showed up in texts mentioning the eclipse.

A great earthquake hit during a king named, Aśšur-Dan's rule. (There were a few kings with this name, but scholars are comfortable saying that it was the one who reigned at the time of Jonah. Likely date = 670 BC)

The seven years leading up to 759 BC were a time when plagues and famines were recorded for the area surrounding Nineveh

Revolts and fighting defensive wars against Urartu

In 758 BC, King Aśšur-Dan moved to Gozan and things became quiet again

After word spread through the city, the king in Nineveh also joined the mourning (3:6)

The grammar says that verse 6 happened after verse 5

Reading between the lines to say what happened in verses 4–6, in spite of verse 3.

The king proclaimed a decree that everyone was to mourn and to repent from the violence that was in their hand in the hope that God would relent from destroying Nineveh (3:7–9)

Observe that the nation was to repent from their violence

In the seven years before Jonah's arrival, God had stopped Assyria from its foreign aggression against other nations. That time made them ripe to receive a warning against their expansionist ways. I suspect that Israel was in their sights. In 744 BC, they resumed the old aggressive foreign policy. Twenty-two years later, they crushed Israel. In turn, God disciplined Assyria. Nineveh was conquered by the Babylonians in 612 BC.

God saw that Nineveh had turned from its violence and did not destroy Nineveh (3:10)

Observe: Jonah does not tell us whether Jonah said anything about how to receive everlasting life. His message was one of telling Nineveh that God was ready to destroy them because of their foreign policy.

Matthew 12:41 says nothing contrary to this

CONCLUSION:

When Jonah told the king's representative of God's judgment against them, word spread through the whole city and general mourning occurred. The king made a decree of mourning for the people and urged them to give up their violence, so God might relent, which He did.