

3:1-6

In last week's study, we completed the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Jonah. We cover, what I like to call, the psalm of Jonah, i.e., his prayer. We saw the consequences of his sin, brought about by his idolatry: the storm that led to his death; Jonah's time in the fish/whale/sea monster; and Jonah's resurrection

We start in chapter 3 by reading verse 1-2.

*<sup>1</sup> Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you."*

**Jonah 3:1-2** NASB95

Jonah is back to square one. Just like in chapter 1, he is commanded again to go to Nineveh. The second time God commands Jonah is slightly different than the first time. (Besides the ship, fleeing to Tarshish, the sailors, the storm, Jonah thrown overboard, his death, the fish/whale/sea monster, and his resurrection.) Let's compare Jonah's commission from chapter 1 to chapter 3.

### **Jonah 1:2**

**<sup>2</sup> "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me."**

### **Jonah 3:2**

**<sup>2</sup> "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you."**

The mission is the same, go to Nineveh, but there is a subtle difference: Jonah is deprived of some freedom. God has chosen to take control of the message.

*<sup>45</sup> And I will walk at liberty, For I seek Your precepts. <sup>46</sup> I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings And shall not be ashamed.*

**Psalms 119:45-46** NASB95

Had Jonah followed God's command in the first chapter, he would have walked in liberty, as Psalm 119 says, and testified before kings without shame. Jonah was called in freedom, just as we are called to freedom:

*<sup>13</sup> For you were called to freedom, brethren; only [do] not [turn] your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*

**Galatians 5:13** NASB95

But Jonah, it seems, forgot to serve in love, in chapter one. Instead, he used his freedom as an opportunity to flee from God, unto his own death.

*<sup>3</sup> So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days' walk.*

**Jonah 3:3** NASB95

At last, Jonah submits to his calling by God, and heads to Nineveh of the Assyrians. He walks into the grandeur and splendor of the ancient, great city. Nineveh is massive; it takes three days to walk across its borders. I'm not certain if Scripture is including the surrounding area, what we would call today Nineveh's suburbs, in the three-day walk. Or if it means that Nineveh was so grand that it would take three days to see all its wonder. Either way, Nineveh is spectacular. Especially for Jonah, who was from a tiny, inconsequential speck of a village, Gath-hepher.



The modern city of Mosul, Iraq is built upon the ruins of Nineveh. Using today's technology, we can find Mosul via the following map references:



36° 21'34"N  
43° 09'10"E

36.359444  
43.152778

38S LF 3426 2540

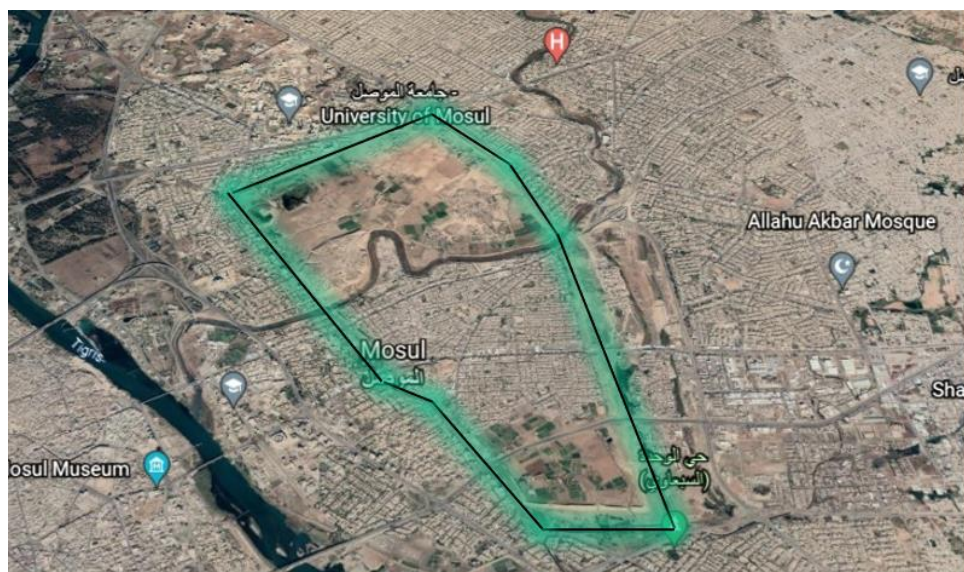


(The QR Code will take you to Mosul, Iraq in Google Maps!)





Below is the outline of where the walled city (city proper) of Nineveh, overlaid onto Mosul



The prophet Zephaniah isn't alone in describing the fate of Nineveh:

*<sup>13</sup> And He will stretch out His hand against the north And destroy Assyria, And He will make Nineveh a desolation, Parched like the wilderness.*

**Zephaniah 2:13** NASB95

Indeed, Nineveh is a desolation. Zooming in on the map, we can see, just east of the river which splits Mosul, what is left of the once great city.



Of course, in Jonah's day, Nineveh would be in its glory...

*<sup>4</sup> Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown."*

**Jonah 3:4** NASB95

I imagine that Jonah, despite his hatred for the Assyrians, was quite impressed with the city. The sight of Nineveh must have been incredibly impressive to Jonah; perhaps that is why it took a day from him to start proclaiming God's judgment on the Assyrian city. God had commanded Jonah to proclaim its destruction for their wickedness, inhumanity, cruelty, and brutality, yet the judgment wouldn't come for another forty days. Why forty days? Why couldn't Jonah climb some high tower and gloat over the city, as fire and brimstone rained down from heaven, just like in Sodom and Gomorrah? Why forty days?

I submit that God uses a 40-day period as a grace period before manifesting His judgment. Let us look at some examples:

*<sup>5</sup> Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

**Genesis 6:5** NASB95

So, He has Noah build an ark:

*<sup>4</sup> "For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made."*

**Genesis 7:4** NASB95

Is it possible that, had the people of the earth repented of their wickedness, their sin, and sought forgiveness from the LORD, that the Flood would have NOT happened? God knew that they would have NOT repented, for their hearts were intent on evil continually, but He still gave them an opportunity.

After attaining their freedom from Egypt, with Moses guiding them, the children of Israel come to the border of the land promised to them and their forefathers. They were led there by a pillar of cloud during the day, and a pillar of fire by night. They were saved from the Egyptian army, and the wrath of Pharaoh, by the parting of the Red Sea. Living through miracle after miracle, being witness to the awesome Glory of God, who among them would have the audacity to question the LORD? Alas, when they reached the border, they were commanded to send in twelve spies to scout out the land. These spies brought back wonderful news of the bounty of the land. Indeed, this was a land flowing with milk and honey, just as God had promised. They even brought a bunch of grapes to show the people. However their report on the inhabitants of Canaan took on a different tone:

*<sup>32</sup> So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of [great] size. <sup>33</sup> "There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."*

**Numbers 13:32-33** NASB95

The spies were clearly afraid of those who lived on the land they were supposed to inherit. There were giants (Nephilim) in those lands, how could they defeat those people? This report displeased the LORD, for it was He who had promised them this land, and to go before them in their battles:

*<sup>1</sup> "When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots [and] people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you."*

**Deuteronomy 20:1** NASB95

The battle belongs to the LORD. It matters not what enemy Israel faced, their God is at the head of their army; He goes before us. Ten of the twelve spies forgot this fact. The people of Israel heeded the words of the ten. They didn't listen to God, nor the last two spies, Caleb and Joshua, who advised having faith in the LORD. God's judgment upon Israel was severe:

<sup>33</sup> *'Your sons shall be shepherds for forty years in the wilderness, and they will suffer [for] your unfaithfulness, until your corpses lie in the wilderness.* <sup>34</sup> *'According to the number of days which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day you shall bear your guilt a year, [even] forty years, and you will know My opposition.*

**Numbers 14:33-34** NASB95

There, again, is the forty-day period. This time, the forty days was for the spies to consider the land and remember who led them. Ten of the twelve failed. Their report caused the people to despair, who also forgot their God. Thus, the entire generation was cursed to wander the desert, until everyone of that generation was a corpse littering the sands. All of them, but the two who believed in the LORD; Caleb and Joshua. Joshua was forty years old when he took part in the spy mission. After the death of Moses, Joshua led the children of Israel in the Promised Land, at the age of eighty. Even though Joshua and Caleb did the right thing, they still had to suffer the forty years of the desert wondering with the rest of Israel. Just like the sailors, who had nothing to do with Jonah's rebellion and flight from God, but they were still in danger of perishing in the storm Jonah's disobedience caused. Sin has a blast radius. It doesn't only affect the sinner, but anyone who happens to be in the vicinity; innocent or otherwise.

One last example:

Cain was a farmer, that's how he identified himself. When it's time to bring an offering to the LORD, Cain brings the fruit of his labors. This is unacceptable to God. Abel's offering, however is acceptable.

<sup>8</sup> *...And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.* <sup>9</sup> *Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"* <sup>10</sup> *He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground.* <sup>11</sup> *"Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.* <sup>12</sup> *"When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."*

**Genesis 4:8-12** NASB95

Often, many are confused by this. The offerings Cain and Abel were to bring was a sin offering. God had established that only the shedding of blood can cover sin. In His Mercy, He has allowed us to substitute the blood of a sacrificial animal, instead of our own blood. Cain would have known this, but out of his pride and arrogance, he decided that the offering of his own labor ought to be good enough. Abel, on the other hand, was faithful to the precepts of God. So, Cain murdered Abel. When God asks Abel's whereabouts, He is giving Cain an opportunity to confess and repent of his awful sin. Cain refuses to be humbled.

<sup>13</sup> *Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear!"* <sup>14</sup> *"Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."*

**Genesis 4:13-14** NASB95

God's punishment for Cain to keep him from tilling the ground and producing food. He can no longer be a farmer. Cain isn't happy about his sentence. His main concern isn't that he had shed the blood of his brother, committing the first ever murder; it isn't the sin he has committed against God and man. Cain is concerned that he should become a victim of the same crime of which he is guilty. He is right to fear this....

<sup>6</sup> *"Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man."*

**Genesis 9:6** NASB95

It would be right if Cain's blood was shed by another man, since he has shed a man's blood. However:

<sup>15</sup> *So the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him.*

**Genesis 4:15** NASB95

God marks Cain that no one should kill him, as he deserves. Why would God let this happen? Ezekiel has the answer:

<sup>23</sup> *"Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked," declares the Lord GOD, "rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?"*

**Ezekiel 18:23** NASB95

God wants Cain to realize his sin, repent from it, and seek forgiveness. God has continuously given humanity an opportunity to repent of their sins. Even when judgment is forthcoming, God give us chance after chance. Sometimes, forty-days' worth of chances.

Jonah didn't have to tell the people of Nineveh twice. At the remotest chance of the remission of God's judgment, they believe and repent:

<sup>5</sup> *Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.*

**Jonah 3:5** NASB95

I do not know how to account for this. Why was Jonah's message so readily accepted? Despite what Martin Luther thought, I don't believe that Jonah was unscathed in the belly of the fish. Even though Jonah was resurrected, I believe he still bore the scars of his time in digestive juices for the rest of his life, since there really isn't any evidence of his miraculous healing. It is possible that the appearance of this uniquely scarred man, proclaiming God's judgment had a strong sobering effect on the Ninevites. We don't know exactly why Jonah's message was received, but we do know how Christ evaluates them:

<sup>41</sup> *"The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here."*

**Matthew 12:41** NASB95

Even the king of Nineveh....

<sup>6</sup> *When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered [himself] with sackcloth and sat on the ashes.*

**Jonah 3:6** NASB95

As the king of Nineveh was confronted with Jonah's God, his heart melted in remorse and repentance.

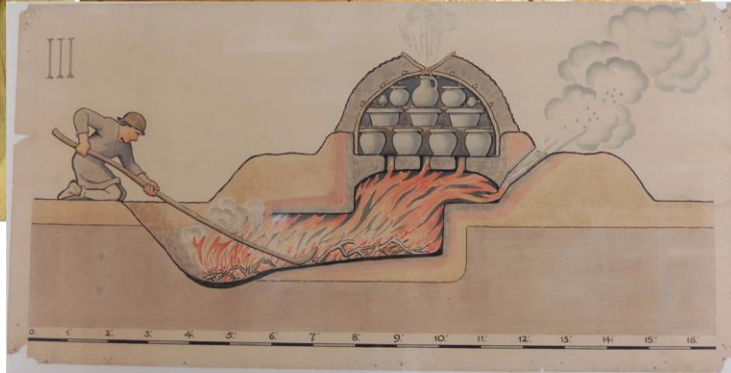
Let's look another king who was confronted by the LORD:

<sup>10</sup> *Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; yet the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go out of his land.*

**Exodus 11:10** NASB95

Pharaoh's heart was hardened by the LORD, and he refused to submit to God's will. Is it fair that God hardened his heart? God's judgment against Egypt, the plagues of Moses, because of Pharaoh's refusal was horrible.





After a potter forms clay, it must be fired in a kiln to become hard and useful.

The same heat, when applied to metal, will melt even something as hard as steel.



The heat applied is the same in either case. The difference comes in the composition of the material exposed to the heat. When heat is applied, clay hardens, metal melts. The same is true for the substance of the heart when exposed to God. Pharaoh's heart was like the substance of stone, or clay; when exposed to God, it hardened. The king of Nineveh's heart was of a substance which melted onto repentance, when exposed to God.

We may wonder what composes the substance of our own hearts. Is it made of stuff, like the king of Egypt, which will harden in the heat of God, or will it be made of stuff which, like the king of Nineveh, melts? When we seek the LORD...



<sup>26</sup> "...I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

**Ezekiel 36:26** NASB95

<sup>45</sup> "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil [man] out of the evil [treasure] brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart."

**Luke 6:45** NASB95

