

# The God of Second Chances

*Jonah 3:1-10*



## Studies in the Book of Jonah

<sup>1</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: <sup>2</sup> "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you."

<sup>3</sup> Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city -- a visit required three days. <sup>4</sup> On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned."

<sup>5</sup> The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

<sup>6</sup> When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. <sup>7</sup> Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. <sup>8</sup> But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. <sup>9</sup> Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."

<sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

How does Jonah's response to God's message compare to his response in chapter one?

God gives Nineveh 40 days to "think it over". Use a concordance and look up "forty"; what major events in the Bible happened in a forty-day period?

What does fasting and sackcloth symbolize? (You might use a Bible dictionary for this.) How many times does "sackcloth" occur in this chapter?

How extensive was the response of the people of Nineveh?

Compare this story of the king of Nineveh to that of Nebuchadnezzar (king of Babylon) in Daniel 4. What similarities do you see?

In what concrete ways were the Ninevites supposed to show that their "ceremonial" repentance was real?

Although the word itself is not found here, what does "repent" mean? (Look this up in a Bible dictionary or Bible wordbook.)

"The city of Ninevah was surrounded by an inner wall and an outer wall. The huge inner wall (50 feet wide and 100 feet high) was about eight miles in circumference while the outer wall encompassed fields and smaller towns."

Before Jonah arrived, two plagues had erupted there (in 765 and 759 B.C.) and a total eclipse of the sun occurred on June 15, 763. These were considered signs of divine anger and may help explain why the Ninevites responded so readily to Jonah's message, around 759."

**John Hannah,  
The Bible Knowledge Commentary**

## LIFE RESPONSE: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ME?

What aspect of God's character does the king appeal to? How does God respond? Do you see that attribute of God at work anywhere else in this book?

Have you always thought of God as being full of compassion? Do you think of Him that way now?

How good was the King of Ninevah's theology? (see verse 9)

Does God have a "fierce anger"? (see Romans 2:5 - what word does Paul use to describe anger?)

Where else in the Bible, besides here in Jonah, do you find someone being given a second chance?

When in your life do you remember being given a second chance? (List as many times as you can.)

"The "great fish" was possibly a mammal. Sperm whales are known to have swallowed unusually large objects including even a 15-foot shark. Others have written that whale sharks have swallowed men who later were found alive in the sharks' stomachs."

John Hannah

When in the last few years have you consciously chosen to give someone else a second chance?