

# The Sign of the Prophet Jonah

“Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah,” who prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II (782-753 B.C.; [2 Kings 14:23-28](#)). “Arise, \_\_\_\_\_ to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me” ([Jonah 1:1-2](#)).

Nineveh was a “great city” in the heart of the Assyrian empire. [Jonah 4:11](#) mentions “more than 120,000 persons” living there, but they did not know “their right hand from their left” in the eyes of God.

“But Jonah rose to \_\_\_\_\_ to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD” ([Jonah 1:3](#)).

**Why?** The answer can be found in Jonah’s prayer to God in [Jonah 4:2](#):

“O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a \_\_\_\_\_ God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.”

Jonah didn’t **want** the Assyrians to repent. He didn’t **want** God to be gracious to people who were growing as an increasing threat to the children of Israel. But could Jonah really run from the presence of the LORD? Not for a moment ([1:4-16](#)). Eventually, Jonah is hurled into the sea and swallowed by a great fish. “And Jonah was in the belly of the fish \_\_\_\_\_ days and three nights” ([1:17](#)).

**But what does all of this have to do with our search for our King?** Listen carefully to what happened seven centuries later in [Matthew 12:38-41](#):

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered [Jesus], saying, “Teacher, we wish to see a \_\_\_\_\_ from you.” But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet \_\_\_\_\_. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something \_\_\_\_\_ than Jonah is here.”

What did Jesus mean? What do we need to understand? **Let’s talk about it...**



## For Class & Family Discussion:

- ▶ Let's think through what Jonah "knew" about God in [Jonah 4:2](#). Why was Jonah "angry" ([4:1](#)) when the people of Nineveh "turned from their evil way" ([3:10](#))?
- ▶ What did God mean by asking Jonah in [4:4](#), "Do you do well to be angry?" What was Jonah's biggest problem?
- ▶ In what way was God "gracious...merciful...slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster" towards Jonah in [chapter 1](#)?
- ▶ Why did Jesus describe the scribes and Pharisees in [Matthew 12](#) as part of "an evil and adulterous generation" ([12:39](#))?
- ▶ What do you think he meant by "the sign of the prophet Jonah"? When would he, "the Son of Man," be "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" ([12:40](#))?
- ▶ What does he mean when he says, "The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah"? What is he teaching us?
- ▶ "And behold, something greater than Jonah is here" ([12:41](#)). What was Jesus saying? What did all of this mean?
- ▶ Are there ways that we can have the same attitude problems Jonah had? If so, how?

## For NEXT Sunday:

- ▶ We'll examine the prophecies in [Micah 5](#), [Zechariah 12-13](#), and [Malachi 4](#). What do they teach us about the Shepherd-King from Bethlehem? **We'll talk about it...**