

**Lesson Two, Day One** The Lord's Commission to Jonah

Read Jonah 1:1-2.

1. Describe the wickedness of Nineveh from Jonah 3:8; Nahum 1:1; 3:1, 4, 19.

2. a. How is this commission different from Jonah's customary ministry? Remember 2 Kings 14:23-25.

b. Is God's commission to Jonah consistent with His purpose for Israel (Gen. 12:3; Isa. 49:6)? Explain.

3. a. What commission did our Lord give us as Christians today? List the commands in Matt. 28:18-20.

b. How does Jesus promise to enable you to do what He calls you to do? See also Acts 1:8; Philip. 4:13

Lesson Two, Day Two Jonah flees from the Lord.

Read Jonah 1:3.

1. From a map or reference work, find Tarshish. Where was it in relation to Nineveh?

2. What do you read about God in Ps. 139:7-12; Jer. 23:23-24?

3. Why might Jonah have thought he could flee from the Lord? See Deut. 12:4-7; 2 Chron. 6:19-21, 38; 7:1.

4. How do we try to flee from the Lord or to hide ourselves from Him today?

Lesson Two, Day Three God who controls the weather

Read Jonah 1:4-5.

1. Beside each of these references, list ways that God uses weather. Be brief.

Jonah 1:4-5

Genesis 7:17-23

Exodus 14:21-22

1 Samuel 7:10-12

***** SYLLABUS CHAPTER TWO *****

I. The Consequences of Disobedience 1:1-16

- A. The Commission of God 1:1-2
- B. The Flight from God 1:3
- C. The Effects on Others 1:4-16
 - 1. The Ship's Peril 1:4-7

II. The Consequences of Disobedience 1:1-16

A. The Commission of God 1:1-2

God's order to Jonah came suddenly and unexpectedly. For ages, God had confined His revelations to Israel only, so it was natural for Jonah to forget that God cares about the whole world and that He is the Ruler of all nations. It would also be easy for Jonah to reason that he was an unlikely person for such an assignment as this. Nevertheless, God assigns His servants their duty and their place, and He need not give an account of Himself to any of us. Some of His workers are appointed more assignments than others. Some are in the limelight while some work quietly behind the scenes. The God who created us has every right to choose His workers, send them out as He will; and then expect their obedience. God gave the command to Jonah, "Go."

It certainly was not an easy assignment for anyone. There would surely be ridicule and quite possibly danger. It was a new, unheard-of enterprise. The very name, Nineveh, probably made Jonah shudder. Nineveh was a pompous place, full of wealth and worldly splendor, with a large population. It had no equal, it was evil, and God was sending Jonah into its midst! The summons had come out of the blue, brief and without explanation. It immediately threw a monkey wrench into Jonah's daily routine in life. But the order was clear. The word was "Go."

When God clearly calls, it is wise to do what He commands, without delay. Delay strengthens doubt and increases difficulty. When we reason and rationalize, we may end up deserting the duty completely. Sometimes we are nudged to write a letter or make a call, and we sense we are being led by the Lord. So, the wisest thing we can do is to get to it immediately. To think, "Well, I will just finish this 'thing' first" is dangerous. In some cases, the timing of a letter or a call has made the difference between life and death for someone. Delay can be a terrible loss to ourselves as well.

B. The Flight from God 1:3

Nineveh was about five hundred miles away from Jonah's home town. Since transportation was limited to traveling on foot or by means of camel, horse or donkey, going that distance was a daunting trip. In this case, it was across hundreds of miles of wilderness and through foreign cities and towns that posed their own hazards.

Nineveh was the center of a cult of military might and material gain. Ninevites were a cruel people, particularly cruel to victims and prisoners of war whom they often tortured to death for sheer pleasure. Although they were pagan, with no relationship to the true and living God, they were, nevertheless, deliberate sinners and fully responsible for their wickedness. They were about to come under the sentence of divine judgment.

Like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the wickedness of Nineveh had gone up to God as a putrid moral stench (Gen. 18:20-21). God had poured out His awesome judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24-25), and this is what the city of Nineveh was facing. God called Jonah to extend a warning and a plea to them to repent and turn from their wicked ways. Verse 3 begins with Jonah's response to God's order. What a sad passage of Scripture! Jonah deliberately fled from the presence of the Lord. When God told Jonah to "Go," he went all right, but instead of going east, the direction God had said, Jonah fled west. This is especially sad because Jonah was truly a prophet of God and had been mightily used of God prior to this. Some people begin in the right way and then fall by the wayside through some kind of discouragement. Jonah did not even start out in the right direction. His westward move was also a downhill route. Joppa was down on the seacoast, down from the hilly country near Nazareth that was his hometown.

When a person turns their back upon God, it is bound to be a downward route. When Jonah got to Joppa, he "went down" into a ship headed west to Tarshish. Tarshish was probably in Spain at the other end of the Mediterranean Sea, west of Gibraltar. Jonah tried to go as far away from where he had been told to go as he could. What a strange thing for a prophet of God to do! To flee from the presence of the Lord is to deliberately lose communion with Him and the blessing and joy of His fellowship.

It is easy for us to look at Jonah accusingly and shake our heads. But what about ourselves? Not only have many individual Christians deliberately left the presence of God, even the church as a whole has sometimes done this. The corporate church has at times taken too lightly the commission of our Lord, to carry the message of the gospel to every kindred, tongue, people and nation. She has often fixed her eyes on structures, social issues, money, and other things and has moved in the wrong direction.

Just as Jonah's commission was clear and plain, so also is the commission Jesus gave to His church. Christians need to be faithfully involved in getting the gospel out to the lost souls in the world. Christians will often say, "There is so much to do at home -- why go to a foreign country?" It is not for us to question. We must go because