



# PT Butler

## Bible Study Notebooks

### Study of Jonah

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## JONAH 1:1---2:10

God sent Jonah, a Hebrew prophet, to a heathen city for at least four reasons (maybe more): (a) it is apparent from the incidental reference to Jonah in 2 Kings 14:25 that the Lord needed to get Israel to believe she needed to trust God's prophet, Jonah (particularly), if Jonah goes to Nineveh, by miracle, wins Nineveh to repentance, so he can return with some clout behind his preaching to Israel; (b) Israel must also understand that no matter how bad she is, if she will repent, God will spare judgment upon her--this Israel can learn from Nineveh's being spared (i.e., God will even spare heathen when they believe in him and repent); (c) but, very importantly, Israel needed to know (and the O.T. needed a book documenting it) that God loves all of mankind--he is no respecter of person--if Gentiles believe and repent, they shall have his blessing just as surely as Israelites who believe and repent; (d) and, of course, Jonah himself needed to go through this experience to bring him back to God's way and God's will in his own life; (e) most importantly, Jonah's experience is to become a prophecy of the way God is going to save mankind--by subjecting his Son of man (the Messiah) to a humiliating death, and a victorious resurrection which will be good news to all who believe and repent--Jonah's "death and resurrection" became a sign (a sign points to something, guides to something) God was signaling that THE Prophet would die and be raised from the dead, and that resurrection would be the cornerstone of producing belief and repentance!

If God was aware of the wickedness of Nineveh, he certainly is aware of the wickedness of any city or nation today! The people of Nineveh were living in one of the oldest cities of the world, founded by Nimrod (Gen. 10:11-12), a great-grandson of Noah. Nineveh was built on the banks of the Tigris River in the land we today call Iraq. She was a powerful city under such kings as Tiglath-Pileser I (1100 B.C.), Ashur-Nasirpal and Shalmaneser III. During the years of Jonah, Nineveh seems to have lost some of her power and had been weakened and was declining. God sent Jonah (ca. 800 B.C.) to preach repentance to her. Nineveh repented, and God allowed her another 200 years (destroying her about 612 B.C.). The Assyrians (Ninevites) were known for their ruthlessness, their cruelty and their blood-thirstiness. When the cry was heard, The Assyrians are coming, every face grew pale (read Nahum's description of Nineveh). No wonder Jonah had reservations about going there! God knows the cruelty of the great heathen and godless nations today! He knows how many millions were slaughtered like animals in Russian, China, Cuba, Africa, India. He knows how God-denying the great Communist, Hindu, and Buddhist countries are. He knows how Christ-denying the Islamic and Jewish countries are! He knows how materialistic and spiritually-rotten the western civilizations are! And he has given them the last message he will ever give. It is as complete as it ever will be. It is in the Son of God and his Gospel! The world cannot hide from God!--he knows! He will judge!

How could Jonah know he was the cause of the great tempest? How could he know the solution was that he be thrown into the sea? (a) the heathen sailors decided to cast lots to discover who was the cause of the storm! The lot fell on Jonah. The

sailors knew that Jonah was fleeing from Jehovah. Who controls the laws by which lots fall? The heathen sailors would say Fortune--a Hebrew prophet would say Jehovah! (b) when Jonah says, I know it is because of me...remember that as a believing Israelite he is well acquainted with the severity of the justice of the Holy God--both from the O.T. Scriptures (to that point) and from the history of his nation (e.g. Achan, Uzzah, Korah, King Saul, false prophets, etc.). Jonah would not need a direct revelation to be conscience-stricken; (c) there is not statement that Jonah received a direct revelation. However, that does not necessarily mean he did not get one. The silence of Scripture cannot be used to argue for or against any human speculation. All we know is Jonah said, I know.... The important question, however, is how did Jonah know to have himself thrown into the sea in order to quiet the storm? Such action might also be deduced from his knowledge of the history of God's dealings with his nation. Achan, Uzzah, & Korah had to die to give Israel victory, etc. Such appeasement of Jehovah is a common practice in the O. T. But, again, Jonah may have had a direct revelation about this. Subsequent calm shows the action to be God's will!

At first, the sailors would not throw Jonah overboard. They tried rowing the vessel to shore, but couldn't, and the storm kept getting worse! Why didn't they follow Jonah's direction immediately? (a) perhaps, in their superstition, they were afraid throwing him into the sea would anger his God even more and they would then surely perish; (b) most likely, however, they were conscience-stricken about such an action. If you've ever been at sea in a raging storm (I have, in the U.S. Navy), you will know that to be thrown overboard is almost certain and quick death. Their plea to the Lord is, Let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood. Some heathen do have consciences against murder and other heinous crimes! God has written laws against moral depravity in nature (i.e., creation) and in logic (their minds and hearts) (see Rom. 1:18-23; 2:14-16). Subsequently, when a heathen does, or does not do, by nature (and by heart) what the law requires, his conscience bears witness by accusing or excusing! Those heathen sailors were about to do what {nature and logic told them was wrong--and their consciences were accusing them. The church would do well to learn and use logic and the fundamental value-systems of non-believers in order to bring conscience to bear upon them so they will try to do right until she has a readier opportunity to confront the unbeliever with the much higher standard--the Gospel of Christ. We must confront people where they are, morally and logically, not where we think they ought to be.

YES! Men (other than Jonah) have been swallowed by huge fish! The Hebrew word in the first phrase of Jonah 1:17 translated great fish is gadol which literally means, simply, a great thing. In the second phrase of Jonah 1:17 and in Jonah 2:1, the Hebrew word used is dogah, which literally means, simply, a fish. Put the two together and all it means is simply, a great fish. There is a different Hebrew word, tanneen (not used at all in Jonah) which is translated only in the KJV whale in Gen. 1:21; Job 7:12; and Ezek. 32:2Ctanneen would more accurately be translated, a sea monster, a large serpent (perhaps a whale). There are certain species of sharks (squalus carcharias) in the Mediterranean capable of swallowing a man. Biblical commentaries by Keil and Delitzsch have documented such incidents. Both the Sperm Whale and the Blue Whale would be capable of swallowing an elephant! A

century or two ago a shark was caught and inside its stomach was discovered a horse that it had swallowed. Every specie of whale known is capable of swallowing a man. This miracle of Jonah's experience was not so much the fact that there was a fish large enough to swallow a man, but the fact that the fish was at the right place at the right time. Even more miraculous was Jonah's survival for 3 days and 3 nights inside the fish. His survival is unequivocally, a supernatural event. There is no way a human being can hold his breath 3 days and nights! And there are all the other natural circumstances that would have killed Jonah (being poisoned by the gastric juices of the fish's stomach, or ground to pieces by the fish's teeth) had his survival not been by the providence of God. Before Jonah was ever swallowed it was already a matter of historical record that God could raise people from the dead. Both Elijah and Elisha had done so--and God had made Samuel appear alive to talk with king Saul (see 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:8-37; 1 Sam. 28:1ff). The O.T. documents hundreds of miraculous events (making the Sun stand still; opening up the Red Sea, etc.) long before Jonah's survival in the fish. Why should human beings think it unacceptable that God could deliver Jonah from the fish's belly? The Lord Jesus Christ confirmed the historicity of Jonah's miraculous deliverance, as well as Jonah's mission to Nineveh! Either it happened, or Jesus is a liar or a moron! Every person who wishes to claim the name Christian must believe this miracle or be honest and renounce Christianity. THE HYPOCRISY OF IT IS, TENS OF THOUSANDS WHO STILL WISH TO BE KNOWN AS CHRISTIANS HAVE, DE FACTO, RENOUNCED CHRISTIANITY, CALLING IT MYTHOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFICALLY INACCURATE! And the miraculous event of Jonah being swallowed by a great fish is one of their classic examples of myth in the Bible!

God put Jonah through the experience in the belly of the great fish because Jonah, and the Ninevites, and the Israelites needed and Jesus Christ, and we needed this event. We have noted before in question #1 some of the reasons God dealt with Jonah in this manner. But the 3 days and nights in the fish's belly was needed because: (a) Jonah needed a reminder (like we all need constant reminding) that when God gives an order, he expects it to be carried out! Sometimes the only time human beings obey God is when they have met their Maker or have come close to it in such an extremity as facing death! No pain, no gain! It could be that safety, security, comfort, and perfect health are dangerous! What if God had let Jonah get away with fleeing to Tarshish? (b) the Ninevites certainly needed Jonah to come to them out of this miraculous experience! How is an Israelite prophet going to convince Ninevites to believe in Jehovah and repent according to Jehovah's demands unless he has some confirming evidence that his message is true, and to be believed? This is the point Jesus makes when he cites Jonah's experience as a sign of his own death and resurrection (which is the ultimate confirmation of Jesus's message). The only explanation of Jesus's statement that as Jonah became a sign to the men of Nineveh, so would he become a sign to those of his generation, is that the Ninevites were eyewitnesses to Jonah's miraculous deliverance! Jonah himself was a sign--that is Jonah himself pointed to belief in Jehovah and the need to repent.

Jonah, in the belly of the great fish, prayed! What else does one do in a fish's belly? What would you have done? We do not know what posture Jonah took in praying. It is almost certain that he did not stand up! Perhaps he was lying down--perhaps he

was curled up in the fetal position. Hezekiah was lying in bed, at the point death, and turned his face to the wall and prayed (Isaiah 38:1-3). We should understand that it is not posture that God is most interested in when it comes to prayer. God is not even most interested in our public prayers--he is most interested in our secret prayers! Most public prayer is said for the benefit of human ears, anyway! It is when a person comes to the end of his rope and is away from human ears that he really directs his prayers to God. Our trouble is that we do not get to the end of our rope every day! Is there any question but that God wants us to be totally dependent upon him? Every day, every hour? Even for our daily bread? Shouldn't we, then, wake up every morning and go to bed every night, at the end of our rope? That is when we get serious about prayer. We never go to the doctor for help until we know we are sick, and can't cure ourselves! Are we sick--spiritually--physically? INDEED! We are certainly in the process every day of dying physically and without God's sustaining providence, we would die instantly (without air, food, shelter, etc.). And, if we have not claimed the vicarious, atoning death of Jesus Christ, we would be dead spiritually! Jesus said the only way to keep from losing heart in a wicked and indifferent and doomed world is always to pray (Lk. 18:1ff). God only hears end-of-the-rope-prayers (Lk. 18:9-14), never those of the self-sufficient. God vindicates end-of-the-ropers speedily!

Jonah attributed his extremity to God! Jonah said, For Thou didst cast me into the deep, in the heart of the seas, and the flood was round about me; all Thy ways and Thy billows passed over me. Jonah believed he was in the fish's belly because God put him there! He believed everything in nature was under God's control. The only thing God could not control was Jonah's mind and choice. Jonah was created like all human beings with freedom to think what he wanted, to choose what he would believe and trust. But as far as his body, the fish's body, the waves and the winds were concerned--they were not free--they were under the control of God. God could and did manipulate these things as he desired! The conclusions about this manipulation of things Jonah could form freely. God would not force Jonah to choose one conclusion over another. Jonah was free to decide for himself what all this meant. Of course, God, because he is God, is compelled to tell the world what all these things mean. But telling the world and forcing the world to believe what he tells them are two different matters! Paul came to the same conclusion about his extremities in the New Testament (e.g., 2 Cor. 1:3-11; 12:1-10, etc.). Perhaps so many people do not see their extremities as being allowed by God because they do not want to think God is trying to deal with them--trying to bring them to repentance. So many want to believe their extremities are of their own doing so they can extricate themselves from the extremities, thus keeping God at a safe distance--keep him from messing in their lives!

For the Israelite, his primary contact with God was at the Temple. There, he presented his sacrifice for his sins. There, the word of God (hopefully) resided. There, priests interceded on his behalf. There he communed with his fellow Israelites. Nothing in our experience quite compared with the Israelite and his Temple! The history of his nation centered around the Temple (before that, the Tabernacle). There was a deep, even superstitious, awe in the Israelite mind about the Temple. Jonah, in the belly of the fish, was quite certain he would never again see that majestic, awe-

inspiring, house where God Almighty dwelt. He would never again offer a sacrifice for his sins. He would never again hear the precious word of God read. In the fish's belly he was cut off from God--he could have no contact with God that amounted to anything, he thought, without the Temple. The Jewish relationship to God was so dependent upon touch, see, taste (Col. 2:24) that it was difficult for them to develop a strong, mature, spirituality! Their spiritual concepts and ideas were like those of children--they had to see and touch before anything could become real to them. That is what the whole book of Hebrew in the New Testament is about--an attempt to wean Hebrews--Christians away from the necessity of the visible. It really is to our advantage that we do not have a visible Jesus, a touchable temple, an edible sacrifice (see Jn. 16:7). We can develop a much more mature faith by looking at the things not seen (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe (Jn. 20:29; 1 Pet. 1:8).

Jonah's was not really a conversion experience--it was a repentance experience. Jonah already believed in God--he did not need to be converted. But he did need to repent! What Jonah went through to arrive at repentance may be analyzed: (a) he came to grips with the fact that he was running away from the will of God for his life. No one repents until they confront that! We must know what God's will is, and that it is God's will (not ours)--often it takes some catastrophic undoing to our self-assumed sovereignty to confront us with that. We see human mortality all around us and read about it in the newspapers, but it's always the other guy. Sometimes it may need to blow its breath slightly upon us personally before we wake up; (b) we must then accept the fact that we are totally dependent. We are creature, not Creator. We must acknowledge that we are lost and alone without God (even if we are surrounded by a family and friends--we are still lost and alone without God). When our souls faints, then we will remember the Lord! Jonah did this! He found himself in a position where he could logically do nothing else. That is why, given the human predicament, it is so insane, so illogical, irrational, to try to fake ourselves into believing we are our own gods and that there is no other god; (c) Jonah then made the decision to pay what he had vowed! He decided he would obey the Lord's will for his life. That is repentance. Jonah's repentance required no specific works of contrition, no penance--just do what the Lord wanted him to do in the first place! Go to Nineveh!

## JONAH 3:1---4:11

God gave Jonah a second chance! He had probably given Jonah hundreds of chances. Just like God does for all sinners! All of us who reach adulthood have hundreds of days in which we have opportunity to decide once and for all that we will, to the best of our ability, do God's will! God suffers long with sinners, eager that not one should perish but that each one should reach repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). No adult will ever have reason to stand at the final judgment and plead, Not enough opportunity to repent, Lord. The Bible, and reason, points out that even those who have only the laws of nature and conscience are without excuse if they do not repent and worship and obey what they know (Rom. 1:18ff). If that be the case--what of those who have Bibles available in every bookstore and department store in every city--who have religious programming (constantly) on cable TV--who have a national heritage originating in Christianity--who have churches in every community scattered throughout their land--who have freedom to choose and obey the truth of God-- what of those who have been given 50-60-70 or more years (18,250 days or more) of opportunities and still refuse to repent! Jesus sternly and solemnly said to his own Jewish people, The men of Nineveh (heathen) will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and Behold, someone greater than Jonah is here (Lk. 11:32). Will the heathen of today who at least worship divine beings of some sort condemn impenitent and indifferent Americans at the judgment?

Any sensible person would recognize that Jonah must have preached more than one sentence! He undoubtedly would be called upon to explain his experience in the belly of the great fish. Jesus said more than once that Jonah was a sign to the men of Nineveh. A sign points to something! Jonah's sign pointed to his God! The Bible never claims to report everything every spokesman of God said! In fact, the Bible clearly admits that it is only a partial (but sufficient) record of what was said and done. Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost was not recorded in full (see Acts 2:40). And we are told that 3000 responded to Peter's sermon. John states that Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this (the Gospels) book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ (Jn. 20:30-31; see also Jn. 21:24-25). Every newspaper, textbook, TV newscast is incomplete! Every scientific research paper is incomplete. No human being can ever collect and record every bit of information that is applicable to any event of experiment! Yet we conduct life, believe in possibilities, make decisions, make plans, make moral judgments on the basis of such incomplete information. So, why do people still reject the Bible on the ground that it is an incomplete record? Whatever Jonah said, it was sufficient to convince people to believe and repent. And they were heathen! If Jonah's experience is historical--and it is (Jesus said so)--it is enough to convince any man today to believe God and repent! That should be encouraging to preachers and Bible school teachers today!

If the whole city of Nineveh, from the king on down, could repent, why couldn't Jonah's own countrymen repent? That's a good question! What's the answer? If

people in places with far less advantages and blessings than my own American relatives have, how come these disadvantaged draw close to God and my relatives scoff at God, or are indifferent? Perhaps the answer is my relatives have too much! As the writer of Proverbs says, Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God (Prov. 30:8-9). If I'm prosperous, I must be righteous, is the way many people (especially most of the ancient Jews) rationalize their indifference to God and the Bible. Perhaps the answer is, people think they are going to live forever in this life! Surely, logical human beings understand that every human being is going to die from this life! We always believe it never will happen to me--only to my friends and acquaintances. Perhaps that is what Jonah's countrymen thought! Perhaps the answer is, people think everyone else needs to repent, but not I! Perhaps the answer is that people think they are good enough for heaven without any changes, so they do not need to think like God thinks--they do not need to accept God's grace--certainly not on God's terms! But, then, why do some rich people repent? Why do some powerful people repent? It has to do with conviction, persuasion--it has to do with truth versus falsehood. Nineveh was convinced--most Israelites weren't!

One of the most interesting things about the book of Jonah is the conversion of the king of Nineveh. When he heard the message of Jonah, he stepped down from his throne, removed his royal robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. That is humiliation! Not only that, he made one of the most amazing decrees ever to fall from the lips of a government official (Daniel 4:34-37; 6:25-27 for others)! He told the whole city to fast, wear sackcloth (even the beasts), cry mightily to God, and turn from their wickedness. According to the ACLU that would be unconstitutional in America. But people never seem to remember that godly kings of the OT Israelites linked religion and civics and no one lost their liberties! In fact, citizens enjoyed the greatest liberty only when godliness and civics were joined! God expects it to be that way. The first amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits Congress from making any law that establishes a religion, and Congress is also prohibited from making any law that prohibits the free exercise of religion. Now, how should that be understood? How is it to be interpreted? How did those men who wrote it intend it to be understood? We should see how they practiced it and then we will understand how they intended it to be understood! How did George Washington, James Madison, Gouverneur Morris (the actual penman of the Constitution) intend this amendment to be practiced? Did they, as civic leaders, pray in public buildings? Did they make religious proclamations? Did they call upon their countrymen to worship God? Did they ever use taxpayer-funds to subsidize Christian works? YES! President James Madison and his Secretary of War sent U.S. Treasury funds to build, furnish, and otherwise sustain schools for the Cherokee Indians in s.e. TN and n.w. GA--and those schools taught Christianity in their curriculum! That's how they understood it--that's what they meant by the First Amendment--that's what they practiced. Any honest student of history should know that! **AND THAT'S HOW IT SHOULD BE PRACTICED IN AMERICA TODAY!**

God evidently accepts people's repentance on the basis of what they know about his will. God is not so unfair that he will hold people responsible to believe or act upon



some truth or principle which he has not told them. The trouble with most of mankind is it refuses to believe and act upon what God has told it! The Bible is full of examples, however, of God accepting people on their faith and obedience to the extent he revealed himself to them--Noah, Abraham, Jethro, Rahab, Naaman, Ruth and Naomi, Nebuchandezzar, Esther, the Nobleman (Jn. 4), the Centurion (Matt. 8), Cornelius, et.al. It is doubtful that Jonah would have preached circumcision and keeping the rituals distinctive to the Law of Moses to the Ninevites. All those things were exclusively to the Israelites as God's chosen people. But chosen does not mean that God offered salvation only to Jews--even in the OT! Israel was chosen to be distinctive representatives of Jehovah in the midst of a heathen, polytheistic, world. There were certain privileges the chosen had, but with those privileges also came special responsibilities. But non-Israelites could please God by faith (as Abraham did when he was a non-Israelite). Even Gentiles could enter into some of the special privileges of the chosen if they agreed to accept the responsibilities. The Law of Moses provided for this. Most Gentiles, however, elected not to keep Moses' law. But they could still please God by faith and moral living according to what they knew about God and their conscience (Rom. 1:18-23; 2:14-16).

It is not reasonable to presume that Jonah was so filled with hatred and malice that he had a cold-blooded desire to see hundreds of thousands of men, women and babies destroyed by Jehovah as his main concern. His main concern seems to be that the withholding of judgment on Nineveh had robbed him of an example which he might use to bring Israel to repentance. Hugh Martin says in his commentary on Jonah, "In Jonah's judgment the sparing of Nineveh would eclipse the honor of God, destroy the credibility of his ministry, and harden the hearts of his countrymen." While Jonah was not obsessed with malice for these Ninevites, at the same time he was anxious to see judgment fall upon them so he might use them as a lever to get Israel to repent. Jonah was practicing pragmatism! Whatever works must be right--who cares that others might be hurt. Jonah thought he knew better than God what ought to be done to produce repentance! Jonah thought God needed Nineveh destroyed to bring Israel to repentance. But God showed Jonah that he needed Nineveh believing, repenting and being spared as an example of his great mercy! God was hoping Jonah would see that his mercy to Gentiles might make Israelites jealous unto their own repentance (see Rom. 11:13-16). Some of God's spokesmen had this problem in NT times also. The sons of thunder (Lk. 9:49-56); Jews asking for a sign from Jesus; John the Baptist asking about Jesus; the Corinthians and Paul's ministry.

Jonah wanted to die because he just knew his trip to Nineveh was a bummer. God had failed him and he would have to return to Israel and hold a press conference and admit his whole ministry was a failure. He not only failed by bringing the Gentile Ninevites to such holy repentance that God spared them, he would have to report the incident in Israel and the Israelites would surely be convinced that living sinfully like Gentiles is no big thing against God so they will go on living in sin like they are were. Jonah is not the first, nor was he the last, spokesman for God with ministerial depression. Before him was Moses, David, and Elijah (to name just three). After him was Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Habakkuk (to name a few more), and thousands of preachers since! Many preachers today are waiting for the seven years of tribulation when the alleged Anti-Christ makes things so miserable upon unbelievers

that many will be converted when the alleged prophecies of these modern-day-prophets come to pass. Some are waiting for God to descend in a great judgment upon China and/or Cuba, or some other Communist country or dictatorship so they will have incontrovertible evidence which will convince even the hardest-hearted American to repent! While it is true that God's judgments are to be feared and this should lead mankind to repentance, it is also the goodness of God that leads to the truest and most productive kind of repentance (Acts 14:14-18; Rom. 2:4; 9:23; 11:22; 2 Cor. 5:14ff, etc.).

The Lord's question, Jonah 4:4, Do you do well to be angry? was intended to give Jonah time to think! God is saying, Are you certain, Jonah, that your concept of how I should deal with the Ninevites is correct? Are you certain that it is a failure? So Jonah went outside the city and sat down, made a booth for himself, and waited to see what would become of the city. Jonah refused to see the situation any other way! But remember, Jonah took his revelation of God's "M.O." (Modus operandi) from the Old Testament, not the New Testament. And there is a difference! Jonah probably did not see himself in opposition to God's way of doing things when he desired judgment upon Nineveh. After all, that is what he had heard about God from boyhood. All Jonah's knowledge of how God dealt with sin, especially heathen wickedness, was learned from accounts about the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, Egypt, Canaanites, etc. Furthermore, he remembered that the king of Israel was taken from king Saul because he would not wipe out the Amalekites! What Jonah needed still to learn, along with all the world--especially Israel--and what God had not yet shown quite as vividly, was the largeness of God's mercy and love! That God forgives complete, by grace, apart from the impossibility of law-keeping, needed to be graphically demonstrated. After all, how difficult was it to get the nation of Israel to accept this revelation?! God started early on Israel (with Jonah), and they still crucified their Messiah for saying what God had demonstrated 800 years earlier through Jonah! But why whip the Jews for this when there are modern Gentiles by the billions who still insist that salvation is not by grace but by self-righteous works.

Jonah was taught by the demise of the gourd plant that God's ways are higher than man's ways (Isa. 55:8-9). Jonah needed something that would graphically turn his thoughts from the channel they were in to ideas of God's purpose which had never entered his imagination. God is leading him slowly but surely to an ever higher plane concerning the divine behavior. In other circumstances it would have mattered little to Jonah whether a gourd plant on a hill east of Nineveh had withered and died, or not! But when his own comfort and perhaps his very life depended upon the gourd plant, its demise became a terrible tragedy to him! This is exactly the relationship God would have him consider concerning Nineveh! Nineveh had believed God and obeyed his voice. God had need of Nineveh in this time of extreme necessity to show Israel and the whole world for the rest of time that God's grace is available to the worst of sinners upon belief and repentance. Perhaps, also, God is giving Jonah a message to take back to Israel of the possibility that the kingdom of God might be transplanted to a people more spiritually prepared to receive it--people like the Ninevites (see Matt. 21:42-46; Rom. chs. 9-10-11). This singular demonstration of God's mercy and forgiveness would also furnish hope for the faithful remnant later in their exile and captivity. The future exiles would have access to the story of God's

willingness to pardon and save even the most rebellious if they repent! In those dark hours of depression, the remnant would welcome such a message of hope.

Lessons from the life of Jonah: (a) don't ever say, I will not go there, Lord!; (b) remember, everything in creation is at the disposal of Almighty God to carry out his purposes--and he is not bashful about using whatever he needs. Nothing is outside his control--not even fish; (c) doing the will of God should not be a matter of whether one feels like it or not. God wants obedience, regardless of how we feel; (d) beware of letting your estimates of the results of God's work in the future interfere with doing his will right now; (e) beware of belittling what can be accomplished for God because of human judgments of the significance or insignificance of the place of service (who would ever have thought that Nineveh would be a good place to serve the Lord? Not Jonah!); (f) wherever and whenever God is pleased to be gracious, it is our privilege and obligation to acknowledge and rejoice in that graciousness; (g) God's way is always the best--he sees the end from the beginning--and is able to use every circumstance to his glory. Remember the messes men have made when they thought to alter God's revealed way; (h) even the best of believers may get depressed, but God's way to cure depression is to get your mind in harmony with God's mind. God did not send Jonah for Group Therapy or Psycho-analysis to find out how he felt about his mother! Read the Bible, find out what God thinks, decide that's the way you will think, and get busy serving God, and most depression (except for physical, chemical imbalances) will go away!

Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

The Sound Bible Study project is a cooperative effort of Christian educators and Jordan Media Enterprises LLC to provide the serious examination of the Scriptures for the conscientious student. All the teachers are experienced educators who have spent countless hours in the classroom on both sides of the lectern. The audio recordings and written notes are made available for those who wish to learn God's Word at a collegiate level but have been unable to matriculate. There is no intention to compete with the many faithful Bible schools, but rather to serve along side and strengthen both the student and the teacher for a stronger and more effective Kingdom of God that knows how to properly divide the Word of God.

