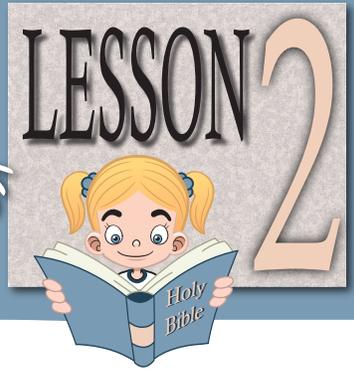


# Jonah's Mission to Israel's Enemies

## Jonah 1-4



Old Testament 8  
Part 1: The Divided Kingdom

## SUNDAY MORNING

Old Testament 8 [Class Attendance Sheet](#) provided in activity sheets (NOTE: The document is interactive, allowing the teacher to type in the Class, Teacher, and the children's names.)

### SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

Jonah 1-4; Matthew 28:18-20; James 2; Acts 10:34-35

### MEMORY WORK:

YOUNGER CHILDREN: "God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34b). [i.e., "God does not show favoritism."]

OLDER CHILDREN: "But if you show partiality, you sin" (James 2:9a).

### SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS (SEE END OF LESSON FOR WORDS):

A [song book](#) and [audio recordings](#) of many of the curriculum songs are available on the curriculum Web site.

- ["Jonah Won't You Go?"](#)
- ["Jonah Song"](#)
- ["There Was a Man Named Jonah"](#)

### LESSON VISUALS AND TEACHING AIDS (NOTE ANY DISCLAIMERS):

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- "Summary of the Bible" from ["Kids Prep"](#) CD by Jeff Miller
- Pictures/drawings from any books listed under 3rd-4th Grader Pre-Class Activities/Learning Centers
- Betty Lukens' felt pieces
- Jonah A Beka Flash-a-Card Series (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, not the lesson book; on card 1.6, make a note—"We do not know what species the great sea creature was.")
- ["Map of the Divided Kingdom"](#) (provided in activity sheets)



## PERSONAL APPLICATION:

God wants me to treat everyone the same and to teach them about Jesus.

## LESSON STARTS HERE

### INTRODUCTION: (YOUNGER CHILDREN)

Have you ever tried to run from your mom or dad or tried to hide from them? Did they find you? Have you ever been mean to someone? In our lesson today, we will learn about a man, a prophet, named Jonah.

### INTRODUCTION: (OLDER CHILDREN)

Have you ever been asked to be friends with someone who is different than you are? When we are with our friends, how should we treat kids that may be different or who aren't necessarily our friends? Does God only want us to teach people whom we like? Today we're going to talk about a man who was told by God to go to a city and teach the people about God. But he didn't want to go. Let's see what happened.

### POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:



**HISTORICAL NOTE:** Other than the Old Testament book bearing his name, Jonah is only mentioned one other time in the Old Testament: in 2 Kings 14:25. Based on that passage, he is identified as a chosen messenger (prophet) for God from the tribe of Zebulun (Joshua 19:10,13), the son of Amittai of the town of Gath-Hepher. He was one of the men active in sharing God's words in the Northern Kingdom (Israel) during the reign of Jeroboam II (ca. 790-750 B.C.). Jeroboam II is described as an evil king, doing the things that **he** wanted to do rather than what **God** wanted, just as the first Jeroboam had done. Jonah (whose name means "dove," usually a symbol of peace and reconciliation) is the only Old Testament minor prophet mentioned by Jesus. (Jesus mentioned Jonah being in the belly of the great fish as a historical event in Matthew 12:39 and 16:4; Luke 11:29.) Jonah was a contemporary of Hosea and Amos. About 150 years after Jonah, the prophet Nahum was sent to preach to Nineveh, but that time the people of Nineveh refused to listen or repent.

1. Nineveh was the capital city of the powerful Assyrian empire, and they were extremely wicked (Jonah 1:2). God wanted Jonah to preach to the people of Nineveh. This huge city was about 500 miles east of Israel. Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh because he did not want the Ninevites, enemies of Israel, to have the opportunity to repent and be forgiven by God (Jonah 4:2). The Assyrians were a cruel and ruthless people that Jonah did not think worthy of God's love and forgiveness.
2. Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah went the opposite direction, to Tarshish, a small Phoenician colony in southwestern Spain—about 2,000 miles from Israel! He knew that God was the Creator of everything (Jonah 1:9), but he thought he could somehow sail away and escape the presence of God. He was soon reminded that God is everywhere (omnipresent), all-knowing (omniscient), and all-powerful (omnipotent).

3. A great storm came upon the ship and threatened to break it apart. The men sailing the vessel called to their gods, and nothing, of course, happened. Jonah, apparently unconcerned about the storm, was asleep in the ship. The captain of the ship woke him up and told him to pray to his God like the rest of the men were, to see if Jonah’s God would stop the storm. The men “**cast lots**” to determine who was causing the storm, and the lot fell on Jonah (1:7; cf. Proverbs 16:33).



**Cast Lots:** “[T]he lot was regarded as a solemn appeal to God, for his direct interference in cases which they could not themselves decide. Proverbs 16:33, ‘The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.’ The choice of an apostle was an event of the same kind, and was regarded as a solemn appeal to God for his direction and guidance in a case which the apostles could not determine. [cf. Acts 1:26] The manner in which this was done is not certainly known. The common mode of casting lots, was to write the names of the persons on pieces of stone, wood, etc., and put them in one urn; and the name of the office, portion, etc., on others. These were then placed in an urn with other pieces of stone, etc., which were blank. The names were then drawn at random, and also the other pieces, and this determined the case.” [*Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament Explanatory and Practical* (2012), WORDsearch Corp., Acts 1:26]

4. The men immediately began to ask Jonah many questions about himself and what might be causing the storm. Jonah confessed that he was an Israelite and that he believed and followed “the Lord (i.e., Jehovah), the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land” (Jonah 1:9). Jonah admitted to the men that he had run away from God. They asked him what should be done to stop the storm, since the storm was getting even worse. Jonah said the men should pick him up and throw him into the sea, and the storm would stop.
5. The men did not want to throw Jonah overboard, knowing that Jonah would certainly drown, and not wanting to be guilty of shedding innocent blood. So they prayed to God, “please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O Lord, have done as it pleases You” (1:14). Then they threw Jonah into the sea—and the sea became calm. The men then feared God and offered to Him a sacrifice and took vows. Meanwhile, God had prepared a great sea creature (Jonah 1:17) for the special purpose of swallowing Jonah and saving him from drowning.



**RECOMMENDED READING FOR TEACHERS:** See the articles “[Jonah and the ‘Whale’?](#)” by Dave Miller and “[Was Jonah Swallowed by a Fish or a Whale?](#)” by Eric Lyons on the Apologetics Press Web site for a discussion about the nature of the creature that swallowed Jonah and responses to common allegations against the Bible regarding this story.

6. Having to spend time in the belly of the great fish for three days also taught Jonah some valuable lessons. One important lesson Jonah had to learn was that God wants everyone in the world to be saved—no matter how “evil” they may be, where they live, what they look like, how they dress, or what language they speak. God loves everyone everywhere the same.
7. Jonah prayed to God while in the belly of the great fish and repented of his behavior. So God “spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land” (2:10). This time, when God spoke to Jonah, he obeyed God and went to Nineveh to preach to the city.

8. Discuss the size of Nineveh (cf. 3:3)—“a **three-day journey** in extent.” Discuss the magnitude of Jonah’s job. Talk with the children about the number of people in the world and the magnitude of the job of teaching all of them about Jesus. There are many places around the world, even places in the United States, where many people need to be taught about Jesus (Acts 17:24-31).



**Three-Day Journey:** “i.e., 60 miles in circumference. It was a great city. Jonah speaks of its greatness, under a name which he would only have used of real greatness. Varied accounts agree in ascribing this size to Nineveh.... An Eastern city enclosing often, as did Babylon, ground under tillage, the only marvel is, that such a space was enclosed by walls. Yet this too is no marvel, when we know from inscriptions, what masses of human strength the great empires of old had at their command, or of the more than threescore pyramids of Egypt.” [*Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament* (2010), WORDsearch Corp., Jonah 3:3]

9. Jonah’s message was simple: God would destroy Nineveh in 40 days. No doubt the people of Nineveh had heard about what happened to Jonah and the sea creature. Jesus referred to Jonah as a “sign to the Ninevites,” comparing Himself being in the grave for three days to Jonah’s being in the belly of the sea creature for three days (Luke 11:29-30; Matthew 12:40). So due to the miracle that the men on the ship had witnessed, the message of Jonah to the Ninevites had been proven to be from God. Remember that the purpose of miracles, first and foremost, was to confirm the message of the speaker as being God-sent (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4).
10. The people, including the king, believed Jonah’s message and repented. The entire city repented of their wicked deeds, prayed to God, and fasted (did not eat), begging God to have mercy on them. So God heard them and did not destroy them. The great news is that as He did with the Ninevites, God will forgive **all** who turn from their wicked ways, turn to Him, and do those things He requires. Read Acts 26:20 and compare it to the actions of the people of Nineveh.



**RECOMMENDED READING FOR TEACHERS:** See the article “[Why does God Sometimes Repent?](#)” on the Apologetics Press Web site for a response to an allegation against the nature of God from this story.

11. This short book is not about the prophet himself (who is mentioned 18 times). It is about God (mentioned 38 times), about His will and how we should respond to Him, about His love and how we should share it with others.



**NOTE:** “Research tells us that between ages 2 and 5, children become aware of gender, race, ethnicity, and disabilities. They also become sensitive to both the positive attitudes and negative biases attached to these four key aspects of identity, by their family and by society in general. Young children develop ‘pre-prejudice’: misconceptions, discomfort, fear, and rejection of differences that may develop into real prejudice if parents and teachers do not intervene.... Many adults... would prefer to believe that young children are blissfully unaware of the differences between people upon which prejudice and discrimination are based. But young children not only recognize differences, they also absorb values about which differences are positive and which are not. How we as parents and teachers react to the ideas that young children express will greatly affect the feelings they will form. If we want children to like themselves and to value diversity, then we must learn how to help them resist the biases and prejudice that are still far too prevalent in our society.” *(from a brochure of the National Association for the Education of Young Children; statement echoes James 2 and other biblical passages)*

**PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—BEFORE CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):**

- Click here for complete [Activity Book](#) and [Answer Key](#).

**Ages 2-5:**

- [“Jonah Coloring Sheet”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- [“Jonah Maze”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- Help the children make a “Big Fish” puppet. [See patterns at <http://www.dltk-kids.com/animals/whales.htm>]
- Bring a small pool (or large bowl) to class and fill it with water; add several plastic fish. Let each child “catch” a fish (either with an aquarium net or a kitchen ladle). Then ask him/her a review question about this lesson and previous lessons. Serve Goldfish® crackers as a snack.
- Play “Hide and Seek.” When finished, discuss with the children how Jonah tried to hide from God but could not because God always knows where we are and what we are doing.

**1st-2nd Graders:**

- Help the children make a “Big Fish” puppet. [See patterns at <http://www.dltk-kids.com/animals/whales.htm>]
- [“Jonah Crossword Puzzle”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- Ask a group of teenagers or adults from your congregation to do a skit about treating everyone the same way (e.g., not leaving someone out; being friends with someone until others come along, then not being that person’s friend; etc.), based on James 2.
- [“Jonah Verse Match”](#) (provided in activity sheets)

**3rd-4th Graders:**

- [“Jonah Crossword Puzzle”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- Ask a group of teenagers or adults from your congregation to do a skit about treating everyone the same way (e.g., not leaving someone out; being friends with someone until others come along, then not being that person’s friend; etc.), based on James 2.
- [“Jonah Verse Match”](#) (provided in activity sheets)

- Have the children read the following:
- Jonah
  - Jonah. [This could be assigned Sunday, to be completed by Wednesday.] Print out copies of the Jonah quiz from AP's [Advanced Bible Reader](#) site for the children to take.
  - *Jonah and the Big Fish and Other Favorite Bible Stories*, by Laura Kelly, Standard Publishing
  - *Jonah the Runaway Prophet*, by Larry Burgdorf, Arch books
  - *Jonah God's Messenger*, Dennis G. Jones, Zonderkidz I Can Read! Series
  - *Jonah and the Big Fish*, Kelly Pulley, Zonderkidz I Can Read! Series
  - *Elijah and the Great Prophets*, by Joy Melissa Jensen, Contemporary Bible Series, Scandinavia Publishing (DISCLAIMERS: p. 20—the text says a “great fish,” not a “whale”; p. 36—skip the phrase “like the one in his dream”; p. 49—skip the last two sentences; p. 61—change the first sentence of the second paragraph to “So a new law was written that protected the Jews.”)

## SONGS:

### “JONAH, WON'T YOU GO?” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Unknown\*

(Tune: “Dinah, Won't You Blow”)

Jonah, won't you go, Jonah, won't you go,  
 Jonah won't you go to Nineveh?  
 “I'm afraid to go, I'm afraid to go, scared to go to Nineveh!”

Something's in the water with Jonah,  
 Something's in the water out there!  
 Something's in the water with Jonah,  
 A fish that God prepared.

“Now I want to go, now I want to go, now I want to go to Nineveh!”  
 The fish, he let him go; the fish, he let him go,  
 And Jonah went to Nineveh.

### “JONAH SONG” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Unknown\*

(Tune: “Old MacDonald Had a Farm”)

Jonah was afraid of God. What did Jonah do?  
 He tried to hide and sail away. What did Jonah do?  
 With a storm over here, and a fish over there.  
 Here a fish, there a fish, everywhere a big fish.  
 What did he decide to do? What God told him to!

**“THERE WAS A MAN NAMED JONAH” ([Click to Hear](#))**

Author: Elbert and Sarah Richey

(Tune: “Down at the Station”)

There was a man named Jonah in the Bible,  
God told him to go to Nineveh,  
Jonah said, “No,” and sailed away to Tarshish.  
He should have known you cannot hide from God. (REPEAT line 2X)

God caused a great big storm to come upon them.  
He shook their boat and scared them half to death.  
Jonah told them, “Throw me in the water,”  
“I’m the reason God has sent this storm.” (REPEAT line 2X)

God had a great big fish to swallow Jonah.  
Three days and nights he lived inside that fish.  
He prayed to God, “Please let me go to Nineveh.”  
Jonah was sorry he did not obey. (REPEAT line 2X)

That great big fish spat Jonah onto dry land.  
Jonah was on his way to Nineveh.  
Jonah preached and all the people listened.  
God was so happy they wanted to obey. (REPEAT line 2X)

*It would be good to make visuals to go with the songs. Make simple drawings of the following: Jonah telling God “No”; the boat in the storm; Jonah in the big fish; Jonah on his way to Tarshish; “happy” Jonah teaching the people. Copy the drawings onto fluorescent paper and mount them on white poster board. Shine a black light on the pictures as you sing the song.*

\*Author Unknown: Please contact us through the feedback button for this lesson if you are aware of any copyright information for this song.

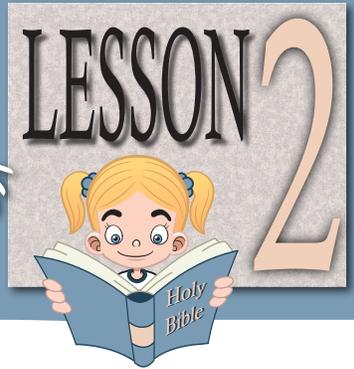
\*\*\* IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS PERTAINING TO THIS LESSON, PLEASE CLICK THE “SUGGESTION” BUTTON BESIDE THE BUTTON FOR THIS LESSON ON THE CURRICULUM WEB SITE.





# Jonah's Mission to Israel's Enemies

## Jonah 1-4



Old Testament 8  
Part 1: The Divided Kingdom

## WEDNESDAY EVENING

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### SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

Jonah 1-4; Matthew 28:18-20; James 2; Acts 10:34-35

### MEMORY WORK:

YOUNGER CHILDREN: "God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34b). [i.e., "God does not show favoritism."]

OLDER CHILDREN: "But if you show partiality, you sin" (James 2:9a).

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- ["Map of the Divided Kingdom"](#) (provided in activity sheets)



## PERSONAL APPLICATION:

God wants me to treat everyone the same and to teach them about Jesus.

## INTRODUCTION:

Review [O.T. 8 Bible Fact Flash Cards](#) (provided under “O.T. 8 Bible Facts” on curriculum Web site)

## POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

- Review Sunday’s lesson. (See [O.T. 8 Review Questions](#) for example questions.)
- Continue the story of Jonah in chapter 4. When God relented from destroying Nineveh, it angered Jonah. He stated his reason for not wanting to go to Nineveh in the first place: because he knew God is “a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm” (4:2). Instead of that description of God being something to be extremely thankful for, Jonah clearly considered it to be a charge against God’s character. Jonah thought the Ninevites deserved destruction, and, to him, God was being a “pushover” for not being harder on them. Jonah said he would rather die than God not punish Nineveh.
- Thankfully for Jonah, just as God was patient and slow to anger with the Ninevites, He was patient and slow to anger with Jonah. God reasoned with Jonah that he should not be upset about God’s decision.
- Jonah went outside the city and sat in the shade of a plant that God had prepared for him while he watched what would become of Nineveh. Jonah was grateful for the plant, but when God prepared a worm to destroy the plant, causing it to wither the next day, resulting in Jonah having to sit in the Sun and hot wind, he grew faint. Again, Jonah wished for death.
- God again reasoned with Jonah: “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?” Jonah said, “It is right for me to be angry, even to death!” (4:10). God reasoned with Jonah that it was not right for him to be more concerned for the withered plant—which had little value and for which Jonah had done no labor to grow and nourish it—than the city of Nineveh, which had 120,000 ignorant citizens, as well as animals. People have more inherent value than a plant (Matthew 6:26-30), considering that, unlike plants and animals, they were made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). Further, God had been laboring for the city of Nineveh, and Jonah had as well, making the city even more valuable.
- Jonah should have been very happy that his message reached so many who decided to turn to God. Instead, his pride and his prejudices made him angry with God. God taught him a powerful lesson with the quickly growing plant which also quickly died.

## PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—BEFORE CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):

- See Sunday morning’s lesson.

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