

Jonah 3:1 And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Jonah 3:2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

We are not told how much time elapsed before God commissioned Jonah the second time. God had a specific purpose for Jonah. For some reason he was the one chosen to take God's message to the people of Nineveh.

Why did it have to be Jonah? Why does he choose some to preach, others to teach, others to lead, others to work with their hands, etc. We may not understand these things now, but the important point is that God has a plan and purpose for each one of us as His servant. There is someone, or maybe lots of someone's, for whom we have been chosen to be God's representative in some type of ministry or ministries. We should never belittle or resent that opportunity to serve Him. We should just desire to be clay in His hands to accomplish His purpose.

Jonah 3:3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.

Jonah 3:4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

This time Jonah immediately gets up and goes to Nineveh in obedience to God. It seems that Nineveh was so large that it took three days to travel through it. As Jonah begins his journey through the city, he cries out the message of God—In 40 days Nineveh is going to be “overthrown.” I thought the Hebrew for this word was quite interesting considering the response of the people; it includes “to turn about or over; by implication, to change, overturn, return, pervert:—x become, change, come, be converted...” God knows the end from the beginning; He knew how the people of Nineveh would respond, and the Spirit inspired the word that reflected that knowledge. As they heard the declaration, they took it to mean that they would be destroyed/conquered—which was the intended impact of the message.

Jonah 3:5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

What was the result of Jonah's obedience to preach God's message? The people of Nineveh believed Almighty God—all of the people from the poorest to the richest, from the least respected to the most honored. As evidence of the sincerity of their belief, they declared a fast and put on sackcloth, a rough, coarse material that was used to carry feed for the animals and was worn as a sign of great grief, distress, or penitence.

Obviously, there was more to the message than we are given. They knew it to be from God and recognized their need to repent.

Jonah 3:6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered *him* with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

Jonah 3:7 And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

Jonah 3:8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that *is* in their hands.

Jonah 3:9 Who can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

When word came to the King of Nineveh, he got off his throne, took off his robe of authority, clothed himself in sackcloth and sat in the ashes (reminiscent of Job). He sent a proclamation throughout the city declaring the fast and the wearing of sackcloth. He also encouraged the people to cry out loudly to God--for mercy seems to be implied. The king acknowledges that evil dominates their society and that violence is the rule, not the exception, and asks the people to repent of their evil practices. The king realizes that God could choose to show mercy and spare their lives.

Jonah 3:10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not.

God saw their works, their actions. (A good place to reiterate that our actions prove our faith.) They turned from their evil ways; this implies that they began doing the things that were pleasing to God. God is clear in the scripture that He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather they repent.

Ezekiel states it most succinctly.

Ezek. 18:32 For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye.

Ezek. 33:11 Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live...

After seeing the response of repentance, God decided not to destroy the city.