

YOUTH



LEVEL 7

BIBLE

LESSONS



LESSON 10



Jonah Prophesies Against Nineveh

JONAH PROPHECIES AGAINST NINEVEH

Jonah was called by God to prophesy against the Assyrian city of Nineveh, a city that was established shortly after the Flood (Genesis 10:9).

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, an empire that threatened to invade and conquer the kingdom of Israel. It was to this city that God sent His prophet, Jonah.

THE PROPHET JONAH

The name *Jonah* means “dove.” He is fifth in order of the *minor prophets*. Jonah was a Galilean from the Israelite city of Gath-hepher in the area of Zebulun.

We first read about Jonah in II Kings 14:25. Here we discover that he prophesied while Jeroboam the son of Jehoash was king of Israel. This was possibly about the eighth century B.C.

Jonah prophesied that God would help King Jeroboam restore many territories to the kingdom of Israel.

“He [Jeroboam] restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain [Dead Sea], according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant *Jonah*, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher” (II Kings 14:25).

THE WORLD IN JONAH'S DAY

King Jeroboam the son of Jehoash was now

ABOUT OUR COVER . . .

The city of Joppa today forms the southern part of the municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa.

YES Photo

the king in Samaria, the capital city of Israel. Remember that Jeroboam the son of Jehoash and Jeroboam the son of Nebat ruled Israel at different times (I Kings 12:20; II Kings 14:16). The Jeroboam who ruled during Jonah's time is now referred to as Jeroboam II.

The kingdom of Israel was not a powerful nation at the time of King Jeroboam II. It was no longer great as in the days of David and Solomon.

During Jeroboam's reign, the Israelites were divided into two separate kingdoms—the southern kingdom, called the house of Judah, and the northern kingdom, called the house of Israel. Both kingdoms suffered through the reigns of wicked kings, but the kings of Israel were especially evil. They continually followed the violent and immoral practices of the nations that surrounded them.

The kingdom of Israel was located between two warring nations—on the southwest, the nation of Egypt, on the northeast, the kingdom of Assyria.

Assyria was a great military superpower in Jonah's day. Its capital city, Nineveh, was one of the oldest and largest in the world at that time.

The Assyrians were known for their military strength and their cruel treatment of captives. Archaeologists, scientists who study history by examining remains of past civilizations, have discovered ancient records that tell about the military exploits of the Assyrians.

When the armies of Assyria conquered a nation, the captives were often taken from their land and resettled in Assyria. This enabled the Assyrians to maintain control over the conquered peoples.

JONAH RUNS FROM GOD

“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city!” God commanded Jonah. “Prophesy against the people, because their wickedness is great” (Jonah 1:2).

Jonah now had to warn the Ninevites to repent of their sins because God intended to destroy the city.

Why would God destroy an entire city?

When a nation rejects God and follows the way of Satan, many people suffer. God does not want people to suffer. A merciful God destroyed two such cities long ago. They were _____ and _____ (Genesis 19:24-25).

Jonah was not happy with the job God gave him. Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah ran from God. He did not want the Assyrians to be saved from destruction, since he knew that God might someday allow Assyria to attack Israel. So Jonah immediately boarded a ship for Tarshish, in the opposite direction from Nineveh (Jonah 1:3).

Jonah planned to sail on a ship across the Mediterranean Sea. He made a hurried trip to the city of Joppa, on the coast of Dan. There he hastily purchased a fare on one of the merchant ships. His destination may have been a port city on the coast of Spain.

Jonah should have known that running from God was foolish. Jonah may have felt that by leaving Israel, he would be able to escape from God. But God’s power is everywhere. Summarize Psalm 139:7-12 on the lines below. _____

Once on board, Jonah decided to go inside the ship and sleep for awhile. By now he was exhausted. He did not want to face his problem and went below deck to further escape God by sleeping.

Jonah now thought he had managed to disobey God and win, but God was just waiting for the right time to correct Jonah.

Do You Remember?

1. The name Jonah means _____.
2. Jonah was from the kingdom of _____.
3. Jonah was the son of _____.
4. _____ was a great military superpower in Jonah’s day.
5. God told Jonah to warn the _____ that their city would soon be destroyed.
6. Nineveh was the capital city of the _____ Empire.
7. Jonah boarded a ship bound for _____.
8. What did Jonah do after boarding the ship?

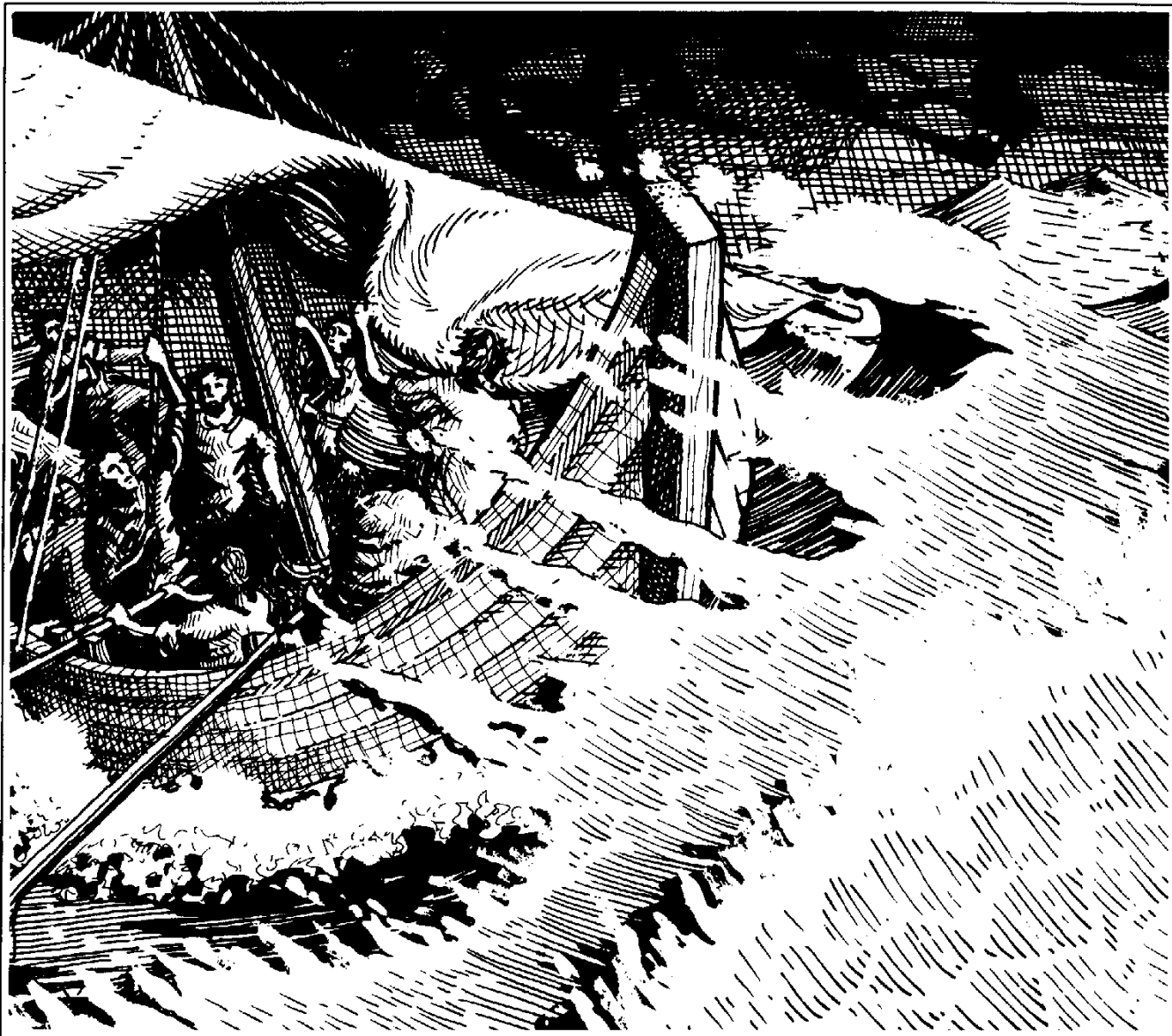
GOD SENDS A STORM

While Jonah slept, God sent a great wind and tempestuous storm that threatened to destroy the ship. The waves swelled higher and higher. They lashed against the ship, nearly capsizing it.

The sailors were frightened. They feared the huge waves would soon break the ship apart. The superstitious sailors began crying out to their many gods to save them. They also tried to lighten the ship by throwing many items overboard. Nothing seemed to help.

Finally, the captain of the ship found Jonah sleeping down inside the ship. “Wake up!” he shouted to Jonah. “Call to your God to save us.” The sailors were probably astounded that anyone could sleep through such a terrible storm! (Jonah 1:4-5.)

Of course, the true God could save them, but the sailors did not know that Jonah’s God was the true God.



God sent a great wind and tempestuous storm that threatened to destroy the ship.

In desperation, the sailors decided to cast lots to discover who was at fault for the storm. When they did, the lot fell to Jonah.

“What do you do for a living? Where did you come from? Who are your people?” the sailors frantically asked Jonah.

Jonah’s disobedience caused trouble for other people.

He realized that the storm had come up because he tried to run from God.

“I am a Hebrew and I fear the Creator who made the sea and dry land,” Jonah told the

sailors. “I have tried to run from God” (Jonah 1:9).

When the sailors learned that Jonah was a Hebrew, they were exceedingly afraid. These superstitious sailors may have heard about the powerful God who had led the people of Israel out of Egypt (verse 10).

THROWN INTO THE SEA

“What can we do to make the sea calm again?” the men asked Jonah.

Here was a wonderful opportunity for Jonah

to admit he was wrong. God certainly would have spared the ship if Jonah would have repented and gone to Nineveh to deliver God's message.

What did Jonah do? (Jonah 1:12) _____

Nevertheless, the men did not want Jonah to die and rowed very hard to bring the ship to land. But the sea was too rough!

Finally, the sailors decided it was impossible to survive with Jonah on board. They prayed to Jonah's God, asking that they not perish because of Jonah.

They quickly grabbed Jonah and cast him into the turbulent sea and the storm began to stop.

The sailors were amazed by this miracle. They immediately offered a sacrifice to God and made vows to Him.

In the meantime, Jonah tried hard to swim, but the waves continually pushed him under the water. He became weaker and weaker.

Suddenly, Jonah felt something swimming around his feet. Then something grabbed him and began pulling him down. In a moment, Jonah was gone. A large fish had swallowed him.

Jonah now found himself in the stomach of a large fish.

God still wanted Jonah to warn the citizens of Nineveh, and prepared the large fish to swallow him. God brought the fish close to the ship to swallow Jonah before he could drown (Jonah 1:13-17).

THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS

Can you imagine how terrible it was for Jonah to be in the stomach of a fish?

Jonah prayed fervently to God from the fish's stomach: "I cried by _____ of mine _____ unto the _____, and he _____

me; out of the _____ of _____ [the grave] cried I, and _____ my _____" (Jonah 2:2).

Jonah could smell the odor of dead fish. He felt the seaweed as it wrapped around his head. He could not see for the darkness in the stomach of the fish. This truly could have been Jonah's grave (Jonah 2:3-5).

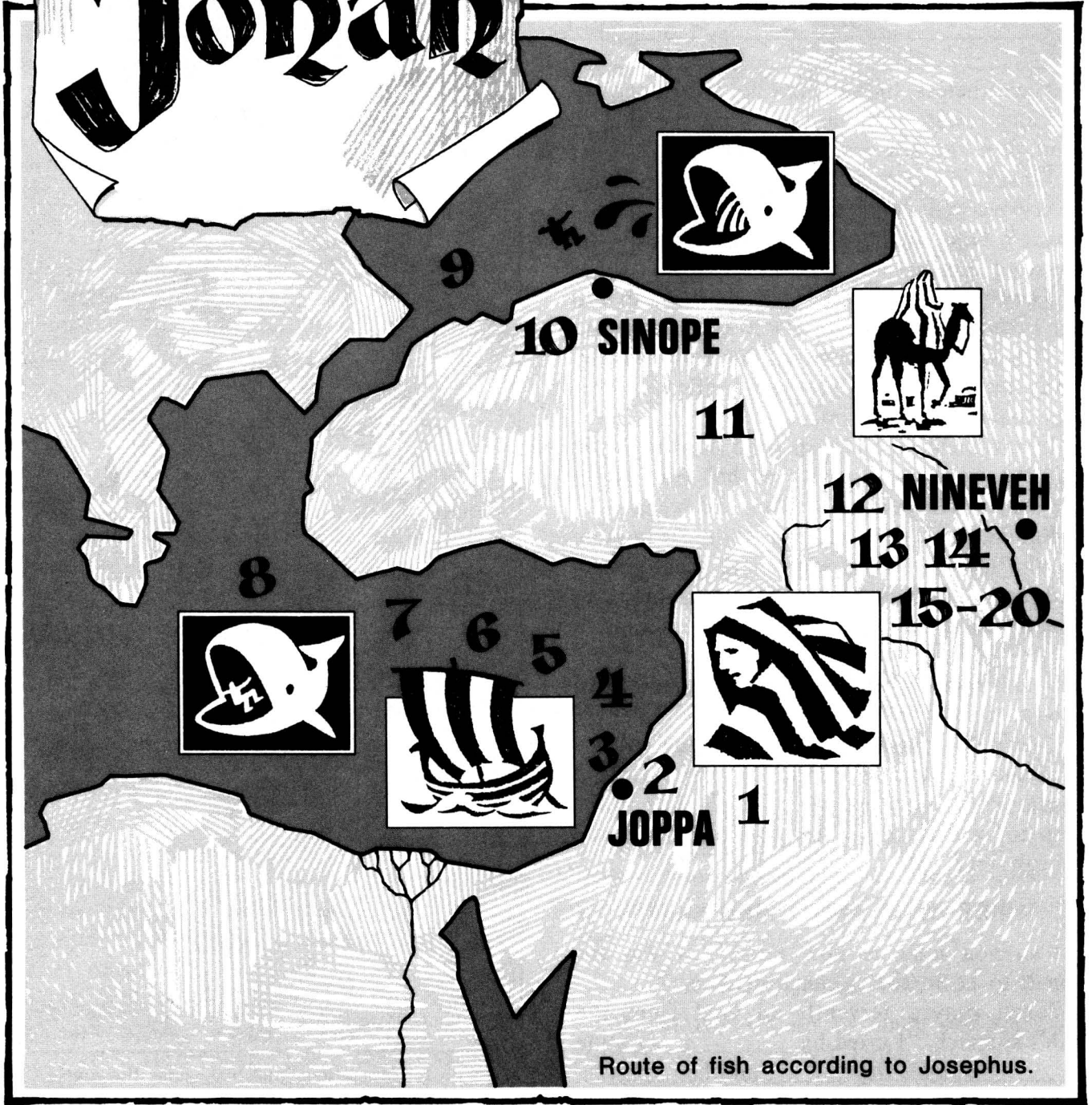
While the fish swam, Jonah knew he was under the waves of the sea. The fish swam up and down as it traveled along to where God was leading it (verse 6). *(Continued on page 8)*



Jonah felt something pull him under the water.

The Story of Jonah

Using the map below and the blank lines on page seven, write in your own words the sequence of events as they happened in the story of Jonah. You may use your Bible if you need help.



Route of fish according to Josephus.

1 JONAH 1:2

2 JONAH 1:3

3 JONAH 1:4

4 JONAH 1:5-6

5 JONAH 1:7-8

6 JONAH 1:9-11

7 JONAH 1:12-16

8 JONAH 1:17

9 JONAH 2:1

10 JONAH 2:10

11 JONAH 3:1-4

12 JONAH 3:5-9

13 JONAH 3:10

14 JONAH 4:1-3

15 JONAH 4:4-5

16 JONAH 4:6-7

17 JONAH 4:8

18 JONAH 4:9

19 JONAH 4:10

20 JONAH 4:11

Finally, a merciful God answered Jonah's prayer and spoke to the fish, and the fish vomited him out on dry land (verse 10).

Jonah was very thankful that God had delivered him from certain death in the fish. Write out part of Jonah's prayer on the lines below. (Jonah 2:6-9) _____

veh and told them that God would soon destroy the city.

"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" (Jonah 3:4).

Nineveh was so large, it took a man three days to walk through it. It may have been several miles around the city (verse 3).

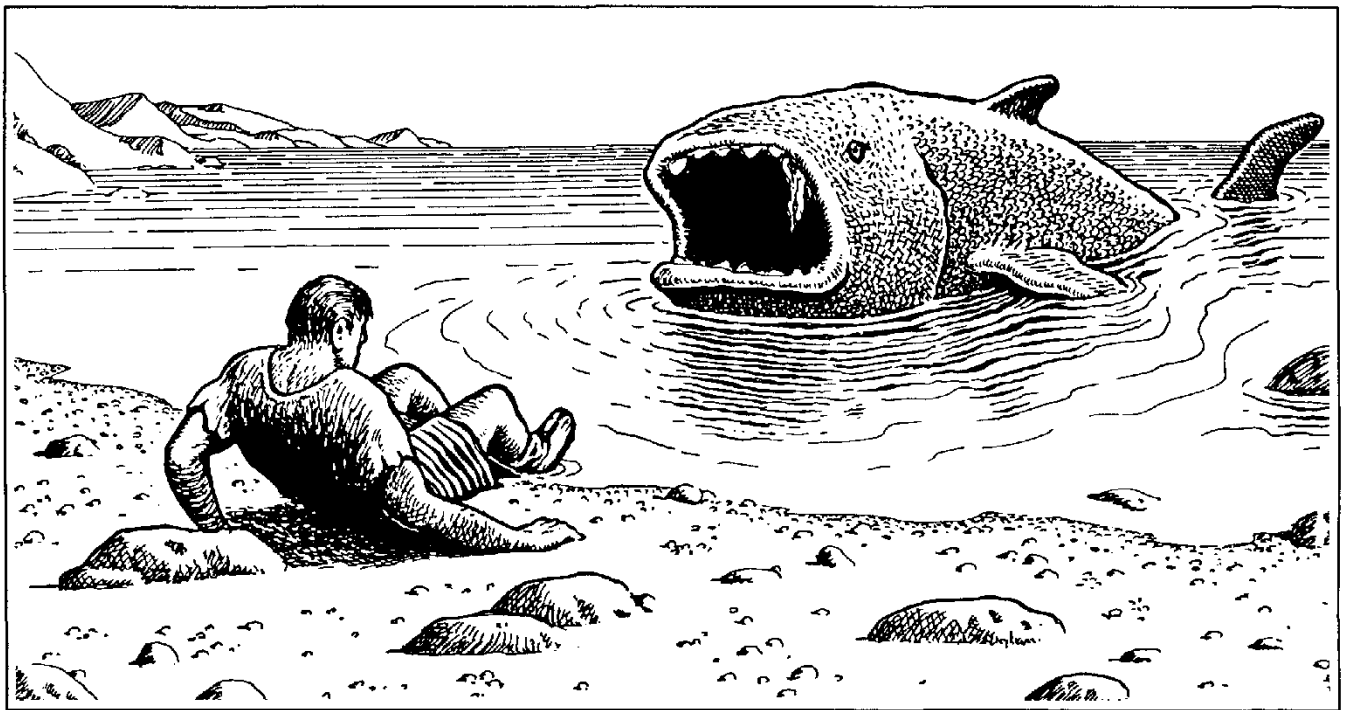
The people of Nineveh believed Jonah. The king of Nineveh proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth and sat in ashes. This was a sign of humility. All the people, from the wealthy to the poor, put on sackcloth and fasted. The king also proclaimed a fast for the animals (Jonah 3:5-8).

What was the attitude of the king of Nineveh? (Jonah 2:9) _____

THE NINEVITES REPENT

Again, God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh: "Arise, go to Nineveh and speak to the people what I tell you!"

Reluctantly, Jonah went to the city of Nine-



God spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah out on dry land.

What happened next?

“And _____ their _____, that they _____ from their _____; and _____ of the evil, that he had said that _____ would _____ unto _____; and _____ did it _____” (Jonah 3:10).

What was Jonah’s attitude? (Jonah 4:1) _____

God spared the city from destruction. But God’s mercy to Nineveh made Jonah very angry. “And he [Jonah] _____ unto the _____, and said, I _____ thee, O LORD, was not this _____, when I was _____ in my country? Therefore I _____ before unto _____: for I _____ that thou _____ a _____ God, and _____, _____ to _____, and of _____, and _____ thee of the _____” (Jonah 4:2).

Jonah groaned with self-pity. “Take my life!” Jonah complained. “It is better for me to die than to live” (verse 3).

What a miserable attitude! Jonah cared little about the people of Nineveh. He was only concerned about himself.

Jonah left and found a place outside the city to sit. He decided to wait and see what God would do (verse 5).

Do You Remember?

1. Jonah was in the stomach of a large fish for _____ days and _____ nights.
2. Jonah proclaimed that Nineveh would be destroyed in _____ days.
3. What did the people of Nineveh do after hearing Jonah’s warning? _____

What did the king do? _____



God prepared a large, leafy gourd to deliver Jonah from the heat of the sun.

4. Was Jonah happy that God changed His mind? _____. What did Jonah want to do? _____

GOD TEACHES JONAH A LESSON

While Jonah waited, a large, leafy gourd sprang up overnight to protect him from the heat of the afternoon sun. It grew quickly and provided a shady place under which Jonah could sit during the day. God prepared the gourd to deliver Jonah from his grief. This made Jonah very happy (Jonah 4:6).

To illustrate His point about mercy, God next prepared a worm to eat the gourd. The next night, the worm caused the gourd to wither and die.

When the sun came up, a hot, dusty east wind began to blow. The sun burned down on Jonah's head, causing Jonah to faint. Jonah again wished to die.

"It is better that I die than live in such grief!" Jonah cried to God.

"Are you angry that the gourd died?" God asked Jonah.

"I have a right to be angry, even if it means my death!" Jonah replied.

"You have had pity on the gourd, and you did not plant it," God explained to Jonah. "You had nothing to do with making it grow. It came up in a night and perished in a night" (verse 10).

Then God revealed why He had prepared the gourd. "If you had pity on the gourd, should I not have had pity on Nineveh, where there are over 120,000 young children?" God asked Jonah.

A LESSON IN MERCY

After this, we do not know what happened to Jonah. We do know that he finally delivered God's warning message to the people of Nineveh. We also know from the story of Jonah that God is very merciful.

God went to great lengths to teach Jonah the valuable lesson of mercy. God showed Jonah great mercy, but Jonah showed little mercy to Nineveh. He wanted God to destroy the city and the people in it.

God wants us to be merciful. If we are quick to show mercy to others, God will quickly show mercy to us. Write out Matthew 5:7 on the lines below.

A SIGN OF THE MESSIAH

Hundreds of years after Jonah, Christ referred to Jonah's mission when He was ques-

tioned by the scribes and Pharisees. These religious leaders asked Christ for a sign that He was the Messiah. Christ told them that as Jonah was a sign to the people of Nineveh, He would be a sign to them (Matthew 16:4; Luke 11:29-30).

Christ said that as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, He would be three days and three nights in the grave. This would be the only sign given that He was the Messiah. For more information about this subject, request the free booklet *The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday* by Herbert W. Armstrong.

Christ said that a resurrection and day of judgment are coming, when the people of Nineveh will be resurrected along with the scribes and Pharisees. Christ said that it would be harder for the scribes and Pharisees at that time than it would be for the Ninevites, because the people of Nineveh had repented at the preaching of Jonah (Jonah 3:5-10; Matthew 12:41).

Do You Remember?

1. What did God do to protect Jonah from the heat of the sun? _____

2. What did the worm do to the gourd? _____

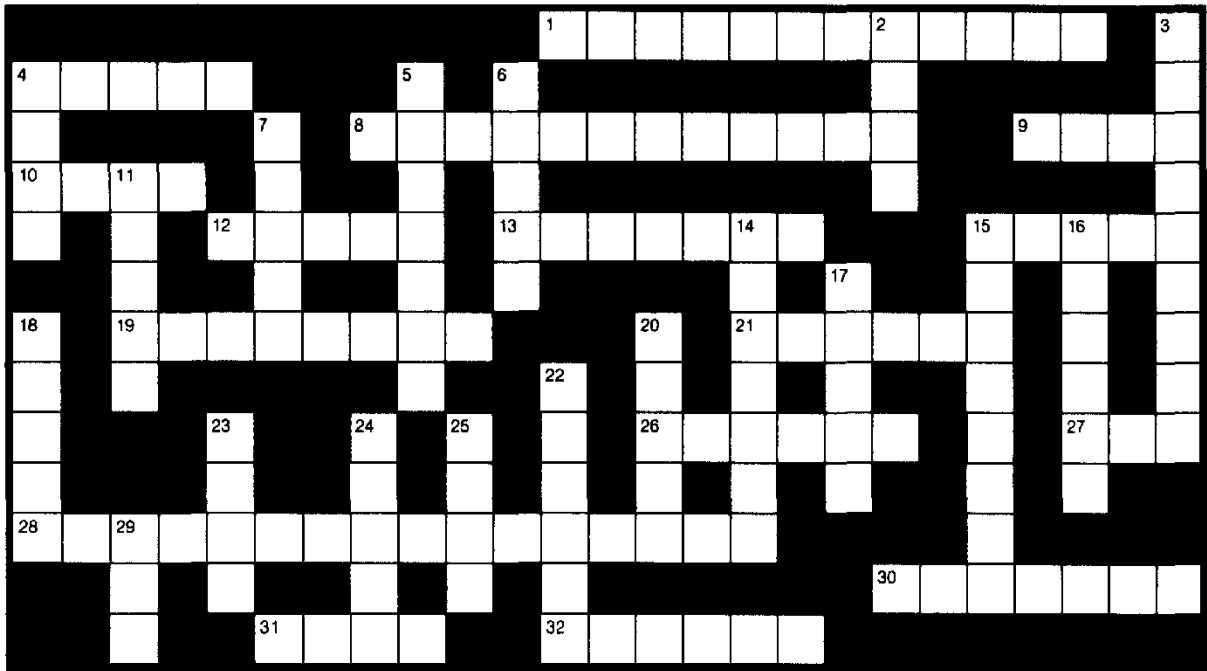
3. What happened to Jonah when the hot, dusty east wind began to blow? _____

4. Who caused the gourd to grow? _____
5. What lesson was God trying to teach Jonah?

6. Christ used what sign to prove that He was the Messiah? _____

7. Christ said that He would be _____ days and _____ nights in the _____.

JONAH CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. A rising from the dead.
4. Nineveh would be overthrown in ___ days.
8. Jonah is fifth in this order.
9. "Turn every one from his _____ way" (Jonah 3:8).
10. Christ was a _____ to the scribes and Pharisees.
12. Christ was three days and three nights in the _____.
13. Jonah's father.
15. Jonah sailed from _____.
19. The people of Nineveh _____ at Jonah's warning.
21. One who sails a ship.
26. Jonah was from the kingdom of _____.
27. Breaking God's law is _____.
28. The ship sailed on the _____.
30. A storm.
31. Jonah was three _____ and three nights in the fish's belly.
32. Jonah was an _____.

DOWN

2. Nineveh was the capital ___ of Assyria.
3. "___ is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9).
4. What the people of Nineveh did in repentance.
5. Capital of Assyria.
6. Prophet who tried to run from God.
7. Number of nights Christ was in the grave.
11. Shaded Jonah from the sun.
14. A military superpower in Jonah's day.
15. A king of Israel in Jonah's day.
16. The sailors thought they would ___ in the storm.
17. The sailors thought they would lose their _____.
18. A city which God destroyed.
20. Vessels which sail on the water.
22. What Jonah was sent to do in Nineveh.
23. The sailors cast _____ to learn who was at fault.
24. The lesson of Jonah's story.
25. A hot, dusty east _____.
29. What Jonah wished to do.

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BIBLE MEMORY Ecclesiastes 9:10

JONAH WORD SEARCH

Find words from this lesson in the Word Search below.

J	I	D	H	S	N	T	G	S	L	E	E	P	F
E	M	E	T	R	A	M	S	T	Y	I	Z	X	T
S	I	O	J	O	N	A	H	H	J	S	M	Q	H
T	L	A	C	P	R	L	G	E	P	R	W	B	R
O	Y	C	U	H	V	T	B	B	V	A	E	U	E
R	T	S	B	E	L	L	Y	K	O	E	V	R	E
M	R	E	H	T	P	A	R	D	J	L	N	Q	S
L	S	S	A	I	R	Y	S	S	A	N	T	I	K
D	I	E	F	G	O	U	R	D	W	Y	A	L	N
F	P	R	O	P	H	E	T	P	I	H	S	D	C

UNSCRAMBLE THE MESSAGE

What was the sign of the prophet Jonah?

ETH NIGS FO HTE HEPPTOR HOJNA NATEM HTTA TRICHS
LUDWO EB NI HET ERGVA ERTHE SYDA DNA HETER SINGTH SA
HANJO SAW NI EHT SIFH'S ELBYL (Matthew 12:39-40).