

16. And behold, a greater than Jonah is here!

KJV (Matthew 12:41) 41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here!

The events of Jonah - as written in the book of Jonah - go far beyond fleeing for a mission from God or a 3-day stay in a big fish.

By means of this book God wanted to show us something of the future, of the conversion of people. The book of Jonah therefore also provides insight into the time, in which we have now arrived. But first we will start with the run-up to the events of Jonah.

What all happened after the global flood

The wickedness of the people in Noah's days grieved God in His heart. (Gen. 6: 5-8)
Because God asked them to, Noah and his 3 sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth with their wives entered the ark:

NKJV (Genesis 7:13) 13 On the very same day Noah and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark--

Cush, a son of Ham, begat Nimrod:

KJV (Genesis 10: 8-12) 8 And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD. 10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. 11 Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah, 12 And Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city.

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus wrote the following: 'Asshur lived in the city of Nineveh and called his subjects Assyrians' (Antiquities, i, vi, 4)

Theme; The Assyrian world power and what the report means to us in these days.

The siege of the ten-tribal kingdom of Israel



After the death of King Solomon, the Jewish nation was split and two kingdoms emerged, the southern two-tribe kingdom of Judah and the northern ten-tribe kingdom of Israel. Samaria, the city, was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. It was also the name for the area or country around the capital, just as Galilee belonged to the kingdom of Israel.

Jeroboam II, king of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel

Syria (Aram) had conquered large parts of the northern ten-tribe kingdom of Israel. The king of Israel Jeroboam II expelled the Syrians from Israel. But Assyria with its capital Nineveh also posed a threat to Israel:

NKJV (2 Kings 14: 23-25) 23 In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, became king in Samaria, and reigned forty-one years. 24 And he did evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. 25 He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hopher.

Jonah is mentioned in the above Scripture as a prophet of God from Gath Hopher. The northern ten-tribe kingdom of Israel (with its godless kings) with Samaria as capital was fully occupied by Assyria (2 Kings 17: 6) and there were many residents deported from the country of Samaria. Again later, new residents from other countries were sent to the cities of Samaria. (2 Kings 17:24)

Nineveh, the big city

Nineveh was one of the oldest and largest cities of antiquity and was located on the east bank of the river Tigris. Mosul is located on the west bank of the Tigris in northern Iraq. Nowadays, both sides of the bank are called Mosul. Nineveh was during King Sanherib from +/- 700 to 610 BC. the capital of Assyria. (Jonah 3: 6) A large part of the Middle East was in the hands of the Assyrian empire. Assyria is also called North Mesopotamia and Babylon is then called South Mesopotamia.



Nineveh (far right map) - [Wikipedia](#)

Assyrian empire - [Wikimedia](#)

The city of Nineveh was situated at a crossroad of important caravan routes and was a very large city with an area of 750 ha. Nineveh had at the time over more than 120,000 residents and much livestock. (Jonah 4:11) It was a wonderfully safe place to stay with spacious squares and roads, beautiful decorated palaces

and buildings, water features such as ponds (Nahum 2: 8), aqueducts, irrigation canals, beautiful sculpture and (hanging) gardens.

The city was heavily fortified and guarded and appeared impregnable with its great army.

Nineveh had a highly developed culture with baked clay tablets with cuneiform script.

But it also was the city of idols like the moon god Sin and the Mesopotamian mother goddess Ishtar, the goddess of fertility, with all the associated temples.



Nineveh - Mashki Gate - [Wikipedia](#)



Nineveh Flood Tablet - [Wikipedia](#)



Nineveh - [Wikimedia](#)



KUYUNJIK - [Wikimedia](#)

The assignment of Jonah

The book of Jonah starts about 800 BC.

Jonah, the son of Amittai, came as mentioned from the place Gath Hepher (2 Kgs. 14:25) near Nazareth in Galilee (the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel).

Nineveh was known for its ruthless atrocities and for its robberies.

It was for that reason called a blood city. (Nahum 3: 1)

And exactly there, the Hebrew Jonah had to preach from God.
He feared the inhabitants of that warlike metropolis and fled:

NKJV (Jonah 1 : 1-4) 1 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." 3 But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. 4 But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.

The port city Joppa lies on the coast but is now called Jaffa and is a suburb of Tel Aviv.
Tarshish or Tartessos was probably a Phoenician port city in southern Spain, a trading post.
Phenicia was a trading nation of seafarers and covered about the area of what is now Lebanon.

During the flight of Jonah a heavy storm arose at sea, so that the ship threatened to break.
Jonah stayed in the hold and was in a deep sleep.
The seamen woke him and he told them that he had fled for his God YHWH.
Jonah offered them to throw him into the sea to calm the sea: (Jonah 1:12)

NKJV (Jonah 1: 15- 17) 15 So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. 16 Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows. 17 Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

During his stay in the big fish, however, Jonah gained insight and repentance and started praying:

NKJV (Jonah 2: 9- 10) 9 But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord." 10 So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Again, Jonah was instructed to preach in Nineveh and he did as he had promised:

NKJV (Jonah 3 : 2-7) 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you." 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent. 4 And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" 5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. 6 Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. 7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water.

Forty is used in the Bible as the number of a Divine judgment or a Divine trial.
It always concerns an important event.

Such as the 40-day flood, the 40-year stay of the Israelites in the wilderness (Num. 14:33), the 40-day lying on his right side of Ezekiel for the iniquity of Jerusalem (Eze. 4: 6), the 40-day ordeal and think over from Moses (Ex. 24:18), Elijah (1 Kings 19: 8) and Jesus (Matt. 4: 2).

Jonah preached: 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!'

The inhabitants of Nineveh were given an ordeal, but they believed in the God of Jonah and all, including their king, repented deeply. They started fasting and put on mourning clothes:

NKJV (Jonah 3:10) 10 Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

Jonah had certainly expected that the Ninevites would be punished and he became angry:

NKJV (Jonah 4: 1-3) 1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. 2 So he prayed to the Lord, and said, "Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. 3 Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!"

Jonah prayed an indignant prayer. He did not understand and would rather die than be happy for the repentant Ninevites. Then Jonah left the city sulking and went to the east of the city to see what exactly would happen (after those 40 days) to Nineveh:

NKJV (Jonah 4: 6-8) 6 And the Lord God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. 7 But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. 8 And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

Possibly is meant with this plant or miracle tree a bottle gourd or else a castor tree.



Jonah seeks shelter - [Wikimedia](#)

But God let the plant or tree wither and Jonah was indignant because he was sitting in the burning sun and again, he would rather die.

God corrected Jonah about his merciless and selfish thoughts and explained to him that this plant had protected him from the sun for which he had done nothing. Would God then also not spare the repentant inhabitants of Nineveh?

NKJV (Jonah 4:11) 11 And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left--and much livestock?"

Jonah was a prophet of YHWH and had spoken his judgment message over the city of Nineveh. But YHWH is a God for both the Jews and the Gentiles. Sparing the repentant Ninevites was a sign of God's love for the converted Gentiles:

NKJV (Ezekiel 18:23, 27) 23 Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? says the Lord God, and not that he should turn from his ways and live?....27 Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive.

The sign of Jesus compared to the sign of Jonah

Jesus considered the Scribes and Pharisees adulterous because of their godless behavior towards their Creator. Jesus would only show them the sign of Jonah, three days and nights in Sheol. For Jonah, the belly of the big fish was also the grave or Sheol: (Jonah 2: 2-7)

NKJV (Matthew 12 : 38-40) 38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." 39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Then Jesus says something remarkable about the generation of Nineveh in the days of Jonah:

*KJV (Matthew 12:41) 41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; **and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here.** (see also Luke 11: 30-32)*

In the judgment the Jewish generation that lived in Jesus days will be judged, also by the converted Ninevites. The converted generation of Ninevites will receive a favorable judgment. The Jewish generation rejected more than Jonah at that time. They have rejected God's sent Son and thereby rejected the Father. Their judgment shall weigh heavily:

NKJV (1 John 2:23) 23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

NKJV (Matthew 5:20) 20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

NKJV (Matthew 8: 11-12) 11 And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. 12 But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness....

The falling away of the Ninevites

Since the conversion of the inhabitants of Nineveh around 800 BC. by Jonah there were +/- 60 years long no raids. With the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III the falling away of YHWH came and the raids came back again. Assyria became a conquering power again.

King Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria reigned from about 744 BC. up to 727 BC.

King Pekah of Israel reigned from about 737 BC. up to 732 BC. :

NKJV (2 Kings 15:29) 29 In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abel Beth Maachah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria.

King Hezekiah of Judah was a king who trusted in God and had regular contact with the prophet Isaiah. Micah and Hosea were also prophets in Hezekiah's days.

He reigned from about 715 BC. up to 687 BC.

Judah was a vassal kingdom of Assyria in those days:

Rev. (2 Kings 18: 5, 7, 13) 5 He (Hezekiah) trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him.... .. 7 The Lord was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him..... 13 And in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them.

The siege of Jerusalem and the struck down of the army of Assyria

King Hezekiah of Judah no longer wanted to be a vassal king of Assyria and to pay tribute. The King Sanherib at that time of Assyria (who reigned from about 705 BC up to 681 BC) wanted to occupy Judah with the capital Jerusalem, after the uprising of Hezekiah:

NKJV (2 Kings 18:28-30) 28 Then the (Assyrian) Rabshakeh stood and called out with a loud voice in Hebrew, and spoke, saying, "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! 29 Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you from his hand; 30 nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, "The Lord will surely deliver us; this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." ' "

Hezekiah prayed before the face of the heavenly God YHWH:

NKJV (2 Kings 19: 19- 20) 19 Now therefore, O Lord our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord God, You alone." 20 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Because you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard.'



[Louvre museum](#) Nineveh Chars Assyrians

Hezekiah encouraged the Jewish inhabitants in Jerusalem, to have trust in their God:

NKJV (2 Chronicles 32: 7-8) 7 "Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid nor dismayed before the king of Assyria, nor before all the multitude that is with him; for there are more with us than with him. 8 With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles." And the people were strengthened by the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

The prophet Isaiah sent the following prophecy to Hezekiah:

NKJV (2 Kings 19: 32-34) 32 "Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria: 'He shall not come into this city, Nor shoot an arrow there, Nor come before it with shield, Nor build a siege mound against it. 33 By the way that he came, By the same shall he return; And he shall not come into

this city,' Says the Lord. 34 'For I will defend this city, to save it For My own sake and for My servant David's sake.' "

For David's sake, we will return to this later in the article.

That night the angel of the Lord struck down **185,000 Assyrians**:

*NKJV (2 Kings 19: 35-37) 35 And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians **one hundred and eighty-five thousand**; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses--all dead. 36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh. 37 Now it came to pass, as he was worshiping in the temple of Nisroch his god, that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword;....*

In Isaiah 10: 5-6, Zephaniah 2: 12-15 and Nahum 1: 12-14, 2: 1-13, 3: 1-7, the fall of Assyria and the destruction of Nineveh are prophesied.

By mainly the Medes and Babylonians, Nineveh was conquered around 612 BC.

After Assyria, Babylon became the new world power where the Jewish people had to deal with.

For My own sake and for My servant David's sake

NKJV (2 Kings 19:34) 34 'For I will defend this city, to save it For My own sake and for My servant David's sake.'

That night, the angel of the Lord struck down **185,000 Assyrian men**.

As predicted in the Old Testament (See: 1. Prince of Peace <https://www.dojc.nl/?p=7098&lang=en>)
Jesus will be Prince of Peace in God's kingdom on the new earth:

NKJV (Jeremiah 33: 15) 15 'In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David A Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.

NKJV (Ezekiel 37: 24) 24 David My servant shall be king over them....

NKJV (Revelation 22: 16) 16 I, Jesus,.... I am the Root and the Offspring of David....

When David - the Prince of Peace Jesus - will reign, something similar will happen. Then the attack of Gog and Magog (God's opponents) on Jerusalem will take place. During their second chance after 1000 years, many will choose Satan's side again. (Eze. 38: 10-16) (Rev. 20: 8-9)
(For Gog and Magog see: 9. The visions of Ezekiel <https://www.dojc.nl/?p=3976&lang=en>)
God (YHWH) has given His word that the New Jerusalem will be protected.

Finally:

Just as Jonah became angry when the residents of Nineveh repented, we should not be disappointed if things evolve differently than we expect.

Jonah had expected Divine intervention and not Divine love for Gentiles.

When others - people with a dubious reputation - repent, we too should have joy:

NKJV (Luke 15: 7) 7 I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

We are urged to do our utmost to warn sinners in the footsteps of Jonah and especially of Jesus, so that they may repent:

NKJV (Ezekiel 33: 8-9) 8 When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die!' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I

will require at your hand. 9 Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.

The falling away of Nineveh is also a depiction of the destruction of today's Christian apostates. That was also the case for the residents in Nineveh after +/- 60 years, after they had converted. In Isaiah 10: 5-6, the fall and destruction of Assyria is foretold by God:

NKJV (Isaiah 10: 5-6) 5 "Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger And the staff in whose hand is My indignation. 6 I will send him against an ungodly nation, And against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, To seize the spoil, to take the prey, And to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

Just as God destroyed the corrupted people on earth with a flood, similarly, the apostates and wicked ones will be destroyed on the last day:

NKJV (Genesis 6: 11-13) 11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. 13 And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

NKJV (Revelation 19:15) 15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

God's patience and goodness are not unlimited concerning godless people:

NKJV (Psalm 37: 10-11) 10 For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it shall be no more. 11 But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

For Christians, God's day means an end to wickedness, a day of deliverance:

NKJV (Micah 7: 4-7) 4The day of your watchman and your punishment comes; Now shall be their perplexity. 5 Do not trust in a friend; Do not put your confidence in a companion; Guard the doors of your mouth From her who lies in your bosom. 6 For son dishonors father, Daughter rises against her mother, Daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; A man's enemies are the men of his own household. 7 Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; My God will hear me.

P.S. On the site [Disciples of Jesus Christ](#) there are more substantive Christian articles.