

JONAH: RUNAWAY PROPHET
THE PATRIOTIC PROPHET

Tuesday, June 23

Reading: Jonah 1:1-3

Jonah 1:1 *But The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before Me."*

God's commission to Jonah is unique among Israel's prophets. While other prophets delivered messages of judgment against the surrounding nations, Jonah is the only prophet who is instructed to actually go to another country with God's word.

Nineveh was the capital city of the mighty Assyrian empire. It is appropriate that God calls it "the great city." It was great in size! Archaeology confirms that Nineveh was about 350 square miles with 100-foot walls wide enough to race chariots. It had an estimated population of 600,000 people. Nineveh was also great in wickedness! Ancient records record the cruelty and viciousness of the Assyrian empire. They mercilessly slaughtered their enemies and mutilated any survivors without pity. Jonah may have experienced some of this firsthand as he lived on the fringes of Israel's northern border. Though recently the Assyrians had lost some influence through internal struggles and natural disasters, they were still a frightening threat to Israel and the surrounding nations.

Jonah wanted no part in God's mission to Nineveh! Perhaps he feared what the people of Nineveh would do to an Israelite prophet proclaiming doom for their city. He might have also worried what his own people would think of his going to enemy territory. Would they think he was a traitor? More than these, Jonah was not as afraid of what people would do as he was afraid of what God might do! Even though it was a message of judgment, the prophet knew that God would forgive these wicked people if they responded in repentance (4:2). Jonah was a patriot. Destruction is what the Assyrians deserved.

Too many "Christians" today have a similar attitude! They are so emersed in their political philosophy and patriotism that they hate those who oppose their country or their views. Instead of seeing them as people who need Christ, they see them as enemies to be destroyed! While it is not wrong to be patriotic, we must also remember that we are citizens of God's kingdom FIRST. God's will and call override any earthly connections we might have. How can you better see people as Jesus sees them?

Jonah had many excuses for not going to Nineveh, but only one reason to go: God had told him to go! Jonah was running away from God's will and disobeying God's direct command. He deserted his responsibility as a spokesman for God and tried to run away.

Many believers today try to use Jonah's excuses for not obeying God and being His witnesses. They are afraid of what people might think of them or how it will affect their reputation. They declare it is too hard and they can't do it. All our excuses are no better than Jonah's!

How have you "run away" from God?

What will you do to stop making excuses and do what God has called you to do?