

RUSSELL SANDERS
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JONAH PART 17
CH. 3 VS. 3

Jonah 3:3 says, ***“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, after his ordeal, obeyed God’s call by traveling a great distance from the Mediterranean coast to Nineveh. It was several hundred miles inland that he was sent to preach to a people he despised so greatly, that he had initially refused to go to them.

Why did he hate them so much? (Note: never tell God what you will not do. It doesn’t work.) Nineveh was the capitol of the vast Assyrian empire, the largest and strongest ruling empire of the world. Prior to King David, Babylon had been powerful, but they began to lose power during David’s reign. David’s defeat of the King of Zobah (Assyrian area just north of Babylon) and their ally, Syria, actually protected Assyria and allowed their rise to power from the end of Solomon’s reign and Jeroboam’s ascension (about 975 B.C.) until their fall about 612 B.C.

During Assyria’s empire, they were the fiercest warriors in the known world of that time. They were also extremely cruel. They were known to skin their prisoners alive, or to cut off their hands, feet, noses, or ears, put out their eyes, or pull out their tongues. They also made mounds of human skulls, all this to inspire terror. (Halley’s Bible Handbook: Assyria.)

They would also remove conquered people from their native land and resettle them into other countries. This gave them better control and eliminated resistance from a conquered people. This is exactly what happened when Assyria (Nineveh) conquered Israel (Samaria, the ten northern kingdoms) in 721-722 B.C. and resettled pagans from other lands into Israel. That is why Judah, the two southern kingdoms (Jerusalem, its capitol) so despised the “mixed breed” people of Samaria in Jesus’ time.

The Assyrian capitol of Nineveh was a huge city. The main part of Nineveh “proper” was three miles long and a mile and a half wide with a population of 120,000. However, “greater” Nineveh was much larger. It extended twenty miles further south to Calah and another ten miles north to Khorsabad, a stretch extending Nineveh to at least 33 miles.

You can see why Jonah had ill feelings for the Ninevites and why it took him three days just to walk from one end to the other end as he preached.

The Jews thought that God only loved them, and anyone who would convert to Judaism. Jonah’s commission showed that God loves everyone, even those that are the most evil.

You and I are to love others as God loved us. Ask yourself, “Do I love everyone? Is there anybody that I do not love?” If your answer to the second question is “yes,” then you must ask God to give you His supernatural ability to love whoever it is...His “agape” love. You cannot go to heaven to receive a reward with hate in your heart. Jesus’ commandment in John 13:34 is ***“That you love one another.”***