

READING PLAN WEEK 3 for **The Epic of Eden – Jonah**

Word from the Author: “As for the prophets, they of all the Old Testament characters could explain to us the work of the Holy Spirit, for they all tell us the same tale. Upon their commission, each is caught up into the royal throne room of God, each overhears the deliberations of His divine council, and each receives their commission to speak on His behalf. Indeed, Jeremiah gives voice to Yahweh’s lament. ‘But if they [the false prophets] had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people.” (Jer 23:22). Each of these is “raised up” by the power of the Holy Spirit and, as promised in Deuteronomy 18:18, becomes the mouthpiece of God.”

Day #1: Read 2 Kings 14:23-26 and Jonah 1:1. Make note of all the named characters in the Kings section of scripture. Note that Jonah is included in this cast. Reflecting on Jonah 1:1, what does this tell us about the original audience’s view of Jonah’s historicity? Pause over the fact that Jonah is recorded to have had a career in Jeroboam II’s kingdom and was involved in a significant military victory in Israel’s national history. Jonah must have done MANY things in the course of his career, yet only one aspect of his prophetic ministry ends up in the ancient scriptures. What do you think this tells us about this one episode in Jonah’s life?

Day #2: To get an idea of the massive scale of the Assyrian Empire’s overthrow of nations which it conquered, conscripted, and ravaged financially, have a look at any two or more of the following accounts: **2 Kings 15:17-20, 2 Kings 16:5-9, 2 Kings 18:9-12 or 2 Kings 18:13-16.** During Jonah’s time, the Neo-Assyrian Empire was the formidable political and military power of the region. Consider for a moment any despotic and aspiring nation today (like ISIS, for example). This is the kind of people to whom Jonah is being called to share the gospel. How would you react if God asked you to do something similar?

Day #3: Read Jonah 1:2, Jonah 3:1-3 and Jonah 4:11. What is the reputation and nature of the city of Nineveh? Once more, ask yourself about the thoughts a called and Godly man like Jonah would have about entering Nineveh as a sole (unaccompanied) missionary. Besides its moral failings, he had every reason to fear and even hate his target audience.

This week’s reflection question: It can be easy to criticize Jonah for his fearfulness in approaching the Ninevites of the Assyrian people group until you look more closely at their nature and the real threat they presented not only to Jonah, but the entire Northern and Southern Kingdom of Israel. In your devotional time this week, ask God to help you to understand the fullness of His directive to the prophet Jonah. If you can manage it, ask God to show you with more clarity the things He may have asked you to do, things which may have challenged your sensibilities – even in small ways. Seek His heart in understanding what He had in mind with those urges or requests and, whether you acted on them or not, how He saw your role as His emissary in those situations.

