

1. As we come to chapter 3 - Jonah obeys God and preaches in Nineveh, and the greatest miracle in the book takes place: the repentance of an entire nation to God.
2. Jonah finds himself on dry land. Verses 1 and 2 do not mention his emotional state, so we are left to our imagination.
3. In a sense Jonah was back to where he began. However, the Jonah in chap. 3 is somewhat different from the person found in chap. 1.
4. We also see that verse 2 is almost identical to 1:2 except for the final clause. It uses the same three words; "arise, go ... preach/proclaim."
5. But in 1:2 the reason for Jonah's mission is given, while in 3:2 the emphasis is on delivering the message from God.
6. The first half of v. 3 stands in stark contrast to 1:3, which begins literally with, "So Jonah rose" and continues with, "to flee to Tarshish from before Yahweh."
7. Then 3:3 continues with, "and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord."
8. The last time God called, Jonah headed west. This time in response to God's call he headed northeast.
9. Depending upon Jonah's starting place, the trip to Nineveh would have been approximately five hundred land miles. According to the usual manner of transport (camel or donkey caravan), it would have taken approximately one month to travel this distance. Going by foot would have taken even longer.
10. On his first day he began preaching (v.4). Jonah's arrival in Nineveh probably was dramatic. His clothing was no doubt different from the norm, his bearing gave evidence of a different lifestyle, and a possibly bleached skin color provided for much attention.
11. This passage refers to the seriousness of sin as well as the certainty of God's judgment. Nineveh was an exceedingly wicked and violent city, and this did not escape God's notice.
12. The people of Nineveh were given time, forty days, to recognize the seriousness of the situation and to repent.
13. Beginning in verse 5 - we are given a summary of Nineveh's response to the warning of Jonah.
14. His message, heard by many and no doubt shared with others, spread to every part of the city.
15. Not only did they hear his message, they believed that it was a serious one - the residents of Nineveh sought to avert their destruction.
16. The Ninevites' reaction is seen in the three verbs: "believed ... proclaimed ... put on."

17. Jesus' words in Luke 11:32, that "they repented at the preaching of Jonah" with the result that they will be present at the judgment condemning those who rejected Jesus' preaching.
18. It is hard, then, to deny that at least some of the Ninevites must have been genuine.
19. We only know that the depth of the repentance was sufficient for God to the pending judgment.
20. Why the sackcloth and ashes in verse 6? It was well known that fasting was a symbol for the affliction of the soul or for intense mourning of the heart.
21. The previous verse (v6) shows the personal response of the ruler of Nineveh. Notice as verse 7 and 8 further details the official response.
22. By the issuing of a proclamation the king added official sanction to that which already was underway. In other words - the decree of the king amounted to a royal seal of approval on what had already occurred spontaneously throughout the city. It became a part of official government policy.
23. The inclusion of animals shows again the earnest, almost desperate, plea of the Ninevites. Outwardly, it sounds even more unusual to require animals to wear sackcloth than it did to require them to fast (v. 7). But - this odd behavior was not uncommon in ancient cultures.
24. These words of the king in verse 9 echo those of the ship's captain in 1:6.
25. Notice the word "repent/relent" in verse 9 and 10. Here and in its two other uses in Jonah (3:10; 4:2) it refers to "divine actions that are contemplated but are never fulfilled."
26. In this chapter God decided that in light of Nineveh's turning, He would spare them rather than follow through on previous announcement to destroy them.
27. We can only imagine the anxiety present in Nineveh at this point. There was hope but there was no guarantee that God would relent and turn from His fierce anger and spare Nineveh.
28. Finally in verse 10 - the Ninevites' repentance is explicitly related to God's mercy. The Ninevites' "turning" from "evil" led to God's "turning" from "evil."
29. However - as prophesied by Nahum - Nineveh later experienced total destruction.
30. The very thought of God "changing his mind" causes difficulty for some believers. In perfect consistency with His justice, righteousness, and mercy, He spared Nineveh.
31. There is absolutely no contradiction here. God's character and His promises do not change. (Numbers 23:19). But there are many other verses show that God does change His plan of action according to His purposes.