

JONAH HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

“²⁵He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher. ²⁶For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel. ²⁷And the LORD said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash. ²⁸Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he warred, and how he recovered Damascus, and Hamath, which belonged to Judah, for Israel, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?” (2Ki.14:25-28)

EARLY ASSYRIA

- Earlier the Assyrians had established supremacy in the Near East including securing tribute from King Jehu.
- Assyria defeated the Arameans but suffered a decline because of internal dissension. Israel had been reduced in territory. Even the King of Damascus was involved with internal affairs in the Northern Kingdom (2Ki.13:7).

JEROBOAM II

- Jeroboam II was the most powerful king of the Northern Kingdom (2Ki.14:23-29). He was not a good king, but God used him to rescue Israel by giving him victory in war (2Ki.14:27-28).
- Jeroboam was able to expand Israel's territories north 120 miles beyond Damascus (Hamath), and south to the Arabah near the Dead Sea.

JONAH

- Jonah lived and ministered during the reign of King Jeroboam II (2Ki.14:23-29). This was a difficult time for Israel. He prophesied that Israel would expand her boundaries under the leadership of the king. The prophecy was fulfilled. This made Jonah very popular. Also Elisha spoke to the King of Israel concerning future victories over Syria (2Ki.13:14-19).

ISRAEL'S ATTITUDE

- The people viewed Israel's expansion as evidence that God was on their side. Israel became complacent with her status with God (Am.6:1).
- While Amos and Hosea were pronouncing a message of judgment upon Israel by Assyria, God was sending Jonah to Nineveh to warn of imminent danger of divine judgment (Jonah).
- Israel expected the “Day of the Lord” (Am.5:18-20) when God would overtake the other nations leaving Israel alone. Business and trade brought prosperity similar to the days of Solomon. They had much optimism about the future, and started over her new found power.
- Contemporary with Jonah was Hosea and Amos. They did not have such a popular message for Israel. Hosea prophesied they would be captured by Assyria (Ho.11:5). Plus Amos also said they would go into captivity (Am.5:27).

LATER ASSYRIA

- There was another nation that also was expanding its territory, power, and might. That nation was Assyria. Earlier under King Ahab, Assyria lost in battle to Israel at the battle of Qarqar in 853BC. A few years later, under King Jehu (842-815BC) he joined forces with Assyria and paid tribute to King Shalmaneser III. By the time of Jonah, Israel freed themselves from Assyrian dominance and did not want to return to it. They believed God would not let a wicked nation like Assyria prosper. They were known for worshiping false gods, and were brutal.

HISTORICAL BOOKS RELATIONSHIP

