

## Obadiah - Jonah

*This is part of an ongoing series of short articles designed to help us understand what scripture is and what is **in** each book of scripture. Previous articles can be found at [www.openarms-communityofchrist.org](http://www.openarms-communityofchrist.org).*

**Obadiah** is the shortest book in the Hebrew scriptures, only 21 verses long. Nothing is known about Obadiah himself and not much more about when the book was written.

Some scholars think that instead of writing the whole book himself, Obadiah may have drawn upon collections of sayings that were transmitted orally among prophetic circles. However, the entire book is dominated by a theme of justice and judgment and so may actually be the writing of one individual.

The book begins with judgment on the Edomites for their behavior when Israel was in peril. It then moves to looking at the future, with God's judgment upon the nations and closes with the promise of Israel's return from exile to the Promised Land and God's sovereignty.

**Jonah** is perhaps one of the most popular of the prophetic books with its story of a prophet running from God's call and being swallowed by a large fish before ultimately responding to God's call.

The book contains no preaching against Israel and foreign nations. Instead, it's a story which may draw upon popular legend, reshaping it to call Israel to repentance and its mission to preach to **all nations** the message of God's mercy and forgiveness.

Jonah is not necessarily a "nice" character. When God first calls him to preach against the city of Nineveh, he runs away to sea—but when a storm arises, he does acknowledge to the other sailors that it's probably because of his running. He is thrown overboard and swallowed by a great fish for three days and nights; during this time he repents of his running away, and God causes the fish to throw Jonah onto dry land. He then goes to Nineveh to warn them of God's coming wrath and is successful in calling them to repentance. When he understands that God is not going to destroy Nineveh because of their change, Jonah becomes angry and sulks.

God shelters him with a bush briefly until it is destroyed by a worm. Again, Jonah sulks, but God teaches Jonah a lesson about God's love and grace, telling him that God has concern for all of creation and therefore it is in God's nature to show grace and love to all who repent.