Author: Jonah - His name means "Dove"
Jonah son of Amittai (1:1). He was from Gath Hepher (2 Kings 14:25). Gath Hepher was three miles north of Nazareth in lower Galilee. Jesus confirms the story of Jonah in Matthew 12:39-41 (see also Luke 11:29-31 & Matt. 16:4)

Date: 780-753 (2 Kings 14:25 indicates Jonah prophesied during Jeroboam II’s reign)

Contemporaries: Amos, Hosea. (Reign of Jeroboam II)

Theme: God's fathomless mercy extends to all those who repent and turn.

Setting: Israel under Jeroboam II was enjoying a period of prosperity after the many bleak years they had endured. Nationalistic fever may have been high. Assyria was in a period of mild decline due to weak rulers, but they were still a threat. Assyrian cruelty had already become legendary. Their own records from the 9th - 7th centuries B.C. give graphic account of their cruel treatment of captives. The repentance of Ninevah (capital city of Assyria) probably occurred in the reign of Ashurdan III (773-775 B.C.). Historians mark two plagues (765 & 759) and a solar eclipse (763) and events that may have prepared the people for Jonah's message.

Outline:
I. God's Mercy upon Jonah. 1-2
   A. Jonah and the Sea (1) (I won't go)
   B. Jonah and the Fish (2) (I will go)
II. God's Mercy upon Nineveh. 3-4
   A. Jonah in the City (3) (Here I am)
   B. Jonah under the gourd (4) (I shouldn't have come)

Key verses
Jonah 2:8 (NASB) "Those who regard vain idols Forsake their faithfulness, 9 But I will sacrifice to Thee with the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the Lord."
Jonah 4:2 (NASB) And he prayed to the Lord and said, "Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my [own] country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.

Possibilities for the fish appointed to swallowed Jonah: Whale Sharks: canis carcharias (a sea dog), squalus carcharias (a sea dog), = carchorodon carchairias, or a cachalot (Sperm Whale). All are common to the area and capable of swallowing a human whole. See The Sign of the Prophet Jonah and Its Modern Confirmations” by John Wilson, Princeton Theological Review, Oct. 1927, pp. 630-642. See also Jonah & Micah, J. Vernon McGee, LaVerne, El Camion Press, 1979, p. 41
Detailed Outline of Jonah

I. God’s Mercy upon Jonah (1-2)
   A. Jonah and the Sea 1 (I won't go)
      1. Jonah Is Disobedient to First Call (vs. 1-3)

      2. Jonah is judged (vs. 4-17)
         a. The Great Storm (vs. 4-16)
         b. The Great Fish (vs. 17)

   B. Jonah and the Fish 2 (I will go)
      1. Jonah’s Prayer (vs. 1-9)

      2. Jonah's Deliverance (vs. 10)

II. God’s Mercy upon Nineveh (3-4)
   A. Jonah in the City 3 (Here I am)
      1. Jonah is Obedient to Second Call (vs. 1-4)

      2. Judgment of Ninevah Averted (vs. 5-10)
         a. Their Repentance (vs. 5-9)
         b. God’s Mercy (vs. 10)

   B. Jonah under the gourd 4 (I shouldn't have come)
      1. Jonah’s Displeasure (vs. 1-3)

      2. Jonah is Rebuked (vs. 4-11)