

The Truest Fish Story Ever Told Jonah 1 and 2



THE TRUEST FISH STORY EVER TOLD

Jonah 1-2

PURPOSE: To study how a man should never run from God's call, but should be obedient to it.

I. THE CALL 1:1-2

II. THE FLIGHT 1:3-11

III. THE PUNISHMENT 1:12-17

IV. THE SURRENDER AND RELEASE 2:1-10

INTRODUCTION: This book of Jonah was written about 782 BC. Jonah pronounced judgment upon Nineveh.

Obadiah was written about 845 BC. He pronounced judgment upon Edom.

Joel was written about 835 BC. He pronounced judgment upon Judah with the plague of locusts.

Nahum prophesied about 150 years after Jonah, during the reign of Hezekiah. He prophesied the destruction of Nineveh, which happened about 100 years later.

2 Kings records that Jonah had been a successful prophet in the days of Jeroboam, king of Israel.

2 Kings 14:25 "He 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."

God called him to warn Nineveh of coming destruction.

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Nineveh was a Gentile city.

It was an important city to the Assyrian powers.

It was a threat to Israel.

It was known for its violence.

Jonah was a bigoted Jew who wanted the city of Nineveh destroyed.

The Jews had no vision for the Gentiles getting saved.

The book of Jonah is one of miracles; therefore liberals do not believe it.

Jesus proved it is true by His acceptance of the book.

Matthew 12:38-41 "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. 39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."

Matthew 16:4 "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed."

The book of Jonah is filled with miracles:

1. The storm.
2. The selection by lot of Jonah's guilt.
3. The preparation of the great fish.
4. The sudden subsiding of the storm.

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5. The great fish appearing at just the right time.
6. The preservation of Jonah.
7. The ejection of Jonah from the fish at the right time.
8. The gourd plant.
9. The worm.
10. The east wind.
11. The repentance of the city.

I. THE CALL 1:1-2

v.1- Jonah received a call distinctly from God.

v.2- Jonah was called by God to go to Nineveh and warn them that God was about to destroy their city because of its wickedness.

Nineveh was founded in Genesis 11 by the wicked Nimrod.

It eventually became the capital of Assyria.

II. THE FLIGHT 1:3-11

v.3- Twice it is repeated in this verse that Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord.

Jonah hated the Gentile Assyrians and wanted God to judge them.

He was not about to go there and preach to them.

He ran from the call of God.

It is a serious thing to run from God's call.

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Nineveh was northeast of Israel while Tarshish was west.

Most believe that Tarshish was in southern Spain.

Jonah's motive for fleeing is found in Jonah 4:2.

Jonah 4:2 "And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for **I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.**"

He was afraid the pagan Gentiles in Nineveh would repent and God would not destroy them.

v.4- The **storm** was a **miracle** sent by God.

God is in control of all weather and He had a purpose in placing this ship in jeopardy.

v.5- The sailors knew this was not a normal storm and their very ship was in danger of sinking.

1. The sailors prayed to their idol gods for deliverance.
2. They started throwing things out of the ship to lighten it.

Jonah was so tired from running from God that he fell asleep during the storm.

He may have been depressed and it may be he did not care if he died anyway.

v.6- The captain of the ship woke Jonah up and asked him to pray to his God that they would be spared.

He did not believe in Jonah's God but believed there were many gods so one more would not hurt when they needed help.

What a shame for a pagan to have to ask a believer to pray!

v.7- Like so many times in life they tried to decide whom to blame.

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Of course we know that Jonah was to blame.

It was a common Old Testament practice to cast lots to determine a decision.

Even believers did this to determine the will of God before the Holy Spirit came in the New Testament.

Proverbs 16:33 "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD."

THE LOT FELL ON JONAH AS THE CAUSE OF THE STORM!

v.8- The unbelievers demanded a confession from the believer.

What did he do that caused this judgment from his God?

What was his occupation?

Where did he come from?

What country was he from?

What was his nationality?

v.9- Jonah admitted he was a Hebrew, or Jew.

He admitted he served the God that created all things.

Therefore, he had to admit that his God had produced this storm.

Jonah was to blame.

v.10- Jonah had admitted to them that this storm was because he was running away from God.

They wanted to know why he had done this or why did he not correct the situation.

They feared Jonah's God more than Jonah did.

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v.11- They wanted to know what could be done to appease Jonah's God to end the storm.

III. THE PUNISHMENT 1:12-17

v.12- Jonah admitted his guilt.

He really was a real man of God.

He volunteered to have them cast him into the sea.

He knew that if he were not in the boat the storm would calm.

v.13- These men had more compassion on one man than Jonah had for a city of 120,000 people.

These men were not anxious to throw Jonah overboard.

They made one last attempt to row to shore.

v.14- They were not believers but since Jonah's God caused this storm they cried out to him to solve this problem.

They were the innocent bystanders (innocent blood) so why should Jonah's God punish them?

They did not think it fair that they die for this guilty man.

v.15- When they could not row to shore they gave in and threw Jonah overboard.

Another miracle happened.

THE SEA WAS INSTANTLY CALM.

v.16- It would appear that these heathen men became believers of Jonah's God.

1. They offered sacrifices.
2. They made vows to serve God.

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v.17- Now we see the fourth miracle.

GOD PREPARED A GREAT FISH to swallow Jonah as he was thrown overboard.

The Old Testament says "great fish".

The New Testament says "whale" but the word means "huge fish". Matthew 12:40

Some believe it was the whale shark, which attains a size of 30 feet or more.

There are traces of a once larger species which swallowed things whole.

They have found horses, sea calves the size of an ox and even men in them. Even a man in a coat of steel mail was found in one of these whale sharks.

In 1758, a sailor fell overboard and was swallowed by one.

They fired a shot.

The "whale" spit him out.

Then they harpooned the shark. The man traveled all over Europe showing the shark, which was over 20 feet long.

In 1891 a Spermaceti whale was killed and cut up and an unconscious sailor was found inside.

One thing I would make clear is that I only site these examples to show that such a story as Jonah being swallowed by a great fish is not preposterous but is a scientific reality. Actually I believe we do not have to explain it scientifically but simply accept the fact that the whole thing was a series of miracles done by a sovereign God who is the Creator. As the Creator He can change the laws of nature any time He so chooses. He created the great fish and He caused it to swallow Jonah as well as preserving Jonah's life for three days.

IV. THE SURRENDER AND RELEASE 2:1-10

v.1- There are some who believe that Jonah died in the great fish and was resurrected three days later to be a true picture of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

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This seems to indicate the opposite, that he was very much alive, and began to pray for God's deliverance.

Jonah began to pray to the LORD HIS GOD!

v.2- His affliction was being in the stomach of the great fish.

He cried out to God and the Lord heard him.

He compared being in the belly of the great fish to being in Sheol, the place of torment.

This is where some get the idea that he was actually dead and in "sheol".

v.3- This is a very vivid description of being in the belly of the great fish rather than a description of being in "sheol".

Every time the fish opened its mouth he was flooded with water.

v.4- This describes an act of repentance.

He was out of God's sight, or God had turned His back on him.

He promised to look to Jerusalem and God's holy temple.

I believe this to be an act of repentance, turning back to God.

When he fled at Joppa he was not praying and talking to the Lord.

Now he was back to praying and communicating with God.

v.5- Again we have a very vivid picture of being in the belly of the great fish rather than being in Sheol.

The water was all around him.

Seaweeds were wrapped around his head.

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v.6- He was at the bottom of the sea.

He probably could feel the pressure as the fish descended into the lower parts of the sea.

He does give God the credit for bringing him up out of corruption.

v.7- When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord:

Jonah had to get to the bottom before he looked up.

When he fainted then he turned to the Lord.

Many times people have to really get down before they turn to the Lord.

and my prayer came in unto thee, into thy holy temple.

In the belly of the great fish God heard him.

It almost appears that from time to time he fainted and when he would come to again he would pray.

v.8- This is probably referring to idol worship as "lying vanities".

Those who worshipped dead idols would abandon them when in a crisis like Jonah was.

Jonah, on the other hand, did not abandon His God but in this crisis actually turned to God.

Each time he awoke from fainting he would pray.

v.9- He had vowed to be a prophet.

He had broken his vow to God.

Now he renewed his vow.

He gave God thanksgiving.

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He praised God for salvation, or deliverance.

No matter if he died or came out alive, he praised God for salvation.

v.10- The sixth miracle took place.

It is important to note what it says, "THE LORD SPAKE UNTO THE FISH".

God created the great fish, caused him to be there to swallow Jonah, and now commands the great fish to vomit Jonah up on DRY LAND.

None of this was an accident.

God listened to Jonah's prayer of repentance and He answered it.

God spared Jonah alive and put him out of the fish and on to dry land.