

JONAH CHAPTER 1. JONAH BECOMES AN INFLUENCER AND WINS SUBSCRIBERS!



WEEKLY
CHRISTIAN
FOCUS

What is it about us as believers that fascinates us about Jonah and the 'Whale/Big Fish?

He disobeyed God, got in a storm and got swallowed by a whale, and reluctantly went to Nineveh, against his own better judgement.

Is that all? Well, it does make for pretty good reading, as thousands of generations of both children and adults have found out since then!

But I have a different take on Jonah! Today I was reading or exhorting about Jonah with my son before school, and guess what?! I felt the Lord telling me a whole new angle I never saw before. I pray and believe this will be an encouragement to you. Today I am only dealing with chapter 1, which is only 17 verses, and that will certainly be enough food for thought for this week, I do believe. Let's go!

First, we should remember, that God knew Jonah before he was born. He watched him grow up and saw all his idiosyncrasies as a child and a teen and as an adult. God knew the person he had chosen to be His Prophet. And we know, God does not make mistakes, and if He can choose Jonah, then He can certainly choose you. God had a special mission for Jonah, just as He does for you and each one of us.



1 Now the word of the LORD came to ¹Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, **2** "Go to ²Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim [judgment] against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me."

Can't be a clearer command in the Bible to an individual than that!

3 But Jonah ran away to Tarshish to escape from the presence of the LORD [and his duty as His prophet]. *(the wrong kind of escaping. I have done that, have you?)*

He went down to ³Joppa and found a ship going to ⁴Tarshish [the most remote of the Phoenician trading cities]. So he paid the fare and went down into the ship to go with them to Tarshish away from the presence of the LORD.

I distinctly remember a time in Toronto, Canada, when my regional, and very Godly Pastor, wanted to visit me and 'have a chat with me' about some possible disobediences to the Word of God in my ministry as a city pastor. I actually went out of the back door

*while he was coming in the front door! (I was 29-30 years old at the time) Of course, in the long run, this did me no good whatsoever, and I had to retake all my spiritual exams until I learned (if ever,) to 'obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves for they watch for your souls') **Hebrews 13:17***

Jonah in fact, in a moment, or a habit, of rebellion and do-my-own-thingi-ness, went the opposite direction. What is it in us, that does that? We all do it at some point! I believe anyway!

4 But the LORD hurled a great wind toward the sea, and there was a violent tempest on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. **5** Then the sailors were afraid, and each man cried out to his god; and to lighten the ship [and diminish the danger] they threw the ship's cargo into the sea. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship and had lain down and was sound asleep. **6** So the captain came up to him and said, "How can you stay asleep? Get up! Call on your god! Perhaps your god will give a thought to us so that we will not perish."

Well, God is not mocked. God really wanted His message



delivered to Nineveh.

The message was; 'Repent of your violence and Global wickedness or you will be destroyed in 40 days!'

Simple message, right. Anyone of us could do that, couldn't we? But listen, there were a lot of other people involved in our disobedience to the Lord. We are not an island. Jonah was not an island.

7 And they said to another, "Come, let us cast lots, ⁵so we may learn who is to blame for this disaster." So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.

And that was the way they decided stuff in those days. It worked out very well in this situation!

8 Then they said to him, "Now tell us! ⁶Who is to blame for this disaster? What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country?" 9 So he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I [reverently] fear and worship the LORD, the God of heaven, ⁷ [who made the sea and the dry land." *Jonah begins witnessing to them all.*

10 Then the men became extremely frightened and said to him, "**How could you do this?**" For the men knew that he was running from the presence of the LORD, ⁸because he had told them. *Jonah had already told them he was backsliding from God! We can't keep it inside of us as true believers when we do something wrong! **You will notice the people of that age, unlike today, knew when something was a really terrible sin or mistake. Today we have to have lawyers, solicitors and barristers to do it, on both sides.***

11 Then they said to him, "What should we do to you, so that the sea will become calm for us?"—for the sea was becoming more and more violent. 12 Jonah said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that it is because of me that this

great storm has come upon you."

Jonah was intrinsically telling these dear sailors, who were not part of God's people, that they should kill him. That was the end result really. Of course we can say it in a nicer way, like; 'oh, just throw me overboard' we may not use use harsh language like 'kill me'.

By God's grace, I will write something about this shortly where our last landlords in the UK decided to come back to their home, after three years, and make my son and I homeless. Of course they didn't use those words, like 'you will be homeless, if **you** can't find another place. You will live in a damp mouldy hotel or bedsit while we we retake possession of this beautiful house, but that is the way it's going to be. Yes, I know we are respected white Christian Pastors, but ultimately we own this house, so goodbye to you, even though you are supposed to be our brethren in the Lord'. So much of this iniquity goes on in this world each day, it is all in how we use our words, and spin them.

'First you gotta learn how to smile as you kill' It's a famous song. Check it out. Well, I digress. Let's go back to the main point of this excellent chapter.

13 Nevertheless, the men rowed hard [breaking through the waves] to return to land, but they could not, because the sea became even more violent



[surging higher] against them. 14 Then they called on the LORD and said, "Please, O LORD, do not let us perish because of taking this man's life, and do not make us accountable for innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as You pleased."

The precious sailors tried their best, they did what they could, they were completely righteous in the eyes of the Lord, and did whatever they could to avoid making Jonah homeless, or thrown into the sea. God bless them.

15 So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. 16 Then the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

The sailors even committed themselves, it seems clear from these verses, to the One true God, they made vows and oaths to Him and feared Him. This was truly life changing event for them, because they saw the MIRACLE that God did in calming the sea after such a prolonged period where they even feared they were going to die. They knew then that what Jonah, the Prophet of God had said was true, even in his terrible back slidden condition, that if they would throw him overboard, they would be safe. **Jonah had won new believers for the True God in this situation.**

They would undoubtedly go back to their countries and share what they had seen with many people and it would spread across the countries they lived in. In fact, it was testimony and God was glorified even in this time of Jonah's disobedience. Because all things work together for them who love God! Romans 8:28. Did Jonah love God? Yes, he did in a kind of strange unusual way that is similar to how many of us are! **We finally obey God.** We have our quirks, our foibles and great sins, but eventually God knows we will do the right thing. And that's why

God kept faith with Jonah! How about you?

May the Lord bless you this week. Don't let the Devil tell you God can't use you despite of your sins past present and future. God keeps Faith with you. Jesus said, and I do love this: 'I an with you ALWAYS even unto the end of the world'. It's only the devil and our carnal mind that would tell us anything different. Stand back this week and see what God will do for you dear friend, amen?

17 Now the LORD had prepared (appointed, destined) a great ⁹ fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the stomach of the fish ¹⁰three days and three nights.

And that is the end of the chapter.



The fish is coming. God had prepared it. He has faith for the next step of your life. Amen?



[Where was Nineveh and why was it famous?](#)

Nineveh was on the east bank of the Tigris in ancient Assyria, across the river from the

modern city of Mosul, Iraq. Settlement at Nineveh first occurred by about 6000 BC, and by

2000 BC the city was a center of worship of the fertility goddess Ishtar.

Love in Christ

Jerry for the WCF TEAM

Footnotes

1 Jonah 1:1 Jonah, the only prophet known to attempt to run away from a divinely appointed mission, lived during the time when Jeroboam II ruled Israel (the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom). He was from the town of Gath-Hepher in Galilee

2 Jonah 1:2 The city of Nineveh was the magnificent capital of the Assyrian Empire. The great palace of Sennacherib was without rival and contained seventy or more rooms. The city was home to more than 120,000 residents (at least twice the size

of Babylon) and had no less than fifteen gates in the wall surrounding the city. During this period of time it was probably the largest city in the known world. Built near the juncture of the Tigris River and its tributary the Khoser, it was served by an elaborate water system of eighteen canals. Nineveh had many suburbs, three are mentioned along with Nineveh in Gen 10:11, 12. Nineveh's extensive ruins are located near the modern city of Mosul, Iraq.

3 Jonah 1:3 The natural harbor of the city of Joppa (modern Jaffa, Israel) has been in use since the Bronze Age. It was the port of entry for the cedars of Liba-

non for Solomon's temple (2 Chr 2:16), and again for the second temple of Jerusalem (Ezra 3:7). It is located just south of Tel Aviv.

4 Jonah 1:3 Possibly Tartessos in southwest Spain.

5 Jonah 1:7 To these sailors, who undoubtedly believed in their own pagan gods, the casting of lots was a way to allow the gods to express themselves since only they could control how a lot fell. In this case, it is possible that God intervened to identify Jonah as the guilty party.

6 Jonah 1:8 The questions asked indicate that the sailors were afraid of Jonah even before he confessed his worship of the Lord (v 9). The lot had already confirmed that he was responsible, but instead of acting on that they gave him the option of blaming someone else. The other questions are typical of what one would ask any stranger.

7 Jonah 1:9 This was an important addition to Jonah's description of God, because most people who believed in pagan gods had different deities for different regions of the created world, and often they also worshiped deities of their own localities. Jonah was affirming that there is only one true God

8 Jonah 1:10 Jonah probably had informed them when he first boarded (cf v 3) but they may not have taken him seriously, or perhaps they were just indifferent to his reason for the voyage. Now that they were in mortal danger, they believed him.

9 Jonah 1:17 The ancient Hebrew term "fish" did not make a distinction between fish and marine mammals. There are no

marine creatures known today which would be capable of swallowing a man, either because of their anatomy or because of their observed behavior. It is possible

that the creature that swallowed Jonah has long since been extinct, or even that it was uniquely created by God for this one purpose.

10 Jonah 1:17 Jesus cited Jonah's experience as a sign of His resurrection (Matt 12:40).

Repentance

Arise, go to _____, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

Jonah 1:1

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