

BIBLE STORY: JONAH IS SWALLOWED BY THE GREAT FISH

Jonah 1:1—2:10

Central Thoughts

- Jonah fled from the Lord's call because he did not want to preach repentance and salvation to the Ninevites.
- The Old Adam in Jonah needed to be drowned and die, so that a new man would come forth and arise by the power of the Gospel.
- Jonah is a type of Christ who became our substitute in His death for us upon the cross.
- The Sign of Jonah: As Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, so Jesus would die and rise again on the third day.

Discussion Questions

What did the Lord call Jonah to do?

Go to the city of Nineveh and call the people to repentance for their wickedness.

Where was the ancient city of Nineveh located?

In present day Iraq

How did Jonah respond to the Lord's call?

He went to the city of Joppa on the Mediterranean coast and sailed in the opposite direction of Nineveh toward Tarshish.

Where is Tarshish located?

The exact location of Tarshish is uncertain, but it is clear from the Bible that it was located far from Nineveh and in the opposite direction.

How does Jonah describe what he was doing when he paid the fare and got on board the ship?

He wanted to travel far from the presence of the Lord.

What does Jonah's desire to flee from the Lord's call teach us about Jonah's spiritual condition?

He was rebelling against the Lord and filled with his own doubts and misbelief.

What did the Lord do to rescue Jonah from impenitence?

He sent a great storm which threatened to destroy the ship.

How did the pagan mariners respond to the storm?

They were filled with fear, each of them prayed to their own gods, and they threw cargo overboard to lighten the ship's load so that they would not sink.

Where was Jonah as the sea raged?

He was fast asleep in the lowest part of the ship.

What did the Captain do when he found Jonah asleep in the ship?

He called him a "sleeper" and told him to arise and call upon his God as the others were calling upon their gods, so that they might not perish.

Why did the others on board cast lots?

They wanted to know who was at fault for the storm and what they could do about it.

When the lot fell to Jonah, what did they ask him?

They asked him to tell them everything about him, his occupation, where he came from, and what people he was from?

How did Jonah respond?

He confessed to being a Hebrew who worshiped the Lord God of Israel, who was the creator of the sea and the dry land.

What did the men know about Jonah and what did they ask?

They knew he had fled from the presence of the Lord because he had told them, so they asked him why he had done this and what should be done to him to calm the sea for them.

How did Jonah answer their question?

He told them to throw him into the raging sea on their behalf, so that the sea would be calm for them.

What did the men do instead?

They continued to row against the wind and the waves, but they could not save themselves from the raging sea.

When their efforts failed, what did these men pray to the LORD before they threw Jonah into the Sea?

“O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You.”

What did the casting of Jonah into the sea cause?

The sea ceased from its raging and there was a great calm that caused those on the ship to fear the LORD, to offer a sacrifice to him, and to confess faith in Him.

What did the Lord prepare for Jonah when he was thrown into the raging sea?

A great fish to swallow him.

How many days and nights did Jonah spend in the fish’s belly?

Three.

What does Jesus teach us about “the sign of Jonah” (See Matthew 12:40/Luke 11:30)?

As Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, so Jesus would die and rise again on the third day.

Meditation on the Bible Story

Jonah was cast into the raging sea and swallowed by a great fish sent by the Lord to be vomited up on dry ground on the third day to be a picture of our Lord’s death and resurrection. Jesus took our place under the judgment of the Law. He became the sinner for us. Bearing our sin, He was plunged into the raging sea of divine judgement and death. But by His death under the Law’s judgment, He won our forgiveness, and the result was the resurrection from the dead. “The sea is calm” by the peace of sins forgiven and Jesus lives, never to die again. In our Baptism we are joined to Jesus’ death and resurrection. He takes our sin and dies our death. We are raised with Him through the forgiveness of sins to new life. Like the prophet Jonah, our Old Adam must daily drown and die in contrition and repentance and the new man must be raised up by the power of the Gospel. As it was God who offered up His Son into death for us, so it is the Lord who must put us to death and raise us to new life. Jonah’s prayer is the prayer of a baptized Christian who calls upon the promises of the Lord to save him from the judgment of death and the deep despair of sin. By the renewing power of the Lord’s forgiveness, Jonah went on to preach repentance and faith to the people of Nineveh and they were brought into the Lord’s salvation.

Prayer on the Bible Story

O Lord as you gave us a picture of Jesus’ death and resurrection through the prophet Jonah who was hurled into the raging sea and raised to life by the great fish on the third day, so deliver us from our sin through daily contrition and repentance. By the power of Your forgiveness in Jesus, raise us up to the new life of faith and holiness in Him; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



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