

The Book of Jonah

Three men were wading along the banks of the [Klamath River](#). Suddenly, from the forest, a California Fish & Game warden appeared and said, “Excuse me, boys, I’d like to see your fishin’ licenses.”

“We ain’t got none,” Stush replied.

“Oh, that’s not so good, boys. If you’re gonna fish, you need fishin’ licenses.” said the game warden. “The state has gotta have its tax money.”

“But officer,” replied Henry, “we’re not fishing. We all have magnets at the end of our lines, and we’re collecting scrap metal off the bottom. We want to save Mother Earth.”

The doubting wildlife officer sighed, then said, “You boys expect me to believe that?”

Bubbarooski, the third wader, said, “We wouldn’t lie to you, chief.”

“Right. Reel ‘em in boys!” And sure enough, when they did, there were horseshoe magnets tied on the end of each line. The game warden was stunned. “Well, I know of no law against this. Take all the scrap you want,” he said. And with that, he left.

As soon as he was out of sight, the three men started laughing hysterically. “What a dumb fish cop,” Stush said. “Don’t he know there are steelhead trout in these waters?”

Today, we begin our first lesson in the Book of Jonah, and I’d like to take you on a ship ride with a man who had the *steely-headed* notion that he could run from God. Although he was a prophet, his heart for other people was as hard and as cold as solid steel, and he strongly resisted God’s plan for his life. However, as you will read, God brought calamity into his life and the lives of others for his disobedience. As we begin, here’s a little historical background.

The book of Jonah was written in the 8th century BC by Jonah, whose name means dove. He was from the town of [Gath Hepher](#), which was north of [Nazareth](#) and west of the Sea of [Galilee](#) (means [violin](#)). Based on the [distribution](#) of the land to the tribes of Israel, Jonah belonged to the tribe of [Zebulun](#). His father, Amittai, whose name means truthful, is mentioned in verse one of this book and along with Jonah in [2 Kings 14](#) concerning a prophecy about the restoration of the ancient boundaries to Israel. Jonah lived during the reign of Jeroboam II (825-784), who ruled the [10 Northern tribes](#) as the 14th King of Israel. [Hosea](#), [Joel](#) and [Amos](#) were other prophets who lived during this time.



Illustration by [Joel Anderson](#)

Jonah is the only [minor prophet](#) mentioned by name by Jesus Christ. And he is considered a minor prophet by man only, not because they’d card him at the 7•11 in Beersheba, but because the book is rather short – just four chapters in length. Yet, Jonah has a major message. You can find it in your Bible after the Book of [Daniel](#), tucked in between [Obadiah](#) and the prophet [Micah](#).

Critics who attack this book do so because they are **natural men** – those who don't know or understand God. They don't believe in miracles, and this book contains **several miracles**. So to them, Jonah is a foolish story. From a human standpoint, it is impossible for Jonah to survive his ordeal in the belly of a fish for three days and nights. The gastric juices and lack of oxygen would kill him. Natural men, those who walk by sight, try to understand this story by common sense, and they refuse to acknowledge God's ability to do anything outside the norm. It is illogical to them – just a fishy story that smells of religion.

Fortunately, for those of us in Christ, who **walk by faith** instead of sight, that's not too big of a stretch, for our God is the Sovereign King of the Universe. He made it from nothing, and He holds it together by His power. He **made the fish**, and **He made us**. He can do **anything!**

? Why would anyone want a God who could not perform the miraculous?

When I was in college, I came home each summer to my hometown – Weirton, West Virginia, the steel city. I worked at **Weirton Steel Company** each summer and for one year after I graduated, and I can tell you that making steel is a dangerous job for tough men. *That's why I came to Florida.* A 4' high steel coil can weigh 25 tons (50,000 pounds), and it is hard and dense. That's why I called Jonah steely-headed, for:

- His heart was hard. He rebelled against God and didn't care about the Ninevites.
- He had to be dense to think there would be no consequence for his actions.

Remember, though, that Jonah was aware of the violence the Assyrians had perpetrated against Israel. This probably helped to taint his thinking.

- ❖ Maybe he didn't believe God could change the minds of the enemies of Israel.
- ❖ Maybe he was walking by sight, based on past history, instead of faith, based on the character of God.
- ❖ Maybe he didn't want the Assyrians to be spared.

So, as we begin, may God, who works to open our hearts or minds by His grace to believe in His Son, use His word to work in us to help us to walk by faith.

Jonah 1:1 NIV ¹ The _____ of the _____ came to _____ son of Amittai:

The word of the Lord came to Jonah. Hold that thought in your mind and look at:

Hebrews 1:1 NOG In the past _____ to our ancestors at many different _____ and in many different _____ through the _____.

During the Old Testament, God spoke to His people – Israel – through the prophets. That means He usually spoke to the prophets first. And He spoke at many times and in different ways. He spoke directly to Moses from a **burning bush**. That's called a **Theophany** [Theos = God & phaneia = appearance], which is a visible appearance of God in the Old Testament period, often, but not always, in human form. **He spoke** to Abraham and Sarah as the angel of the Lord when He confirmed the promise that they would have a son – Isaac. Some Bible scholars believe this may have been a **Christophany**, as well.

Now if a Theophany is an appearance of God, a Christophany is an appearance of Christ. Specifically, a Christophany is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. If you've ever eaten at a Mexican restaurant, you know that carne is meat or flesh. *Carne asada* is roasted meat. A pre-incarnate appearance of Christ means it occurred before He came in the flesh, before He came in the *carne*. Jacob wrestled with a man who was called an angel of the Lord. That was probably another Christophany.

Today, we all wrestle with Christ at times, don't we? He called us for a purpose and gave us His instruction book, but we don't always get it, or want to get it, and we wrestle with Him – the Living Word – as we struggle with the written word. But He **never gives up**, and His word **always achieves the purpose** for which He sends it.

God also spoke to people in dreams and visions. After Jacob stole Esau's **blessing**, he fled:

Genesis 28:10-22 CEV ¹² In a _____ he saw a _____, or _____ that reached from earth to _____, and God's _____ were going up and down on it.

Jacob called that place the House of God, the gate of Heaven, and he named it Bethel, from (el = God / beth = house).

God even spoke to kings in dreams. The dream of Pharaoh had to be interpreted by **Joseph**. King Nebuchadnezzar's dream was interpreted by the prophet **Daniel**. Joseph, in the New Testament, receives several dreams. Take **Mary** as your wife; flee to **Egypt**; come back to **Israel**; live in **Nazareth**.

God also spoke through visions. Dreams appeared to people during sleep, while visions occurred when people were awake. Speaking to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, God said:

Numbers 12:1-6 NKJV ⁶ "Hear now my words: If there is a _____ among you, *I*, the LORD make myself _____ to him in a _____; I speak to him in a _____."

Using a vision, God is transitioning away from Eli the prophet to Samuel, a young boy:

1 Samuel 3:1-10 NCV ¹ The boy Samuel served the Lord under Eli. In those days the Lord did not speak _____ to people very often; there were very few _____.

(T – F) Serving under Eli is similar to New Testament discipleship.

² Eli's eyes were so weak he was almost blind. One night he was lying in bed. ³ Samuel was also in bed in the Lord's house, where the Ark of the Agreement was. God's lamp was still burning. ⁴ Then the Lord called Samuel, and Samuel answered, "I am here!" ⁵ He ran to Eli and said, "I am here. You called me." But Eli said, "I didn't call you. Go back to bed." ⁸ The Lord called Samuel for the third time. Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "I am here. You called me." Then Eli realized the _____ was calling the boy. ⁹ So he told Samuel, "Go to bed. If he calls you again, say, 'Speak, Lord. I am your servant and I am listening.'" ¹⁰ The Lord came and stood there and called as he had before, "Samuel, Samuel!" Samuel said, "Speak, Lord. I am your _____ and I am _____."

? As a servant of the Lord, are you listening to Him when He speaks to you?

God spoke to the high priest using **Urim** and **Thummim**. The Urim "lights" and Thummim "perfections" were gemstones that were carried by the High Priest of Israel on the ephod, a vest-like garment. The Urim and Thummim were used by the High Priest to determine God's will in some situations.

Exodus 28:29-30 NIV ²⁹ “Whenever _____ enters the Holy Place, he will bear the names of the sons of Israel over his heart on the breastpiece of decision as a continuing memorial before the LORD. ³⁰ Also put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron’s heart whenever he enters the presence of the LORD. Thus Aaron will always bear the _____ of making _____ for the Israelites over his _____ before the LORD.

Some propose that God would cause the **Urim and Thummim** to light up in varying patterns to reveal His decision. Although they were used in the Old Testament, little is known today about how they really worked.

God also spoke to Elijah in a gentle **whisper**. The Egyptians witnessed His miraculous **power** when He **plagued** each of their gods. Today, as always, the **skies** proclaim His handiwork, and there is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. He even spoke to Balaam by the mouth of a **jackass**. God spoke in many ways, but the important thing is this:

He spoke. God spoke!

So, what about today? Does God speak to us today? Has the word of the Lord come to _____? Well, the Scripture says that in the past, God spoke through prophets:

_____ write your first name

Hebrews 1:1-3 NIV ² but in these _____ days he has _____ to us by his Son whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God’s _____ and the _____ representation of his being, sustaining _____ things by his powerful _____. After he had provided purification for _____, he sat down at the _____ hand of the Majesty in _____.

Jesus Christ, the **Divine Word** made **flesh**, becomes God the Father’s exclusive mode of Divine revelation to the world. Nothing more can be added beyond Christ and the revealed word, and nothing can be taken away. Jesus Christ *is* God’s **final word**.

The story of divine revelation is a story of progression up to Christ, but there is no progression beyond Him. **F. F. Bruce**

While God may still send dreams and visions to people, they are not intended to add to the doctrine of the church. A gentle whisper from the Lord may encourage us to do something for Him, warn us of error, or build us up (edify us) in the faith. God still speaks, but He speaks primarily through His word. As a church, it’s important to hear the word of the Lord expounded, or set forth, by Pastor Steve. It’s important to assemble for corporate worship.

However, it's just as important for us to spend time alone with God in His word – reading, meditating, and studying on a daily basis, as it is to regularly attend and listen during [corporate worship](#). And listening at both times should lead us to action. Many Christians set aside some time each day to meet alone with the Lord. Most refer to those special moments as Quiet Time. I call it Mountain Time, and as you work to make it a habit, you'll grow to love it, and you won't want to miss it – for any reason.

If you are not spending time with God in His word on a daily basis, ask Him to give you the desire to do so. By His grace, may you echo the words of the prophet Jeremiah, who said:

[Jeremiah 15:16 NKJV](#) “Your _____ were found, and I _____ them, and Your _____ was to me the _____ and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your _____, O LORD God of hosts.”

God's words (the entirety of Scripture) contain a specific word for you, and He will reveal that during moments alone with Him. Don't lose His words by keeping them on the shelf or ignoring that Bible App on your iPad. If you have ignored His truths, discover them again. Exactly how the Lord spoke to Jonah is not known, but He did. God spoke and called him to:

[Jonah 1:2 NIV](#) ² "Go to the great city of _____ and preach _____ it, because its _____ has come up before me."

Jonah received divine instruction on where to go and what to do. God had a message for the people of Nineveh, whose wicked ways had nearly filled the cup of His wrath. Although prophetic books contain references about God reaching out to the Gentiles, Jonah is the only prophet called to take a message from God directly to the Gentiles – the people who hated Israel and wanted to destroy them. And those people (nations) still exist today.

The city of Nineveh was built by [Nimrod](#), grandson of Noah, on the eastern banks of the Tigris River in Assyria – modern day Iraq. Nimrod was involved in the building of the [Tower of Babel](#), and He built the city of Babylon. His name means mighty hunter, and many say that he hunted men. [Josephus](#), a first century Jewish historian, wrote this about Nimrod:

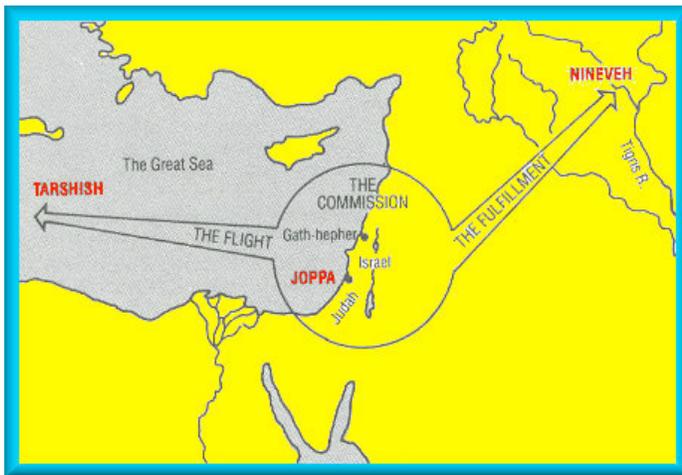
“He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it were through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence on his power.”

? Do you see any parallel to what is happening with governments around the world today?

The ruins of Nineveh were excavated in the early 20th century and lie near the Iraqi town of [Mosul](#), which is often in the news for the violence that takes place there. The city stretched for 30 miles along the river, and it expanded inland an average of ten miles. It was a huge city, and it was the capital city of the Assyrian empire. That empire lasted for 600 years, until the Medes and Persians defeated them. So, it is to this great city that Jonah is called to take a message from the God of Israel. That message, as we'll see, contained bad news, but it contained mercy, as well, and that may be the reason that:

Jonah 1:3 NIV ³ ... Jonah _____ from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After _____ the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to _____ from the _____.

Jo, as his friends called him, decided to ignore God's instruction. He fled, and his father would view his son's rebellion and his coming paranormal experience (last verse of this chapter) as the **Amittai-ville Horror**. Parents, no matter what century, suffer when they see their children snub the Lord. Christian parents grieve when their children ignore the Lord, and when it seems there is little that can bring them back, they faithfully pray, knowing that God will never give up pursuing them, for He will do whatever it takes to restore *His* children.



The port city of Joppa was about 30 miles NW of Jerusalem. Today, it's called **Jaffa**. Joppa was on the Mediterranean Sea and was a hub of bustling commercial activity. It was southwest of Jonah's hometown. At the harbor, Jonah pays to continue his mischief, *as we always do*, and purchases a ticket for a voyage to Tarshish. The Beetles sang about a girl who had a ticket to ride, but they didn't care. Jonah had a ticket to ride, but as we'll see, God cared – greatly.

Most Bible scholars believe the city of Tarshish was in Spain, to the west of Joppa and Nineveh. In his endeavor, Jonah turns from God, or away from God. We could call it negative repentance. When people repent, they turn to God. Here was a prophet who turned away. God says, "This way!" Jonah goes that way.

Think about that day at the port. There was the normal hustle and bustle of goods being loaded and unloaded, people coming and going, sailors doing their jobs. It was probably a beautiful day with a nice breeze for sailing. People were probably listening to their iPods and talking on their cell phones as they strolled the boardwalk eating saltwater taffy. It was a normal day, like days we have. But normal can go bad real fast.

On a Saturday, I was driving down I-75 from Tampa. I had just taken Connie to TPA for a flight to Nashville, where she'd be the guest speaker at a meeting about roses – *can you believe it?* I was cruising south in my F-150, and I was listening to a set of songs by Chris Tomlin. Just south of the University exit, I noticed a helicopter coming northward. When I saw it dip down below the bridge that took the interstate over Fruitville Road, I said to myself, *That's not good*. I knew that it meant a **Bayflite** for someone, and instantly I started looking to see if brake lights were flashing ahead of me. I had ten to fifteen more seconds before I had to make a decision to either stay on the interstate or exit at Fruitville. Since I saw no brake lights in the traffic ahead, and since there were no cars coming over the bridge heading north, I opted to continue on the expressway.

When I cleared the top of the bridge, I saw the helicopter had landed in the northbound lanes, and traffic was backed up on that side. I saw a white car that was in the grass, and I thought that someone might have had a heart attack, but as we all slowed down to gawk, my spirit sank at the sight of a mangled motorcycle. I was worried about being delayed a few minutes earlier – the loss of my time. Now I was praying for some soul or souls who were on the verge of meeting Jesus Christ face to face. Neither the motorcyclist, the passenger if there was one, nor the driver of the car involved got up that morning and said, “I’m going to ruin someone’s life today.” It was a beautiful day, a time to ride and rejoice. Yet, someone made a decision that not only affected their own wellbeing but the lives of others, as well.

Jonah wasn’t planning to ruin the day for all those sailors, but by disobeying God, he did, and there’s always a price to pay for disobeying God, especially a direct order. After all, we’re still paying for Adam’s rebellion. The consequence for his disobedience was that sin entered the whole world, and we see the devastating effects of sin everywhere we look. Whether it’s in a personal health tragedy, a financial loss, or an environmental degradation, sin has affected everything in this world. Presently, as Christians, we are called to be soldiers on the battlefield for Christ. We battle evil thoughts in our own minds, and we battle evil deeds perpetrated against ourselves, our families, our nation, and the world – caused by other people infected with sin. We may not know what to do, but God does, and though He is very patient, He does not sit back longer than necessary:

Jonah 1:4 NIV 4 Then the LORD _____ a great _____ on the sea, and such a _____ storm arose that the ship threatened to break up.

The NASB says the Lord hurled a great wind. He threw a fast squall right down the middle, a supernatural heater right across the plate of every mariner on board. The Creator sent the wind from his **bullpen**. *Strike one* miracle for God! Normally, the uneven heating of the earth by the sun causes hot air to rise. Cold air then sinks, and the winds move, but not this time. It may have been a great day in the harbor, but the Lord did not **harbor** His anger forever. **Fair winds** and **following seas** disappeared. Sometimes, God gives us a long leash, but there is a limit to its length. If we set sail against the flow of Scripture, God has many ways to get our attention – to reel us back in. We are under grace today, but Scripture says He will **chasten** those He loves – for our good – to make us holy and produce righteousness.

God loves us enough to correct us when we’re wrong.

To get Jonah’s attention, God produced a storm so bad that:

Jonah 1:5 NIV 5 _____ the sailors were _____ and each cried out to his _____ _____. And they _____ the cargo into the sea to lighten the _____. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep _____.

Since all the sailors were afraid, it must have been no ordinary storm. To keep the ship higher in the water and afloat, they deep sixed valuable cargo. They were making bold human efforts to save themselves – the most precious cargo – from a watery grave.

Jonah, as this tempest raged, slept below deck. He may have thought he was safe from God's reach, but God was not ready for Jonah to retire at sea, so:

Jonah 1:6 NIV ⁶ The captain went to him and said, "How can you _____? Get up and call on _____ god! _____ he will take notice of us, and we will not perish."

Here, most likely, was a heathen captain rebuking a man of God. As the storm worsens, the captain leaves his post and goes below deck to get Jonah to pray to Jonah's God. The crew has tried their gods and human effort, yet the storm has not abated, so the captain decides to have Jonah throw out a prayer – just in case Jonah's god could save them! When Samuel was God's prophet in Israel, the people wanted a king, like the other nations. They did not want God to rule over them. That displeased Samuel, but God gives them a king. Soon after, they forget God, worship idols, and are enslaved by Sisera, so the people come to Samuel and say:

1 Samuel 12:19-25 NCV ¹⁹ "Pray to the Lord _____ God for us, your servants! Don't let us _____! We've _____ to all our sins the evil of asking for a king." ²⁰ Samuel answered, "Don't be afraid. It's true that you did _____, but don't turn away from the Lord. Serve the Lord with all your _____. ²¹ Idols are of _____ use, so don't worship them. They can't help you or _____ you. They are _____! ²² For his own sake, the Lord won't leave his people. Instead, he was pleased to make you his own people. ²³ I will surely not stop _____ for you, because that would be sinning against the Lord. I will teach you what is good and right. ²⁴ You must _____ the Lord and truly serve him with all your heart. Remember the wonderful things he did for you! ²⁵ But if you are stubborn and do evil, he will **sweep** you and your king away."

Some Christians ask me to pray for certain situations because they feel I'm better connected with God than they are. They feel unworthy, as we all do on some days. However, I am no more worthy, based on what I do, than any other person. As Christians, we need to remember that *it is Christ who makes us worthy!* And when Jesus makes us worthy, we can ask Him directly. There is nothing wrong with asking for prayer from other Christians, but we should always be petitioning, praising and thanking the Lord alone, as well, for He always hears His children. If an unbeliever asks you to pray, it's a wonderful opportunity to do not only that, right on the spot with them, but it's also an opportunity to share the Gospel with them and let them know that God loves the prayers of His people – those in Christ.

Now as Jonah slept, the crew worked valiantly to save the ship and their lives, but they did not know the true God. Thus, their prayers to their gods were useless. The prophet, although he was asleep, was exercising his own will, too. In his sleep, he continues to sing the **theme song** from the Frank Sinatra School of Theology. But our way is not **His way**, and God always wants man to **forsake** his way and turn to the Lord, for our way leads us away from God. As the storm surges, God is at work in many ways, for He is not limited to dealing with one person's problems at a time. God can multi-task. He can teach different lessons to countless people in the same event, from a single verse, or from the same passage of Scripture.

Let's contrast this part of Jonah's story to another prophet who slept in a boat:

Mark 4:35-41 NIV ³⁵ That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." ³⁶ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. ³⁷ A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly _____. ³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, _____ on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" ³⁹ He got up, rebuked the _____ and said to the _____, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely _____. ⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, "Why are you so _____? Do you still have _____ faith?" ⁴¹ They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves _____ him!"

? There was great fear in both stories, but God has not given us a spirit of fear – **correct?**

Jonah 1:7 NIV ⁷ Then the sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast _____ to find out who is _____ for this **calamity**." They cast lots and the lot fell on _____.

Casting of lots was a common practice in centuries past, and this practice is mentioned 70 times in the Old Testament and seven times in the New Testament. If you remember, the soldiers cast lots for the clothes of Christ as they crucified Him. That was a fulfillment of **prophecy**. In spite of the many references to casting lots in the Old Testament, nothing is known about the actual lots themselves. They could have been sticks of various lengths, flat stones like coins, or some kind of dice; but their exact nature is unknown. The closest modern practice to casting lots is likely flipping a coin. The obvious reason for casting lots was the impartiality of the decision. There's no human bias involved. What is particularly significant is the fact that, in ancient Israel, the High Priest did use this method for important, uncertain decisions. It amounted to consulting God for the answer:

Proverbs 16:33 NKJV The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the _____.

The New Testament nowhere instructs Christians to use a method similar to casting lots to help with decision-making. In Acts 1, the apostles cast lots to determine who would replace Judas, but Jesus had repeatedly told them to **wait for the Holy Spirit**, who would instruct them and give them wisdom. To discern God's will today, we read God's word, and the Holy Spirit will **illuminate** us. He will speak to us. He will teach us.

After Jonah was indicated, the sailors said:

Jonah 1:8 NIV ⁸ "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this _____ for us? What do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?"

Let's see your birth certificate Jack!

Jonah comes under intense scrutiny. After all, the situation is dicey, and their *health plan* is in serious jeopardy. They are trying to find a remedy, and they are doing all this while fighting to keep their vessel from sinking.

Jonah 1:9 NIV ⁹ He answered, "I am a _____ and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who _____ the sea and the land."

Jonah utters the truth about his God, that He is the Creator. However, I don't believe you can call running from God an act of worship. When Jonah said that he was a Hebrew, he was employing the customary way of telling foreigners that he was an Israelite. The God of Israel was well known for His power and majesty, and:

Jonah 1:10 NIV ¹⁰ This _____ them and they asked, "What have _____ done?" (They knew he was running away from the LORD, because he had already told them so.)

Because they knew of the Lord's awesome glory, they were terrified. They knew the God of Israel could do anything He wanted. And I think their question was more like this:

You see what you've done?

as they pointed to the raging sea.

Jonah 1:11-12 NIV ¹¹ The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we _____ to you to make the sea calm down for _____?" ¹² "Pick me up and _____ me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is _____ fault that this great storm has come upon you."

Jonah takes responsibility for the situation. He knows it will mean death for him, but there is a difference here between a convicted spirit and a despairing spirit. He was convicted that he had done wrong and was willing to suffer the consequence. He was not going to throw himself overboard, though, for he did not despair, as in having no hope. Although he was running from God, he still believed – he knew – that his God had absolute sovereign control over all things, and since he knew God was merciful, he knew God would spare the sailors once they threw him overboard.

Jonah 1:13 NIV ¹³ Instead, the men did their _____ to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even _____ than before.

They did not want to kill one of God's chosen people, so they tried with all their might to make it back to land. When they are finally hopeless and helpless, they call on God. It's the same today. When things are peachy, God is not needed. But when hard times strike, we call out to God for help.

Jonah 1:14 NIV ¹⁴ Then they cried to _____ LORD, "O LORD, please do not let us _____ for taking this man's _____. Do not hold us accountable for killing an _____ man, for you, O LORD, have done as you **pleased**."

Interestingly, **the heathen sailors have more concern for the life of one man than Jonah does for an entire city of people.** They prayed to their gods, they lightened the ship, they asked Jonah to pray to his God, they asked Jonah what they should do, they rowed with all their might – all to no avail. So they prayed to the Lord God of Jonah – the true God – and ask for mercy.

Jonah 1:15 NIV Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew _____.

They prayed to God and accepted the word of one of His prophets on what to do. Then, they acted in accordance with God's will, and the sea grew calm. It seemed hopeless, but it was not, because they asked God for mercy and willingly trusted God to save them. Jesus said:

Luke 18:27 NASB "The things that are impossible with _____ are possible with _____."

Our God can calm the **storm** ♪, calm our spirit, or do both!

Jonah 1:16 NIV ¹⁶ At this the men greatly _____ the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made _____ to him.

The sailors went from fear of death to reverential fear of the Living God. God was respected and honored – feared for what He had done. It's often good to look back and recognize what God has done in our lives. Then we can offer thanksgiving and praise Him all the more.

Jonah 1:17 NIV ¹⁷ But the LORD _____ a great fish to _____ Jonah, and Jonah was _____ the fish three days and three nights.

Whale or fish? The word just means fish, but it could have been either. I like the idea of God sending an **Epinephelus itajara** to swallow Jonah. After all, what better fish to swallow a Jew than a Jewfish, correct? Of course, due to the political sensitivity of our day and age, it's now called a Goliath grouper. It's a huge fish that can weigh up to 800 pounds. I've seen two while diving one of the M-reefs off Sarasota. They open their mouth, and you're going in! When Jonah entered the fish, he was instantly covered with saliva. He was a spitball headed for home plate – the stomach of the fish. But it wasn't the end of the game or his career.

The word *Epinephelus* means cloudy, or overcast. It surely was a cloudy, overcast day for Jonah and the ship's crew, wasn't it? And it was that way until Jonah turned back to God. It's good to know that when life gets cloudy, or overcast, God's light and love can fill our hearts. We can be swallowed whole by the God of all hope and be filled with joy and peace. People think the story of Jonah is just a fish story, a lie. They don't believe a man could stay alive in the belly of a giant sea creature for three days and three nights, and they surely don't believe a man could come back to life when spit out like vomit. But they ignore the power of the Sovereign God of the universe. He either kept Jonah **alive or resurrected** him when the whale spit him out on shore. I believe he died and was resurrected, for Jesus mentions Jonah as a sign:

Matthew 12:38-41 NIV ³⁸ Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous _____ from you." ³⁹ He answered, "A _____ and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But _____ will be given it except the sign of the prophet _____. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the _____ of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the _____. ⁴¹ The men of _____ will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of _____, and now one _____ than Jonah is here.

Either Jonah died in the belly of the fish and was later resurrected, or God kept him alive throughout the ordeal. Either of those two scenarios would take a supernatural act by God. Either would be a miracle from God. Because Jonah was in the belly of the fish, gastric juices would have broken his body down into a semi fluid mass called **chyme**. To keep that from happening, God would have had to intervene, or Jonah would have died.

The word *chyme* comes from a Greek noun (chymos) meaning juice and a Greek verb (chein) meaning to pour. Now think about Christ. His *juice* (blood) was *poured out* for our sins, but after three days and three nights in the belly of the earth, He was resurrected from the dead. Jonah's story is a great picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, it was Christ's resurrection – not Jonah's – that makes us right with God. Christ took all our debris (sins and burdens) and lifted us off rock bottom, and though He didn't spit us onto the sand, we became one of the **grains of sand** mentioned to Abraham in Genesis. We have an awesome God, and He rules from Heaven. Yet, One greater than Jonah is here, and He lives in our hearts. Spend some time with Him in His word — every day. Run to Him, for His blood ran for you.

Memory Verse

Then He [Jesus] said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Matthew 4:19 NKJV

See you next week as we continue our study in Jonah.

Miracles in Jonah

- God raises up a storm1:4
- God calms the storm1:15
- God sends a great fish to swallow Jonah at just the right time 1:17
- Jonah survives three days & three nights inside the belly of a fish 1:17
- God commands the fish to spit Jonah out onto dry land 2:10
- The entire city of Nineveh experiences repentance 3:5-9
- The Lord raises up a vine to provide shade for Jonah, a worm to take the vine down, and a scorching east wind to provide thermal discomfort for Jonah..... 4:6-8



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