

How Did Jonah Stay Alive Inside a Whale for Three Days?

Question: How was it possible for Jonah to stay alive inside a whale for three days and three nights?

Answer: Two different things could have happened to Jonah inside the whale. First, God could have supernaturally kept him alive for three days and nights. If this was the case, He would have either put him in a comatose state or He would have supplied enough oxygen for him to live. The second possibility is Jonah was dead for three days and nights and then God supernaturally brought him back to life. This is the more likely possibility.

4 Proofs Jonah Died Inside the Whale

1. Jonah calls out to God from Sheol. In Jonah 2:1, Jonah called out to the Lord from the belly of the whale, so this happened just before he died. Next, we see him crying for help from Sheol (2:2), which was after he died. In the Old Testament, Sheol is the place in the afterlife where people's souls went after they died. Luke 16:19-31 informs us that there were two compartments in Sheol—one part for righteous people and the other section for those who rejected the Lord.

2. Jonah says, "While I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord" (2:7). He is referring to the time just before he died.

3. Jonah says, "You have brought up my life from the pit" (2:6) implies that he was brought back to life. This was written later as he was recalling his experience.

4. Jonah's experience foreshadowed the death of Jesus and His resurrection three days later.

Jesus said, "For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40). Jesus referred to Jonah as a real person who was literally inside the whale for three days and nights.

This statement by Christ tells us Jonah was a type of His own death and resurrection. A "type" is a picture or object lesson in the Old Testament that foreshadows a fulfillment in the New Testament. Jonah could have been inside the whale only two days and nights, but then he wouldn't be a picture of what Jesus would do. God purposely appointed Jonah to be swallowed by the whale and remain dead inside for exactly three days and nights. His experience was a snapshot of Jesus being in the grave three days and nights.

Jonah was supernaturally brought back to life after he was vomited onto the shore (2:10), which would be considered a [Near Death Experience](#). Jesus was also supernaturally brought back to life, but the difference was Jonah was brought back in his natural body while He was in a resurrected body.

It's interesting to note that Jonah's prayer in chapter 2 comes from the Psalms, which is a book of prayers and songs. He memorized many Psalms because he quotes them in his prayer.

Jonah 2:2 is from Psalm 18

Jonah 2:3 is from Psalm 42.

Jonah 2:4 is from Psalm 5.

Jonah 2:5 is from Psalm 69.

Jonah 2:6 is from Psalm 30.

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