

### Jonah is Swallowed by the Great Fish

#### Jonah 1:15-17

Jonah 1:15-17 - *“So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. <sup>16</sup> Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows. <sup>17</sup> Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”*

#### Background Notes

In the last three verses of Jonah 1, there are three great miracles:

- 1 - Jonah was swallowed alive by a big fish - and he didn't die.
- 2 - Jonah was thrown into the sea during a catastrophic storm - and the sea became calm.
- 3 - The sailors *“feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows.”*

Think of that! The sailors had been pagan polytheists before the storm - but after the storm they were converts to the one true God! They were not only converts, but they were worshiping the Lord!

I don't think these were temporary “professions of faith.” I believe that these men were truly converted. Whenever a true conversion takes place, that's a miracle! It's a supernatural work of God. I trust the miracle of conversion has taken place in your life. Have you come to the place in your life when you realize that you can't make it on your own, and turned to the one true God and His way of salvation? The way of salvation is to put your trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

How about the other two miracles in the last three verses of Jonah 1? Again we see how God is sovereign over nature. God is in complete control of the wind and the sea - and He's also in control of the *fish* of the sea! God is sovereign over the natural elements, and He's sovereign over the animal kingdom - even the “worms” (as we'll see in chapter 4)!

The calming of the storm certainly reminds us of the time when the Lord calmed the violent storm on the Sea of Galilee. There again God's complete and sovereign control over nature was evidenced. The wind and the sea were subject to the words of the Lord Jesus: *“Peace, be still.”*

What about the first miracle in these three verses – the miracle of Jonah being swallowed by the big fish? This miracle causes skeptics of the Bible to say that the book of Jonah is “only a Jewish legend.” Others have said that it's an “Old Testament parable.” Some skeptics have even said that Jonah wasn't swallowed by a big fish, but rather he was picked

up by another ship - and the name of the ship was "The Fish"! Well, we believers know that the account in the book of Jonah is true and accurate - and this was a miracle!

What kind of sea creature swallowed Jonah? Was it a whale? The Hebrew word that's used here allows for a whale - but it doesn't have to be a whale. The idea of "whale" comes to us from the King James translation of Matthew 12:40. Notice - our Lord was speaking here: "*For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*" But again the Greek word that was used in Matthew 12:40 was not confined only to whales, and other translations render this word as "great fish."

So it was a large sea creature - a large "fish" of some sort. Maybe a whale - or maybe a whale shark. A whale shark can easily swallow a man whole, and a whale shark does not have sharp teeth. Maybe it was a sea creature that is now extinct.

On the other hand, maybe it was a genetically altered large fish, perfectly prepared by God for preserving Jonah. Notice verse 17: "*The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.*" Maybe the preparation didn't involve only the timing - having a large fish ready and waiting for Jonah - but it also involved preparing a large fish that was specifically altered for Jonah as well! Whatever it was, it was a miraculously prepared sea creature!

There are a couple of events on record in which a man was rescued from inside a whale or shark - but those men weren't in there for three days or three nights! In these cases, the whale was cut open soon after the accident. The case of Jonah was no accident. This was a miracle - from start to finish!

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Jonah is a *type* or a picture of Christ.

Do you remember the definition of a "*type*"? A *type* is an Old Testament person, place, or event that either pictures or illustrates New Testament truth.

Jonah is a *type* of Christ. In what way does he picture Christ? He certainly was not a picture of Christ when he disobeyed! However, he did foreshadow Christ when he was preserved for three days and three nights in the stomach of the fish. Is seeing a picture of Christ in this event an over-spiritualization of the text? Is it just a fanciful notion? No - it's definitely a *type*, because our Lord Himself said that Jonah was a *type*! Jesus said, "*For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*" (Matthew 12:40). So Jonah is a *type* or picture of Christ in His death and resurrection.

Jonah did not have to die in order to be a *type* of the Lord's death and resurrection. *Types* are not *identical* with what they typify; they are *pictures*, or illustrations. For example, Hebrews 11:17-19 says that Isaac was also a *type* of Jesus Christ: *"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called,' concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense."*

So Hebrews 11:19 says that when Abraham took his son Isaac to that altar of sacrifice, Isaac was a picture of Christ in His death and resurrection. But like Jonah, Isaac did not literally die. He was merely a picture that foreshadowed Jesus Christ. Our Lord literally died and was literally resurrected, but Isaac and Jonah, as *types* of Christ in Christ's death and resurrection, did not have to literally die and rise from the dead. They're only illustrations. So Jonah is a type or picture of Christ.

## **2. Jonah is a type or picture of Israel.**

Jonah was not only a *type* of Jesus Christ – he was also a type of the nation of Israel. Here are ten parallels between Jonah and Israel:

- a. As God called Jonah to go to Nineveh, the Gentiles, so God called Israel to be a light to the Gentiles. (Isaiah 49:6)
- b. As Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh and disobeyed and fled from the presence of the Lord, so Israel turned her back against the Lord and walked away in disobedience. Filled with national pride, she was not a light to the Gentiles.
- c. As Jonah boarded a merchant ship to travel to the Gentile world, so the Jewish people have become merchants and have traveled throughout the Gentile world.
- d. As Jonah ran into hard times from the hand of the Lord, so the Jewish people and nation have undergone hard times. Daniel 11:35 says that God is purging the Jewish people, and preparing them for the End Times.
- e. As Jonah never denied his nationality or his faith in God, so the Jewish people have maintained their Jewish identity and their monotheistic creed throughout thousands of years of dispersion among Gentile nations.
- f. As Jonah became a witness to the pagan Phoenician sailors, in spite of his disobedience, and they believed, so the disobedient nation of Israel has been the means by which Gentiles have converted through trusting in Jesus Christ, the Jewish Messiah, and thus the Gentiles have come to know peace and calm. Speaking of the Jewish people, Romans 11:11 says, *"Through their fall, salvation has come to the Gentiles."*
- g. As disobedient Jonah was cast into the sea, so disobedient Israel was cast into the "sea of Gentile nations" after their rejection of Christ.

h. As Jonah was miraculously preserved in the sea, so Israel has been miraculously preserved over the years in the midst of Gentile nations. The Jewish people have never been assimilated, as have other peoples. They are still distinct - still the Jewish people. The preservation of the Jewish people (Israel) is one of the great miracles of history!

i. As Jonah was thrown up on land from his place of preservation in the sea, so the Jewish people will be brought back to the land of Israel from where they have been preserved within the Gentile nations. That process is on-going in the world today, as Jews return to their ancient homeland.

j. As Jonah repented and was re-commissioned, and then finally went to Nineveh, so there will be a spiritual awakening in the nation of Israel in the future. They will turn to the Lord and be re-commissioned, and they will then be the light to the Gentiles that God meant them to be. Read Romans 11 in this connection.

What a great picture of God's dealing with the Jewish people we see in the book of Jonah! Jonah is a *type* or picture of Israel.

## Practical Application

### **You are never too old to disobey!**

How old do you think Jonah was when he disobeyed God's call, and fled from the presence of the Lord? We don't know his exact age, but he was definitely not a young prophet. 2 Kings 14 says that Jonah prophesied in the northern kingdom of Israel in the early days of King Jeroboam II, and perhaps even before Jeroboam's reign. Jonah predicted that Israel would regain some of its territories from the Assyrians, and those prophecies had already been fulfilled at this point.

So Jonah was no spring chicken! At the time of his disobedience Jonah was an *older man*, and he was a *mature prophet*. Do you see the lesson? You're never too old to disobey!

Is it possible that you are an older and mature believer, and you think that you're invulnerable? You'd *never* disagree with the Lord's leading, or yield to temptation to disobey – would you? Not in your business - or in your marriage - or in your ministry?

If you think you're too mature a believer to disobey - be careful! Remember the story of Jonah.

You're never too old to disobey!