

Jonah Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: The Book of Jonah is a battle of wills. If there ever was a book of the Bible that dealt with a man matching his will and wits against the Lord, it's the Book of Jonah. You don't have to read very far to realize the fruitlessness of that endeavor! Have you ever battled the Lord over anything?

Read vs 1-3

1. We should notice that Jonah received a personal message from the LORD. The 1st verse calls it “**the word of the LORD,**” and it is connected to the presence of the LORD (vs. 3).
2. Jonah is called to the city of Nineveh. Nineveh was a very important city in that it was the capital city of the nation of Assyria—2Kings 19:36 “**So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.**” This is important.
 - a. Jonah lived in the Northern Kingdom during the reign of the second Jeroboam—2Kings 14:25 “**He [Jeroboam II] restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher.**”
 - b. The Northern Kingdom at this time is on the decline. They will go into captivity in less than 100 years and it might have been less than 50 years depending on at what point Jonah prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II.
 - c. Shortly after the death of Jeroboam II, Assyria begins to attack Israel, the Northern Kingdom (2Kings 15:19-20).
 - d. Eventually, Assyria will be the nation that completely conquers Israel and hauls them away captive.
 - e. Now Jonah, being a prophet of the LORD, is aware of the spiritual condition of the Northern Kingdom and the impending judgment of God upon them. He also is aware of the ascendancy of the Assyria as a mighty power and a threat to his homeland and family.
3. Now there is an ominous note in verse 2 for any city or nation that thinks that they can participate and/or promote wickedness. That business comes up before the throne of God and He acts upon it. The Egyptians found out about that (Exodus 7-14). The Amorites learned the hard way (Genesis 15:16). And, of course, Sodom (Genesis 19) became “**an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly**” (2Peter 2:6).

4. Well, Jonah prays, “Not THY will, but MINE be done.” Instead of heading northeast to Nineveh, he heads west to Tarshish. Tarshish is in Spain. Jonah wants to get as far away from the will of God as he can possibly get. Although he is wanting to go west, he has to go “**DOWN to Joppa**” (vs. 3) to find a ship, and once he finds it, he goes “**DOWN into it**” (vs. 3). Whenever your will is on the throne, you will be going DOWN!
5. Now there is a price to pay for running from the LORD, so verse 3 says, “**so he paid the fare thereof.**” I know that it costs something to serve the Lord, but it also costs to disobey the Lord. How many illustration have been given of folks who have lost their children, or their possessions, or their health, etc. because they refused to surrender to the will of God? It will cost you.
6. According to the text, Jonah is fleeing from the presence of the LORD (vs. 3). Now that is quite an undertaking. David said, “**Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or WHITHER SHALL I FLEE FROM THY PRESENCE? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee**” (Psalm 139:7-12).

Read vss 4-12

1. The chapter began with the LORD giving a command (vs. 2). We saw Jonah’s response to that command in verse 3. Now in verse 4, the LORD responds to Jonah’s rebelliousness. He ups the ante as they say.
2. Speaking of upping the ante, we should not fail to notice that Jonah’s sin affected others. He put some innocent people in danger of losing their lives. Sin is a deceitful business that is detrimental to the sinner as well as those he comes in contact with.
3. In verse 5, we see that Jonah has gone even lower. He “**was gone DOWN into the sides of the ship.**” He’s going to get a lot lower than this before it is all over—“**... the way of transgressors is hard**” (Proverbs 13:15)!
4. Now look at this rebellious prophet of God who is in perfect peace in a raging storm—He’s sleeping! Now how could that be? Remember the Lord Jesus Christ asleep during a storm on the Sea of Galilee? He had good reason to be a peace, but what about Jonah? You know what I think? I think that there is an early, temporary, short-term sense of relief or peace in a state of rebelliousness. Jesus Christ said, “**Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: NOT AS THE WORLD GIVETH, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid**” (John 14:27).

5. When heathen folks get into some serious trouble, they don't waste anyone's time debating the value or benefits of prayer. They pray and they encourage others to pray too—"...**arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not**" (vs. 6).
6. After the Prayer Meeting is dismissed, they turn to casting lots (vs. 7). They are looking for the source of their troubles, and they're going to find him—Proverbs 16:33 "**The lot is cast into the lap; BUT THE WHOLE DISPOSING THEREOF IS OF THE LORD.**"
7. Once they find out that Jonah is responsible for their troubles, the interrogation begins (vs. 8). They ask 4 questions without letting Jonah answer a one of them. Don't you know that they are talking fast because they don't have time to mess around too long? They are trying to avoid a tour of Davy Jones's locker!
8. Verse 9 is the way the LORD deals with Gentiles. He deals with them on the basis of creation. Notice that Jonah says, "...**I fear the LORD God of heaven, WHICH HATH MADE THE SEA AND THE DRY LAND.**" When dealing with the Jews, he is "**the Lord God of our fathers**" (Acts 5:30).
9. Now in spite of the current thought that no religion is any better than any other and that you should not judge anyone's religious beliefs, these heathen sailors realize that Jonah's God isn't like their gods (vs. 10). They were unconcerned about the fact that Jonah was fleeing from the presence of the LORD when Jonah bought his ticket on the cargo ship. You see, they wanted to know why a man would want to ride on a cargo ship instead of in a passenger ship when he bought his ticket, but they were not concerned about that then. Now they want to know, "**Why hast thou done this?**" We should notice that they ask a question with 5 words in it while they are fearful that they will die! 5 is the number of death!
10. The 7th and last question that these mariners ask Jonah is found in verse 11—"What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us?" If Jonah is the source of the troubles, and he is, what needs to be done? That's the question. Pilate faced a real crisis. Some folks brought Jesus Christ to him and demanded that he have him executed. In the midst of that tempestuous, political storm he asked, "**What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?**" (Matthew 27:22).
11. Someone suggested that Jonah is still in rebellion and that he would rather die than obey the will of God (vs. 12). To make matters worse, he wants the sailors to assist him in his suicide. You know Solomon said that there was nothing new under the sun. It's all happened before!

Read vss 13-16

1. The dilemma facing these sailors is: If we toss Jonah overboard, we will be guilty of murder. What would God do to us if we killed this man? Isn't it amazing how

much Bible the heathens know without ever going to church or spending any time in that Book! They knew Exodus 20:13 was a violation of the law of God and they expected consequences for that! The Democratic National Convention, the National Education Association, Planned Parenthood, and the Hemlock Society aren't as enlightened as those heathens were.

2. Verses 13 and 14 make a beautiful picture of unsaved folks trying to save their own necks by means of their own works without trusting in the blood of Jesus Christ. Do you see them rowing hard (vs. 13)? Do you see their reluctance to accept the “**innocent blood**” (vs 14)? Do you know what Judas Iscariot said in the Confessional Booth in Matthew 27:4? He said, “**I have betrayed THE INNOCENT BLOOD.**” Hebrews 9:22 says, “**...without shedding of blood is no remission.**”
3. Now Jonah is quite a preacher. Before he leaves, he has a whole boatload of converts without even trying. They are praying to Jonah's God in verse 14, sacrificing to Him (vs. 15), and making vows (vs. 15). What a missionary! What an evangelist!
4. Did you notice that the motivation for turning away from their gods to the God of Jonah was FEAR? It's fear from start to finish! This modern Christianity that seeks to avoid anything that might cause a lost sinner to fear his condition and his eternal destiny in a devil's hell is Satanic. And that goes for these perverted bibles that are removing the word *hell* from their texts too!

Read vs. 17

1. Now when we take verse 17 along with Matthew 12:40, we get a firestorm of controversy from every form of skeptic out there, atheist to fundamentalist and everything in between—“**For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**”
 - a. The *Skeptics Annotated Bible* thinks that it is absurd to call a whale a fish. You talk about absurdity! Jesus Christ was the Creator of all things according to John 1:3. He called the “**great fish**” of Jonah 1:17 a “**whale.**” In 1735 (124 years AFTER the King James Bible was published), Carolus Linnaeus published a book on how to classify animals. He put whales in a class of animals called mammals and fish in a different category. This skeptic is betting that Linnaeus is right and Jesus Christ is wrong. Not me!
 - b. Here's the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: “Whales are found in the Mediterranean and are sometimes cast up on the shore of Palestine, but it is not likely that the ancient Greeks or Hebrews were very familiar with them, and **IT IS BY NO MEANS CERTAIN THAT WHALE IS REFERRED TO**, either in the original Jonah story or in the New Testament reference to it. If any particular

animal is meant, IT IS MORE LIKELY A SHARK.”

(<http://bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/home.showPopup>)

- c. According to Russ Pickett, “...this verse is incorrectly translated from the Greek. Jonah was not three days and three nights in the ‘whale's belly’, but three days and three nights in KETOS, KAY'-TOS; probably from the base of Greek CHASMA, ‘a huge fish’. This was not a ‘whale’ but a ‘huge fish’. There are several such minor mistranslations throughout every version of every Scripture, not just the KJV. Yet, bear in mind, that these defects are more superficial than they are profound to the believer in fellowship with God. Again, the Holy Spirit is your guide.” (<http://www.russpickett.com/basic/whatscrp.htm>)
- d. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown also have a problem with the passage. “The fish, through a mistranslation of [Matthew 12:40](#), was formerly supposed to be a whale; there, as here, the original means ‘a great fish.’ THE WHALE'S NECK IS TOO NARROW TO RECEIVE A MAN.” (<http://www.searchgodsword.org/com/jfb/view.cgi?book=jon&chapter=001>)
- e. Jimmy Williams agrees: “THE BIBLE DOESN'T SAY THAT JONAH WAS SWALLOWED BY A WHALE. ONLY THE KING JAMES VERSION OF 1611 DOES THAT. Jonah 1:17 says ‘God prepared a great fish (*dag gadol*)’, not a great whale. And THE MATTHEW PASSAGE (12.40) IN GREEK REFERS TO THE ANIMAL AS A ‘SEA MONSTER’ (*KETOS*), NOT A WHALE.” (<http://www.probe.org/docs/jonah.html>)
- f. Here’s a sermon from a fundamentalist preacher who quotes a creation scientist who defends the Genesis account of creation: ‘In the book of Jonah in the Hebrew language, the word translated "fish" is the Hebrew word "dag." This word appears in the Old Testament nineteen times, and is translated on each occasion "fish"...IN THE KING JAMES VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT THERE IS AN INCORRECT TRANSLATION THAT MAKES THE FISH APPEAR AS A WHALE...The translators, in dealing with this passage [Matthew 12:40] used the word "whale" because it was the only sea creature they knew that was big enough to suit them. The word [in Greek], however, is "ketos" - and simply means a monster from the deep. The Hebrew word for whale is "tannin." The Old Testament Scriptures say that Jonah was swallowed by a great "dag" [fish]. The New Testament says he was [swallowed] by a "ketos," and nowhere does the original writing say that this was a whale.’ (Dr. Harry Rimmer, *The Harmony of Science and Scripture*, Eerdmans, 1949, pp. 177-178 as quoted by R.L. Hymers, Jr. at the following address: http://www.rlhymersjr.com/Online_Sermons/071004_Jonha.html)
- g. Some of these characters are born again people, but like all people they have a sinful nature. In their zeal to uphold “**science falsely so called**” (1 Timothy 6:20) and impress us with their knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, they lied. The Greek word *ketos* does mean *whale*! Brother Daryl Coats, our missionary to Finland,

points out that our word *Cetus* is the constellation of the whale. The word *cetology* is the study of whales and other mammals of the sea. And the word *cetacean* is the scientific name for whales. Do you know how those words entered the English language? They all come into our language from the word *ketos*! Somebody is lying, and they would rather call Jesus Christ a liar than to be ridiculed by folks who are educated.

2. Now we shouldn't lose sight of the context of Mathew 12:40. It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now we understand why folks want to discredit the historical record of Jonah and his experience in the whale. You see the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is an absolute essential. Paul put it this way in 1Corinthians 15:17— **“And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.”**

3. Muslims don't believe that Jesus Christ was crucified or resurrected. I was reading an article from a Muslim website that took issue with the 3 days and 3 nights of Matthew 12:40. They took a different approach to discredit the words of Jesus Christ in an effort to do away with the resurrection of Christ: “...in line with the miracle of Jonah and according to the Bible, Jesus only spent one day and two nights in the sepulchre, and not three days and three nights as he prophesied.” (<http://www.al-sunnah.com/bible.htm>). Apparently, a Muslim cannot read a Bible any better than a Roman Catholic. The “one day and two nights in the sepulchre” is one of the many Roman Catholic superstitions that has no basis in the word of God. Jesus Christ did NOT die on Friday. I know about the Sabbath day that is mentioned in the context of the crucifixion and burial of Christ. But that Sabbath was NOT the weekly Friday night to Saturday night Sabbath day. We are told in John 19:31 that **“that sabbath day was an high day.”** There are a number of occasions when more than one Sabbath day can occur within the same week. That was the case when the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified!

CONCLUSION: Running from the Lord and His will for our lives is a fruitless business. If you are engaged in fleeing from Him and His will for your life, why don't you just save yourself a whole lot of trouble? **SURRENDER TO HIS WILL.**