

## Great Stories of the Bible — 2/6/22

### Jonah and the Whale

**TEXT — Jonah 1:1** *Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,*

**INTRO — That Jonah was an actual person in history is verified by 2 Ki 14:25** *He 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. This prophecy declares that Jeroboam II would expand his kingdom. This message made him a popular preacher.*

But when God called Jonah to preach to the city of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire the prophet rebelled.

History tells us that the Assyrians were a cruel and heartless people. They would bury their enemies alive, skinning them alive, or impaling them on sharp poles under the hot sun.

“If the city of Nineveh is going to be overthrown, then let it be overthrown,” argued Jonah.

“I would rather disobey God than see my enemies saved from judgment.” In the four chapters of his book, Jonah traces his experiences and the lessons that he learned.

#### I. The Reluctance of Jonah - Jonah 1:1-17

Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah ran in the opposite direction. He fled “from the presence of the Lord,” He became a backslidden prophet.

##### A. The reasons for his backsliding

1. He had the wrong attitude toward God’s will; he thought it was something difficult and dangerous.
2. He had the wrong attitude toward witnessing; he thought he could “turn his witnessing on and off” when he wanted to
3. He also had the wrong attitude toward his enemies: he *wanted* to see them die.

##### B. His life went downward

Down to Joppa, down into the ship, down into the sea, and down into the great fish. Disobedience always leads downward.

The ship was waiting for him and he had the money to pay the fare. He was so at peace that he was even able to go to sleep in the storm!

##### C. The consequences of his running from God

He lost God’s voice, for now God had to speak to him in a storm.

He lost his spiritual energy and went to sleep in the hold of the ship.

He lost his power in prayer, and even his desire to pray.

The heathen were praying, but Jonah was sleeping.

He lost his testimony with the men on the ship,

He lost his influence for good, because he was the cause of the storm.

He also almost lost his life. But the long-suffering of the Lord was with him.

#### II. The Chastening of God - Jonah 2:1-10

Jonah was chastened under the loving hand of God.

Jonah admitted it was God who cast him into the sea vs. 2:3.

When trials and afflictions come to us because of our sins,

**Heb 12:5-11** *And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord,*

Jonah was convicted of his sins,

He lost the presence of God Jonah 2:4

He admitted he had believed the devil’s lies Jonah 2:8

He showed true sorrow for his sins Jonah 2:9.

In faith he asked God for His forgiveness, looking toward the temple. 1

**Jn 1:9** *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

There are several ways Christians may respond to chastening

We may despise it, as Jonah did for three days, and refuse to confess;

We may faint and give up;

We may endure God’s chastening, confess our sins, and trust Him

To rebel against the hand of God is to ask for trouble. Jonah submitted, prayed, and trusted, and God forgave him.

#### III. The Revival in Nineveh - Jonah 3:1-10

The key word in this chapter is “great.”

Jonah came to the great city to preach the message of God. There were nearly a million people in and around Nineveh,

The city itself had great walls and towers. It was the center of the rising empire of Assyria. But it was a sinful city (**Nah 3:1-19**) because the Assyrians were a ruthless, cruel people who had no pity for their enemies. “Violence” was their chief sin (Jon 3:8).

**God gave Jonah a great commission**, to preach to these Gentiles that they could escape the wrath of God and be forgiven. Jonah had to overcome his sinful prejudices to preach this message.

**God performed a great change in the city**, for from the king to the lowest citizen, there were expressions of fear and repentance. Two things contributed to this: Jonah's message and the miracle of Jonah's deliverance from the great fish, the news of which certainly reached this city.

It took three days to get through Nineveh, but revival came the very first day of Jonah's ministry. The people "believed God" (**Jonah 3:5**), proving their faith by their works of contrition. And God forgave them.

It shows what the Lord can do with a frail human instrument willing to preach God's message.

**Jesus used Nineveh to illustrate an important point Mat 12:38-41** *Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 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. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*

He had preached to that generation for three years and had reinforced His message with His miracles, yet they would not repent and believe. The Ninevites heard *one* sermon from *one* preacher, and that sermon emphasized wrath, not love — yet they repented and were forgiven.

#### **IV. Rebellion — The Lesson of God's Pity (Jon 4:1-11)**

Instead of meeting a rejoicing preacher, we meet a rebellious preacher, angry at the people and angry at God.

We see Jonah sitting outside the city, trying to make himself comfortable, and actually hoping that God's judgment will fall on the people.

God sent a great awakening under the preaching of a man who did not even love the souls of the people he preached to!

**This is the key lesson of the book: God's love and pity for lost souls.** Jonah felt sorry for himself, and even felt sorry for the plant that sheltered him and then died, but he had no heartfelt love or pity for the multitudes in the city of Nineveh.

**Jesus looked upon a city of lost souls and wept.** God could control the wind and waves in Jon\_1:1-17, the fish in Jon\_2:1-10, and the gourd, worm, and wind in Jon\_4:1-11, but He could not control Jonah without the prophet's surrender.

Everything in nature obeys the Word of God except human beings, and human beings have the greatest reason to obey. It would seem that Jonah did get right with God, confess his sins, and continue his ministry. And God did spare the city of Nineveh for another century and a half.

**CONCL** — Of course, Jonah is a type of Jesus Christ **Mat 12:39-41** in His death, burial, and resurrection. Christ was greater than Jonah