

Cherished Bible Stories

Lesson 20



An Unbelievable Fish Story (Jonah 1-4)

Introduction

Without calling all fishermen liars, those who go fishing are often noted for telling about the “big one that got away.” No matter how big a fish present-day anglers may tie into, they’ll never be able to match the “fish story” Jonah could tell. Although some unbelievers are serious in rejecting the Bible story of Jonah and the big fish, it is no tale...it really happened. Jesus alludes to its certainty (Mt. 12:39-41; Lk. 11:30).

The short O.T. prophecy about Jonah teaches an important lesson...God has a universal love for all men and their salvation (2 Pet. 3:9). He also expects His children to share that concern and to do our part in trying to bring lost men to repentance. The lengths to which Jonah went in shunning his God-given duties illustrate the foolishness of opposing God.

To help us understand how the book unfolds, please consider the outline below from Homer Hailey.

I	Jonah's call and flight to Tarshish (1:1-16)	Jonah running <u>away</u> from God
	A. Jehovah's charge to go to Nineveh, and the prophet's disobedience (vv. 1-3)	
	B. The great wind and Jonah's confession (vv. 4-10)	
	C. Jonah sacrificed – cast into the sea (vv. 11-16)	
II	Jonah's miraculous preservation (1:17 – 2:10)	Jonah running <u>toward</u> God
	A. The fish prepared by Jehovah (1:17)	
	B. Jonah's prayer from the deep (2:1-9)	
	C. Jonah's deliverance (2:10)	
III	Jehovah's second call; Jonah goes to Nineveh (3:1-10)	Jonah running <u>with</u> God
	A. The call, response, and message to Nineveh (vv. 1-4)	
	B. Repentance and Jehovah's gracious change (vv. 5-10)	
IV	A narrow prophet vs. a merciful God (4:1-11)	Jonah running <u>ahead of</u> God
	A. Jonah's anger at Nineveh's repentance (vv. 1-5)	
	B. The gourd vine and the worm (vv. 6-8)	
	C. Jehovah's rebuke and lesson of the gourd vine (vv. 9-11)	

[Outline from *Commentary On The Minor Prophets* by Homer Hailey, p. 66]

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Read the story and be prepared to answer the following questions.

- 1) Who was Jonah, where was he from, and what was his job? (1:1; 2 Kings 14:25) In the midst of this work, what other work did God have for him? (1:2)

- 2) Where was Nineveh? What do you know about the ancient Assyrians that indicates the "wickedness" of Nineveh? How did Jonah respond to the directive from God? (1:3)
[Try locating on a Bible map Nineveh, Gath-hepher, Joppa, and Tarshish]
Based on his actions at this point, how would you label Jonah?

- 3) What was the Divine response to Jonah's actions? (1:4) Chronicle the events recorded in 1:5-6. What commendable trait do we see in the pagan sailors that apparently was absent in Jonah? How do you account for Jonah's actions in 1:5 during this tense moment?

- 4) What else do the sailors decide to do in 1:7? (cp. Prov. 16:33) What did they learn from Jonah in 1:9? How does Jonah's confession of God relate to his actions thus far? What advice did Jonah give the sailors? (1:12) What noble spirit do we see in them in 1:13?

- 5) What did the sailors do and what was the effect of their actions? (1:15) What was their response in 1:16? What did God do in 1:17? What is so noteworthy about Jonah's stay in the fish? (cp. Mt. 12:38-40)

