

jenaministries – Part 4 Bible Characters

8. The Story of Jonah Swallowed by a Fish

Jonah was a prophet, though he didn't want to be. The book of Jonah only covers a small period of his life, but such an important part that we can learn much from.

God told Jonah to prophecy to the city of Nineveh and preach against it and its wickedness. But Jonah was too scared. So he ran away and fled from God (**Scriptures 1. Jonah Flees From the LORD Jonah 1:1-3**). His goal was to flee to Tarshish.

He boarded a ship. But while he was on that ship, God brought a great storm (**Scriptures 2. Great Storm Breaking Ship Jonah 1:4-6**). In those days, when something bad like this happened, they believed it was God's wrath and people had a great fear for God's wrath. Jonah had told them earlier that he was running away from God. The people on the boat asked Jonah what they needed to do to be saved from this storm killing them all. Jonah actually bravely told them they must throw him off the ship. After trying a futile attempt to row back to shore, they prayed for God to forgive them and threw Jonah off the ship (**Scriptures 3. Jonah Thrown Off the Ship Jonah 1:8-15**).

But that wasn't the end of Jonah's story, for the Lord had plans for him. God sent a huge fish to swallow him (**Scriptures 4. Jonah Swallowed by a Huge Fish Jonah 1:17**) and Jonah lived in the belly of that fish for three days and three nights.

Jonah came to his senses while in the belly of the fish and prayed to God (**Scriptures 5. Jonah Prayed While in the Fish Jonah 2:7-10**). He basically vowed he would prophecy salvation comes from the Lord and that worthless idols turn them away from God's love. God honored his prayers and had the fish vomit him out onto dry land.

Later, God went to Jonah a second time and told him again to prophesy to the city Nineveh and preach against it and its wickedness. This time Jonah obeyed (**Scriptures 6. Jonah Went to Nineveh Jonah 3:1-4**). Nineveh was a large city. It took Jonah three days to walk through it; prophesying that because of their wickedness and idols, their city would be overthrown in 40 days.

The people of Nineveh believed Jonah's prophecy came from God and repented from their sins. They fasted and put on sackcloth (**Scriptures 7. Ninevites Repented Jonah 3:5-10**). They called out urgently onto God and gave up their evil ways; hoping God would have compassion on them. When God saw what they had done, he did have compassion and relented to bring the destruction he had threatened.

This made Jonah very angry at God (**Scriptures 8. Jonah Angry at God Jonah 4:1-3**). Jonah's prophecy was now a false prophecy since God changed his mind and did not bring destruction to the city as prophesied. Jonah told God that this is why he ran from him the first time. Because he knew God is gracious and compassionate, and that he would not bring this calamity if they repented.

Jonah felt very sorry for himself. He wasn't happy about God not bringing destruction to over 120,000 people. He wasn't thinking of all those people at all. He was just thinking of himself. Over the night, God provided Jonah a leafy plant to provide shade, and that made Jonah happy. But at dawn, God had a worm eat the plant, which made Jonah so angry he wanted to die.

God told Jonah if he had been concerned about the plant, he should have tended to it (**Scriptures 9. God's Response to Jonah's Anger Jonah 4:5-11**). God also expressed to Jonah that he should he have also been concerned for all the people and animals in the city of Nineveh.

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Scriptures 1. Jonah Flees From the LORD

Jonah 1:1-3 The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

Scriptures 2. Great Storm Breaking Ship

Jonah 1:4-6 Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. The captain went to him and said, “How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish.”

Scriptures 3. Jonah Thrown Off the Ship

Jonah 1:8-15 So they asked him, “Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?” He answered, “I am a Hebrew and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” This terrified them and they asked, “What have you done?” (They knew he was running away from the LORD, because he had already told them so.) The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, “What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?” “Pick me up and throw me into the sea,” he replied, “and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.” Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. Then they cried out to the LORD, “Please, LORD, do not let us die for taking this man’s life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, LORD, have done as you pleased.” Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm.

Scriptures 4. Jonah Swallowed by a Huge Fish

Jonah 1:17 Now the LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Scriptures 5. Jonah Prayed While in the Fish

Jonah 2:7-10 “When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. “Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God’s love for them. But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, ‘Salvation comes from the LORD.’ ” And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Scriptures 6. Jonah Went to Nineveh

Jonah 3:1-4 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.” Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.”

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Scriptures 7 Ninevites Repented

Jonah 3:5-10 The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish." When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

Scriptures 8 Jonah Angry at God

Jonah 4:1-3 But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the LORD, "Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

Scriptures 9 God's Response to Jonah's Anger

Jonah 4:5-11 Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. Then the LORD God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live." But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" "It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead." But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?"