

Jonah 1:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?

Analysis

The sailors interrogate Jonah: "Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?" They ask five questions seeking to understand this mysterious passenger who caused their crisis. Their approach is reasonable and measured—not violent but inquisitive. Verse 9's response is crucial: "And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land." Jonah's confession is theologically sound: he worships Yahweh, Creator of sea and land. The irony: his theology is orthodox, his behavior completely contradicts it. He claims to "fear" (yare') the LORD yet flees His command. This exposes the danger of correct doctrine with disobedient heart—orthodox theology doesn't save apart from genuine submission.

Historical Context

Jonah identifies as Hebrew ('Ibri), the ethnic term used when speaking to foreigners. His confession that Yahweh created sea and land directly challenges pagan polytheism—if one God made everything, other gods are false. The sailors' terrified response (v. 10) shows they understand implications: this universal Creator-God is pursuing His prophet, and they're caught in the middle. The scene

demonstrates effective witness requires consistency between profession and practice.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How do we sometimes claim to fear God while actively disobeying Him?
2. What does it mean that orthodox theology without obedience condemns rather than saves?

Interlinear Text

לְמִי	בְּאִשׁ רַ	לְנוּ	נָא	הַגִּידָה	אֵלַי וַיֹּאמֶר וַ
H4310	H834	H0	H4994	H5046	H413
				they unto him Tell	Then said
					H559

מָה	לְנוּ	הִזְאת	הַרְעָה
H4100	H0	H2063	
			us we pray thee for whose cause this evil
			H7451

מָה	תָּבֹא	וּמֵאֵי	מִלֹּאכְתֶּךָ
H4100	H935	H370	H4399
	comest	and whence	is upon us What is thine occupation

אֲתֶה:	עַם	מִזֵּה	וְאֵי	אַרְצְךָ
H859	H5971	H2088	H335	H776
	and of what people			thou what is thy country

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 47:3 (Parallel theme): And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers.

1 Samuel 30:13 (Parallel theme): And David said unto him, To whom belongest thou? and whence art thou? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick.

Joshua 7:19 (Prayer): And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.

James 5:16 (Prayer): Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

1 Samuel 14:43 (Parallel theme): Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and, lo, I must die.