

Jonah 1:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Jonah's confession: "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." This statement is theologically orthodox and evangelistically powerful. Jonah identifies as Hebrew ('Ibri), his ethnicity. He claims to "fear the LORD" (yare' 'eth-YHWH)—worship with reverence. He identifies God as "the God of heaven" ('Elohey hashamayim), universal sovereign, not tribal deity. Most significantly: "which hath made the sea and the dry land"—Creator of everything, including the very sea Jonah thought he could use to escape. This confession is ironic: Jonah proclaims correct theology while his actions completely contradict it. He says he fears Yahweh yet flees His command. He confesses God made the sea yet tried to cross it to escape God's presence. This exposes the danger of orthodox confession without obedient heart. Jesus condemned this repeatedly (Matthew 7:21-23, 23:3). Paul warned of those who profess to know God but by works deny Him (Titus 1:16).

Historical Context

The confession "God of heaven" appears in post-exilic literature (Ezra 1:2, Nehemiah 1:4-5, Daniel 2:18-19) and when Israelites addressed foreigners. It emphasized monotheism against polytheism—one God rules all, not regional deities with limited jurisdiction. Jonah's claim that this God created sea and land directly challenged pagan sailors' worldview. If one God made everything, their multiple gods are false. The sailors' terrified response (v. 10) shows they

understood implications. Jonah's witness was verbally effective even though his life contradicted it—God can use even flawed witnesses.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How do we sometimes have orthodox theology but disobedient lives?
2. What does it mean to profess faith in God's sovereignty while living as though He doesn't see or care?
3. How does Jonah's confession challenge the notion that effective witness requires perfect consistency?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	אֶלָּם	עַבְרִי	וְאַנְּכִי	יְהָנָן	וְאַתָּה	אֱלֹהִים	וְאַתָּה	הָרָא
And he said	H413	unto them I am an Hebrew	H5680		H595	H853	the LORD	H3068
H559			H3373		H834	H6213		H3220
אֱלֹהִים	בְּשָׁמָן	אֲנָכִי	אֲשֶׁר	עָשָׂה	אַתָּה	מִן	הַיּוֹם	אֱלֹהִים
the God	of heaven	and I fear	which hath made	the sea				
H430	H8064	H589	H6213	H3220				
בְּשָׁמָה	וְאַתָּה							
and the dry								
H853	H3004							

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 9:6 (Creation): Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that

are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

Psalms 136:26 (References God): O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Nehemiah 1:4 (References God): And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,

Genesis 14:13 (Parallel theme): And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.

2 Kings 17:28 (References Lord): Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Beth-el, and taught them how they should fear the LORD.

2 Kings 17:25 (References Lord): And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew some of them.

Ezra 1:2 (References God): Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.