

Jonah and the Great Fish

God tells Jonah to preach to Nineveh, but Jonah runs away. A great storm and a great fish teach him that he cannot flee from God.

Jonah 1:1-17 • Jonah 2:1-10

CHARACTERS: Jonah, God, Sailors

THEMES: Obedience, God's sovereignty, Repentance, Second chances

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. He went down to Joppa, found a ship bound for Tarshish—the opposite direction from Nineveh—paid the fare, and went aboard to flee from the Lord.

Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. The sailors were terrified, and each cried out to his own god. They threw the cargo overboard to lighten the ship.

But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. The captain found him. 'How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish.'

The sailors cast lots to find out who was responsible for the calamity. The lot fell on Jonah. 'Tell us, what have you done?'

Jonah admitted he was running from the Lord, the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land. The sailors were terrified. 'What should we do to you to make the sea calm down?'

'Pick me up and throw me into the sea,' Jonah replied, 'and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault this storm has come upon you.'

Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not. Finally, they cried 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.'

They took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they made vows to Him.

Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. From inside the fish, Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. He acknowledged his distress, remembered the Lord, and vowed to do what he had promised.

And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.