

# Jonah Runs from God

God commands Jonah to preach to Nineveh, but the prophet flees in the opposite direction. A violent storm reveals that no one can escape God's presence.

Jonah 1:1-17

CHARACTERS: Jonah, God, Sailors

THEMES: God's call, Disobedience, God's sovereignty, Consequences of running from God

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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. Nineveh was Israel's enemy—a brutal, pagan empire that had oppressed God's people. How could God ask him to warn them of judgment? Might they repent and receive mercy? Jonah would have none of it. Instead of heading northeast to Nineveh, he went to Joppa and found a ship bound for Tarshish—the opposite direction, as far west as he could go.

He paid the fare and went aboard, hoping to flee from the presence of the Lord. But can anyone hide from God? The Lord sent a violent wind upon the sea, and such a great storm arose that the ship threatened to break apart.

The sailors were terrified. Each cried out to his own god and threw cargo overboard to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, lay down, and fallen into a deep sleep.

The captain found him. 'How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Perhaps he will take notice of us so that we will not perish!'

The sailors cast lots to discover who had brought this calamity upon them, and the lot fell on Jonah. 'Tell us,' they demanded, 'what have you done?'

Jonah confessed: 'I am a Hebrew, and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land. I am running away from Him.'

The men were even more terrified. 'What should we do to you to make the sea calm?'

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

The sailors didn't want to do it. They rowed hard to reach land, but they couldn't. The storm grew worse. Finally, they cried out to the Lord, 'Please do not let us die for taking this man's life!' They threw Jonah overboard, and immediately the sea grew calm.

The sailors were filled with awe. They offered sacrifices to the Lord and made vows to Him.

But the Lord had not finished with His prophet. He provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights—entombed in darkness, yet preserved by God's mercy, given time to reflect on his rebellion.