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Jonah 1:1-2

New King James Version	Names of God Bible	Amplified Bible
¹ <i>Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,</i> ² <i>"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me."</i>	1 Yahweh spoke his word to Jonah, son of Amittai. He said, ² "Leave at once for the important city, Nineveh. Announce to the people that I can no longer overlook the wicked things they have done."	1 Now the word of the Lord came to [a] Jonah son of Amittai, saying, ² Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.

THE PERSON: JONAH

- Jonah is from a town called Gath-hepher in the northern kingdom of Israel, in the territory of the tribe of Zebulun. It is interesting to note that Gath-jhepher is about 2 miles from Nazareth.
- Jonah's name means "dove" though it is not immediately clear if that has any meaning to this story. When the ark came to rest in Genesis after the flood, Noah sent out a dove over the waters. Doves are commonly used for sacrifices. They are considered the "poor man's sacrifice." Perhaps this has meaning later in this story as Jonah essentially sacrificed himself to save the sailors on the sinking ship.
- He is identified as a prophet, not by that word here, but by the fact that the "word of the LORD" came to him. In other words, Yahweh spoke directly to Jonah and that qualifies him as a prophet. The phrase "the word of the LORD came to" is also used in the New Testament to identify John the Baptist as a legitimate prophet. Jonah is identified as a prophet of Yahweh in 2 Kings.
- Jonah is identified **as a real person in scripture, not fictional**. He is mentioned not just once, but twice. No one attacks the veracity of the book of Obadiah, yet Obadiah is mentioned only ONE time. We know absolutely nothing about him. But in the book of Jonah, people are threatened by the supernatural nature of the events, so they must attack the book, and the author, claiming Jonah never existed.
- Every argument, however, can be tossed aside because there is one major argument for not only the existence of Jonah, but also the story itself. If you believe in Jesus, then you must believe in Jonah. **Jesus Himself validated this book, and the author.**

- TWICE Jesus referenced Jonah, and by doing that, he also validated this book as accurate, historical and more than a “fish story.”

“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.”“But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.” (Matthew 12:38-41)

- Jonah was a contemporary of Hosea and Amos, who both prophesied to and against the northern kingdom of Israel. Jonah is identified in scripture elsewhere (we know he is the same one because his father’s name [Amittai] is mentioned there also) as a prophet under King Jeroboam II.
- Jonah successfully prophesied that this king would extend Israel’s borders to the time of Solomon. Jonah was a real person, not fictional, not allegorical. This is not a parable or a simple story. It is historical record. It is at a time in Israel’s history where she is prospering and getting stronger, but her character is becoming more and more wicked.
- The prophets Elijah and Elisha had important ministries in the northern kingdom, but they were both gone by the time Jonah is on the scene. He gets tagged for this important work for Yahweh.

- We should note that there is **no direct prophecy in this book**, other than the word Jonah spoke against Nineveh’s sin and impending doom if they did not repent. However, it contains perhaps the most significant yet mysterious prophecy of all scripture, having nothing to do with Nineveh directly. But it has everything to do with all human kind.
- Like the book of Ruth, **Jonah stands as a remarkable “type” in scripture**. In Ruth, the characters and the story represent God’s entire plan of redemption both for chosen Israel and for the Gentiles. Ruth is the Gentile believer, now Israel, and Boaz is the Kinsman-Redeemer who is the Messiah in type. It will be very easy to see who Jonah represents, since the Messiah Himself referenced him as a sign. We will also see other clues that are not mere “coincidence” in this story. Like Ruth, Jonah is an historic event, but also so much more.

THE PLACE: NINEVEH (later capital of Assyrian Empire)

- Nineveh was located on the east side of the Tigris River about 550 miles NE of Samaria (capital of northern kingdom of Israel). This journey alone would have required about a month to travel by foot. The ruins of Nineveh are located today just opposite the town of Mosul in Iraq.
- Nimrod, the great rebel against God, built Nineveh (also Babylon). The Assyrians were the cruelest and most barbaric of the ancient kingdoms. Their war crimes and brutality were famous. At this time, Assyria had started “forays” into the northern kingdom, so they were most definitely Israel’s enemy – probably the real reason Jonah did not want to go there.
- Nineveh was also famous for its blatant, excessive and wicked idolatry.

- Here it is called a “great” city. Some translations say “important.” Note how many times this word (*great*) is used in this small book.

THE DIRECTIVE: POINT OUT SIN AND PREACH REPENTANCE TO THE GENTILES

- Jonah is told to go immediately to Nineveh and preach to them about their wickedness. God had never before commanded (at least as far as we know) any of His prophets to go to a Gentile nation or city and preach to them. All of the Old Testament prophets had missions within the kingdom of Israel, or later to either the south or the north of the divided kingdom. Now God directs one of His prophets to go preach to a Gentile people. This was unheard of before Jonah’s directive. What made this even worse to Jonah, was the fact that Nineveh represented their chief enemy. It is clear that God is concerned about ALL peoples, and that His message of salvation is not just for the Hebrew people, who had come to think of themselves as God’s ONLY people.

“... is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.” (Romans 3:29)

- Jonah is told “denounce” the Ninevites. He is literally to point out their sin, call it what it is and indicate it is not acceptable to a Supreme God, the God who made heaven and earth, the God who created all things, and the God who is judge of all people. He is also the God who knows and watches all things. Nothing is hidden from Him. Thankfully, however, his message also includes a way to avoid judgment (much to Jonah’s dismay!)
- The Old Testament Hebrews were to spread the Good News of God and His message of salvation and precepts, but they “hoarded” it to themselves. We seem to do that a lot as well. This message is important for all of us. God wants to save everyone. He wants no one to perish. That message is very clear here, and one that Jonah did not like.

“Indeed He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’” (Isaiah 49:6)

- The word “arise” in Hebrew is used to mark the beginning of a project, a commission, a mission or some other important task. It also implies immediacy. Jonah was not to wait to do this. God wanted it done NOW.

THE PROBLEM: SIN

- The Gentiles are wicked, and the “wickedness” (“wretchedness”) of the Assyrians has “come up before God.” This phrase indicates their sin has “ascended” to God like the savor of the Old Testament offerings. But this offering is wicked, not savory. Prophets have testified to the wickedness of God’s people the Hebrews, but now He sends a prophet to testify to the wickedness of the Gentiles, specifically the Assyrians.
- Sin is the problem everywhere, not just for the Hebrew people, and not just for the Assyrians. It is OUR problem also. It is what separates us from God, regardless of Hebrew or Gentile. It has always been this way. God has a remedy, if we are listening and willing. Elohim, Yahweh, is the ONLY source of salvation, and that is part of Jonah’s message. Seeking to resolve the problem of sin anywhere else will be fruitless.

THE MAIN CHARACTER (The One In Charge, The Hero of this Book): YAHWEH

- Elohim (God) is the star of this little book – not Jonah, and not the big fish. He is the One doing all the work, not Jonah. He directs every action here, including preparing the hearts of the Assyrians to receive Jonah’s warning and message. We see Him in this book not only as Judge, but as the Compassionate One, the Just One, the disciplining One, the forgiving One. Yahweh is clearly the main character here. Jonah is only along for the ride of his life, so to speak. Yahweh is sovereign, and proves it with miraculous actions.
- It is clear throughout scripture that **God is the judge of the entire world**, not just Israel. He has already judged Nineveh as wicked, and will condemn them if they do not repent.

New King James Version	Names of God Bible	Amplified Bible
³ <i>But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.</i>	³ Jonah immediately tried to run away from Yahweh by going to Tarshish. He went to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid for the trip and went on board. He wanted to go to Tarshish to get away from Yahweh .	³ But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from being in the presence of the Lord [as His prophet] and went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish [<i>the most remote of the Phoenician trading places then known</i>]. So he paid the appointed fare and went down into the ship to go with them to Tarshish from being in the presence of the Lord [as His servant and minister].

JONAH’S RESPONSE: DISOBEDIENCE

- Jonah didn’t “arise” to begin a new mission as God directed. He “arose” and bolted! That’s literally what the Hebrew word “flee” means. He determined his immediate project would not be to preach repentance to a people he hated, but to go as far away as possible, maybe where God couldn’t find him. Thought, for a prophet of God, we can’t imagine how Jonah could have thought that. He just knew he didn’t want to go to Nineveh, so he immediately made other plans. In some ways, it’s as if Jonah has just handed in his resignation as a prophet of God.
- In Jonah’s time and for many years, the most advanced seagoing peoples of the ancient world were the Phoenicians. Their main cities near Israel were Tyre and Sidon. They had been known to successfully sail to extreme ports of call, including India, southern Spain, and some even suggest, the Americas. No one is sure where Tarshish was, but there is much speculation about it. Wherever it was, it is thought to be the farthest point in the Phoenician’s trading empire. That’s where Jonah was going, as far away as he could get. It’s interesting that the city of Tarshish is actually mentioned three times here in the span of one verse.

- Tarshish is mentioned several times (20) in scripture. Tarshish was a descendant of Noah's son Japheth, after the flood. It is likely the town referenced here was once either built by or dedicated to him. In Genesis 10 (the "table of nations") Tarshish is described as part of the "coastland peoples of the Gentiles." In almost every reference to Tarshish there is also reference to them being "coastland" people, seafaring traders.



- Instead of traveling to Nineveh by land (northeast) Jonah tried to escape his mission by sea in the opposite direction. He boarded a ship at Joppa (modern Jaffa), on Israel's coast about 35 miles from Samaria. Since Tarshish is thought to be the Phoenician's furthest outpost, the fare for this journey was probably hefty. (it is very likely this was indeed a Phoenician ship with "merchant" sailors from many lands.) Jonah was willing to PAY big time to escape Yahweh's directive. He didn't know then that he would indeed PAY, but not the way he thought. Money can't buy us a ticket from God.

- There is a lot of speculation about **WHY Jonah ran away from Yahweh**, or at least the task Yahweh had called him to do:
 1. He was from the northern kingdom of Israel, whose current enemy was the Assyrians. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire at a later point. Nineveh was representative of everything hated about the Assyrians. Jonah wasn't about to come to the aid of his enemy. There were also prophecies that Assyria would be used by God to punish Israel. Jonah seemingly did not care about them, at least the fact they were lost and headed to eternal doom. Something we should think about. Jonah did not want the Assyrians saved. Who is our enemy (earthly, not spiritual)? What do we think about them?
 2. God had never sent a Hebrew prophet to preach repentance or judgment to a Gentile people. This was unusual and Jonah's response shows his total distaste for this new project Yahweh had for him.
 3. Jonah's message was to be a message of judgment, IF the people did not repent. But Jonah KNEW God, and knew He would forgive if the Ninevites repented. He didn't want these people forgiven or saved. He wanted them obliterated.

- In just this one verse, it is **mentioned TWICE** that Jonah bolts from the "**presence of Yahweh.**" There is emphasis placed on the disobedient action. This is deliberate on Jonah's part, not an accidental directional mix-up.

- Those who read this account and know scripture will immediately respond with the thought that this is completely stupid and vain. Perhaps the two-time mention here is to underscore the stupidity of this move. Jonah KNOWS God. He knows that Yahweh is omni-present. He KNOWS he cannot escape God. Jonah is a prophet well after King David (over 100 years later). He knows the scriptures. He has read David's psalms:

O LORD, You have searched me and known me. ² You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. ³ You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. ⁴ For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. ⁵ You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it.

⁷ Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?

⁸ If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

¹⁰ Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.

¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me;

¹² Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day;

The darkness and the light are both alike to You. (Psalm 139:1-12)

- However, as stupid as Jonah might have been in his attempt to flee from God, he is not unlike any one of us who at times have done the same thing. Thankfully we didn't have to spend time in the stinking belly of a fish to learn our lessons, but maybe we had to learn in different (and perhaps just as shocking or painful) ways. At any rate, running from God IS stupid, and IS vain. No one can run from Him. Whether saved or lost, He is always there, and we are always seen by Him. When God calls us to do something for Him, the best response is always obedience.

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⁴ But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.	⁴ Yahweh sent a violent wind over the sea. The storm was so powerful that the ship was in danger of breaking up.	⁴ But the Lord sent out a great wind upon the sea, and there was a violent tempest on the sea so that the ship was about to be broken.

GOD'S RESPONSE TO JONAH'S RESPONSE: FATHERLY DISCIPLINE

- Jonah probably agreed with God that the Assyrians were wicked and deserved His punishment. However, he KNEW God, and by going there to preach repentance he would be giving the Assyrians a chance to survive God's wrath. Perhaps he was being "patriotic" to his land and people and didn't want their enemy saved. Whatever his reasons, Jonah disobeyed big time and went in the opposite direction.



- As usual, however, God’s will cannot be thwarted. He always gets His way – something we also need to remember. Maybe Jonah knew his little diversion wouldn’t work, but he was willing to try it anyway.
- The word used in most translations for “sent” literally means hurled. God didn’t just stir up a little storm, He HURLED a “great wind.” This wind was unlike anything the sailors had ever seen. God knew what the result would be. A small storm wouldn’t stop Jonah or get his attention, but this great wind would.
- God never intended to get rid of Jonah, just get him to come to repentance himself and continue the journey God had directed. He didn’t cast Jonah aside and raise up someone else. He disciplined Jonah as a father would his child. The discipline was harsh, but Jonah certainly got the message. God will do whatever He needs to do to discipline His children, no matter who we are.
- The true nature of Jonah’s heart is revealed in his disobedience to God’s direct will. God’s true nature is revealed in His response to that disobedience – discipline, re-commission (a second chance), compassion and revelation of His ways. God does not just push us out of the way when we disobey direct orders. He lovingly disciplines to bring us back into true fellowship. He even teaches and admonishes the way we think, as He did with Jonah.

Jonah 1:5

New King James Version	Names of God Bible	Amplified Bible
<i>⁵ Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.</i>	⁵ The sailors were afraid, and they cried to their gods for help. They began to throw the cargo overboard to lighten the ship’s load. Now, Jonah had gone below deck and was lying there sound asleep.	⁵ Then the mariners were afraid, and each man cried to his god; and they cast the goods that were in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep.

- It is quite remarkable to think that Jonah actually thought he could run from God. He paid a hefty fare, no doubt, to travel as far away as was conceivably possible, to the furthest trading outpost of the Phoenicians. It is even more amazing to think that Jonah could go below and go to sleep. He didn’t seem nervous to be disobeying God, and the storm apparently did not bother him. That alone is rather unusual. Jonah certainly is one Hebrew with “chutzpah!”
- In the previous verse we see that God “hurled” a great wind. This is indication that the wind is violent and the storm is raging. This is no ordinary storm.
- The sailors, probably from different lands and peoples (as merchant seaman probably), each cried out to their own “gods.” This is interesting. They didn’t know Yahweh, so they aren’t praying to Him, and He is not listening. He hears everything, but unless our hearts are right before Him, He will not regard our prayers. Obviously, since the sailors are calling upon false gods, nothing happens except the storm gets worse.

- The sailors did all they could to help the ship survive this supernatural storm, including throwing overboard the cargo they were hired to bring to distant ports. This must have truly been an amazing storm, since doing this would probably cost them dearly. Better alive with no cargo, than dead at the bottom of the sea with cargo intact!

Jonah 1:6

New King James Version	Names of God Bible	Amplified Bible
<i>⁶ So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish."</i>	⁶ The captain of the ship went to him and asked, "How can you sleep? Get up, and pray to your <i>El</i> . Maybe he will notice us, and we won't die.	⁶ So the captain came and said to him, What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call upon your God! Perhaps your God will give a thought to us so that we shall not perish.

- The captain probably can't believe that Jonah is sleeping through all this. He seems a bit perturbed, with good reason, since Jonah had apparently already freely told them who he was, and what he was running from. The sailors have tried their gods with no luck. In desperation, the captain asks Jonah to call on his God, so that maybe there's a chance they won't all die and go down with the ship in the storm. His commend "What do you mean, sleeper?" can be translated "how on earth can you sleep at a time like this?????????"
- This storm was apparently of such intensity that the sailors automatically attributed it to a god. Some god somewhere was unhappy about something and throwing a temper tantrum. In a sense, they were right. This was no ordinary storm – like all the events in this story, they have been specially prepared by God.
- Since the sailor's gods aren't answering, they want Jonah to try his.

Jonah 1:7-8

New King James Version	Names of God Bible	Amplified Bible
<i>⁷ And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.</i> <i>⁸ Then they said to him, "Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?"</i>	⁷ Then the sailors said to each other, "Let's throw dice to find out who is responsible for bringing this disaster on us." So they threw dice, and the dice indicated that Jonah was responsible. ⁸ They asked him, "Tell us, why has this disaster happened to us? What do you do for a living? Where do you come from? What country are you from? What nationality are you?"	⁷ And they each said to one another, Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us. So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸ Then they said to him, Tell us, we pray you, on whose account has this evil come upon us? What is your occupation? Where did you come from? And what is your country and nationality?

- It's interesting that we don't hear Jonah offer up a prayer here at the captain's request. Maybe he did, but most likely Jonah knew exactly what was going on, and also knew that his prayers would be worthless at this point. In either case, the storm continues to rage so the seamen decide that someone must be to blame for an angry god, they do what was always done to decide difficult things – they cast lots.
- **Casting lots is an ancient practice that was common among all the ancient peoples,** including the Hebrews. It is mentioned in scripture 70 times in the Old Testament, and 7 times in the New. (Those numbers are interesting, too!) Not a lot is known about exactly how this was done, but chances are whatever was around was used (stones, any small item, etc.) with values assigned to those pieces, then they were probably mixed up and thrown down. Wherever they landed, the answer to any question could be determined. In this case, probably each sailor was assigned some token piece easily recognizable as theirs (perhaps trinkets, colored stones, etc.). One of them would be farthest away, or closest, or whatever they determined beforehand. It was thought that God would be the one to control the "lots" (like dice in some cases), so a human could know the will of God in this way. Actually, this was true, as mention of this is made in the Old Testament in Proverbs 16:33 - ***"The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD."***
- And, naturally, since God is in charge of this entire event, the lot falls on Jonah. The Almighty has shown the sailors who is responsible for this storm. Whether they know it or not, Yahweh is also controlling these sailors.
- The **rapid-fire questioning can almost make us visualize these sailors trying to get Jonah to talk and tell them what is going on.** Why was he chosen? What is up here? A lot of talking at once, and all this going on with a storm raging the whole time. They didn't know much about Jonah before, but they do now!
- This un-natural storm, Jonah's sleeping, frantic sailors vainly attempting to save their ship and themselves and then the same kind of questioning about another man should remind us of another tempestuous storm, another sleeping passenger, and frantic sailors. This is not a coincidence. Do you recall the storm on the Sea of Galilee, when Jesus slept in the boat while the frightened disciples attempted to keep their little boat upright? They couldn't believe He was sleeping, and then after Jesus calmed the storm, they questioned exactly who He was:



³⁵ *On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, **"Let us cross over to the other side."*** ³⁶ *Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him.* ³⁷ *And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling.* ³⁸ *But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"*

³⁹ Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, **“Peace, be still!”** And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ But He said to them, **“Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?”** ⁴¹ And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, **“Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!”** (Mark 4:35-41)

- Another remarkable passage that has bearing on this event, and on the future calming of a storm is one that Jonah would have been familiar with. It is from Psalm 107, which is a song of deliverance for God’s people. But it is also **highly prophetic**, and was most likely available in the scriptures in Jonah’s time. Perhaps these words came to Jonah in some way: *“Those who go down to the sea in ships, Who do business on great waters, ²⁴ They see the works of the LORD, And His wonders in the deep. ²⁵ For He commands and raises the stormy wind, Which lifts up the waves of the sea. ²⁶ They mount up to the heavens, They go down again to the depths; Their soul melts because of trouble. ²⁷ They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, And are at their wits’ end. ²⁸ Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble, And He brings them out of their distresses. ²⁹ He calms the storm, So that its waves are still. ³⁰ Then they are glad because they are quiet; So He guides them to their desired haven. ³¹ Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men! ³² Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people, And praise Him in the company of the elders.”* (Psalm 107:23-32)

It is also interesting to note here that the sailors know some evil, or terrible trouble, has come upon them because of Jonah. **It is a basic fact that when we sin, we affect those around us.** Jonah’s sin put the sailors’ lives at risk. When we sin, what evil or trouble are we causing for the people around us?

Jonah 1:9-11

New King James Version	Names of God Bible	Amplified Bible
⁹ So he said to them, “I am a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” ¹⁰ Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, “Why have you done this?” For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. ¹¹ Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?”—for the sea was growing more tempestuous.	⁹ Jonah answered them, “I’m a Hebrew. I worship Yahweh, the God of heaven. He is the Elohim who made the sea and the land.” ¹⁰ Then the men were terrified. They knew that he was running away from Yahweh, because he had told them. They asked Jonah, “Why have you done this?” ¹¹ The storm was getting worse. So they asked Jonah, “What should we do with you to calm the sea?”	⁹ And he said to them, I am a Hebrew, and I [reverently] fear <i>and</i> worship the Lord, the God of heaven, Who made the sea and the dry land. ¹⁰ Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, What is this that you have done? For the men knew that he fled from being in the presence of the Lord [as His prophet and servant], because he had told them. ¹¹ Then they said to him, What shall we do to you, that the sea may subside <i>and</i> be calm for us? For the sea became more and more [violently] tempestuous.

- **Jonah answers their panicked questions honestly.** No matter what we think of his original stupidity in disobeying God’s direct command to go to Nineveh, Jonah is honest here and does not try to duck the truth. Most likely, he knew the “jig was up.” He probably knew he couldn’t outsmart the Almighty, but he tried it anyway. Now, God has placed him in a situation where only the truth will be of any benefit.
- Jonah had told the sailors what he was doing (“***For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.***”), running from Yahweh, the God he worshipped. Notice Jonah’s answers are in the present tense. He still worships Yahweh. Notice also how he identifies Yahweh. These sailors did not know Him, but Jonah gives them some background information – all they need to know. His **God made the sea**, and the dry land. His God created and controlled the very seas that were tossing them about like toys. **His God is the one who is causing this storm**. And that is all the more reason to question Jonah as to exactly WHY he was running from his God. In sailor lingo, it was probably laced with local expletives – WHY on earth would you do this??? Good question!
- Now they want to know what to do to appease Jonah’s God. Notice that they believe they **must do something TO Jonah to appease his God**. This is how the pagan religions worked, man must do something, sacrifice something, in order to make their gods happy. They want to know what Yahweh, Jonah’s God, the master of the seas wants in order to calm this storm.

LITERARY NOTE: Verses 4 through 16 are written as a “chiasmus,” which is Greek for a shape like the letter “X”. It is a figure of speech where two or more phrases related to each other are reversed in structure in order to make a point. They show inverted “parallelism.” It is a deliberate literary feature the writer (most likely Jonah himself, even though written in the 3rd person, very common in scripture) used to illustrate the dire conditions and the response of the sailors and himself. There are many such literary structures found in both the Greek (NT) and Hebrew (OT) scriptures. It is a sort of “criss-cross” way of phrasing and can be applied to themes, phrases, whole passages, etc. It is used to get the reader’s attention to some larger point. Here’s what it looks like in this passage:

a. The sailors’ fear (1:4-5)

b. Their prayer to their gods (1:5)

c. The sailors throwing cargo overboard to lighten ship (1:5)

d. The captain’s speech to Jonah (1:6)

e. The sailors’ conversation with each other (1:7)

f. The sailors’ question to Jonah, “Who are you?” (1:7-8)

g. Jonah’s confession (1:9)

f. The sailors’ question to Jonah, “What have you done?” (1:10)

e. The sailors’ question to Jonah, “What shall we do?” (1:10-11)

d. Jonah’s words to the sailors (1:12)

c. The sailors’ rowing trying to save the ship (1:13)

b. The sailor’s prayer to the Yahweh (1:14)

a. The sailors’ fear of Yahweh (15-16)

- Up until this point in our story Jonah is **certainly not behaving as a “type” for the coming Messiah**, the deliverer of the world. He is disobedient, cowardly and contrary (sideways with God!). However, he knows what he must do, and he will do it. And it is at this point that Jonah becomes a type for Jesus, the Messiah.

Jonah 1:12

New King James Version	Names of God Bible	Amplified Bible
¹² <i>And he said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me.”</i>	¹² He told them, “Throw me overboard. Then the sea will become calm. I know that I’m responsible for this violent storm.”	¹² And [Jonah] said to them, Take me up and cast me into the sea; so shall the sea become calm for you, for I know that it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.

- Jonah knows what must happen. We don’t know how and when God spoke to him, but **Jonah knows**. He knows the storm is because of him, and he knows what must be done. He doesn’t ask these sailors to turn the boat around or try to row harder to save it. He doesn’t try to shirk his responsibility. He has obviously heard from Ed Shaddai, and this time he is obedient.
- It is very important to note the precise way Jonah is to end up in the sea. He cannot stay on the boat. This storm is between he and God, and he is endangering the lives of the sailors by staying there. God knows it, Jonah know it. But why didn’t Jonah just jump into the sea by himself? He most likely believed he would die and he is willing to do so to save the innocent sailors (*they are innocent in this particular incident, but certainly not innocent before a holy God whom they did not know or worship. Like the rest of humankind, their sin separates them from God. This is an important note.*)
- The answer to this question is simple but profound. Those whose lives depended on Jonah’s sacrifice had to sacrifice him themselves. Jonah could not just kill himself by jumping overboard. Why? **Because he and this incident are a profound type for the Savior of the world, who would do the same thing.** Jesus could not just kill himself either. He had to be put to death, sacrificed, by the people for whom He was dying. The same was true for Jonah. When we think about this and the many ways Jonah would represent the Messiah’s sacrifice for the sin of the world, saving those whose sins he paid for, and spending three days and three nights in the belly of the earth (rather than a fish!), and then being resurrected to life again, we can easily see how the author of all the scripture (the Holy Spirit Himself) is weaving an incredible prophetic view of something that would happen almost two thousand years later.

Jonah 1:13-15

New King James Version	Names of God Bible
<i>¹³ Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. ¹⁴ Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said, "We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You." ¹⁵ So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.</i>	¹³ Instead, the men tried to row harder to get the ship back to shore, but they couldn't do it. The storm was getting worse. ¹⁴ So they cried to Yahweh for help: "Please, Yahweh, don't let us die for taking this man's life. Don't hold us responsible for the death of an innocent man, because you, Yahweh, do whatever you want." ¹⁵ Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the sea became calm.

- After hearing Jonah's incredible statement that they must throw him overboard (*notice Jonah does not just jump....THEY have to do it!*) The sailors try harder to save the ship without resorting to murder.
- It is worthy to note that these are probably "good" men, men who understood the immoral nature of murdering an "innocent" man. While men and women can be "good" in the world's eyes, **no one is good before a completely holy God**, and goodness will not save, just as trying harder to save the ship had any bearing on the ultimate destiny of these sailors' lives. Only Yahweh can save. And Jonah will make that statement shortly. No matter what we do, we cannot save ourselves from the raging storm of sin that separates us from God. God must intervene, and we must ask. We must have a role in this – **salvation is not automatic, not from "goodness" and not by our own efforts**. These alone are very important lessons for us to understand from this story.
- It becomes very clear the **sailors cannot save themselves** and have no options left. They realize they must do what Jonah asked them to do – throw him to his death in the raging seas.
- The sailors are **terrified of Yahweh**, seeing what incredible power he has. They are plagued, however, by their consciences which are keeping them from sacrificing an apparently innocent man. Jonah is far from innocent, however. But that is not the point. They are not only looking out for Jonah, but for themselves as well. They plead with Yahweh not to hold them accountable for Jonah's death. They recognize that all of this trouble has been caused by Yahweh, for His purposes, and they are hoping that Jonah's request to throw him overboard will please and appease this God of such power, and that at the same time, He will not hold them responsible for Jonah's death and take their lives as well!
- **The sailors relent and throw Jonah in, and immediately the storm stops**. That must have been quite a visual experience. It is also a very vivid underscore that Yahweh is the God of power and might, for whom nothing is impossible. And, until we do as He requests or desires, nothing will go right for us! These sailors are no doubt standing in awe at this point. They have no doubt about Yahweh, Jonah's God, the God of the Hebrews, at this point.

Jonah 1:16

New King James Version	Names of God Bible
<i>16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows.</i>	<i>16 The men were terrified of Yahweh. They offered sacrifices and made vows to Yahweh.</i>

- After seeing the storm abate immediately after throwing Jonah in the storm-tossed seas, the sailors are in awe, probably trembling, because this is not natural. Obviously Jonah's God was the One in control here. None of their gods could do anything.
- The word "feared" here is *yare* in Hebrew, meaning **both to be terrified, but also in reverence**. These men now know there is a true God who not only controls the universe and all the elements, but also hears and answers prayers, unlike their false gods. It is also likely that these sailors, once they returned to dry land, told everyone they could find about Jonah, and about the God of the Hebrews, who is also most likely now their God. Jonah has effectively created Gentile, formerly pagan, missionaries!
- Again, "the LORD" is in fact not the Lord, but the name of God, Yahweh. Literally this statement read "The the men feared Yahweh exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to Yahweh and took vows." The word for "vows" means promises. We are not told what exactly they promised Yahweh, but perhaps it was to follow Him instead of other gods. Jonah has then effectively given his life for the eternal salvation of these sailors. Another very strong "type" for the gift of Yeshua, our Savior. He gave His life so we could be saved. There are very strong parallels throughout the story for the Redeemer of all mankind.

Jonah 1:17

New King James Version	Names of God Bible
<i>17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.</i>	<i>17 Yahweh sent a big fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.</i>

- There has been all sorts of speculation about this "great fish." Most people think of Jonah and a whale, but the word used in Hebrew is the word for fish, not whale. People speculate about what kind of great fish this was, something large enough to swallow an entire man. Most people think it had to be a whale, most probably a **sperm whale**, because nothing else would be large enough to do this. There are actual reports of men being swallowed whole by sperm whales and being found alive days later after the whale was caught and cut open. Unfortunately one man was a bit deranged (not surprising!) for a few weeks in one case, but later recovered fully.

THERE IS ONLY ONE BIG PROBLEM WITH ALL THIS SPECULATION, and one that we tend to apply to much of scripture. We try to explain things in our natural understanding of our world. But we must remember what this verse really says: ***"Now Yahweh prepared a great fish..."*** This is a fish that God specially prepared for this job. It may not resemble anything we know in our natural world. It could have been a whale, but again, it may not have been.

- Whatever it was doesn't really matter, because God prepared it special for this task. The fish may have been a one of a kind, something we will never see again.



(Sperm whale, showing perspective to man – the whale almost looks like he's smiling!)

- The reference to three days and three nights is critical here. This is the whole reason Jesus alluded to the story of Jonah, as a comparison and a sign of what He would do:

³⁹ But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. ⁴² The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here."
(Matthew 12:39-42)

- This story of Jonah is an actual event, but it is also an early type for the death and resurrection of the Messiah. There are similar elements in this story to Jesus' experience also, including the fact that Jonah had to be thrown into the sea by the sailors (he couldn't just jump, he had to be killed by those he was saving), he willingly allowed this to happen, and by so doing saved the lives of those who "killed" him. The same is true of our Messiah.

- At the time Jesus made this reference, it probably **would not make any sense to those who heard it**. But later, after He died and came to life again after 3 days and 3 days in the “heart of the earth,” those who knew the scriptures and were watching for the Messiah would have connected the dots and seen this remarkable prophecy. Sadly, many scoffed at this story then, and many do now. But we know our God is capable of anything, and preparing a fish to swallow Jonah is no big deal to Him! Making this event a prophetic pointer to a bigger coming event is just like our God.
- We should also note that this verse 17 of the first chapter of Jonah is actually the first verse of the second chapter in the Hebrew bible, which makes a lot of sense. The chapter and verse designations in scripture were added and manipulated by man, not God. Sometimes we didn’t get them exactly right, but that does not change the veracity of the scriptures.