

While on a business trip across the country, a man noticed a woman reading her Bible during the airplane flight.

He grinned and thought to himself **“How can any sensible person could believe that the stories in the Bible were true.”**

After a few more moments his curiosity got the best of him and he leaned over to the woman and asked her:

“Tell me something”, he continued, **“Do you really believe that the stories in the Bible are true?”**

“Yes, of course I do”, the woman said, “It’s the Word of God”.

“Really, well what about the story of Jonah and the whale, do you believe that actually happened?”

“I mean do you really believe that a whale swallowed a man and that he was able to survive inside the stomach of that whale for 3 days and 3 nights?”

"Why of course I believe this story is the truth!"

“Well, how do you suppose he survived all that time inside the whale?”

The lady said "Well I don't really know, I guess when I get to heaven I will ask him."

The man laughed and said to the woman sarcastically, **“Well what if he isn't in heaven?”**

She said: **“Well Then you can ask him.”**

Bible critics and scoffers have laughed at the story of Jonah and the whale for 2,000 years.

☞ **A lot of people** see the Book of Jonah as a little **“Fishy”**

☞ **They cannot grasp** the fact that the story is true...**O Whale...**

A lot of people find the story of Jonah, “Hard To Swallow”...

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- ☞ **Along with the Bibles statements** that the Lord created the Earth in 7 literal days and the fact that Jesus Rose from the dead, as just Mythical stories.
- ☞ **As we come to our study this morning** in the Harmony of the Gospels, we will have the opportunity to look at Jonah and see if that story is true or not.
- ☞ **More importantly**, what does Jonah and the Whale have to do with us today and our lives?

Matthew 12:38-41

38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, “Teacher, **we want to see a sign** from You.”

39 But Jesus 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.

The other place that this story is found, is in Luke chapter 11, which is virtually identical to Matthews account.

Luke 11:29-32

29 And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, “**This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign**, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet.”

30 For **as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites**, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation.

32 The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here

Now wait a minute! Let’s get this straight...

The Pharisees have come to Jesus and want Him to perform some kind of Supernatural sign and wonder so that He can prove to them that He is The Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

- ☞ **Jesus tells them** that “*It is a wicked and adulterous generation that seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given except the sign of the Prophet Jonah.*”

“As Jonah was three days and three nights in the Belly of the Whale, so also (Jesus said) He will I be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Oh Jesus, now you have blown it!

Don’t you know that this story of Jonah is just a mythical story, it never really happened!

No one could survive three days and three nights inside the stomach of a whale!

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Do you see where I am going with this?

- ☞ **If the story of Jonah** never happened, then why is Jesus saying that it did happen?
- ☞ **Who do you trust**, the Bible scholars that say it didn't happen, or Jesus who says that it did happen.
- ☞ **In Fact it happened** just so Jesus could illustrate How When He is crucified, He will descend into the Middle of the earth, right into Hell itself.

Ephesians 4:8-9

8 Therefore He says: "When Jesus ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men."

9 (Now this, "He ascended" **what does it mean** but **that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?**)

When the thief on the Cross next to Jesus asked Jesus to "Remember Him when Jesus came into His kingdom", Jesus said "Today you will be with me in Paradise".

Luke 23:43

And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Did you know that at the time that Jesus was here on the earth, Heaven was not called "Paradise", a great holding place within the center of the earth was called "Paradise", or "Abraham's Bosom".

Luke 16:19-23

19 "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.

20 But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, 21 desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 So it was **that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom.** The rich man also died and was buried.

23 And **being in torments in Hades**, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off,

What many people do not realize is what Jesus did AFTER He was Crucified.

- ☞ **We know** that Jesus was put into the grave.
- ☞ **He stayed** there for 3 days.
- ☞ **He was Resurrected** on the third day.
- ☞ **During the 3 days** that Jesus body was in the Grave, Where was His Spirit?

Ephesians 4:7-9

7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

8 Therefore He says: "**When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive**, And gave gifts to men."

9 (Paul Said): "Jesus ascended" what does it mean but that **Jesus also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?** ("Lower": Greek: "**Katoteros**", Literally "Hades")

In other words Paul says, “Jesus did ascend back into Heaven”, but before Jesus ascended into Heaven, He first Descended into Hell!

- ☞ **Did you ever wonder** what Jesus was doing for those three days between the time He was Crucified and He Rose from the dead?
- ☞ **Before Jesus ascended into Heaven**, he went to Hell.
- ☞ **Now, Jesus didn't go to hell** to pay for your sins, that was already accomplished on the Cross.

Here in 1 Peter, chapter 3, Peter comments on this time when Jesus went into Hell, after He was crucified.

1 Peter 3:18-20

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, **the just for the unjust**, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,
19 by whom also **He went and preached to the spirits in prison**,
20 **who formerly were disobedient**, when once the Divine longsuffering waited **in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared**, in which a few, that is, **eight souls**, were saved through water.

The first thing Jesus did after he was Crucified, was descend into Hell and preach to those who died during the flood of Noah.

- ☞ **Peter reminds us** that only 8 people believed the Lord at the time Noah was building the ark for 100 years.
- ☞ **Only 8 people entered the Ark** and were saved, everyone else on the earth did not believe, and were killed in the flood.

So, getting back to our story: Jesus is Crucified, He descends into Hell, he is preaching to the souls that are in Hell, who would not believe Gods promise to save them...

- ☞ **Isaiah recorded** that Jesus also had another purpose in Descending into Hell.

Isaiah 61:1-2

1 “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, **To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;**
2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God

- ☞ **Jesus came to** “*Proclaim Liberty to the Captives and the opening of the prison to those who were bound*”.
- ☞ **What “Captives**, was Jesus and Isaiah talking about?

Those that had died before Jesus came and Made His ONE Sacrifice for all of us for our sins.

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In the Old Testament, "Hell" is called "Sheol".

☞ Before Jesus came, "Sheol", or "Hell" had 2 compartments,

Picture of Earth

Picture of 2 Compartments

Before Jesus made His sacrifice on the Cross, everyone that died in the Old Testament went into one of 2 places.

1. **One compartment** called "*Abrahams Bosom*", A place of comfort for those who died believing in the future promise of Jesus sacrifice for their sins, and
2. **A Second compartment** A place of Torment, for those who died that had rejected the promise of Jesus sacrifice went to "**Tartarus**".
3. **At the end of the 1,000 years** of Jesus reign on the earth, there will be the Great White Throne Judgment, (Rev 21) at the end of that Judgment, those held in "*Tartarus*", will be cast into "*Ghenna*", "**The lake of Fire**".

☞ **Tartarus** appears to be for the **Soul and spirit**.

☞ **Ghenna** appears to be for the **Body soul and Spirit**.

Jesus Himself tells the story of these 2 compartments in Luke chapter 16:

Luke 16:19-31

19 "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.

20 But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate,

21 desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 So it was that **the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.**

23 And **being in torments in Hades**, he lifted up his **eyes and saw** Abraham afar off, and **Lazarus in his bosom**.

24 "Then **he cried** and said, 'Father Abraham, **have mercy on me**, and send Lazarus that he may **dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented** in this flame.'

25 But Abraham said, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now **he is comforted** and **you are tormented**."

26 And besides all this, between us and you there is **a great gulf fixed**, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'

27 "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house,

28 for **I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.**'

29 Abraham said to him, "**They have Moses (Law) and the prophets**; let them hear them.'

30 And he said, "No, father Abraham; but **if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.**'

31 But he said to him, **“If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.”**

So, back to our Study of Hebrews 9, we learned this morning that when Jesus died and descended into Hell, He preached to all those who died in the flood that would not believe God...

- ☞ **Then Jesus** “*Ascended*” back into heaven.
- ☞ **When He did**, He took with Him, all those Old testament believers who were waiting for Him to come.

Ephesians 4:7-9

8 Therefore He says: **“When Jesus ascended on high,(Back to Heaven) He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.”**

Jesus took with Him to heaven, all the Old Testament believers. THEN JESUS CLOSED “ABRAHAM’S BOSOM” FOREVER.

So, the story of Jonah being swallowed by the whale really happened, **because Jesus said that it happened and Jesus used it to illustrate the fact that He would be going into the lower parts of the earth.**

- ☞ **But what** was the purpose of Jonah being swallowed by the whale?
- ☞ **What was the message** that we can get from the Lord for our lives today, from this story?

Jonah 1:1-4

1 Now the word of the LORD came to **Jonah** the son of Amittai, saying,

2 “Arise, **go to Nineveh**, that great city, and **cry out against it**; for their wickedness has come up before Me.”

Jonah lived about 800 years before Jesus came.

- ☞ **Jesus said** that “*The men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment*” when Jesus returns to judge the earth because when Jonah went to Nineveh and preached repentance, they repented.

Luke 11:32

The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, **for they repented at the preaching of Jonah**; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here

But the generation that was alive when Jesus came, did not repent and accept Jesus as Lord and Savior.

- ☞ **The reason** that the men of Nineveh will speak up at that judgment, is that Jonah was **a mean, angry, grouchy old prophet** who didn’t really care about the people of Nineveh, in fact he hated them.

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- ⊕ **And yet the people repented**, but when Jesus came, One greater than Jonah, He was kind and gentle and Merciful, yet most of the people rejected His offer of forgiveness and eternal life.

The reason that Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh is that **he knew that the Lord is Merciful and kind and forgiving**, and that if the evil people of Nineveh did repent, then they would be spared from God's judgment, but **Jonah didn't want them to be spared, he wanted them destroyed**.

In those days a man could walk about 10 miles per day.

- ⊕ **The Book of Jonah** says that it took 3 days just to walk across Nineveh.
- ⊕ **This means** that Nineveh was more than **30 miles** from one end to the other.
- ⊕ **The Bible says** that there were **120,000 babies** small enough that they didn't know their right hand from their left, innocent with no knowledge of good or evil.
- ⊕ **This means** that Nineveh had over 1 million people living there.

But Nineveh was one of the most wicked cities that have ever existed.

Picture of Nineveh:

- ⊕ **It is mentioned** in the Book of Genesis and was established by Nimrod.
- ⊕ **The Assyrians of Nineveh**, skinned their prisoners alive, and cut off various body parts to inspire terror in their enemies.
- ⊕ **There are records** of Assyrian officials pulling out tongues with their hands and displaying mounds of human skulls to bring horror to the surrounding nations.

Picture of skulls:

- ⊕ **When Nineveh would capture an enemy**, they would physically mutilate and torture their prisoners.
- ⊕ **Here an Assyrian Soldier** pokes out the eyes of the captive, while another soldier leads his captive by a hook through their lip.

Picture of eyes poked out:

- ⊕ **History records** that many times if an army knew that they were going to be captured by the army of Nineveh, the Assyrians, that **they would all commit suicide** rather than go through the cruelty of the Assyrian soldiers of Nineveh.

So when the Lord tells Jonah to go and preach to the Ninevites because; **"If they don't repent from their wickedness, that in 40 days, God would destroy them all"**, Jonah said **"Good Let God Destroy them because I hate them"**.

- ⊕ **But the Lord didn't hate them**, even though they were so evil and cruel, He still loved them and wanted to save them.

Jonah 1

3 **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

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.

Just as in your own everyday life, **the Lord works in the everyday circumstances of your life, to speak to you and change you...**

- ☞ **As Jonah flees**, the Lord works through nature and causes the seas to be in a tempest.
- ☞ **Jonah knows** the reason the sea is rough and that the ship they are in is breaking up.

Jonah 1:7

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**

Jonah 1:12

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**

Because of Jonah’s sin, other people were paying the price for his rebellion.

- ☞ **It is the same for us**, when we are in sin and rebellion, other people in your life, will pay the price for your stubbornness and rebellion.

Jonah 1:17

Now **the LORD had prepared a great fish (DAG) to swallow Jonah**. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights

“The Lord prepared a great fish”.

- ☞ **Sometimes the Lord prepares a trial** custom made for us, to get our attention.
- ☞ **Jonah ran from the Lord**, but the Lord would not let Jonah go, because He also loves Jonah.

And while in the belly of the Whale, Jonah finally comes to his senses, and call on the Lord...

Jonah 2:1

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish’s belly.

Picture of Jonah in the Whale:

In February 1891, the Whaling ship “**Star of the East**” was near the Falkland islands.

They spotted a Whale and sent out two smaller boats to kill the whale.

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The first boat managed to get a harpoon into the whale, but the second boat was hit by the tail of the Whale. And destroyed...

One man drowned and another, James Bartley disappeared.

When they opened the stomach of the whale, to their surprise out came the missing man, James Bartley.

The acid from the stomach of the Whale had removed every trace of hair from his body and bleached his skin an ashen white the color of white paper.

They bathed him in salt water and he quickly regained consciousness.

He said that he did not become unconscious from lack of air, but from fear.

This is recorded in a secular, non Christian publication and documented to be a true story, there are many other stories like this.

Picture of Newspaper “New York World” article of James Bartley, the Modern Jonah:

But going into the Whale was what Jonah needed to come to His senses...

Just as Peter, when He came to the end of himself after he denied that he even knew Jesus, he came back to the Lord.

- ☞ **As the prodigal son** finally came to the end of himself and then decided to go home.
- ☞ **As you and I**, when we are in our terrible trials, we come to our senses and return to the Lord...
- ☞ **Jonah was in a “Tight Spot”, but as soon** as Jonah called on the Lord, notice what happened:

Jonah 2:10

So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Picture of Jonah on land

Jonah 3:1-5

1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying,

2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.”

3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, **a three-day journey in extent.**

4 And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, **“Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”**

5 **So the people of Nineveh believed God,** proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.

Did you get that?

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- ☞ **All that Jonah does** is say to the people of Nineveh: *“In 40 days Nineveh shall be overthrown”*
- ☞ **That’s it!** No long sermon, no detailed list of scriptures.
- ☞ **Just:** *“in 40 days you are all toast”*.

And yet the people of Nineveh proclaimed a fast, and they all repented from the greatest to the least...

Jonah 4:1-2

1 But **it displeased Jonah exceedingly**, and **he became angry**.

2 So he prayed to the LORD, and said, “Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm

Over 1 million people turned to the Lord, and Jonah is mad!

- ☞ He is mad at God.
- ☞ For being so kind.
- ☞ Because he hated the people of Nineveh.
- ☞ But God loved them, and he used a grouchy old prophet who hated them to save them all.

Jonah 4:6-11

6 And the LORD **God prepared a plant** and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant

7 But as morning dawned the next day **God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered**

Even while Jonah is pouting and angry with the Lord, the Lord grows a plant over his head to cool him in the hot sun of the day.

8 And it happened, when the sun arose, **that God prepared a vehement east** wind; and the sun beat on Jonah’s head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, “It is better for me to die than to live.”

9 **Then God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?”** ¶ And he said, **“It is right for me to be angry, even to death!”**

10 But the LORD said, **“You have had pity on the plant** for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night.

11 And **should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?”**

You see how merciful and kind the Lord is, even to the worst of the worst!

- ☞ **And notice how patient** and kind the Lord will be when your heart is not quite right with Him...

Video: “Jonah Was A Prophet”

“A Doodle Doo”

We learn some wonderful things about the Lord from this story of Jonah and Nineveh:

1. **Chapter 1:** That through the entire process of Jonah's stubbornness and unwillingness to follow the Lord, that the Lord was very patient with Jonah...and he will be very patient with you too.
2. **Chapter 2:** The Lord forgave Jonah, even when he had gone so far from the Lord that he was swallowed by a whale.
3. **Chapter 3:** We see that the Lord worked incredibly through Jonah when he went to people that Jonah didn't even like.
4. **Chapter 4:** We see the Lord compassionate and kind to Jonah even when he was pouting about his circumstances.

Your trials can either harden you or soften you.

- ☞ **Boiling water** can **harden an egg**, but also soften a potato.
- ☞ **It's up to the one who is in hot water**, will you be softened, or will you harden your heart.

When Jonah was in the worst, most rebellious place in his life, He softened himself and called on the Lord,...AND THE LORD HEARD HIM... and delivered him...

And the Lord wasn't finished with Jonah because Jonah had blown it...