

# **JONAH & JESUS**

**By Abri Brancken, 7 Jan 2017**

## **Matthew 16:1-4**

Mat 16:1 The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tried to test him by asking for a sign from heaven.

Mat 16:2 But he answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the heaven is red.

Mat 16:3 And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the heaven is red and lowering. Ye know how to discern the face of the heaven; but ye cannot discern the signs of the times.

Mat 16:4 An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of Jonah. And he left them, and departed.

Jesus said that the Pharisees had the understanding to know and see the time of day and weather, but that they were unable to see the signs of the times. They lived in very important times because it was the time when the Messiah stood in their midst. They failed to see it!

Jesus said the answer to understand the signs of the times is to look at Jonah.

## **WHY DOES JESUS MENTION JONAH?**

### **Where he lived:**

The prophet Jonah lived in the Galilean city of Gath-hepher, just north of Nazareth.

### **When he lived:**

During reign of Jeroboam II (793-753 B.C.), king of Israel (cf. 2 Kings 14:25). Jeroboam II was northern Israel's most powerful king, and during his administration the borders of the nation were expanded to their greatest extent since the time of David and Solomon. Jonah lived in the middle of the 8th century BC. This makes Jonah a contemporary of the prophet Amos and Hosea.

At this time in history, God sends Jonah to Nineveh to preach repentance to them, but Jonah refused. Jonah went to Joppa where he boarded a ship bound for Tarshish, a Phoenician colony on the southwest coast of Spain some two thousand miles to the west. Tarsus was a place of commerce where Jews in that time made a lot of money.

## **WHY DIDN'T JONAH WANT TO GO TO NINEVEH?**

### **Nineveh background**

Nineveh was established by Nimrod, "the mighty hunter" (Gen. 10:8-10). It served as the capitol of the Assyrian Empire for many years. For years sceptics questioned the existence of the city since it could not be found. However, British archaeologist A. H. Layard excavated the site in 1845-1854. Nineveh by name 18 times and dedicates two entire books (Jonah and Nahum) to its fate.

The Assyrians were a very cruel and evil. They came into Northern Israel and raped

the woman. They would take babies by feet and bash head against a wall. They would take men and skin them alive & let them walk in desert till they die.

God told Jonah to go to Ninevah, the capital of Assyria where these cruel people lived and to preach to them.

### **WHAT MADE JONAH SO POPULAR?**

Jonah was a popular prophet, but why? Was it because of the fish story? No. It was because of a prophecy he gave to a king. He prophesied the expansion of Israel's borders during king (2 Kings 7) Jeroboam 2<sup>nd</sup>, the king of Israel.

Israel's neighbours were the Assyrians. He gave prophecy that his land must be extended from the dead sea area right into Assyrian territory. He was a hero because he helped with the extension of Israel. He helped them extend their ground.

If you extend ground you have to take it from someone, in this case Assyria. The Assyrians started to attack IL & a war broke out. So, Jonah does not want to go because he was the initiator of the invasion of Assyria. He knew what would happen to him in Nineveh.

Got on ship & started sailing for Tarsus and while on the way, a storm arose. Found out Jonah was cause of the storm. Jonah said to throw him overboard. Better to drown than to be skinned alive. He chose the easy way out. When he landed in the water, a great sea creature came and swallowed him.

### **THE GREAT SEA CREATURE (FISH)**

As for the whale, the Bible doesn't actually specify what sort of marine animal swallowed Jonah. Most people assume that it was a cachalot (also known as the sperm whale). It may also have been a white shark or some other type of sea creature.

The Hebrew phrase "gadawl dag", literally means "great fish."

Two sea creatures in Mediterranean able to swallow man. The cachalot (sperm whale). The sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) is the largest of the toothed whales. The males average at 16 metres (52 ft) in length but can reach 20.5 metres and the white shark. Both creatures are known to prowl the Mediterranean and have been known to Mediterranean sailors since antiquity.

Aristotle described both species in his 4th-century B.C. *Historia Animalium*

### **NINEVEH & DAGON**

Jonah's extraordinary arrival upon the shores of the Mediterranean drew attention. Dagon worship in that particular area of the ancient world. Dagon was a fish-god who enjoyed popularity among the pantheons of Mesopotamia and the eastern Mediterranean coast.

Dagon is mentioned several times in the Bible in relation to the Philistines (Judges 16:23-24; 1 Samuel 5:1-7; 1 Chronicles 10:8-12). Images of Dagon have been found

in palaces and temples in Nineveh and throughout the region. In some cases, he was represented as a man wearing a fish. In others he was part man, part fish—a merman, of sorts.

Jonah's appearance, no doubt bleached white from the action of the fish's digestive acids, would have been of great help to his cause. If such were the case, the Ninevites would have been greeted by a man whose skin, hair and clothes were bleached ghostly white, telling them to repent or destruction would come on them.

Jonah was probably accompanied by a crowd of frenetic followers, many of who claimed to have witnessed him having been vomited upon the shore by a great fish (plus any colourful exaggerations they might have added).

God delivered Jonah in a way that the people of Nineveh could relate to.

The prophet Jonah said - "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" ([Jonah 3:4](#)). People of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them" ([Jonah 3:5](#)).

### **JONAH & JESUS PARALLELS**

Both Were called to deliver a message, repentance (Jonah 3: 1; Matthew 4: 17)

Both were sent to the lost

Both had to leave their place of safety

Both ended up in a storm (although Jesus not because of disobedience)

Both were asleep in the storm

Both were leaving the Jewish territory for the gentiles (Mark 4)

Both were 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of a "beast" (Jon 1:17, Matt 12:39-40)

Both were delivered from death (fish & earth)

Both the Messengers were "delivered" to their audience in a relatable way (Jonah 3:1-10, John 1:14)

Both saw people repenting due to the message

Both are "signs" to their generations and ours as well

We can go **willingly**.