

NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH PREP SCHOOL LESSON

Jonah Part 1

Have you ever heard the story of Jonah and the “whale”? Well, we are going to begin a study on the Old Testament book named after him. Jonah was a prophet, which is someone chosen by God to tell people about His will, so he “worked” for God. One day, Jonah’s boss (God) gave Him a job to do:

Jonah 1:1-2 *“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.’”*

So, Jonah packed a bag and headed straight for Nineveh, right?

Jonah 1:3 *“But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship, which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare, and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.”*



As you can see from the map, Tarshish is in the exact OPPOSITE direction of where God told Jonah to go! Why in the world would Jonah disobey the Lord? At that time, Nineveh was a large, powerful city in Assyria and the Assyrians were enemies of the Jewish people. It is quite obvious that Jonah did not want God to save them. That is a shame, but we will talk more about this later. Anyway, as you can imagine, God was not happy with Jonah’s disobedience. Here was His response:

Jonah 1:4-5 *“And the LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up.”*

The chapter goes on to say that the rest of the people on the ship began to panic and prayed to their gods. Then, the captain found Jonah asleep, woke him up, and asked him to pray to his God. Interesting how fickle they were, huh? If their fake gods would not help, maybe another one would. In this case, the other One was actually THE God, the Creator of the Universe. Despite all of their prayers, though, the storm continued. So, they concluded that someone on board must be the reason for the storm and decided to find out exactly who it was.

Jonah 1:7 *“Each man said to his mate, ‘Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us.’ So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah”*

Casting lots is like picking straws where whoever picks the shortest straw is the winner or the loser, depending on the reason for it. We can clearly see that God controlled this little game of chance since Jonah was shown to be the cause! Jonah admits to them that he is, indeed, the reason for the storm and tells them why God sent it.

Jonah 1:9-10 *“He answered, ‘I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.’ This terrified them and they asked, ‘What have you done?’ (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.)”*

They then ask Jonah what they should do to calm the storm. His answer is a bit shocking.

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 on account of me this great storm has come upon you.’”*

Not surprisingly, the men did not want to throw him overboard. So, they did not listen to Jonah, at first. Instead, they began rowing with all their might to get back to land. This only made the storm worse. They finally gave up and did what Jonah said.

Jonah 1:15-16 *“So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.”*

God used Jonah's discipline for disobedience as a way to show His glory and power to unbelievers- cool, huh? Anyway, now Jonah is in the ocean- what happens next?

Jonah 1:17 *“And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.”*

Wow! What a chapter! We can clearly see that God expects obedience from His children and will discipline us if we disobey Him. Unfortunately, our discipline often affects those around us. So, we should be obedient to His commands because of our fear of God, love for God, as well as our love for others!

Ecclesiastes 12:13 *“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.”*

1John 5:2-3 *“This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,”*