

JONAH: THE WRONG-WAY PROPHET (Part 4)

“Q & A WITH MR. JONAH” (Jonah 1:17)

INTRO: A series on “Jonah - the Wrong-Way Prophet.” Book Outline . . . *Ch 1* - a prodigal prophet running from God. Next *Ch 2* - a praying prophet running to God in repentance. This message is an interlude or parenthesis to deal with questions surrounding 1:17. It is at this point ridicule is poured on the story. Only the creation accounts in Genesis 1-2 more debated. It is foundation of our faith in God. Jonah’s “3days & 3 nights” foreshadows the Resurrection, the foundation of our faith in Christ! Are there valid reasons for accepting it as historically reliable? This has been a debating ground for centuries. Of all the incidents in the Bible, this is one of the hardest to “swallow”. I want to ask and answer four (4) essential questions about this event:

I. **COULD IT? IS IT POSSIBLE FOR A FISH TO SWALLOW A HUMAN BEING AND TO TELL ABOUT IT?**

- A. TEXT says, “But the Lord *provided*...” Hebrew term is never used in the sense of creating but of assigning or ordaining. God ordered that fish He created to be at that place at that time. Text also says He provided “*a great fish* to swallow Jonah.” Literally, a sea monster (Gen. 1:21), probably a sperm whale (PIC). Could a fish really swallow a person and that person live? Historically documented cases of whales swallowing man alive...

ILLUS. - J. Sidlow Baxter pp. 152-4...

- B. TRUTH - Could this happen? For all who believe in a supernatural God, the answer is “of course”. A miracle occurs when God temporarily suspends the laws of nature for His purposes. There is no question this event was a miracle. “With God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26). To deny the supernatural or miraculous is to deny God (atheist). “Must I believe in miracles to be a Christian? Only two . . . W. A. Criswell says all this discussion of whether or not a man could be swallowed by a fish and live is ridiculous. God could’ve furnished it with carpet, TV, Wi-Fi, and AC if He chose! More important than could IT, is, would He?

II. **WOULD HE? IS IT PROBABLE THAT GOD WOULD ORDAIN SUCH A MIRACLE?**

We know God could do it, but *would* He do it? Again, yes. God has always used the miraculous at certain times to get man’s attention always at His discretion and for His purposes. Moses (the Exodus); Elijah (institution of prophecy); Christ (confirm deity), NT Apostles as authenticated spokesmen for God. God has always used miracles at certain times to confirm His presence and His Word. No question in my mind with the revival that occurred in wicked Nineveh, that God put His signature on Jonah with this mighty miracle. Without question it got their attention that God was a work! John 20:30-31

ILLUS. - Bob Marcarelle writes...

III. **DID HE? IS IT PROVABLE THAT THIS TOOK PLACE?**

Ultimately, we do not believe in this episode because it is possible that God could or even probable that He would, but because we believe in the infallible & inerrant inspired Bible. God said this actually happened in His Word and that should settle it in our hearts. God cannot lie and His Word is true (Pro. 30:5). Besides Christ accepted the account as true.

IV. **WHY DID HE? IS IT PURPOSEFUL?**

As noted, God always has purpose for the miraculous. Never to amuse or entertain. God’s remarkable and miraculous deliverance of His prodigal prophet has a purposeful message concerning the sovereign power of God. This event demonstrates the power of God to:

- A. TO CONTROL HIS CREATION - The Creator is not subject to His creation. He is Master over not slaves to all He made, including the sea and its creatures. He made and controls it. Job 38 ff . . .
- B. TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE HIS PEOPLE - This was an act of preservation more than punishment. Jonah and every believer is invincible until God is through with him. There is no grave until God gives the Word (Psa. 91:5-7). Our death is never in the hands of human fate but of Almighty God (Isa. 43:1-3a).
- C. TO PURGE DISOBEDIENCE - God used that storm to discipline His prophet. In that fish Jonah repented (Ch. 2) and was purged to be used again. God always knows when, where, and how to touch His wayward children to bring them back. That fish was God’s scalpel. He used a donkey to purge Balaam, a parable for David, a look for Peter, an earthquake for a jailer in Philippi, and a fish to reach Jonah. He’ll never let us go without a fight.
- D. TO PORTRAY HIS SAVIOR (Matt. 12:38-41). Jonah’s experience serves as a sign to the greatest event in human history - the resurrection of J.C. “Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights.” To deny Jonah’s experience is to question Christ’s own Resurrection.
- E. “But Jonah didn’t die,” you say. Where does it say that? In fact, suggesting the contrary is Jonah’s spirit praying to God from Sheol (place of the departed spirits of the dead) (Jonah 2:1-2). Jonah’s life, death, and resurrection portrays One, greater than Jonah - Jesus Christ, who is greater in His person (Son of God), His character (sinless) & message (love), and greater in His effects offering salvation to all mankind.

CONC: So, Mr. Jonah? *Could* IT? Yes! *Would* He? Yes! *Did* He? Yes! *Why*? US! Remember the fish event is incidental and not central. Don’t blow it so out of proportion that you miss the heart of the book. More important than the dimensions of the fish are God’s dealings with a prodigal and a lost city with grace and mercy. Let me close with Swindoll’s imagined account . . . Read Ch. 2 for next time.