

JONAH

This is a parable or story about a man named Jonah who was chosen by God to preach to the people of Nineveh, which was a great city in a distant land. These people were not Hebrews and did not know about God's loving care and guidance. But Jonah did not really want to preach there. And so, hoping to escape God's command, he went to the coast and boarded a ship that was sailing in the opposite direction, toward the faraway city of Tarshish.

God knew everything that Jonah did, and after the prophet had been at sea for a few days, He sent a mighty storm that threatened to wreck the ship. All the crew members prayed to their gods, but Jonah realized that the storm was his punishment for trying to leave the presence of God.

Jonah then told the men what he had done and said to them, "Throw me into the sea, and then the storm will quiet down." The men pitied Jonah and were reluctant to throw him into the rough waters. Instead they rowed as hard as they could and tried to bring the ship back to land. The harder they rowed, however, the more the sea raged. Finally they saw that the only way to save themselves was to throw Jonah overboard. As soon as they had done so, the sea became calm and the storm ceased.

Jonah was tossed about in the sea, but he did not drown for God had appointed a great whale to swallow him. For three days and nights Jonah remained alive inside the fish, thinking about his disobedience and praying for God's forgiveness. When Jonah had been punished enough and was ready to go on with his mission, God caused the whale to open its mouth and deliver Jonah safely on dry land.

Jonah went on to Nineveh and so brought God's word to other people as well as the Israelites, thus showing His love for all nations.

