

JONAH - STUDY PART 2

Jonah 1:17 – 3:2 (NIV)

1:17 But the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights.

2:1 From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God.

*2 He said:
In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry.*

3 You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me.

4 I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again towards your holy temple.'

5 The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head.

6 To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you brought my life up from the pit, O LORD my God.

7 When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple.

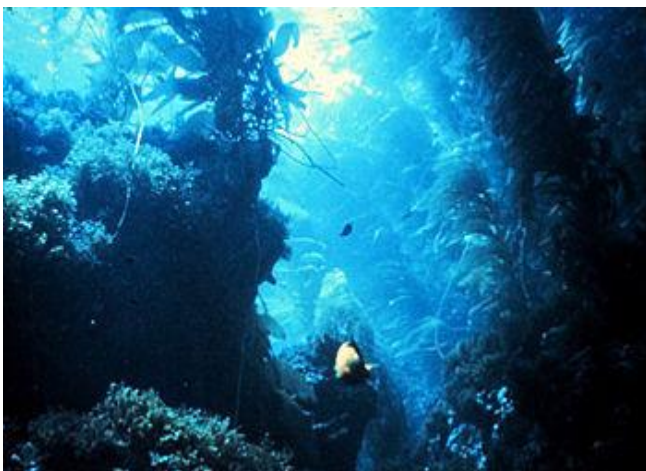
8 Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.

9 But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the LORD.

10 And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

3:1 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time:

2 Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.



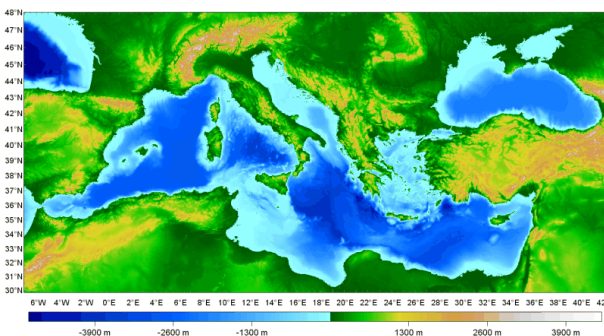
Reason and Faith – the engineer’s approach

- Jesus called the fish a whale.
- How far off shore was the ship? The sailors tried to row ashore. The sea floor off the coast near Joppa rapidly descends to over 2000m deep.
- It takes about 3 minutes to drown.
- It takes a long time to sink, even 100m.
- An adult only needs about 1½ tablespoons of water to drown.
- Whales can swim at around 10mph and up to 25 mph.
- Did Jonah get thrown back onto land further up the coast, nearer Nineveh?

Can we even apply reason here?

We just saw a storm miraculously quietened, “it calmed down at once, this made the sailors afraid...”.

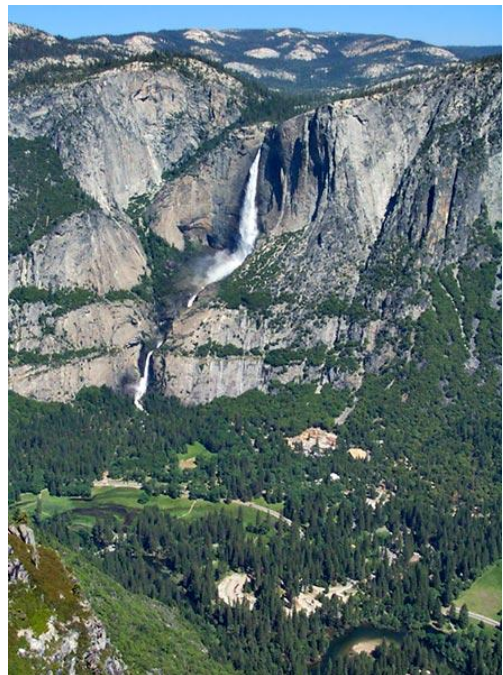
So what is reason worth - in the face of miracles.



The Eight Miracles in Jonah

1. God sends a wind that causes a storm, and puts the ship in grave danger
2. When the sailors cast lots to find out who is the cause of divine anger, they identify Jonah. God has controlled the outcome of an apparently random selection.
3. When the sailors throw Jonah overboard, God calms the sea.
4. God sends the great fish to swallow Jonah.
5. God makes the great fish vomit Jonah onto dry land.
6. God makes a vine to grow up overnight.
7. God sends a worm to eat the roots of the plant so that it dies.
8. Finally God sends a hot scorching desert wind.

So on eight occasions God controls nature.



Upper, Middle and Lower Yosemite Falls in Yosemite Valley from Glacier Point

1:17 – 2:2 The Lord provides a big fish, probably a whale, to rescue him from drowning. During his sojourn in the belly of the fish, he reflects on what has happened to him and prays. Jonah is relieved that God has not left him.

Perhaps some might like to share their prayer or psalm written from an experience of distress and deliverance.

2:3-6 Jonah’s lowest point is recorded at the centre of his psalm.

At his nadir, he feels close to death. Yet, his prayer transforms the belly of the whale into a womb. Death leads to resurrection. He finds the God from whom he has been fleeing is there to meet him in his distress.

Questions to consider:

How does Jonah know that God is with him? Think about a low point in your life – could you find God at that time? As you look back now, how did God sustain you?

2:7-9 The idea personified by Jonah’s story is of an individual, or nation descending into Sheol, the place of the dead, where God meets with them and brings new life. Salvation belongs to the Lord!

Questions to consider:

How does Jonah’s mood change as he becomes aware of God’s presence? Can you think of any examples of God rescuing an individual or nation from a dark and difficult time?

2:10 – 3:2 In contrast to the rebellious prophet, the fish is instantly obedient and vomits Jonah on to dry land. The word of the Lord comes to Jonah a second time. This time, he is obedient and heads off to Nineveh.

Questions to consider:

Landing on dry land, what do you think Jonah felt? For what might he be grateful? Have you ever experienced being offered a second chance by God?

Prayer time:

Intercede for people and countries in need of God’s deliverance.

You may like to simply speak names of people or places, interwoven with some silence. Or you could symbolically light a candle for each person and place.

For next time:

Consider what you think repentance is.



Jonah, as depicted by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel