



About Jonah, the man:

Today, Jonah is a pretty common name—especially among Christian families. In Bible times, however, it was much less popular, and there could have only been *one* Jonah, son of Amittai. He is first mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25, the time when God used Him to foretell King Jeroboam II's future military successes. ***But, who exactly was Jonah?*** Well, he lived almost 800 years before Jesus (700s B.C.), and he was the prophet who came after directly after Elijah and Elisha. Speaking of those other prophets, Jonah is *remarkably* different from them. He resisted God's calling in a *drastic* way. Sure, Moses centuries before was hesitant to accept God's mission (Exodus 3-4). But no person in the Bible had *ever* reacted quite like Jonah did...

About Jonah, the book:

Jonah is grouped together with books, like Micah, Nahum, and Malachi, in a section of the Bible, called the “Minor Prophets.” Now, don't think of that word, minor, as in “minor leagues.” There is *nothing* minor about *any* book of the Bible. Instead, the classification, minor prophet, means that it's a shorter book compared to something like Jeremiah—with a whopping 52 chapters! ***So, what's this book all about?*** I'm sure you've heard the story about the great fish...But it's really a story about a great God. Jonah's story is unlike *any* other book in the Bible named after a prophet. Whereas most of those books are written-out sermons, Jonah's book focuses on the drama surrounding God's plan for his life. In fact, there's only *one* verse—with 8 words—from Jonah's message to Nineveh in this *entire* book. It is likely that Jonah himself wrote this story from a third person's point of view some time around 760 B.C.





In the last 150 years, it's become popular to treat the story of Jonah as a parable or fable. In other words, some people view it as a symbolic life lesson with a moral of the story.

But the book of Jonah is written like history, the church has always accepted it as history, and Jesus himself taught about this story like it had actually happened.

If we deny that this story is real history, what's keeping us from denying the other miraculous stories in the Bible, like Jesus' resurrection?

The Setting:

The story of Jonah takes place in multiple locations. According to 2 Kings, Jonah was originally from Gath-hepher, a town in Israel right outside of Galilee. The Pharisees criticized Jesus for being from Galilee by saying “**...a prophet does not come out of Galilee**” (John 7:52). But they must’ve forgotten about Jonah. People of Jesus’ day also thought that nothing good could come from Nazareth, the capital city of Galilee. But, nevertheless, this is where this story begins. Next, Jonah heads toward Tarshish, which is in modern-day Spain. Then, Jonah ends up in the belly of a fish. And, *finally*, after much pain, confusion, and heartache, Jonah arrives in Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, the largest empire in the world. The city was founded and named after Nimrod, the project manager for the building of the infamous Tower of Babel (Genesis 11).

Nineveh’s walls were 100 feet high and it took 3 whole days just to walk around the city. There were 120,000 children in Nineveh (Jonah 4:11), which means that the total population of the city was 600,000 people. This was unheard of at this point in time. For context, our Virginian Peninsula (Hampton, Newport News, York County, Poquoson, Williamsburg, and James City County) has a total population of 487,983—*significantly* less than Nineveh all by itself. This was a *colossal* city—even bigger than the giant fish that Jonah had faced. And yet, it was eventually destroyed during the events of the book of Nahum, and it’s currently a pile of dirt somewhere in Iraq.

The Application:

When it comes down to it, the story of Jonah points us to Jesus Christ. Jonah was an unwilling man, but Jesus is a more than willing God. Jonah took one look at Nineveh and said, “Forget it, I’m not going there.” And Jesus could’ve easily said the same thing about Earth. But, instead, He came down to us and preached a message similar to Jonah’s: “**...the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel**” (Mark 1:15). When Jesus arrived on the scene, He said these very true words: “**...behold, something greater than Jonah is here**” (Matthew 12:41). As we study this book, we will remark at all the ways that Jesus is an indescribably better Jonah.