



Life Group Questions¹

Jonah 1:17-2:10

May 14, 2017

In many ways, Jonah's life as a prophet in Israel, called to take a prophetic message to his greatest enemy, is a sad story of irony. Jonah was called to proclaim the word of the Lord to God's people *and* their enemies. It was not until Jonah was called out of his comfort zone that the true state of his heart for God was revealed.

Jonah's situation on the ship in chapter 1 revealed the heart of a prophet that was not consistent with his calling. Despite his attempts to flee from God, God pursued Jonah and he does so even to the depths of the sea. Like Jonah, Jesus had a prophetic ministry to the lost of the world but unlike Jonah, Jesus faithfully carried out His mission from the Father.

GOD ACTS IN AND THROUGH CREATION

- Why do people have a hard time believing the account of Jonah and the fish?
- How would you help someone to see how this account is believable?²
- What are some other historical accounts of God using animals as means to accomplish His will?³
- Much like many parts of the world today, in the Ancient Near East (ANE) there was a god for everything. Further, water was considered to be a place of chaos. What is the significance to the ANE people (more specifically the Ninevites) that God wielded control over the chaotic water in the storm and that He used a great fish to save Jonah?⁴
- What encouragement can we draw from God's power over creation? What should it do to the fears and idols our hearts make?

(continued in next column)

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JONAH AND HIS PRAYER

- What clues in Jonah's prayer give us a window into how people viewed the structure of the world then? (vss. 2-3 & 5-6)
- According to vs. 7, at what point was Jonah saved by the fish?
- To what is Jonah's prayer a reaction?
- On who is Jonah's prayer focused?⁵
- Given the events in chapter 1, what is missing from Jonah's prayer?
- What do your prayers look like—first-person prayers missing key parts? Or are they bigger? How can we make them bigger? Please provide three (3) simple solutions to “super size” your prayers.
- Please take some time now to pray as a group.

JONAH AND JESUS

Read Matthew 12:38-41; 16:4 & Luke 11:29-32 to answer these questions:

1. To what is the “sign” Jesus refers?
2. How does Jesus compare the Ninevites to the religious leaders?
3. How far do we press the comparison of Jonah's 3 days/nights in the fish to Jesus' 3 days/nights in the earth?⁶
4. How does Jesus' prophetic ministry compare/contrast to Jonah's?
5. How do we follow in the steps of Jesus (as opposed to Jonah) as we proclaim God's message of salvation?

FOOTNOTES

¹ By Craig Hurst, ed. J. Lobbell

² Consider the greater miracles and acts of God in creation and the resurrection. Also, Jesus' reference to this account in Matt. 12:38-41 & Luke 11:29-32 give strong support for its historicity.

³ See Num. 22:21-39 for one example.

⁴ Read 1 Sam. 5:1-5. The Philistines god, Dagon, is believed to be a fish god. God is sending Jonah and the ANE people a message that He has control over their gods so His words should be believed and acted upon. (This is similar to what God did in Egypt with the plagues. Each plague was a judgment on the Egyptian gods to show their powerlessness). See www.dagonfishing.com for fishing gear named after this god.

⁵ How many first person references can you find?

⁶ In biblical times, after someone was buried for three days they were considered to be officially dead. Some people conclude from Jesus' comparison to Jonah that Jonah did, in fact, die and then was brought back to life. Others believe that what Jesus is doing is using Jonah's time in the fish as a type which does not require an exact comparison in every detail.