



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Prophet Flees from the Capital

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Jonah 1:3-4

“But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare, and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. And the LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up.” (NASB)

“GRANT, ALMIGHTY GOD, THAT AS THOU HAST NOT SENT A JONAH TO US, WHEN ALIENATED FROM EVERY HOPE OF SALVATION, BUT HAST GIVEN THY SON TO BE OUR TEACHER, CLEARLY TO SHOW US THE WAY OF SALVATION, AND NOT ONLY TO CALL US TO REPENTANCE BY THREATENINGS AND TERRORS, BUT ALSO KINDLY TO ALLURE US TO THE HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE, AND TO BE A PLEDGE OF THY PATERNAL LOVE, --O GRANT, THAT WE MANY NOT REJECT SO REMARKABLE A FAVOR OFFERED TO US, BUT WILLINGLY AND FROM THE HEART OBEY THEE.”
JOHN CALVIN

How permanent was the decision of Jonah to move to Tarshish? Who is Jonah actually fleeing in this passage, God Himself or his calling by God? What kind of a ship does Jonah board? Does the Bible give any other hints as to the distance to Tarshish? Is it possible that Jonah paid for the entire boat? What else is “hurled” in Scripture besides this wind? Is this a supernatural storm? Is the ship actually complaining? How is the path of sin pictured in this brief passage?

FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES/EVENTS:

- JUNE 20-22: JONAH 1:5-6 *A HEATHEN LEADER REQUIRES PRAYER*
- SEPTEMBER 27: DELTAVILLE, VA *THE LEGISLATIVE INVITATIONAL FISHING TOURNAMENT*

Jonah had been clearly called by God to go to the capital of the most powerful empire of his day. The Assyrians had known only conflict since their founding just after the flood and thus had become the most cruel oppressors in the world. The northern kingdom of Israel had already been subjugated to the Assyrians twice (Ahab, Jehu), and no doubt had already experienced their brutal domination. Though God had blessed Israel just as Jonah had prophesied, he knew that it was only temporary because Israel had refused to repent. And since God considered Nineveh to be just as evil as the homosexuals of Sodom and Gomorrah and was threatening a similar destruction, Jonah decided that the best way to insure their destruction was to leave them alone and flee as far away as possible. What he probably had not considered was the fact that his disobedience against God made him guilty of sin just like those to whom he was to preach.

“JONAH RECOGNIZED THAT HIS MISSION HAD A REDEMPTIVE PURPOSE. IF THE PROCLAMATION WERE MERELY A PREDICTION, IT COULD HAVE BEEN MADE EQUALLY WELL IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL. THE FACT THAT HE HAD TO GO TO NINEVEH AND ANNOUNCE ITS OVERTHROW TO THE INHABITANTS COULD ONLY MEAN THAT GOD WISHED TO GIVE THEM THE OPPORTUNITY OF REPENTANCE AND REDEMPTION.” A. COHEN

I. THE PRICE OF TARSHISH

JONAH 1:3

“Tarshish,” with its unusual emphasis in being used three times in one verse, is worthy of careful consideration. As the unsurpassed wealth of Solomon’s reign is described, his fleet of “ships of Tarshish” is given precise timing. “For the king had at sea ships of Tarshish with the ships of Hiram; once every three years the ships of Tarshish came bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks” (I Kings 10:22). Henry Morris explains, “A three year journey surely

BIBLE STUDIES

WEDNESDAY @ 7:00AM –BIBLE STUDY – FREDERICKSBURG – BOB EVANS ON RT. 3, 11:30AM – WOODBRIDGE – RESUMING AGAIN NEXT WEEK
THURSDAY @ 7:30AM –BIBLE STUDY – RT. 10&301 SHONEY’S, NOON – WYTESTONE PLAZA – 8TH & MAIN – 2ND FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
FRIDAY @ 7:00 AM –BIBLE STUDY – NORFOLK – GOLDEN CORRAL, 6103 N. MILITARY HWY, NEAR THE NORFOLK AIRPORT

Virginia

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involved going farther than Spain or England. Further, the apes and ivory might have been obtained from somewhere in Africa, but the peacocks could only come from India.”¹ India would more realistically require a three year journey. The mad exodus and the wording suggests that Jonah may have financed the entire voyage. If so, Jonah most likely would have sold his home and most everything he had in order to pay for this trip!

“SIN ALWAYS TAKES US FARTHER THAN WE IMAGINED WE WOULD GO, FASTER THAN WE EVER INTENDED.”

RICHARD PHILLIPS

II. THE PATHETIC ESCAPE

JONAH 1:3

Everything and everyone else in the book of Jonah obeys God’s will except for God’s prophet. The wind, the storm, the captain, the lots, the mariners, the sea, the fish, the king, all the nobles, all the Ninevites, all their animals, the shady plant, the sun, the scorching East wind, and even the worm obeys immediately and willingly while God’s prophet does the opposite. Jonah had been given three imperatives to motivate him to go quickly to Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrian Empire. Instead he flees in disobedience, employing eight verbs to hasten his departure. The first verb is the only one that matches God’s command, “*Jonah rose up*.” In reality, this verb only adds urgency to all the other verbs. Equally as urgent as God’s command was Jonah’s disobedience. As he flees to Tarshish, his sinful path is characterized by a downward progression. The same verb is used when “*he went down to Joppa*,” and he “*went down into*” the ship. The progress in descent is similar to the path and permanence of sin found in Psalm 1:1, “*How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!*” It was not enough for him to go below the deck, Jonah had looked for the lowest spot in this seagoing vessel and had gone down

into the “*bold of the ship, lain down, and had fallen asleep*” (1:5). If that wasn’t far enough, he later sinks in the ocean and in the belly of the fish, “*descended to the roots of the mountains*” (2:6), going lower than was otherwise humanly possible. Such is the path of escape from the will of God.

“BEHOLD, THE STORM OF THE LORD! WRATH HAS GONE FORTH, A WHIRLING TEMPEST; IT WILL BURST UPON THE HEAD OF THE WICKED. THE ANGER OF THE LORD WILL NOT TURN BACK UNTIL HE HAS EXECUTED AND ACCOMPLISHED THE INTENTS OF HIS HEART.”

JEREMIAH 23:19-20 (ESV)

III. THE POWER OF GOD

JONAH 1:4

As unexpectedly as God’s word had come to Jonah, God’s “*great wind*” is “*hurled on the sea*.” The change of word order in the original signals an emphasis on YAHWEH as the obvious cause, and the verb “*hurled*” is only used 14 times in the entire Old Testament and used 4 times in this little book. It is used twice of Saul hurling a spear at David (I Sam. 18:11) and at Jonathan (I Sam. 20:33). Thus, this verb not only describes strong exertion but even precise accuracy. So great and fierce is the resulting storm that this ocean going vessel is described with personhood and it “*plans*”² to “*break up*.” The loud cracking of its timbers screamed its fate in such a storm. There was now no escape from God’s arresting power!

“THE WRITER, IN BOLD POETIC IMAGERY, ENDOWED THE SHIP WITH A CONSCIOUSNESS OF HER COMING FATE.”

JOHN PIDGE

¹ Henry M. Morris, *The Remarkable Journey of Jonah*, (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2003), 33.

² Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1906 reprint, 1996), 362.

Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Are you walking in willing and immediate obedience to God or selfishly fleeing the opposite direction?
- 2) What is the price, the distance and the depth you will pursue your sin before turning in repentance to God?
- 3) Is adversity being hurled by God upon you in order to get your attention?