



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

A Heathen Leader Requires Prayer

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David Andersen / PO Box 2020, Chesterfield, VA 23832 / David.Andersen@capitolcom.org

Jonah 1:5-6

“Then the sailors became afraid, and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down below into the hold of the ship, lain down, and fallen sound asleep. 6) So the captain approached him and said, ‘How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your God. Perhaps your God will be concerned about us so that we will not perish.’” (NASB)

“THERE IS EXTREME IRONY HERE: A ‘HEATHEN SEA CAPTAIN’ PLEADED WITH A HEBREW PROPHET TO PRAY TO HIS GOD. IT IS SOBERING TO SEE ONE WHO MIGHT BE TERMED AN ‘UNBELIEVER’ PLEADING FOR SPIRITUAL ACTION ON THE PART OF A ‘BELIEVER.’ THE ‘UNBELIEVER’ SAW THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION WHILE THE PROPHET SLEPT. IT IS A SAD COMMENTARY WHEN THOSE WHO ARE COMMITTED TO THE TRUTH OF GOD’S WORD HAVE TO BE PRODDED BY A LOST WORLD INTO SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY.”
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What is the first response of these rough, hardened sailors to this supernatural storm? How do these old “salt” sailors prove that life is more valuable than possessions? Why do they choose in such a severe storm to “lighten” the ship? Where is the “hold” of the ship? Is Jonah’s depth of sleep comparable to Adam’s when God made Eve? How were the captain’s commands similar to God’s in regard to Jonah? Does the captain consider Jonah’s God to be the one true God? How can the Church be similar to Jonah in disobedient passivity?

FOCUS ON FUTURE EVENTS:

- SEPTEMBER 27: DELTAVILLE, VA *THE LEGISLATIVE INVITATIONAL FISHING TOURNAMENT*
- NOVEMBER 5: CAPITOL SQUARE, RICHMOND, VA *THE CAPITOL COOKOUT & PRAYER WALK*

Three times Tarshish is mentioned as the destiny to which Jonah flees from the face of the LORD and because of the “peacocks” mentioned in I Kings 10:22, most likely he has sold everything to sail to India. Unknown to His disobedient prophet, God has arrested his entire ship with a “great storm” stirred up by a fierce wind He has “hurled” upon the sea. The gale force winds are so powerful that boards of this deep sea vessel begin to crack and break up under the pounding of the waves so that the ship is screaming it’s splintering fate. The seasoned mariners all know that they will soon perish in this relentless storm if these hurricane force winds and mountainous whitecaps continue hammer their ship!

“THE CREW WAS FRANTIC. THEY WERE PRAYING TO THEIR OWN GODS. THOSE RUGGED SAILORS HAD SEEN MANY A STORM ON THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA. IT WOULD TAKE QUITE A STORM TO GET THEM ALARMED.” O. S. HAWKINS

I. THE SAILORS’ RESPONSE

JONAH 1:5A

The Scriptures emphasize the experience of these seamen by using the plural of the word “salt.” Just as we refer to an experienced mariner as an “old salt,” so these seasoned sailors are honored by making them one with the water on which they have sailed for most of their lives. They had weathered many a storm but these raging elements splintering their ship have them frightened to the point of frantic prayer! Probably not one old salt among them was normally religious, but the fury of this wrath in the sea has these hardened men all clinging to their cracking ship and crying out, openly in prayer, trying to press their gods into calming the storm. Realizing their gods were futile and the storm was growing worse, they decided that their lives were more valuable than the wares on their ship, so they worked frantically at

BIBLE STUDIES

- WEDNESDAY @ 7:00AM –BIBLE STUDY – FREDERICKSBURG – BOB EVANS ON RT. 3, 11:30AM – WOODBRIDGE – BOB EVANS, 13900 NOBLEWOOD PLAZA
- 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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unloading the ship and “hurled” their cargo and probably even their spare tackling and gear into the wind-swept waves. As the ocean was heaving and thrashing the ship, they hoped to lighten it so it would ride higher in the water and the waves would no longer come crashing over the deck. Still wave after wave slammed against their vessel threatening to flip it at the tops of the crests or crush it after careening down into the depths of the canyon-like troughs. With all of them more afraid than ever, the captain even abandoned his wheel, giving up all hope of steering them to safety in such a furious storm!

“THIS PASSAGE TEACHES THAT MEN ARE CONSTRAINED BY NECESSITY TO SEEK GOD, SO ALSO, ON THE OTHER HAND, IT SHOWS THAT MEN GO ASTRAY IN SEEKING GOD, EXCEPT THEY ARE DIRECTED BY CELESTIAL TRUTH, AND ALSO BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.”
JOHN CALVIN

II. THE SAINT’S REPOSE

JONAH 1:5B

Jonah had already found a comfortable spot away from everyone in the very bottom of the ship. As he ran from God he had chosen a downward path, and now he is not only in the lowest part of the ship, he had laid down and was in an unusually deep sleep. The tossing of the ship that scared the mariners into frantic prayer and disposal of everything was rocking Jonah into a deeper sleep! Yet even Jonah’s sleep had a supernatural element in that it is the same word used for “*deep sleep*” that God had given Adam when He took the rib to make Eve (Genesis 2:21). It is the same “*deep sleep*” that Saul and his army had when David only took his spear and water jug to prove to Saul that he could have killed him (I Samuel 26:12). So the lurching and cracking of the ship and even probably the water seeping into the hold had not awakened the slumbering prophet. The object of wrath and cause of all the wind and danger is completely unaware of any

problem, much less the life-threatening storm he has brought upon the entire ship and the anxious mariners.

“WHY WERE THE MARINERS IN SUCH DANGER? IT WAS NOT BECAUSE OF THEIR SINS, BUT BECAUSE OF THE PROPHET’S SIN! IN LIKE MANNER, THE CONDITION OF THE WORLD IN ANY AGE MAY BE TRACED TO THE CONDITION OF THE CHURCH.”
RICHARD PHILLIPS

III. THE SHIPMASTER’S REQUIREMENT JONAH 1:6

As the men are tossed about below the deck wondering how soon the ship will be broken up, the captain decides to go below the decks into the hold, probably both to find out how much water they were taking on, and to find the missing passenger. The chief of the rope pullers then becomes furious when he finds the prophet asleep because Jonah has not done anything to help and they all are about to perish. Literally, “*How can you be so soundly sleeping?! Arise! Summon your God! Perhaps The God will shine upon us that we may not perish!*” Jonah must have thought that he was having a nightmare! The captain was providentially using the same words that the LORD had used earlier when sending him to Nineveh. First, “*Arise!*” Then, just as he had been told to “*cry*” against the city, or “*summon*” them before the great judgment bar of God, now he is commanded by the captain to “*cry*” to his God or “*summon*” the very God that he was trying to run from! But sleepy Jonah seems to be as unconcerned about these heathen mariners as he is those in Nineveh who are about to perish. The stubborn prophet does not care about those around him even when he can feel the waves mercilessly destroying their ship! Aware that he alone serves the true God who has complete control over their destiny, and that he is responsible for everyone’s eminent danger, he still refuses to pray! His first priority and his only means of peace is neglected just like many of God’s people today (I Timothy 2:1-4, II Chron. 7:14).

Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Do you know for sure if you died today that you would go to heaven?
- 2) Have you ever turned from your self-made religion and good works to place your trust in Jesus Christ?
- 3) Are you praying for and witnessing to the leaders around you or unrepentant and prayerless, calling for God’s wrath?