

## All Jonah's Overboard - Be Prepared for the Tidal Wave

Jonah was a declared man of God who had a word to share with the town of Nineveh. Nineveh was the town that God assigned to Jonah to share the truth. Unfortunately, Jonah was like me in many ways ... it was easier to step back and decide that the word of truth is awfully hard to present when it does not favor the person delivering the message.

Jonah was not given an assignment where he could win favor, take up an offering, or springboard his ministry based on his assigned speaking engagement. His assignment was to simply be obedient and tell the town of Nineveh the truth of their circumstances. Jonah was not given an option to call a large gathering of ministers to have a conference on repentance in hopes that the town would eventually repent. He was called to be obedient and tell the truth all by himself!

This spiritual bulletin is intended to cause a tidal wave of response by having the following two things occur:

1. Having all sincere leaders take account of the number of Jonah's on their ship and have them thrown over board.
2. Have every Jonah 'act-a-like' and 'look-a-like' voluntarily jump off the ship in which they are sleeping on or hiding on as a means to stay disobedient to word of obedience God gave them before they feel asleep on the ship.

### A serious problem of our day

The storms of life, storms within church(s), storms within families, storms within communities, storms within marriages, and the personal storms of individuals have reached a point that we must ask the same question the captain of the ship that Jonah was on asked. During the greatest storm of that captain's sailing career he was wise enough to ask *"What and who is onboard that is causing the storm to continue and increase in such intensity?"* The captain knew his business and knew someone was sinking his ship. The captain searched the ship and finally found Jonah asleep in a hidden compartment. Upon Jonah's confession that he was disobedient on a personal assignment from God, the Captain did the right thing ... he threw Jonah overboard into the water where a whale swallowed him. It is important to note that it was not Nineveh's moral sin that caused the storm or ship's problems; it was the disobedience of God's servant. This same theory holds true today with many ministries who blame the moral decay of society of the world's storms and church collapses, while the real problem is in their very midst through disobedient servants

of God who have been sleeping in their pews and singing in their choirs for years.

*The sailors were so afraid that each cried out to his own god and they flung the ship's cargo overboard to make the ship lighter. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold below deck, had lain down, and was sound asleep. The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us, and we will not perish."*

*This terrified them and they asked, "What have you done?" (They knew he was running away from the LORD, because he had already told them so.) The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?" He said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you. Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm." (Jonah 1:5-6; 10-12, 15)*

### **Cruel and unusual treatment often has great spiritual rewards**



Jonah

On one hand what happened to Jonah sounds like cruel and unusual treatment for a man called of God. However on the other hand, it is often the harder things in life that produce the greatest results. Throwing Jonah overboard was a small splash that produced a huge spiritual wave. In fact, the cruel act finally got Jonah's attention to be obedient and eventually allowed 120,000 people in Nineveh to hear the word of God. Upon hearing the word from the one obedient man they repented and were spared their own on-coming storm.

Not only did Jonah prevent an entire town from going through tremendous trials, the ship that he was on suddenly experienced calm weather and made it to their destination.

### **Imagine with me the possibilities of dealing with modern day Jonahs**

Sit back and think of the people you know who were once called to do something in life for the Kingdom of God but are hiding in the lower compartments of church. I can only imagine that we each can find at least one family member, one friend, one minister, and one acquaintance to total four Jonahs. For some readers you already feel convicted ... so you can add yourself as a modern day Jonah to equal 5 Jonahs within your sphere of influence. Now let's begin the imaginary journey of what-if?

1. What-if each minister openly admitted that 10% of their congregations are Jonah look-alikes who once had a call, but now hang-out in the pews?
2. What-if the storms of your church are being caused by the Jonahs who are hiding and rebelling against God.
3. What-if a Modern day Church Captain had the spiritual fortitude to literally throw people overboard as they knew it would result in the greater good of the church and human need.
4. What-if the Jonah look-alikes would step up to the plate and tell the spiritual captain to throw them overboard in order for the church/ship to survive?
5. What-if Christians would claim being 'Jonahs' as much as they claim being prophets, or a more glamorous Bible characters?
6. What-if 100 churches threw over 10-Jonah's next week and each Jonah reached 120,000 people? There would be a result of 1,200,000 people spared a storm, and their own church would start thriving again.
7. What-if we each challenged the 5-Jonah's we know and collectively we released 200 Jonah's every month for 10 months? We would see  $120,000 \times 1,000 \times 10 = 1,200,000,000$  people repent.
8. What-if we understand that God was concerned with the moral sin of Nineveh, but He was more concerned with Jonah's disobedience, laziness, stubbornness, rebellion, and self-righteousness. Could God see things the same way today? Are we more self-righteous about the moral sins of the world, yet stand in self righteous disobedience?
9. What-if Jonah tried to hide behind the men's group, cell group, study group, or buddy group? The reality is the point of confrontation is always personal and individual, and we must stand with Christ as individuals during these moments and not hide behind denominational cloaks or choir robes when God is confronting our call. We have hidden far too many people behind groups and fellowships as if the fellowship is an end unto itself. The fact is we will all stand-alone with reasons for our personal obedience and disobedience at the seat of Christ. I personally need Christ first, obedience second, and others third. I cringe every time I hear a minister over-play the cliché 'We need each other' as if that is primary. Jonah's cell group was probably eating jelly donuts and sipping coffee while he was in his personal moment of confrontation in the belly of the whale.

Imagine the splashes that would start happening if we would all identify as many Jonahs as we do other Bible characters, and treated them the same way God treated the Jonah of the Old Testament. We just might see a gigantic spiritual tidal wave or tsunami that is unmatched anywhere in the world. It may even usher in Habakkuk 2:14 which states: "*The*

*entire earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Glory of the Lord; as the waters cover the sea."*

## Interesting Facts to Ponder

Jonah was referred to by Christ on a few occasions in the New Testament. In one case he told the religious people who asked for a sign that "The only sign they will get is the sign of Jonah (Jonas)." (Matt 12:39). Jesus was referring to the reality that what happened to Jonah was a good thing, and in fact it was so good that Jesus explained or correlated His own death to the death and resurrection of Jonas (Jonah). Sounds pretty honorable to me!! This speaks volumes of the Captain who approved the Polar Plunge and splash for Jonah.

Jonah in the Old Testament is the same as Jonas in the New Testament and Peter's Father Jonas came from Galilee which is the same place that Jonah was from. This is extremely interesting as when Jesus confronts Peter after His death and resurrection for his disobedience (denying Christ), Jesus makes the statement "Peter Son of Jonas" three times (John 21:15-17). Some Bible Scholars believe that it was only a reference to Peter's father John but called Jonas here. However, remember Jesus is confronting Peter and inquiring if Peter loves Him; and if Peter does love Christ, then he is to feed God's lambs and sheep.

There is a plausible case that indicates that Jesus was referencing Peter back to the disobedience-turned-obedience by Jonah that fed 120,000 people of Nineveh. Jesus was graciously allowing Peter to confess His disobedience and jump off the ship of disobedience and start seeing the world change through a new obedience.

Peter agrees to the call that Christ has for him to become in Love with Christ and follow the path of obedience. Jesus follows with the words "I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." (John 21:18) In other words Jesus is telling Peter that he will go to a place he does not want to go; much like Jonah went to the place he did not want to go (The Belly of the Whale). No wonder Jesus may have called Peter son of Jonah; he was throwing Peter overboard to make a splash that the world would never forget. Peter went on to make waves of miracles, healings, salvations, and a legacy of a father of the Christian movement.

Who knows what will happen when all the modern day Jonah's get into their bathing suits and jump into the waters of obedience ... marriages may be restored, churches revived, communities saved, families healed, miracles untold, and multitudes will hear the Gospel that has been hiding behind the compartment doors of the modern day Church!

In Christ Love,

Mike and Pam Mathews