



Jonah - Chapter One

Summary of Chapter One

God called Jonah and commanded that he go to prophesy in Nineveh but Jonah tried to run away and boarded a ship bound for Tarshish. The Lord brought a violent storm on the sea and the sailors feared for their lives. They found out that Jonah was the cause of their plight and he instructed them to throw him overboard to save themselves. However, they initially tried to row back to shore because they did not wish to be the cause of Jonah's death. Eventually, they relented and threw Jonah into the sea. God then sent a large fish to swallow Jonah, who remained inside the fish for three days and nights.

I Jonah 1:1-17 - Jonah Tries to Run Away from God

Refer to the chapter summary above.

I.a Jonah 1:1-3 - Jonah's commissioning and flight

This episode records Jonah's call to prophesy and his flight from that call. Two questions drive the plot:

1. What will happen to the Ninevites?
2. What will happen to Jonah?

¹ Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, ² 'Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.'

Jonah 1:1-2

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah. God spoke to Jonah in his own unique and powerful way and he told Jonah to do two things. First, go at once to

Nineveh; second, cry out against it; that is, rebuke them for their sin and call them to repentance.

Jonah prophesied prosperity for Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II as recorded in 2 Kings 14:23-28. Jonah means dove, a symbol for Israel as silly and senseless: <<Ephraim has become like a dove, silly and without sense; they call upon Egypt, they go to Assyria>> (Hosea 7:11); Jonah will be true to his name.

The passage in 2 Kings Chapter 14 also reveals Jonah's origin: <<He restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher>> (2 Kings 14:25). Gath-hepher was within the territory allocated to the tribe of Zebulun (Joshua 19:10-16), and was therefore within the region of Galilee. This demonstrates an error made by the Pharisees when they tried to dismiss Jesus as having a prophetic gift: <<The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee'>> (Matthew 21:11), compared with: <<Then the Pharisees replied, 'Surely you have not been deceived too, have you? Has any one of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, which does not know the law – they are accursed.'

Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked, 'Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?' They replied, 'Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee'>> (John 7:47-52). They clearly had not followed their own advice; otherwise they would not have made the error.

Son of Amittai means 'son of my faithfulness'; Jonah will remain the object of God's faithful love.

The city of Nineveh was a large and prominent city in its day and later became the capital of the Assyrian Empire. It was not a city of Israel at all; God called Jonah to go to a pagan, Gentile city and call them to repentance. Nineveh sat on the east



Land Allocation to the Twelve Tribes

bank of the Tigris River about 220 miles or 354 km north of present-day Baghdad and over 500 miles or 805 km northeast of Israel. Ancient historians say that Nineveh was the largest city in the world at that time. It became the large, important capital of a dominating empire, surely an intimidating place to go.



Nineveh in relation to Jerusalem



The Mashki Gate at Nineveh

Great, Hebrew *gadol*, is used fourteen times in Jonah. Nineveh was an important regional metropolis, i.e. that great city: <<*So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across*>> (Jonah 3:3).

For their wickedness has come up before me. Why did God want Jonah to go? It was because God saw the wickedness of the Ninevites. None of man's wickedness is hidden before God, he sees it all, and it may come to a point where it demands the specific warning and judgement of God. The same Hebrew term for wickedness, Hebrew *ra'ah*, is used nine times in Jonah and can mean calamity, evil or disaster. The Ninevites were wicked, and they were in line for disaster.

³ But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

Jonah 1:3

But Jonah set out to flee. Why did Jonah not want to go to Nineveh and do what the Lord told him to do? It may have been because he was given a difficult task to undertake. Nahum 3:1-4 provides great insight of just how wicked the people of Nineveh were. Jonah had every reason to expect that at the very best he would be mocked and treated as a fool. He might be attacked and killed if he did what the Lord told him to do. It is easy to discuss Jonah's reasons for not doing what God told him to do, but what reasons do Christians give? God told Jonah to go and to preach; every Christian has the same command: <<*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the*

Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age>> (Matthew 28:19-20). They should also remember that Jesus says: <<If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you>> (John 15:18). With Jonah's example before them, Christians have even less reason than Jonah for their disobedience!

He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. Going to Tarshish is repeated three times in this verse to underscore that Jonah is not going to Nineveh. Tarshish, an unknown locale associated with distant coastlands, was somewhere in the western Mediterranean, possibly Spain, and in the opposite direction from Nineveh. Tarshish was known as a seafaring and trading nation with great ships: <<For the king had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks>> (1 Kings 10:22), <<He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish; they built the ships in Ezion-geber>> (2 Chronicles 20:36), <<For the coastlands shall wait for me, the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your children from far away, their silver and gold with them, for the name of the Lord your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because he has glorified you>> (Isaiah 60:9), and: <<The ships of Tarshish travelled for you in your trade. So you were filled and heavily laden in the heart of the seas>> (Ezekiel 27:25).

The port city of Joppa, modern day Jaffa, is just south of Tel Aviv and is part of that city. It was captured by the Jewish Hasmonæans in the 2nd Century BC, and contained a substantial Jewish population prior to the First Jewish Revolt in AD 66-73. Excavations under portions of the modern city have revealed evidence of 1st Century AD residences and an early fortress.



The Harbour at Joppa

It was the port used to import materials for building the temple: <<We will cut whatever timber you need from Lebanon, and bring it to you as rafts by sea to Joppa; you will take it up to Jerusalem>> (2 Chronicles 2:16), and: <<So they gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the grant that they had from King Cyrus of Persia>> (Ezra 3:7). It was also the location where Peter was involved in raising Tabitha back to life: <<Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed.

He turned to the body and said, 'Tabitha, get up.' Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord>> (Acts 9:40-42).

So he paid his fare and went on board. It seemed easy enough. Perhaps even Jonah felt that the Lord provided the money for the fare! This shows the danger of being guided by circumstances. Providence or no providence, the Word of the Lord is to be the guide, and believers must not depart from it under pretext of necessity or circumstance. It is very easy to make up providence when one wants to do so. If one sits down and tries to find in the ways of God an excuse for the wrong which one means to commit, the crafty devil and the deceitful human heart together will soon conjure up a plea for providence: <<***But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone***>> (John 2:24-25). Nevertheless, when a person runs away from the Lord, they never get to where they are going and they always pay their own fare. When they go the Lord's way, they not only get to where they are going, but he pays the fare.

Away from the presence of the Lord is repeated at the end of this verse to underscore Jonah's purpose in going to Tarshish. Jonah should have read the words of David: <<***Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast***>> (Psalm 139:7-10).

Went down is also a euphemism for death, for example: <<***All his sons and all his daughters sought to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and said, 'No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.'*** Thus his father bewailed him>> (Genesis 37:35). It could be missed in this translation as it is also stated as went on board, and 'gone down' in v.5. The suggestion is that each step away from the presence of the Lord is one step closer to 'going down' to death: <<***I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me for ever; yet you brought up my life from the Pit, O Lord my God***>> (Jonah 2:6b).

I.b Jonah 1:4-17 - Jonah and the pagan sailors

This episode highlights Jonah's encounter with pagan sailors and raises the question, 'who fears the Lord – Jonah or the pagans?' The key repeated word is fear or afraid: at the beginning and end the sailors fear (v.5 and v.16); in the middle Jonah claims to fear the Lord in v.9 (although the NRSVA translates it as worship), while the sailors are actually afraid (v.10a).

⁴ But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up. ⁵ Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep.

Jonah 1:4-5

But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea. Remember that the Lord stirred up the storm and he can calm it: <<*By his power he stilled the Sea; by his understanding he struck down Rahab*>> (Job 26:12). People often think of Jesus calming the waters: <<*When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God'*>> (Matthew 14:32-33), and he can do that. However, he can also stir up the storm.

Hurled, also translated as threw, is used four times in this episode (v.4, v.5, v.12, and v.15). Just as God hurled a great wind, the sailors threw the cargo into the sea.

The ship threatened to break up. The ship and the sailors were in a dangerous place. This was all due to Jonah being onboard the ship. There was nothing wrong with the sailors being on the ship, but Jonah had no business being there, although in other circumstances it might have been fine for him to go to Tarshish.

Each cried to his god. The sailors prayed, evidently believing that a divine being could come to their aid.

When in trouble, man does his best to fix the problem. In this case, they threw the cargo overboard. When that is not enough, man also instinctively turns to his god. If people do not know the true God, the God of the Bible, before they get into trouble, they may sincerely turn to a false and imaginary god, one of their own making. Many people assume that they can put off doing their business with God until they choose a 'better' time to do it. Nevertheless, it is extremely presumptuous to think that in the moment of crisis people will be able to call upon the true God if they have not dealt with him before.

Had gone down. In contrast to the sailors, Jonah went down below deck, taking yet another step closer to death as below deck is a dangerous place to be in a storm.

Jonah had lain down, and was fast asleep. How could Jonah sleep in the middle of this storm? Perhaps because the storm outside seemed insignificant to him in comparison to the storm inside, the storm that came from his resistance against God. What a curious and tragic scene! All the sailors were religious men, devout in

their prayers to their gods. Yet their gods were really nothing, and could do nothing. There was one man on board who had a relationship with the true God, knew his Word, and worshipped him, yet he was asleep!

Charles Spurgeon commented on this, “Jonah was asleep amid all that confusion and noise; and, O Christian man, for you to be indifferent to all that is going on in such a world as this, for you to be negligent of God’s work in such a time as this is just as strange. The devil alone is making noise enough to wake all the Jonahs if they only want to awake . . . All around us there is tumult and storm, yet some professing Christians are able, like Jonah, to go to sleep in the sides of the ship.”

The nature of Jonah’s sleep is also instructive, and too much like the sleep of the careless Christian:

- Jonah slept in a place where he hoped no one would see him or disturb him. ‘Sleeping Christians’ like to ‘hide out’ within the church.
- Jonah slept in a place where he could not help with the work that needed to be done. ‘Sleeping Christians’ stay away from the work of the Lord.
- Jonah slept while there was a prayer meeting up on the deck. ‘Sleeping Christians’ do not like prayer meetings!
- Jonah slept and had no idea of the problems around him. ‘Sleeping Christians’ do not know what is really going on.
- Jonah slept when he was in great danger. ‘Sleeping Christians’ are in danger too, but they do not know it or choose to ignore it.
- Jonah slept while the heathen needed him. ‘Sleeping Christians’ snooze on while the world needs their message and testimony.

Some sleeping Christians protest that they are not asleep at all:

- “We talk about Jesus” - but people can talk in their sleep.
- “We have a walk for Jesus” - but people can walk in their sleep.
- “We have passion for Jesus - I just wept in worship the other day” - but people can cry in their sleep.
- “We have joy and rejoice in Jesus” - but people can laugh in their sleep.
- “We think about Jesus all the time” - but people can think while they are asleep; it is called dreaming!

There is a difference between the sleep of Jonah here and that of David when he was surrounded by his enemies: <<*I lie down and sleep; I wake again, for the Lord sustains me. I am not afraid of tens of thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around*>> (Psalm 3:5-6). David believed that he

would be delivered by God because he had done what he could to be reconciled with his enemy, in this case with his son Absalom.

However, there is a similarity with the sleep of the Canaanite military leader Sisera, who fled from battle and was exhausted. As he slept in the tent of Jael, she crept up on him and killed him with a tent peg; refer to Judges 4:17-22.

⁶ The captain came and said to him, ‘What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish.’

Jonah 1:6

Get up, call on your god echoes God’s commission in v.2. Ironically, the Israelite prophet has to be summoned to prayer by a pagan sailor. The captain knew that his crew cried to their gods, but it achieved nothing. Perhaps Jonah’s God could do something in this crisis. It must have seemed ironic to Jonah that the sailors demanded that he call on his God. His only reason for being on that ship was to escape from God.

So that we do not perish. Perish is repeated in v.14, 3:9 and 4:10. Ironically, a pagan, not Jonah, is concerned that people should not perish.

⁷ The sailors said to one another, ‘Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know on whose account this calamity has come upon us.’ So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.

Jonah 1:7

Come, let us cast lots. Casting lots was used in the ancient world to discern the divine will: <<*But the land shall be apportioned by lot; according to the names of their ancestral tribes they shall inherit*>> (Numbers 26:55), and: <<*You shall describe the land in seven divisions and bring the description here to me; and I will cast lots for you here before the Lord our God*>> (Joshua 18:6). Israelites believed that God controlled the outcome: <<*The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is the Lord’s alone*>> (Proverbs 16:33), as did the early church: <<*And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles*>> (Acts 1:26).

This would not have been the case when the Roman soldiers cast lots for Jesus’ garments for that was simply gambling. However, it was by divine inspiration and will: <<*When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, ‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.’ This was to fulfil what the scripture says, ‘They divided my clothes among*

themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.’ And that is what the soldiers did>> (John 19:23-25a).

So that we may know on whose account this calamity has come upon us. It is hard to know what motivated the sailors to think that the storm was sent because one of them had wronged their God. Perhaps it was because of some spiritual insight, and they sensed a spiritual power in the storm. Or, perhaps it was just fortunate superstition. Once the lot fell on Jonah, the sailors wanted to know as much as they could from Jonah, so they could discover a remedy and save their lives.

Calamity, Hebrew *ra‘ah*, was translated as wickedness of Nineveh in v.2 but here suggests disaster is about to fall upon them.

⁸ Then they said to him, ‘Tell us why this calamity has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?’ ⁹ ‘I am a Hebrew,’ he replied. ‘I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.’ ¹⁰ Then the men were even more afraid, and said to him, ‘What is this that you have done!’ For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them so.

Jonah 1:8-10

Second Kings 14:25 says that Jonah was a recognised prophet. When he was asked, what is your occupation, had he answered ‘prophet’ then the sailors would have been even more terrified.

Hebrew is an ethnic term used to identify Israelites in international contexts, for example: <<*For in fact I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon*>> (Genesis 40:15), <<*The midwives said to Pharaoh, ‘Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them’*>> (Exodus 1:19), and: <<*When the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, ‘What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?’*>> (1 Samuel 4:6a).

Jonah claims to worship the Lord, also translated ‘I fear God’, but his actions contradict his confession. Even a believer who is in a state of rebellion can give glory to God if he will only tell the truth about God. It is tragic that Jonah’s life contradicted his knowledge of God. However, at the moment when Jonah said I worship the Lord he may have already repented for running away, turning back to God because of the present circumstances.

The God of heaven refers to the universal and supreme God: <<*Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah*>> (Ezra 1:2), <<*Then I replied to them, ‘The God of heaven is the one who will give us success, and we his servants are going to start building; but you have no share or claim or historic right in Jerusalem’*>> (Nehemiah 2:20), and: <<*You, O king, the king of kings – to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the might, and the glory, into whose hand he has given human beings, wherever they live, the wild animals of the field, and the birds of the air, and whom he has established as ruler over them all – you are the head of gold*>> (Daniel 2:37-38).

Who made the sea. Ironically, Jonah confesses to fear the God who controls the sea, which Jonah is crossing to escape from the presence of God. The sailors who were afraid are now even more afraid for they knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them so!

Even an unbeliever who knows some truth about God can rightly rebuke a Christian who is resisting God. What is this that you have done is the most logical question in the world, even for an unbeliever to ask a believer.

¹¹ Then they said to him, ‘What shall we do to you, that the sea may quieten down for us?’ For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous.

Jonah 1:11

What shall we do to you, that the sea may quieten down for us? The more the sailors hear, the worse the situation gets.

For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. The fear demonstrated by these sailors was similar to that displayed by the disciples as they sailed through a storm while Jesus slept in the boat: <<*A gale arose on the lake, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him up, saying, ‘Lord, save us! We are perishing!’ And he said to them, ‘Why are you afraid, you of little faith?’ Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm*>> (Matthew 8:24-26).

¹² He said to them, ‘Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quieten down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you.’ ¹³ Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them.

Jonah 1:12-13

Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Why did Jonah ask to be thrown into the sea? Perhaps out of compassion for the sailors. Perhaps out of a desire to be forced into complete dependence upon God alone. After all, there is no safer place than casting oneself totally upon God. Perhaps out of a feeling that anything was better than his continual resistance against and running from God. Perhaps it was because he had already truly repented of his actions. If this were the case, it illustrates that repentance is not only a matter of heart and mind, but also a matter of action.

The men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land. It would have been natural for these men, in their fear, to hurl Jonah overboard immediately, but they did not. They did not know God, yet were made in his image and therefore it seems they showed compassion for Jonah even though they knew he was the likely cause of their perilous situation. Or perhaps they knew of the God of Israel and they believed this God was for real, dreading the consequences of throwing a prophet, even a disobedient prophet, into the sea.

The sea grew more and more stormy, for God was not ready to have Jonah delivered onto dry land. If he had, the outcome would likely have been similar to that of the disciples on the Sea of Galilee: <<*When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the lake and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. But he said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.' Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land towards which they were going*>> (John 6:19-21).

¹⁴ Then they cried out to the Lord, 'Please, O Lord, we pray, do not let us perish on account of this man's life. Do not make us guilty of innocent blood; for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.' ¹⁵ So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging.

Jonah 1:14-15

Then they cried out to the Lord. Whereas each of the sailors had prayed to his own god (v.5), they now pray to the Lord. The pagan sailors, not Jonah, are concerned that people should not perish.

For you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you echoes the liturgical language of Psalm 115:3 and 135:6, and is thus the sailors' confession of faith in the absolute sovereignty of God. The sailors' actions are in harmony with God's: as God had hurled the wind onto the sea to start the storm, the sailors now threw Jonah into it in order to stop the storm.

The sea ceased from its raging. The immediate end of the storm proved that Jonah's God was for real, and that Jonah's resistance to that God was the real problem. In a logical response the sailors feared the Lord even more, sacrificed to him and made promises or vows to serve him (v.16). The sailors moved from fearing the storm to fearing the Lord, just the disciples in the boat did when Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee in Mark 4:35-41.

¹⁶ Then the men feared the Lord even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

Jonah 1:16

Then the men feared the Lord even more. What started as a general fear (v.5) grew into an intense fear (v.10) and matured into reverential fear; that is, the fear that causes people to worship of the Lord only.

They offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. The exact response expected from people who fear the Lord and to promise to serve him alone; refer to 2 Kings 17:32-36 and Psalms 22:5, 61:5 and 76:11.

Notice that the vows of the sailors came after they were delivered. Based on this, many commentators believe that the sailors came to a true faith in God. Spurgeon preached a sermon with four wonderful points based on the actions of the crew in this chapter:

- Sinners, when they are tossed upon the sea of conviction, make desperate efforts to save themselves.
- The fleshly efforts of awakened sinners must inevitably fail.
- The soul's sorrow will continue to increase as long as it relies on its own efforts.
- The way of safety for sinners is to be found in the sacrifice of another on their behalf.

¹⁷ But the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

Jonah 1:17

Verse 17 is Jonah 2:1 in the Hebrew text.

But the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah. Provided is also translated 'appointed' and 'prepared' in Jonah 4:6-8. This is the first of four uses of this word that underscore God's sovereign control over creation.

A large fish, Hebrew *Dag*, is not limited to what is called fish today, generally cold-blooded vertebrate sea creatures with fins and gills, but is a general word for

an aquatic beast, which cannot be identified further. However, a large whale such as a sperm whale could easily swallow a man whole.

Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. Although this may be a symbolic expression for a time of dying and rising, as in: <<*After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him*>> (Hosea 6:2), it more likely describes the actual number of days, or parts of three days, according to accepted reckoning of days at that time: <<*In the open country they found an Egyptian, and brought him to David. They gave him bread and he ate; they gave him water to drink; they also gave him a piece of fig cake and two clusters of raisins. When he had eaten, his spirit revived; for he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights*>> (1 Samuel 30:11-12), and: <<*Turn back, and say to Hezekiah prince of my people, Thus says the Lord, the God of your ancestor David: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; indeed, I will heal you; on the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord*>> (2 Kings 20:5). In either case it has associations with return from death or near-death, which perhaps is why Jesus likened the time between his own death and resurrection to Jonah's time in the fish: <<*When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, 'This generation is an evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation*>> (Luke 11:29-30). The fact that Jesus referenced the account of Jonah indicates that the story is a true historic record.