



... *Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights...*

#### Part Five – Jonah as a Type of Christ

*17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.* (Jonah 1:17)

*38 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. 39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.* (Matt 12:38-41)

There is a surprising parallel in the life of Christ and that of the prophet Jonah. Jonah could, in no way, measure up to that holiness expressed in the life of Christ, yet that is one particular event that unites the two in a shared circumstance. Christ used the example of Jonah as one compared to Himself in His lying in the Tomb for "***three days and three nights***." There are, of course, other profound similarities which are worthy of mention. I would challenge the Reader to get out a pen and paper and note some of those obvious parallels as you read the Book of Jonah – if we put our heads together, we may find may more than is immediately obvious.

The name, Jonah, in the Hebrew, means '**DOVE**.' A dove represents 'sent love' as in the sending of a dove as a messenger by Noah to bring back the good news of the receding floods upon the earth; and the sending of the Holy Ghost at the baptism of Christ represented by a dove. Jonah is a man, like Christ, sent to a people who knew not God. The entire population of Nineveh were lost in sin. Christ was sent into a world which was lost in sin without His coming. ***Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.*** (Jonah 1:1-2) In the normal course of the world, one would not expect such a wicked city to heed the words of a prophet of the Lord, but

Nineveh was an exception to the rule, and God knew that He had souls in Nineveh that belonged to Him. God sent the Lord Jesus Christ, His only Begotten Son, into a world of like disposition. But Jonah lacked the humility and obedience of Christ. He balked at the command of God.

There is a warning of woe to clergy included in the account of Jonah: if the Lord commands, it will save everyone a lot of misery and consternation if we simply obey promptly rather than putting the Lord to the trouble of chastising us until we agree to that which we should have done from the very first. Remember the wide road which leads **DOWN** to destruction? Well, that is the road that our brother, Jonah, chose rather than obey the Lord. *But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.* (Jonah 1:3) Now these are only the first two examples of Jonah's going **DOWN** out of the will of the Lord for, after he went down into the ship, he went down into the hull of the ship: *But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.* (Jonah 1:4-5) Nor is this the whole extent of Jonah's going **DOWN** for he eventually went **DOWN** into the Sea. He then went **DOWN** into the belly of the whale, and the whale went **DOWN** into the depths of the Sea. If we embark upon such a downward path from the will of the Lord, I fear, at the risk of conjuring up images of Dante's Inferno, we shall find that the Lake of Fire in Hell is truly a bottomless pit whose only company will be Satan and his minions.

Would it not have been simpler for poor Jonah not to resist the command of the Lord? The opening lines of a poem, *The Hound of Heaven*, written by Francis Thompson, come to mind exemplifying the harsh reality of fleeing the Call:

### **The Hound of Heaven**

*I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;  
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;  
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways  
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears  
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.  
Up vistaed hopes I sped;  
And shot, precipitated,  
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,  
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.  
But with unhurrying chase,  
And unperturbèd pace,  
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,  
They beat--and a Voice beat  
More instant than the Feet--  
"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."*

In his inclinations to flee the service of God, Jonah is in no wise a Type of Christ for he, as all other types, fall far short of the object they typify. It is also this contrast that causes that perfect image of Christ to stand out in such stark relief. Our Lord never hesitated to do all that His Father commanded! In the weakness and failure of Jonah, how much more clearly do we observe the greatness and grandeur of Christ! In our own weakness and failure, we cannot help but admit the unsurpassed holiness of our

Lord.

I hope you will have already looked over the Book of Jonah, Reader, and will have detected stellar comparisons, in type, with Christ. What else do we see other than the fact that Jonah, like Christ, was sent to a lost and sinful people?

Jonah, like Christ descended to the depths of Hell. He was three days and three nights in the whale's belly. .... *And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.* (Jonah 1:17) Jesus, too, lay in the stone tomb for three days and three nights. It was during this time that Christ descended into Hell. <sup>40</sup> *For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* A striking difference between the horror of Jonah's experience and the Passion of Christ is this: Jonah underwent his trial and suffering due to his disobedience and in chastisement to force him to go to Nineveh. Jesus came first to the lost world and taught in obedience to His Father. He then suffered death and burial out of obedience and not out of disobedience. Both rose from the gloomy darkness on the third day.

Jonah, like Christ, slept soundly throughout a raging storm at sea. Both were awakened by fearful seaman. Christ calmed the sea at His Word. Jonah calmed the sea at his being cast into it.

Jonah was cast off by the men of the ship in order to save themselves. Christ was cast off from Israel and crucified by men who, unwittingly, did so as a matter of their own possible salvation. These good, yet pagan men of the sea, did not desire to cast Jonah into the sea just as the Roman Prefect, Pontius Pilate, desired not to crucify Christ. Yet, both faced their fated ordeal in the end. We read: *Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging* (Jonah 1:11-15) These rough men of the sea repented to God of the action they were forced to take against Jonah. Remember, Reader, how Pontius Pilate vainly washed his hands of *this innocent man's blood*.

Another typical characteristic of Jonah's experience was the effect of his preaching. The city repented at his preaching. Jesus came preaching the Gospel of Salvation and men were saved thereby. He, unlike Jonah, died to seal that redemption offered. Did you find other typical qualities in the account? If so, please share them with me.