

Jonah - continued

of the South will rise up with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here (Matthew 12:39-42).

Now ask yourself, how effective would it be for Jesus to use a fictional story as a "sign" (type / anti-type) of his own death (Matthew 12:28-40; 16:1-4; see also John 3:12,14)? Would you use a fictional story today to try and prove to your friends some great thing that you are going to do?

How effective would it be for Jesus to use a fictional story to rebuke the Jews of their unbelief (Matthew 12:41)? Was Jesus unfair by using a fictional story to rebuke the Jews? Would you use a fictional story to try and rebuke your children for something wrong that they are doing?

Note also that Jesus refers to the Queen of Sheba. Is the Queen of Sheba fictional as well (Matthew 12:42)? If Jesus was wrong about Jonah and whale, are all of Jesus' words wrong? Is all of Matthew's record fictional? What about all of Luke's words? What about the rest of the New Testament? Either all of the Bible is accurate, or none of it is accurate.

Yes, Jonah was swallowed by a whale and lived to tell about it and we would do well to read what he said and repent just like he told the Ninevites. - *Chris Reeves*

Sentence Sermons

- You cannot decide when or where you will die, but you can decide **how** you will die.
- Action is the true indicator that you have faith and love.
- You cannot shine for Jesus if you do not burn for Jesus.
- A sharp tongue can sever a good relationship.
- Put on the whole armor of God.

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

Jonah and the Whale: Fact or Fiction?

There are many people today, including religious theologians, who would say that the story of Jonah and the whale is “one big fish story” - one big fairytale. They would say that this story is a fake, a fiction, and a fraud. They would say that it makes for any interesting literature, but that it never happened. So, I ask, “Is Jonah and the whale fact or fiction?”

For years, many have attacked the Bible as full of myths, fairy-tales, folk-tales, and legends (like many modern movies). Many unbelievers, modernists, and rationalists today say that Jonah’s “great fish” was fiction. Is all this, as some say, “a whale of a fish story” or “a fish story that’s hard to swallow”?

J.W. McGarvey, a Christian, wrote *Jesus and Jonah* in 1896 to confront the modernism of his day. You can read his book at: <http://archive.org/stream/jesusjonah00mcga#page/n5/mode/2up>. McGarvey made the case for the historical nature of Jonah and the whale.

What literary evidence exists that points to the historical nature of this account? Well, I will not be appealing to natural explanations in this article although it may be naturally possible. There are indeed fish today large enough to swallow a man without killing him. So, yes, it is physically possible. You may have heard of the famous *Star of the East* (1891) story in which James Bartley was allegedly swal-

lowed by a whale and lived days later to tell about it. To view the validity of this story and others like it see <http://www.truthorfiction.com/rumors/n/newjonah.html>; <http://www.straightdope.com/columns/read/2294/have-any-real-life-jonahs-been-swallowed-by-whales-and-lived>; <http://www.ycaol.com/swallowed.htm>; <http://www.reasons.org/articles/a-modern-jonah>).

So, what evidence would I offer for the



historical nature of this account? I would offer three lines of evidence taken from the literature itself.

First, the story of Jonah is set forth in the style of historical narrative, including the mention of real places like Nineveh and Tarshish (Jonah 1:1-3; 3:3,6; note that 2:2-9 is in poetic style). Turn in your Bible and read the account for yourself, if you haven’t already, and consider the historical flow of the narrative throughout the book. How logical would it be to add the so-called “fish story” (1:17 – 2:10)

later as some suggest? It doesn’t make good sense to be telling a story in normal, everyday speech and good prose form (1:1-16) and then immediately jump to fiction without any indication of doing so. What author does that?

Second, Jonah lived during the time of other real, historical figures like King Jeroboam II (see 2 Kings 14:25; Jonah 1:1; Joshua 19:13). If the story of Jonah and the whale is fictional, then all that is said in connection with him elsewhere in the Old Testament can be fictional as well. If not, why not? How much of the rest of the Old Testament is fictional and who has been put in charge by God to tell us which stories are real and which stories are false? Were the Ninevites also fictional?

Third, Jesus, in his ministry, referred to Jonah and whale as an historical account. He said:

³⁹ But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; ⁴⁰ for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. ⁴² The Queen