

Jonah: A Fish Story? Does It Matter? #2

Joe Slater

Yes, it matters! Critics complain that the account of Jonah is just too far-fetched and outlandish to be taken as historical fact by modern educated people. But the Bible presents it as historical. Nineveh was a real city; the Assyrian empire was all too real, and an imminent threat to Jonah's people, the very real nation of Israel.

But Jonah lived over 2500 years ago! So who cares whether he was real, or just a story-book character who teaches us some good moral lessons? Friends, we had better care! Here's why:

Jesus of Nazareth treated the account of Jonah as historical. *"A sinful and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here"* (Matthew 12:39-41).

Folks, if Jonah isn't historical, then Jesus loses all credibility. Our confidence in Him as the Son of God goes up in smoke! Jesus predicted His own resurrection from the tomb as a likeness of Jonah's exit from the belly of the fish. If Jonah wasn't real, then Christ's resurrection isn't real either, and we are, as Paul said, *"of all men most pitiable"* (1 Corinthians 15:19).

No need to fear the day of judgment, either. If Jonah isn't historical, then neither the threatened overthrow of Nineveh nor their repentance and survival means anything.

We can believe Jesus, or we can surrender to the critics who deny all things miraculous. What say you?

Family Resemblance

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him" (1 John 3:1)

I was once asked to travel to the airport and pick up my grandmother's older sister. I had not seen her since I was a small child, and honestly, I had no idea who I was looking for. My mother told me, "You'll know her when you see her." I traveled to the airport, armed only with a flight number and an expectation of total chaos. However, I immediately spotted her in the crowd of people. The family resemblance was undeniable.

What I have described is typical in almost every family. People who share the same DNA tend to look alike. I have been told that I resemble a younger version of my father. My youngest brother Robert could pass for the twin of a cousin who lives in Virginia. For some family members, even their voices, interests, and mannerisms are similar. It all has to do with genetics.

When people are "born" into the family of God and *"adopted through Jesus Christ"* (Ephesians 1:5), life moves in a different direction. Personal interests shift away from the flesh and toward the spiritual. Lifestyles cease to be self-centered and gratifying as they disassociate with worldly affairs. The goal is to *"conform to the image of Jesus"* (Romans 8:29) and to look more like Him.

And as people develop a resemblance to Jesus, they also develop a resemblance to God.

--Kenny Westmoreland (Celina, TN)

If you must get even, try to get even with those who have helped you in some way.

OF CRABS AND HUMANS

I once read the story of a young boy sleeping beside his basket of freshly caught crabs. A passerby awakened him and told him his crabs were climbing up the sides to get away. "Mister," said the boy, "You don't know crabs! Just about the time one crab is ready to crawl out, all the other crabs start dragging him back down!"

Isn't that the way human beings act sometimes? They try to drag down those around them. Often their actions are prompted by envy. When a person resents the good fortune of another, he will too often criticize, slander, and attack in order to pull the successful person back down.

Envy and cruelty go hand in hand. Proverbs 27:4 tells us, *"Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?"* The cruelty suffered by Joseph from the hands of his own brothers was the result of envy. *"And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was with him"* (Acts 7:9).

In fact, envy is credited with the most heinous crime of all time – the death of the Son of God. Pontius Pilate recognized the reason the Jewish leaders had given Jesus to him: *"For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him"* (Matthew 27:18).

Envy's companions are dark and sinful as well. Titus 3:3 speaks of *"malice and envy"*; Galatians 5:21 mentions *"murder and envy"*; and Romans 13:13 talks of *"strife and envying."*

Envy destroys innocent people, but it ends up making the envious person miserable as well. *"A sound heart is the life of the flesh; but envy is as the rottenness of the bones"* (Proverbs 14:30).

Let's make sure than envy is not a part of our thinking, and that we are pulling others up from the depths rather than back down into it!"

--Ron Stough (via *Old Paths*)