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# Jonah and the New Testament<sup>1</sup>

by Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., June 1997

Transcribed and edited by David Sielaff, June 2013

Read the accompanying [Newsletter for June 2013](#)



**The prophecy of Jonah was given some 780 to 750 years before the birth of Christ Jesus. To comprehend implications of this prophecy we need to go to the New Testament and look at what Christ Jesus said about the prophet Jonah and his prophetic message, then we shall examine what others said about Jonah. You will learn about themes which are most remarkable, all developed within the environment of New Testament doctrine.**

Turn to Matthew 12:38–41. In this section of Scripture, Christ spoke primarily to the Pharisees. He was teaching them the errors of their ways. The Pharisees were the chief leaders of the Jews in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. They were the Israel of God at the time, and they had Jerusalem as their capitol. They had the Temple of God that Jesus Himself said was **“My Father’s house”** (John 2:16). They had the law of Moses. They had teachers and preachers. They even had John the Baptist who told them to repent. Jesus Himself was teaching. Accompanying Jesus’ ministry were miracles and signs and wonders to show that Jesus was no ordinary Israelite (John 20:30–31). He was born in Bethlehem but reared in Galilee. Most of the apostles He selected were from Galilee.

Jesus in Matthew chapter 12 began to teach the Pharisees principally, as well as the people of Israel, that the righteousness they were displaying was not the righteousness God expected of His people. They had the external righteousness. They kept the Sabbath, the Holy Days. They tithed. They did all of those things. But Jesus in Matthew chapter 12 gave them teachings to show the spiritual side of things which many of them were not applying at the time.

The principles Christ gave were based upon things other than just the law itself. He decided to use the example of a prophet that all of the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the others would have known and understood. The prophet was Jonah, who experienced a most remarkable circumstance as a rebellious prophet, a prophet who turned away from his responsibility. Remember, Jonah went down to Joppa, the

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<sup>1</sup> This presentation is a follow-up to Dr. Martin’s presentation [“The Book of Jonah”](#) which deals with the historical and textual background of one of the Twelve Minor Prophets in the Old Testament. This month’s article was originally presented as an audiocassette lecture titled *“Jonah and New Testament Themes.”* DWS

seaport city of the northern kingdom of Israel. He boarded a vessel and started to go to Tarshish, which is Spain. The mariners in charge of the ship were not Israelites. As Gentiles, they sacrificed an animal to discover God's will. Jonah said for them to toss him overboard and the life-threatening storm would calm down. The Gentile crew prayed to YHWH so He would not charge them with innocent blood. (Remember Pilate said the same thing concerning Christ.)

Jonah knew God would punish him if he rebelled against God. He went west instead of north into Assyria to the great city of Nineveh on the Tigris River in northern Iraq today. He knew they would repent if he preached to the Ninevites. Jonah did not want them to repent. You would think any prophet from God would want to see anyone repent of his or her sins and living in a manner that was wrong.

### *The Territory of Jonah and Christ*

There were already prophecies uttered in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC when Jonah was prophesying, showing that the northern Kingdom of Israel would be punished for their sins, and Judah in the south as well. Jonah was from the village of Gathhepher in Galilee.<sup>2</sup> Next door, in New Testament times, was Nazareth about three miles south of Gathhepher, west about one mile from the New Testament city of Cana where Jesus turned water into wine. The hometown of Jonah was right in the central area where Christ did many miracles in Galilee where He grew up. It is remarkable that most of the apostles (but not all, Judas may have been an exception) came from Galilee. Peter was from Capernaum.

You know the rest of the story. They tossed Jonah overboard, waters became calm, and a great fish swallowed him. For three days and three nights Jonah was inside the fish which God prepared for him (Jonah 1:17). Chapter 2 speaks in language that shows Jonah was dead. At the end of three days and nights (inclusively and not necessarily 72 hours), Jonah was brought back to life and vomited back to the land. In my prior presentation "[The Book of Jonah](#)" I showed that the Jewish historian Josephus told how Jonah was taken northward through the Aegean Sea, through the Sea of Marmara, and into the Black Sea along the Asia Minor coast (Turkey today), He was finally vomited out near the road to Assyria.

His name was Jonah, which means "dove," but the Assyrians had a god they said brought civilization to them. He came out of the water. The god's name was Oannes, and he had priests. In the Pergamum Museum in Berlin you can see ancient depictions of these priests with their Oannes garb on with hats showing the mouth of a fish and a fish tail on their backs like a bridal veil.<sup>3</sup> These people must have thought Jonah was their god Oannes, or his spokesman, who came out of the sea. All the people, the nobles, and the king, all in Nineveh listened to Jonah's preaching. We are familiar with Jonah's story. God told Jonah it was up to Him (and not Jonah) to decide regarding the judgment of ancient Israelites or Gentiles.

God showed Jonah a miracle by raising up a tree in one day to provide security and shade to Jonah. The next day God brought a worm to destroy the tree and bring on misery, difficulty, and stifling heat upon Jonah. God was telling him "Jonah, it is not for you to decide what will be done to punish either the ancient Israelites or Assyrians."

### *Christ's Teaching about Jonah*

There are many types and symbols of Jesus and profound New Testament teaching derived from the Book of Jonah. Christ Himself recognized this to be so. Jonah's experience was a "type" of Christ's ministry while He was here on earth (although Jesus was willing to obey God, even unto death). Once we realize this, we can begin to comprehend the scope of what Christianity is all about and to whom it was to go. It

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings 14:25:

**"He [King Jeroboam II] restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of YHWH God of Israel, which he spoke by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher."**

<sup>3</sup> See [Oannes images](#). Some images are ancient art, ignore the modern images. DWS

was not to be dispensed only to the ancient Israelites, but it was to go to the whole world. Jonah was told to go to the top Gentile power at the time. He was sent to their chief city to preach repentance.

Jesus calls the incident to the attention of these Pharisees. They were well aware of the story.

**“Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, ‘Master [speaking to Jesus], we would see a sign from you.’ But he answered and said unto them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.’”**

• *Matthew 12:38–39*

What particular sign or wonder of Jonah is Jesus referring to?<sup>4</sup> The sign is made clear in verse 40 (quoting from Jonah 1:17):

**“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly [“fish’s” belly in Greek]; so shall [in the same fashion] the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”**

• *Matthew 12:40*

Clearly Jesus understood and communicated to the scribes, Pharisees, and to the people, that He was going to die for the sins of the world. Jesus also knew and told them the length of time He would be in the tomb. When He illustrated this to the scribes and Pharisees, they did not understand what He meant. But Jesus knew what He was doing and here it is recorded for our instruction.

Jesus was actually dead for 3 days and 3 nights.<sup>5</sup> This indicated that Jonah himself was dead in the same fashion. It deals with the typology, but it does not end the matter because in verse 41 Jesus says,

**“The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation [the generation of those scribes and Pharisees when Jesus was speaking], and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas and behold a greater than Jonas is here.”**

• *Matthew 12:41*

Jesus was speaking of Himself. Jesus said He would give one sign only to the scribes and Pharisees, who were seeking for signs and wonders. It was not His walking on the water, turning the water into wine, causing fish to be multiplied, pieces of bread being multiplied, or any other sign that would give sufficient proof Jesus was the Messiah. Nor was bringing Lazarus back from the dead after 4 days the sign to prove Jesus was the Messiah.

None of the miracles He did was the one sign to show He was the Messiah. The one sign He gave was of Jonah in the belly of the fish 3 days and 3 nights, so too the Son of man was to be in the heart of the earth for the same period.

This means He would die, be dead for 3 days and 3 nights, and then be resurrected from the dead. His resurrection from the dead was the ONLY sign that demonstrates Jesus was [and is] the Messiah, the Christ.

You and I have been granted the gift of being able to read about, to study, and to learn the significance of that sign. Many people saw Jesus after He was resurrected (1 Corinthians 15:1–11), fulfilling His time in the grave. This is the central message of the Gospel. Jonah, the 5<sup>th</sup> in order of the Twelve Minor Prophets, was brought into a New Testament context by Jesus, showing that Jonah was a type of Christ.

Even today many are looking for signs and wonders. Today you can easily find preachers who put up big signs in tents or convention centers: “Come expect your miracle and a sign.” Yet Jesus said an evil generation and adulterous generation seeks after signs. There is only one sign you need and it is the one

<sup>4</sup> John says that Jesus did many signs (John 20:30–31). Does this not contradict Matthew 12:39, Mark 13:4, and Luke 11:29–30 where Jesus says only one sign would be given? No. Jesus said only one sign would be given that He was the Messiah to the scribes, Pharisees, and the people. John in chapter 20 is referring to signs Jesus did **“in the presence of his disciples”** which were written down by them for readers to believe their witness. For others Jonah’s sign was the only proof. *DWS*

<sup>5</sup> Jesus was dead as a rock. He was not alive in another “state of being.” His spirit died, His body died, and His soul died. *DWS*

Jesus gave. By the way, this sign is one of the most provable to human rationale that you could imagine.<sup>6</sup> It demonstrates that Jesus was the Messiah.

### *Jonah as a Type of Christ*

Jonah was a type of Christ in more than this way. Jonah felt he could take all of the judgment of retribution for disobedience upon himself and die, so the Assyrians would not punish his people Israel as God planned. He did it because he loved his people Israel. He did it in a mischievous way, in a human way attempting to thwart God, but his motive was correct. He died in order to save his people. Jesus died not only to save Israel, but to save the entire world (John 1:29, 4:42; Romans 5:8, 12, 17–19; 1 John 2:2, 4:14).

The typology does not stop there. This whole matter of Jonah being in the fish for 3 days and 3 nights, then preaching to the Assyrian Gentiles for 3 days and on the 4<sup>th</sup> day waiting to see what would happen, while Jonah himself received miracles from God — all this is reflected in another section of the New Testament. It has to do with what happened to the apostle Peter in particular, and to the Christian community in general, after Jesus was resurrected from the dead.

After Jonah was vomited out on the seashore, the Assyrians then began to hear him, and they repented, as Jesus mentioned in Matthew 12:41. When Jesus was on earth some 750 years later, the Romans were in charge. They were also of Abrahamic stock, but they were Gentiles just like the Assyrians.<sup>7</sup>

Jesus was resurrected from the dead, just as Jonah was resurrected. Jonah went to the Assyrians, the Gentiles, preached to them repentance of their sins, and they responded with great fear and they did repent. After Jesus was resurrected the apostles not went to the Jews, the Israelites, but they also went to the top Gentile power at the time, the Romans, and the Romans over time accepted the message. It took generations, but they actually did accept the Gospel.

### *The Interesting Relationship of Peter to Jonah*

There are other interesting parallels when we consider the apostle Peter and Jonah. In Matthew 17:1–13 the transfiguration of Jesus takes place before three of the apostles: Peter, James, and John. The transfiguration took place on Mount Hermon in the Galilee area. In a vision, there was Jesus standing beside Moses and Elijah.

**“And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell THE VISION<sup>8</sup> to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.”**

• *Matthew 17:9*

Even God the Father came down in a cloud and spoke during this important event: **“This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”** In all, seven individuals were on the mount of transfiguration. When they came down from the mountain, Christ had some teachings to give them. The transfiguration is most important because that was when Jesus said He was going to die.

<sup>6</sup> See Dr. Martin’s articles “[A Major Proof of the Bible](#)” and “[Proof of the Resurrection](#).” These complementary articles demonstrate that Jesus was in fact resurrected from the dead. DWS

<sup>7</sup> Reading the prophecies of Isaiah, the writers of the Dead Sea scrolls, speaking about the Assyrians, equated them with the Romans. They called the Romans the “Kittim” people coming from the Chatti people of Japheth, which is a geographical term. They felt that racially many of the Romans were direct descendants from these ancient Assyrians or ancient Edomites, people of Abraham (see the article on Obadiah [yet to come, ed.]). The ancient Edomites also moved into Rome and were part of the hierarchy of Rome. Quite a number of the Assyrians, in many instances were some of the common people who moved to the western part of Europe after the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, the period of time just before Jesus Christ came to earth. See also my book [The People That History Forgot](#). ELM

<sup>8</sup> This Greek root word occurs once in Matthew 17:9 and 11 times in the Book of Acts. There is no reason to believe that Moses and Elijah were alive. If they were, there would be no need to use the term “vision,” they could just have appeared. John is not interpreting this event. John, an eyewitness, is quoting Jesus who said this event was a vision. Moses and Elijah were not alive. They are still dead now. DWS

Just before the transfiguration, in Matthew chapter 16 Jesus prepared Peter for this event. Here is what transpired:

**“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi [north at the base of Mount Hermon] He asked his disciples, saying, ‘Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?’ And they said, ‘Some say that you are [1] John the Baptist: ...’”**

• **Matthew 16:13**

John the Baptist was dead by this time and some people thought Jesus was John the Baptist resurrected from the grave:

**“... some, [2] Elijah, and others, [3] Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He said unto them, ‘But whom say you that I am?’ [note Peter’s answer:] And Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered and said unto him,**

**‘Blessed are you [note the name He calls Peter] Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto you, That you are Peter [a little stone], and upon this rock [massive stone], I will build my church [my community, my *ekklesia*]; and the gates of hell [hades] shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto you [singular, meaning Peter] the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven and whosoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed to heaven.’”**

• **Matthew 16:14–19**

**“Simon Barjona”** is how the King James Version puts it, and this translation is correct. But notice to whom Jesus was speaking when He made this important statement. He was talking to Peter. It is interesting that in this case, Jesus gives Peter’s surname rather than just his common name. He said, **“Simon Barjona.”** *Bar* is the Aramaic word, which simply means **“son”** or **“son of.”** Aramaic, spoken throughout the land at the time, was a cognate language to Hebrew. Jesus said to Peter, you are **“Simon the son of Jonah.”**

Jesus was not talking about the prophet Jonah himself who died, obviously, some almost 800 years before the time. It is interesting also that the name of Peter’s father was Jonah, and Christ seems to be emphasizing the Jonah connection. Jesus is saying in effect, Simon you are Peter all right but you are also Simon the son of Jonah.

Recall that Jonah was the only prophet from Galilee who we have record of in either the Old Testament or the New Testament. He was from Gathhepher, next door to Nazareth, next door to Cana. The other “Jonah” who begat the apostle Peter was also from Galilee, as was Peter.

The Apostle Peter had his special name emphasized to him by Christ, the title **“Simon, son of Jonah.”** They were in Galilee at the time Jesus made this statement. This is when the final commission of Christ leading up to His death in Jerusalem was to take place. The next day they were on top of the mountain of transfiguration. After this incident Peter, James, and John were told by Jesus that He would be killed in Jerusalem. His death and resurrection happened about a year later.

Jesus was crucified but He was also, like Jonah, resurrected from the dead, albeit a spiritual resurrection. Fifty days later, we find the Apostle Peter in Jerusalem standing up amongst the Jewish people in the Temple preaching his Pentecost sermon recorded in Acts chapter 2. Numerous miracles were associated with Peter and with John soon after. Finally, the apostle Paul was converted as we find presented in Acts chapter 9.

### ***Peter and Jonah Again***

The apostle Peter later had something very special take place which gave him more of a typical and symbolic relevance, back again associated with this prophet Jonah. Not only was Christ Himself like Jonah, in the sense that He died for the sins of the world (as Jonah tried to sacrifice himself for his people Israel), but we also find that the ministry of the apostle Peter had connections to Jonah’s prophetic ministry.

The two are typical in many ways. Since Peter had the keys of the kingdom with him, he introduced, you

might say, the Gospel to a range of people, Jews, Israelites, yes, but also to Gentiles. In fact, the first one to talk in an official way to a Gentile and see Gentiles converted was this Apostle Peter. This is recorded in Acts chapter 10 and it is most important we understand it. We find Simon Peter, his father's namesake, following in the footsteps of the prophet Jonah in several ways almost 800 years before, who did some of the same things Peter did within a New Testament context.

In Acts chapter 10, the Apostle Peter was beginning to preach the Gospel in the lowland countries of Palestine in the land of Canaan. Acts 10:1: **"There was a certain man in Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band."** Caesarea was the Roman port city for Jerusalem and Judea, built new by King Herod about 12 years before the birth of Christ. It was a beautiful Roman city. There were Jews living there, but principally the population consisted of Romans. Cornelius was a Roman military officer. It is interesting to note that Cornelius' being a military officer of the occupying Romans in Judea was a humiliation to the Jews who wanted their own kingdom. There had been Herod's kingdom before, then there was a period when the Herodian dynasty was still in effect, but the Roman military controlled the whole of the Middle East including Judea.

Here was one of the occupying Roman soldiers, a captain in charge of quite a number of people. This man, it says in verse 2, was a Gentile, but he was:

**"a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house [he taught his family and household to fear the true God of heaven and earth, YHWH] which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always. He saw a vision ..."**

• Acts 10:2-3

Cornelius was stationed at Caesarea, in the northern Judean coast of the Mediterranean Sea. He saw this vision **"about the ninth hour of the day,"** about 3 o'clock in the afternoon,

Understand the periods of time when all of this happened. It took place the first day at 9 o'clock in the morning, the next day noon is referenced, 9 o'clock is mentioned the third day, and then on the fourth day something happens. It is all recorded in the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Book of Acts. There is a four-day sequence of events. Remember, Jonah went through the city of Nineveh in three days and on the fourth day remarkable things happened. These events in the Book of Acts also happened in a four day period.

**"He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, 'Cornelius.' And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, 'What is it Lord?' And he said unto him, 'Your prayers and your alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa [notice, Joppa was where Jonah went, the port city for ancient Judea] and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter."**

• Acts 10:3-5

Joppa was 40 miles south of Caesarea, both were cities on the Mediterranean coast. Caesarea was a Roman city and Joppa was a Jewish city. Where was Simon Peter at the time? He had been around the area of Lydda and the plains of Sharon and now he had found himself in the city of Joppa. He was staying with a man who also was named Simon.

**"He lodged with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell you what you ought to do. And when the angel which spoke unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier that waited on him continually; And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa [south to Joppa from Caesarea]."**

**On the morrow [the second day], as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, [Joppa] Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour [the sixth hour from sunrise, about noon]: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready [the food], he [Peter] fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending upon him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners [held up by four corners like a stork holding a baby], and let down to the earth.**

**Wherein [in the sheet] were all manners of four footed beasts of the earth, wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air [unclean animals, like eagles, crows, etc.]. And there came a voice to him, 'Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.'"**

• **Acts 10:6–13**

Peter, being a Jew, was not supposed to eat unclean animals. Here were all these unclean animals in this sheet and the angel telling him to rise and eat. **"But Peter said, 'Not so, Lord'"** (Acts 10:14). Notice Peter's reluctance. You would think if an angel would tell you to rise and eat, and you knew he was from God, what would you do? Peter said, "I will not eat."

**"... for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.' And the voice spoke unto him a second time, 'What God has cleansed, that call not you common.' This was done thrice [three times, the Jews had a belief that if a vision occurs three times, God means business]: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.**

**Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men that were sent from Cornelius [the Roman centurion] had made inquiry for Simon's house and stood before the gate, and called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. While Peter thought on the vision, the spirit said unto him, 'Behold, three men seek you [down stairs waiting]. Arise therefore, get you down, go with them, doubting nothing [do not doubt]: for I have sent them.'**

**Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, 'Behold, I am he whom you seek: what is the cause whereof you are come?' And they said, 'Cornelius the centurion [a commander of the hated occupying military forces], a just man, and one that fears God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews [he gave them alms], was warned from God by a holy angel to send for you [to come] into his house and to hear words from you.' Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow [the third day] Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied them [north 40 miles].**

**And the morrow [the fourth day] after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, 'Stand up; I myself also am a man.' And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together."**

• **Acts 10:14–27**

These were Gentiles, not Jews. Until this time the Gospel, even as Christ preached while He was here on earth, only went to the Israelites, to Jews. Peter did not go to Gentiles ever before this time. He was very, very surprised at what he was seeing here in front of him. He was taken into the home of a Roman military captain in charge of some of the occupying forces of Judah. Though being a just man, he was not an Israelite. The Gospel was to go to Israel. Peter speaks:

**"And he said unto them, 'You know how that it is an unlawful thing [Peter said] for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.'"**

• **Acts 10:28**

Those beasts Peter saw were symbolic. Those animals and eagles which he saw all in his vision while praying were unclean. Peter says he was told, **"Rise Peter, kill and eat."** He knew then it meant go to the Gentiles and teach the message to them. All these animals represented Gentile nations. The bear for example represented Persia, the eagle represented both Babylon and Rome, the great eagle of Rome. The lion represented Judah on the Jewish side, but also Babylon. The leopard was the Greek nation. These unclean animals represented Gentile nations. God was saying, Peter, now is the time to go to the Gentiles, tell them to repent and teach them conversion.

## *The Jonah Connection*

Where was Peter shown this? In the city of Joppa. The same city Jonah was in when he started to go to Tarshish in the western part of the Mediterranean. And where did this Roman centurion come from? He was a member of the Italian band from the western Mediterranean.

On the fourth day Jonah preached to the Assyrians and they repented. Here now was Peter arriving at the house of the latter-day Assyrians, the major power of his time, teaching this Roman centurion at the provincial capital city of the Romans, Caesarea, in the Middle East. And Peter said:

**“Therefore I came unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent you had sent for me?”**

**And Cornelius said, ‘Four days ago [note the time] I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing [an angel looking like a man], And said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer is heard, and your alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon the tanner by the sea side: who, when he comes, shall speak unto you.’**

**Immediately therefore I sent to you; and you have well done that you are come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded you of God. [Peter, what am I to know?]**

**Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, ‘Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.’”**

• *Acts 10:29–34*

From then on it would not be just the Jews who receive the Gospel; God has now opened the door to give His Gospel to the entire world. Just as He took Jonah from Joppa, and deliberately by a fish took him to the Assyrians when Jonah did not want to go, likewise Peter did not want to eat, and did not want to go from Joppa to Caesarea. Nevertheless, once he understood, he went, respecting God’s obvious message to him.

When Peter later went to other apostles in Jerusalem and told them that Cornelius and his house, all being Gentiles (and Romans as well), had been baptized, had repented, and received the Holy Spirit in the same manner as they did at Pentecost, including speaking in tongues (Acts 10:44–48). No one believed Peter (Acts 11:1–18). They said it was not possible. Nevertheless, Peter said it happened exactly that way. The apostles in Jerusalem finally were convinced and said in Acts 11:18, **“Then has God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”** God gave the gift of repentance to Gentiles.

This was a major step forward. Now the Gospel was to go not only to the Israelites, it was also to reach out and embrace the whole of the Gentile world. The first Gentile people God went to were the Romans,<sup>9</sup> the despised controlling power in the world at that time, just as Jonah went to the hated Assyrians, the chief power at that time.

What happened to the Assyrians? The whole nation, including the king, was finally converted. It took longer for the Romans, but from that time forward the whole direction of the Gospel was not east into India, that came later. It was not south to Africa, or even into Egypt or Alexandria. It was not to the north into the Soviet Union or into China and places like that. The Gospel went in the same direction Jonah was heading toward, toward Tarshish.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The Romans were the first of a group of Gentiles to be converted. Cornelius and his house (meaning his relatives and servants) **“feared God”** and prayed to God always (Acts 10:2). The first Gentile individual to be converted after Pentecost was the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–40). Perhaps the apostles did not think the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch had general significance, so God arranged the more obvious demonstration with Cornelius and his household. DWS

<sup>10</sup> Although Peter did not use the story of Jonah as an example, I wonder if he had Assyria in mind when he wrote the last part of 2 Peter 3:9:

**“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”**

DWS

## ***The Apostles Paul, Peter, and the Prophet Jonah***

Paul comes along, the apostle to the Gentiles, and takes the Gospel to Asia Minor, to Greece, to Dalmatia and Illyricum, then into Italy itself and the islands of the sea. Finally, the apostle Paul takes the Gospel to Spain, or Tarshish, the very place that Jonah was going. Contrary to the intention of Jonah, he was diverted to the Assyrians. Tarshish was the right way to go, but it was the wrong time to do so.

Christ commissioned His apostles to begin by teaching the Israelites, but then He directed Peter to go to the city of Joppa. When Peter was there near the seaside, right at the jumping off place, shall we say, to the west, is when God called Cornelius 40 miles north at the Roman capital city of Judea, and told him to send men south and have Peter come to him. It took four days to do it, just as Jonah took 4 days to do what he did.

Jonah was a type of the apostle Peter, taking the Gospel to the Gentiles, first of all to the Romans. The Romans accepted it through the Apostle Paul, finally. Of course, the Romans diluted the pure message, but it was from the Romans you and I have the Gospel and subsequently the Bible. The whole story is most remarkable. It means that the Book of Jonah is a type of a Gospel, in a typical way, not in every detail, but typically.

In point after point God was introducing what would happen to the Gospel message once the Messiah, Christ Jesus, came on the earth in type of the person and mission of Jonah. Do you know where the Gospel went? It went directly into the area that Jonah first wanted to go to start his escape. Peter went there also, but he was not turning from God. Peter was used by God to show that the message of Christ was now to go to believing Gentiles.<sup>11</sup> From this beginning the whole world now has received the message of the Gospel.

There are still people in this world who do not yet know the Gospel of Christ. I am talking about people in India and in China and such places. They may have heard of Him by the ear, but they have not seen His miracles yet. The Apostle Peter prophesied in Acts chapter 3 that there was coming a time of great refreshing, a time when there would be a restitution of all things, when the Gospel will be given to the entirety of this world. It will be done like a Jonah taking it.

## ***The Gospel Received***

Do you know what will happen? The world will repent. When I say repent, they will repent like the Assyrians did. The Assyrians did not have much spiritual knowledge, but with what knowledge they had, they repented and God was pleased with what happened. The same thing will happen again. This time it will be as it was back in the time of Acts. People shall see signs and wonders which will spur them to an acknowledgment that Jesus was indeed the Christ, and that His resurrection from the dead is a fact.

Peter and the miracles that took place at Joppa and Caesarea, and Paul's experiences, and the experiences of others, prepared the way for the Gospel to go into Rome. Peter was not the first pope, but tradition has Peter dying (and I have no doubt this is the case) in Rome. You know who else died at the same place near the same time? Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. The first of Paul's 14 epistles was to Rome. In the Book of Acts, what was the last geographical area you find the Gospel going to with the Apostle Paul? It was the city of Rome.

**“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”**

**• Luke 24:47**

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<sup>11</sup> The apostles had a preview of this when Jesus said in Matthew 24:14:

**“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”**

and Matthew 28:19: **“Go you therefore, and teach all nations, ...”**; and Mark 16:15: **“And he said unto them, ‘Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.’”** DWS

The Gospel started in Jerusalem but it went to Rome. Rome was the symbolic Assyria. When you look at the Book of Isaiah, especially the first 35 chapters, events are described there which deal with our end time. The central power in the world being discussed, dealing with this end time, are the Assyrians. Isaiah wrote about 100 years after Jonah. The Assyrians are prophesied to do important things again in the future, and it is all there in the Book of Isaiah.

Even the authors of the Dead Sea scrolls, written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century before the birth of Christ, knew that the prophecies of Isaiah relating to the Assyrians dealt with the end time. They equated them with the Romans even then. The Assyrians were symbolic of the entire Gentile world. The Romans were the head of the nations, the empire that controlled the world. You and I have received the Gospel through that channel from Jerusalem through Rome, to us, to the rest of the world.

We should be thankful for these symbolic and typical teachings which we find throughout the scripture. The nucleus of the Gospel message and the distribution of it around the world was shown in the Book of Jonah long before Jonah or anybody else knew what it meant.

Put all of these things together:

- It was no happenstance that Peter was born of a father by the name of Jonah.
- It was no happenstance that Peter came from Galilee like Jonah did.
- It was no happenstance that Peter was in Joppa when he got the message to go north to the beasts and wild animals and these fowls like eagles.
- It was no accident that Cornelius, the Roman centurion representing the occupying power of Gentiles over Israel at the time, was in Caesarea the capital of the Romans in Judea at the time.

These were not accidents. They were all symbolic tie-ins to one another to assist the spread of the Gospel around the world.

When we read Jonah now, because we have the New Testament revelation, we can read back into the Book of Jonah to see things we never would have believed before and could not see until now. The reluctant prophet Jonah was like the reluctant Peter who would not eat the unclean animals. They were at the same place in Joppa. As the Assyrians repented so would the Romans, and other Gentiles, and so finally the whole world will come to a knowledge of Christ. And they will repent. Not just like the Assyrians in a superficial way, but they will finally, ultimately, accept Jesus as the Christ as you and I accept Him today.

We need to look at Jonah with its New Testament themes. When we do, we have a revelation given to us by God some 900 years before the events of Christianity took place. It is most remarkable because it demonstrates that God knew what He would do with the world long before these things ever happened.

Just like the Apostle Paul said, our salvation was secured in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). You and I have been predestined before we even got here to fulfill a plan that God has put in place.<sup>12</sup> That plan, though given a little bit here and there in the Old Testament, finds its fulfillment completely in the New Testament.

Jonah was a type of Christ. Jonah was a type of Peter. Jonah's preaching to the Assyrians was like Peter's teaching to the Romans, from whom we are the inheritors. We have a marvelous truth to thank God for, because Jonah has New Testament themes.

Ernest L. Martin, June 1997

David Sielaff, June 2013

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<sup>12</sup> God does all things according to the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:11), and he does these things when it is His pleasure to do His will (Ephesians 1:5). DWS

### *Addendum by David Sielaff*

The ancient city of Joppa is today called Jaffa, but the old city has been incorporated within modern Tel Aviv today. It is the primary port for goods coming to Israel, the major manufacturing center of Israel, and its municipal and outlying area contains about 40% of the country's population.

The term "Joppa" means "beautiful" or "lovely." In the time of Joshua it was designated to the tribe of Dan (Joshua 19:46, the city is called Japho in the KJV), but it was mostly a Gentile city at the time of Jonah.<sup>13</sup> This is likely the case because it was not designated as one of the cities of the Philistines. At the very least, the city had a mixed Israelite and Gentile population even before King Saul of Israel emerged.

**"The city does not appear in the [biblical] history as Philistine, so we may, perhaps, infer that it was held by the Phoenicians, the great seamen of those days. It was doubtless a Phoenician ship that Jonah found here, bound for Tarshish, when he fled from the presence of the Lord (Jon 1:3)."**

• **"Joppa," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia***

It did not become an Israelite, or more precisely a Jewish city, until the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. The materials for the construction of God's Temple by King Solomon came through the port of Joppa (2 Chronicles 2:16). When the exiles returned from Babylon and the Jews began to rebuild the Temple, the cedar wood for the interior came from Lebanon through Joppa (Ezra 3:7).

### *Peter Raises Tabitha from the Dead*

Why was Peter in Joppa when Cornelius sent his men to bring Peter to Caesarea? The narrative of Acts 9:36–43 tells us why.

A disciple named Tabitha in Joppa died. Other disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda (because of the events of Acts 9:32–35), a short distance inland from Joppa. They found Peter and brought him to Tabitha's body.

**"... Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, 'Tabitha, arise.' And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.**

**And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. And it came to pass, that he [Peter] tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner."**

• **Acts 9:40–43**

A physical resurrection from the dead, with Peter as God's agent,<sup>14</sup> was the reason Peter was in Joppa when Cornelius' men found him. After Tabitha was raised, Peter stayed in Joppa. Yet Acts chapter 10 says that Cornelius did not know Peter was in Joppa; an angel told him Peter was there.

The two men sent to bring Peter to Caesarea apparently had no trouble finding Peter, probably because of the recent news of Tabitha's resurrection, which **"... was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord"** (Acts 9:42).

Unlike Jonah, Peter did not hesitate to go to Tabitha's side. He did not hesitate to go to Cornelius' house, even though a summons to a Roman official must have caused concern. He went unafraid. Peter, however, forewarned by the visions of the unclean animals and the story told by Cornelius' men, probably knew that God had arranged the circumstances. Peter went willingly, unafraid, unlike Jonah, yet both men fulfilled God's intention of salvation, physical and spiritual.

David Sielaff

<sup>13</sup> "Joppa," Avraham Negev, ed, *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*, 3rd ed. (NY: Prentice Hall Press, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> Peter's experience in Joppa was similar to God's working through Elijah in 1 Kings 17:17–24, and Elisha in 2 Kings 4:8–37.