

Tyndale, William



The Story of the Prophet Jonas

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The Story of the prophet Jonas first translated from Hebrew to English by William Tyndale, published in 1531. This edition has the same wording, but modernized spelling.

The Story of the prophet Jonas.

The first Chapter.

The word of the lord came unto the prophet Jonas the son of Amithai saying: rise and get thee to Nineve that great city and preach unto them, how that their wickedness is come up before me.

And Jonas made him ready to flee to Tharsis from the presence of the lord, and gat him down to Joppe, and found there a ship ready to go to Tharsis, and paid his fare, and went aboard, to go with them to Tharsis from the presence of the lord.

But the lord hurled a great wind in to the sea, so that there was a mighty tempest in the sea: insomuch that the ship was like to go in pieces. And the mariners were afraid and cried every man unto his god, and cast out the goods that were in the ship in to the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonas gat him under the hatches and laid him down and slumbered. And the master of the ship came to him and said unto him, why slumberest thou? up! and call unto thy god, that God may think on us, that we perish not.

And they said one to another, come and let us cast lots, to know for whose cause we are thus troubled. And they cast lots. And the lot fell upon Jonas.

Then they said unto him, tell us for whose cause we are thus troubled: what is thine occupation, whence comest thou, how is thy country called, and of what nation art thou?

And he answered them, I am an Hebrew: and the lord God of heaven which made both sea and dry land, I fear. Then were the men exceedingly afraid and said unto him, why didst thou so? For they knew that he was fled from the presence of the lord, because he had told them.

Then they unto him, what shall we do unto thee, that the sea may cease from troubling us? For the sea wrought and was troublous. And he answered them, take me and cast me in to the sea, and so shall it let you be in rest: for I wot, it is for my sake, that this great tempest is come upon you. Nevertheless the men assayed with rowing to bring the ship to land: but it would not be, because the sea so wrought and was so troublous against them. Wherefore they cried unto the lord and said: O lord let us not perish for this mans death, neither lay innocent blood unto our charge: for thou lord even as thy pleasure was, so thou hast done.

And then they took Jonas, and cast him into the sea, and the sea left raging. And the men feared the lord exceedingly: and sacrificed sacrifice unto the lord: and vowed vows.

The second Chapter.

But the lord prepared a great fish, to swallow up Jonas. And so was Jonas in the bowels of the fish three days and three nights. And Jonas prayed unto the lord his god out of the bowels of the fish.

And he said: in my tribulation I called unto the lord, and he answered me: out of the belly of hell I cried, and thou heardest my voice. For thou hadst cast me down deep in the midst of the se: and the flood compassed me about: and all thy waves and rolls of water went over me: and I thought that I had been cast away out of thy sight. But I will yet again look toward thy holy temple. The water compassed me even unto the very soul of me: the deep lay about me: and the weeds were wrapped about mine head. And I went down unto the bottom of the hills, and was barred in with earth on every side for ever. And yet thou lord my God broughtest up my life again out of corruption. When my soul fainted in me, I thought on the lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, even into thy holy temple. They that observe vain vanities, have forsaken him that was merciful unto them. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving, and will pay that that I have vowed, that saving cometh of the lord.

And the lord spake unto the fish: and it cast out Jonas again upon the dry land.

The third Chapter.

Then came the word of the lord unto Jonas again saying: up, and get thee to Nineve that great city, and preach unto them the preaching which I bade thee. And he arose and went to Nineve at the lordes commandment. Nineve was a great city unto God, containing three days journey.

And Jonas went to and entered in to the city even a days journey, and cried saying: There shall not pass forty days but Nineve shall be overthrown.

And the people of Nineve believed God, and proclaimed fasting, and arrayed themselves in sackcloth, as well the great as the small of them.

And the tidings came unto the king of Nineve, which arose out of his seat, and did his apparel off and put on sackcloth, and sat him down in ashes. And it was cried and commanded in Nineve by the authority of the king and of his lords saying: see that neither man or beast, ox or sheep taste ought at all, and that they neither feed or drink water.

And they put on sackcloth both man and beast, and cried unto God mightily, and turned every man his wicked way, and from doing wrong in which they were accustomed, saying: who can tell whether God will turn and repent, and cease from his fierce wrath, that we perish not? And when God saw their works, how they turned from their wicked ways, he repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them, and did it not.

The fourth Chapter.

Wherefore Jonas was sore discontent and angry. And he prayed unto the lord and said: O lord, was not this my saying when I was yet in my country? And therefore I hasted rather to flee to Tharsis: for I knew well enough that thou wast a merciful god, full of compassion, long ere thou be angry and of great mercy and repentest when thou art come to take punishment. Now therefore take my life from me, for I had lever die than live. And the lord said unto Jonas, art thou so angry?

And Jonas gat him out of the city and sat him down on the east side thereof, and made him there a booth and sat thereunder in the shadow, till he might see what should chance unto the city.

And the lord prepared as it were a wild vine which sprang up over Jonas, that he might have shadow over his head, to deliver him out of his pain. And Jonas was exceeding glad of the wild vine.

And the lord ordained a worm against the spring of the morrow morning which smote the wild vine that it withered away. And as soon as the sun was up, God prepared a fervent east wind: so that the sun beat over the head of Jonas, that he fainted again and wished unto his soul that he might die, and said, it is better for me to die than to live.

And God said unto Jonas, art thou so angry for thy wild vine? And he said, I am angry a good, even on to the death. And the lord said, thou hast compassion on a wild vine, whereon thou bestowedest no labour nor made it grow, which sprang up in one night and perished in another: and should not I have compassion on Nineve that great city, wherein there is a multitude of people, even above an hundred thousand that know not their right hand from the left, besides much cattle?