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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1591 ~ Jonah Swallowed by a Fish.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

In today's Bible Adventure, we watch the prophet Jonah run for his life in an opposite direction from where God wanted him to be going. Why would Jonah do a thing like that? God gave him the assignment to travel to the northwest of Israel to Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria. Jonah was to warn the people there to repent of their sins within 40 days or God would destroy their whole city.

The Assyrians were known to be cruel people and thus greatly feared. Jonah believed that the people of Nineveh didn't deserve God's mercy at all – only His punishment. Assyria was a dreaded enemy of Israel. If God destroyed Assyria, then Jonah's own beloved Israel could escape future judgment at Assyria's hands. So instead of obeying God, Jonah headed for the seaport of Joppa, looking for a ship to take him west to a place called Tarshish in Spain at the other end of the Mediterranean Sea.

DRAMA - [The Bible In Living Sound.](#)

Jonah lived in a town about an hour's distance from Nazareth at the time when the great prophet Elisha was ministering to the people of Israel.

Jonah lived during the reign of King Jeroboam II in the northern kingdom of Israel and helped the king make his country powerful and prosperous.

The small book of Jonah is in the last section of the Old Testament called the 'Minor Prophets'. God is seen in this book working and taking care of his prophet Jonah. Yet this book is a test of our faith. A 'great fish' was prepared and sent by God just at the right moment to save Jonah. How could he or anyone survive three days and three nights inside a very large fish? The event involved a divine miracle, which we see happens. The fish then also obeyed God to spit Jonah up on the shore at the place where he could start his trip back to Nineveh.

The story of Jonah has been told and retold to children many times under the book title of "Jonah and the Whale." People who know anything about whales struggle to believe this. Many of the largest whales 'strain' the sea water to feed on tiny creatures as well as plants floating in the water. Their mouths are so small they could scarcely swallow an orange.

Only 'predator' types of whales have teeth and thus can open their mouths to feed. But we know the book of Jonah is correct because the Lord Jesus referred to it in Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 12. The scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus and asked Him to give them a sign or a miracle to prove that He really was the Son of God. They had seen Jesus make the blind to see, the sick well and even a few people rise from the dead. Yet they didn't believe Him. To a person in unbelief, even a miracle will not move them to change their minds and worship the Lord.

Jesus condemned them as being morally unfaithful to God and it was for this reason they demanded a sign. He said no sign would be given to them but the sign of the prophet Jonah. Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great sea creature, so would He be in the heart of the earth for the same time.

Strangely though, the scribes and Pharisees believed that Jesus meant what He said. After His body was laid in the rich man's tomb the Temple rulers asked for a squad of Roman soldiers to seal His tomb and guard it for three days. They guarded the grave site until Jesus rose from the dead.

In Matthew's Gospel, chapters 27 and 28, the guards saw an angel roll away the stone from the Lord Jesus' grave. They went back to the Temple rulers and told them everything that had happened. The guards were paid well to remain silent about what they had seen. The chief priests even made up an excuse for them, that they fell asleep and that Jesus' disciples came and stole the body. What tough Roman soldier would ever dare to fall asleep while on guard duty?

When Jonah disobeyed God and looked for an alternative, he took himself out of God's will for him. Some people want God to reveal His will to them first and then decide if they are going to follow God's plan or not. That's not the right way to grow our faith. When we do one job for the Lord, we are then given a different and maybe harder task to do. We have to come to an end of relying on our own abilities and trusting God instead to make the way open for us to do what He wants to do next. We can make the mistake of hiding in everyday busyness. In fact, we can be so busy that we don't have any time to do something God wants us to do.

As soon as Jonah fled in a ship heading for Tarshish, God acted. He sent a great wind and a severe storm which threatened to break up the ship. God loved Jonah too much to let him prosper in his sin. Failure never relieves us of responsibility to serve.

Should the sailors on the stricken ship have thrown Jonah overboard? At first they were reluctant to do such a thing. They'd respect for human life and didn't want to kill Jonah needlessly. But they and Jonah knew that God had caused the storm to stop Jonah from going further away from Nineveh.

The big lesson Jonah had to learn out of this tempest was that God knew where he was, even when he was hidden out of sight in the dark hold of a ship travelling on the high seas.

Nothing is ever hidden from God's eyes. He is all-knowing and present everywhere, as well as having unlimited power. Because God sees everything, this makes Him the God of justice, who judges correctly.

No matter whether it's the hidden bribes some people pay to get their way in business affairs or the angry words spoken in the family home, God sees it all, both the good and the bad.

There's no hiding from God. Rather than try to run away from Him, it's much better to run to Him asking for His forgiveness and mercy.

We who sit in the audience as it were, watching Jonah trying to decline this mission to Nineveh, must remember that God's character is changeless. As a famous preacher pointed out, God cannot change. All change must be in one of three directions: From better to worse or from worse to better or from one order of being to another. God's perfections rule out all three choices.

“In coming to Him at any time, we need not wonder whether we shall find Him in a receptive mood. He's always receptive to misery and need, as well as to love and faith. He doesn't keep office hours or set aside times when He will see no one. Neither does He change His mind about anything.” In the Old Testament book of Malachi, Chapter 3, God says: “I am the Lord. I do not change.”

Jonah thought he had a choice. He forgot that the will of God is not an option. It's an obligation and an opportunity. When we run from God, we'll always get into trouble. We may even end up like Jonah, sacrificing safety for danger and peace for a storm.

A believer out of fellowship with God can cause a great deal of trouble. Jonah put the ship's crew in danger and left the wicked people of Nineveh without a message of hope. Jonah proves the point that those who try to run from God will be disciplined by God sternly.

One writer has said: "We need not worry for fear the faith of our fathers will have no relevance for today. Times have changed, they tell us, but time makes no difference to our great God. The Gospel will never be out of date." The hymn writer said:

"Faith of our fathers, holy faith, we will be true to thee 'til death." What a commitment of loyalty to Christ this is! But do we sing it and mean it? Is each one of us prepared to lay our life down in death if it is God's will for us? Jonah did give up his life by being thrown into the sea, but it wasn't God's will for him to die in that storm.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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