The Book of Jonah: Foreshadowings of Jesus as the Christ

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Abstract

The book of Jonah is a remarkable story perhaps best known for the stubbornness of a prophet, the great fish that swallows and then regurgitates Jonah, the conversion of the whole city of Nineveh, and the rapid growth and death of a gourd. But this small book has a much deeper, more powerful message that has been obscured through the ages: that the Messiah would live and die to make salvation available to all humankind.

In images from Jonah's storm-tossed sea experiences to those in his prophetic prayer of affliction while in the Lord's great fish (belly of hell), the book contains a prophecy of Jesus's future ministry. These Jonah images portray and prefigure Jesus's prayerful agony as he accepted his bitter cup of suffering in Gethsemane, his being lifted up, and his feeling forsaken on Calvary. These were followed by the images of his death and spirit-world ministry. In Jonah's miraculous third-day deliverance from the Lord's great fish, readers can easily visualize the unmistakable image of Jesus's rising from the dead with his third-day resurrection. Jesus himself called attention to this likeness when he referred to it as the sign of Jonah. The just as miraculous missionary image of Nineveh's total conversion and era of peace among men and beasts in that worldly city provides images that symbolize the Lord's second coming as the world's Savior and Judge.

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decide. The second is that the Old Testament is filled with foreshadowings and prefigures of New Testament teachings. If both of these are true, then it stands to reason that the Old Testament should be riddled with prefigures of the coming Messiah.