



دراسات كتابية وأبائية  
Biblical and Patristic Studies



# Our Christ the Wonderful Saviour in the Book of Jonah

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# Our Christ the Wonderful Saviour in the Book of Jonah

The relationship between the story of Jonah and the church readings during the Circumcision Feast and the Holy Epiphany Feast

The Old Testament includes many prophecies and symbols pertaining specifically to baptism. This is because once the believer enjoys baptism with a true biblical understanding, it's considered a spiritual circumcision. Also without baptism, the believer can't enjoy salvation. That is because during baptism, the Holy Spirit grants the believer sonship so that he becomes an icon of God, and offers him adequate characteristics as a member in the body of Christ. Among these characteristics; love, meekness, spirit of giving, longing to the heavenly and a true desire for the salvation of mankind ..etc

The book of Jonah portrayed the Holy Baptism in a beautiful picture through Jonah himself who enjoyed meeting with God for three days and three nights while in the belly of the whale. As Jesus Christ said “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.” (Matthew 12:40).

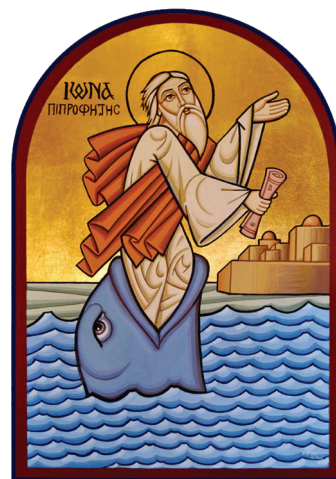
The Gospel of the Sunday between the Circumcision Feast and the Holy Epiphany Feast, which is the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ, mentions “And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, “This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation.” (Luke 11:29-30).

- 1 It's true that Jonah found it difficult to preach to the gentiles while knowing by the spirit of prophecy that when the gentiles accept and believe in Jesus Christ, more Jews will refuse to believe in Him - The same Jews who later on will arrest Him and ask to kill Him during His trial and took every chance to mock Him in public. So Jonah tried to flee from preaching to the gentiles when God asked him to go to Nineveh northeast of Jerusalem, Jonah tried to flee to Tarshish southwest of Jerusalem.  
(Jonah 1:1-3).

2 As the tempest came on the sea and the ship was about to be broken, Jonah confessed to the captain and the mariners that the tempest was because of him. It's because he disobeyed the Lord, the creator of the heaven, the earth and the sea. Jonah asked them to throw him in the sea so that it calms (Jonah 1:21). The mariners asked for forgiveness because he confessed his sins and asked to be thrown in the sea. This was a symbol of the baptism. The sea ceased from its raging and the mariners feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows. (Jonah 1:14).

Jonah fled from going to Nineveh to preach to the people of Nineveh, so he became a preacher of the baptism. The mariners who are from the gentiles believed in God after Jonah had to tell them about fleeing from God.

3 Jonah was surprised that God had prepared a whale to swallow him and saw heaven open in front of him. He didn't experience this when he was worshiping God at the temple in Jerusalem. We haven't heard of a prophet or a priest who saw heaven open while being inside the belly of a whale moving in the sea.



4 Jonah didn't think too much about his fate while in the belly of the whale. He didn't think about the whale's belly being filled with water at times or when the whale was spitting out water. He didn't think if the whale was swimming closer to the surface of the water or down deep in the bottom of the sea. All he thought of was to offer a unique praise (Jonah 2:1-9). A praise that comforted the believers in the Old and in the New Testaments and until this day, especially during the Resurrection praises that the believers chant on Bright Saturday, when they share those who enjoyed the company of the Lord Jesus Christ who defeated Hades and carried them to enter paradise.

Truly, every believer ought to pray this praise from the heart going from glory to glory while saying: **"I went down to the moorings of the mountains; the earth with its bars closed behind me**

forever; Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord, my God. “When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer went up to You into Your holy temple. “Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own Mercy. But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.” (Jonah 2:6-9)

We ought to sing this praise to always renew the work of the Holy Baptism, so neither the world, the sin or the devil can ever spoil what we have received. We feel our prayers reach the Lord’s holy temple. We offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving and fulfill what we offered from inner joy. Our hearts, our thoughts and our minds never cease to say: “Salvation is of the Lord”. Jonah offered to us what he received in the belly of the whale while enjoying the symbol of baptism that our Christ sanctified when He asked John the baptist, with the spirit of humbleness, to baptize Him to fulfill all righteousness. (Matthew 3:15).

5 God called Jonah to arise and go to Nineveh and preach to it the message of the Lord. We should ask ourselves:

a How did Jonah feel when he received what he didn’t receive at the Lord’s temple in Jerusalem? Through human weakness, he didn’t cry out in the city to tell them about his experience with the Lord while in the belly of the whale, or what he saw and praised for. Instead he said “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (Jonah 3:4) without opening for them the doors of hope in God’s mercies.

b Did Jonah realize that when the Lord told him “arise”, he received the blessings of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ as He said “I am the resurrection” (John 11:25)? Did the people of Nineveh see the brightness on Jonah’s face as a reflection of the heaven he saw while in the belly of the whale? Did anyone mention this to the king? As it’s written “Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in

ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?" (Jonah 3:6-9)

6 We can say that by receiving the symbol of the Holy Baptism, Jonah moved the whole city of Nineveh from the King to the infant to offer sincere repentance. Not by pressuring them but they made this decision through the blessing of God's work in His prophet.

Many see Jonah as a fleeing prophet from the face of the Lord, no one can really ignore this. However, no one can ignore the fact that Jonah was the only prophet God sent to preach to a gentile country, Nineveh the capital of Assyria, in the Old Testament. Jonah may have realized through prophecy what the apostle Paul declared about Israel "through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness." (Romans 11:11-12)

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