

Jonah: The Sign of Jesus in Hell

Jonah 1:17 – Jonah 2:10

Introduction: The Sign of Jonah

""Matthew 12:38-39

Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. 39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:""

""Matthew 12:40

For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Jesus *explicitly identifies* Jonah as a **prophetic sign** of His own death and burial.

This means Jonah's experience is not just a story—it's **prophecy**. The Bible is so much deeper than many believe.

Jonah didn't just suffer physically—**Jonah said he was in hell**. Jesus is saying: "*What Jonah experienced, I will fulfill—in hell.*"

Jesus says he will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. You see it right there with your own eyes, right? "So shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." IN THE HEART OF THE EARTH.

Did Heart of the Earth Mean Buried in a Tomb?

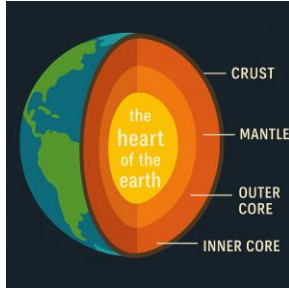
Some people claim that when Jesus said He would be "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40), He was simply referring to being buried in a tomb. They argue that the grave, even if only a few feet underground or inside a rock, counts as the "heart" of the earth.

This interpretation reduces the phrase to mean nothing more than being dead and buried, equating a shallow, surface-level tomb with the deep inner part of the earth. However, this view ignores the literal meaning of "heart," the language of descent used in other Scriptures, and Jesus' clear comparison to Jonah, who said he cried from "the belly of hell."

A **tomb** is not the *heart* of the earth—it's just barely under the surface.

When we say "heart of the city," we don't mean a sidewalk on the edge—we mean the **deep center**.

Biblically and linguistically, “heart” means the **core, inner part**, not the outer shell. Hell is deep in the center of the earth.



Now, since Jesus Himself refers us to the Book of Jonah, let's take a close look. Let's see what Jesus meant exactly. Let's see if Jesus simply meant being buried several feet under the ground in a tomb meant the heart of the earth. Let's see what happened to Jonah.

VERSE-BY-VERSE STUDY – Jonah 1:15 to 2:10

""Jonah 1:15-17

So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. 16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows. 17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.""

We see Jonah swallowed by a great fish. Matthew 12 says whale. This isn't a fairy tale. This actually happened. "And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." Jonah is in a whale for three days and three nights. Jesus was in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

Verse 17 is the last verse in Jonah Chapter 1.

""Jonah 2:1

Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,""

Jonah is conscious and praying—not dead in body, but alive in soul. From inside the fish, **he prays from hell**. This isn't literally hell for Jonah, but for Jesus it is hell. The Bible says that Jonah prayed out of the fish's belly.

""Jonah 2:2

And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.""

Jonah says he is in **hell**, not just a fish. This is prophecy that is speaking of Jesus Christ just as Psalm 16 is David prophesying of Jesus Christ and not himself.

This matches **Acts 2:31**:

"He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption."

Jonah *speaks prophetically* of Christ's **soul in hell**. There is no other interpretation here. If you attempt to change all of this, you're trying to get around the fact that the soul of Jesus went to hell.

Think about this. Jonah says, "Out of the belly of hell cried I." Belly refers to the innermost part of something. The belly of a fish is its deepest internal part. The belly of hell is not the edge of hell. It's the deepest internal part of hell. Jonah is cut off, tormented, and imprisoned.

Look, there's many other Scriptures I could go to here to show that Jesus was in literal hell after He died on the cross. But we will do that in another sermon here soon. I'm going to focus in on the Book of Jonah here.

""Jonah 2:3

For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.""

He's cast into the deep. Not at the surface. He's in the middle of the seas. There's no easy way out of there. The floods compassed him about. The waters surrounded him completely. Floods here refers to the violent, overwhelming waters of the sea. Floods are very violent.

All thy billows or great surging waves passed over Jonah and Jesus. Jonah says "thy billows" which means he knows that God sent them. This is God's judgement directly upon Jonah and Jesus. He's being buried under wave after wave like being submerged in wrath.

""Jonah 2:4

Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.""

Now, think about this. "I am cast out of thy sight." Jonah in the belly of the whale way out in the middle of the seas and deep into the ocean. The soul of Jesus was not left in hell and cast out of the sight of God.

""Jonah 2:5

The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.""

He's in a deep and dark place. The waters compassed him about. And notice the exact words of the Bible: "Even to the soul." To the soul. To the soul.

Acts 2:31 says the soul of Jesus was not left in hell. And notice this is for three days and three night. Jesus was on the cross for 6 hours, approximately. He was in the heart of the earth, His soul buried in hell for three days and three nights.

Jonah says the depth closed me round about. Depth. He's deep down. The weeds were wrapped about his head.

""Jonah 2:6

I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.""

Down to the bottoms of the mountains.

So, the "bottoms of the mountains" = **the deepest possible part of the earth's surface—**where even the **foundations of the mountains begin.**

But Jonah isn't just talking **geology**—he's speaking spiritually. The Bible is a spiritual book. He's trying to tell you that this isn't talking about the body of Jesus being buried in a tomb. He's speaking of the soul of Jesus going to hell.

He says, "The earth with her bars was about me for ever." The prison bars of the earth.

""Jonah 2:7

When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.""

The Bible says, "When my soul fainted within me." Remember, we're trying to answer the question: Did the soul of Jesus go to hell? "When my soul fainted **WITHIN** me. Again, he's clearly speaking of his soul within. His prayer to God came into His holy temple.

""Jonah 2:8-9

They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. 9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.""

Lying vanities are anything that competes with the truth of God. I believe the story of Jonah clearly shows that the soul of Jesus did go to hell. And this is yet another proof that the inner man, the soul of Jesus, went to hell. Anything else is a lying vanity. And forget about everything else and focus on God's truth. If not, you forsake your own mercy.

""Jonah 2:10

And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.""

The whale comes up out of the deep and vomits Jonah out upon the dry land. This is just like Jesus rising from the dead. And again, He was in the deep. Not a few feet but a long, long way.

Conclusion: The Resurrection from the Deep

Jonah cried from the belly of hell, and God heard him. He was surrounded by floods, buried in the depths, bound behind the bars of the earth—but God brought him up. And Jesus said: *“So shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”*

This wasn't a metaphor. It wasn't a shallow tomb. It was hell itself.

Jesus died for our sins, but He didn't just rest in a peaceful grave. He descended into the lowest hell to pay the price we never could. His soul was not left in hell, and His body did not see corruption. Just like Jonah was brought up from the depths, Jesus rose in power and glory on the third day—conquering death, hell, and the grave.

So what does this mean for you?

It means the wrath of God was fully poured out—and fully satisfied.

It means the bars of hell were broken open—so you never have to enter them.

It means salvation truly is of the LORD—and He went farther than any man has ever gone to bring it to you.

If you trust in lying vanities—false religion, works, tradition, or self—you're forsaking the mercy that Jesus bought with His blood and His soul. But if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—the one who went to hell and came back—you have everlasting life.

"Salvation is of the LORD." Not of you. Not of the church. Not of baptism or behavior. It's of the LORD—and it was paid for in hell.

That's not just doctrine. That's the depth of God's love. That's the Gospel.

Next time I want to go over the verse, "For the wages of sin is death." What does this mean exactly? We're going to go in depth, and this is related to that question we're answering: Did the soul of Jesus go to hell?

Let's pray.