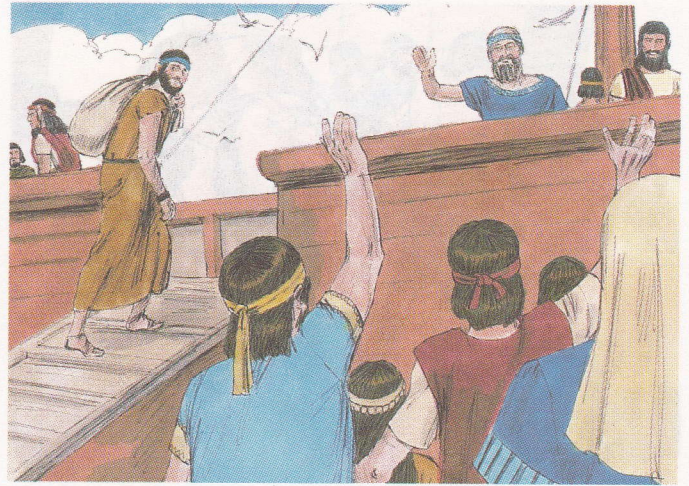


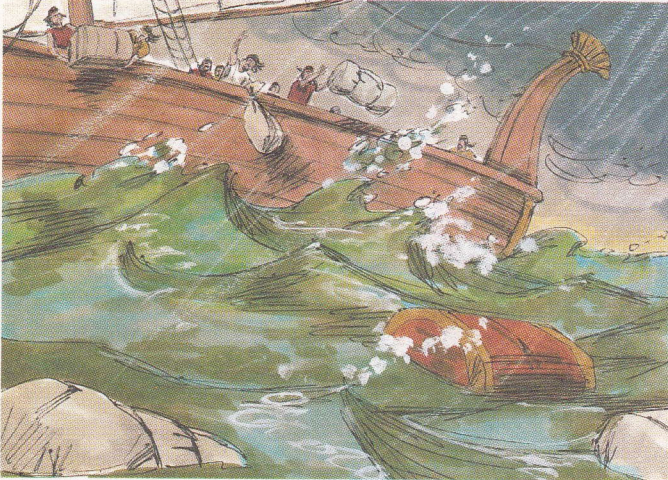
The Story of Jonah



1 In the days when Assyria was still a great nation, the Lord called a prophet named Jonah. He said, "Go to the city of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and preach against it, for it is very wicked."



2 Jonah, however, did not want to preach to the people of Nineveh, because the Assyrians were enemies of Israel. So Jonah got on a ship going in the opposite direction from Nineveh.



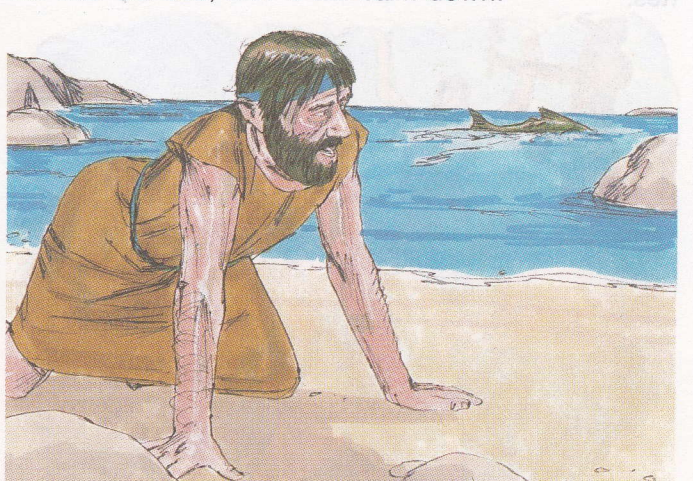
3 As the ship sailed, a terrible storm came up. The wind was so strong that the ship was about to sink. The frightened sailors threw all the cargo overboard to keep it afloat.



4 But the storm continued to get worse. Finally, Jonah said to the sailors, "This storm is all my fault, because I have run away from the Lord. Throw me into the sea, and it will calm down."



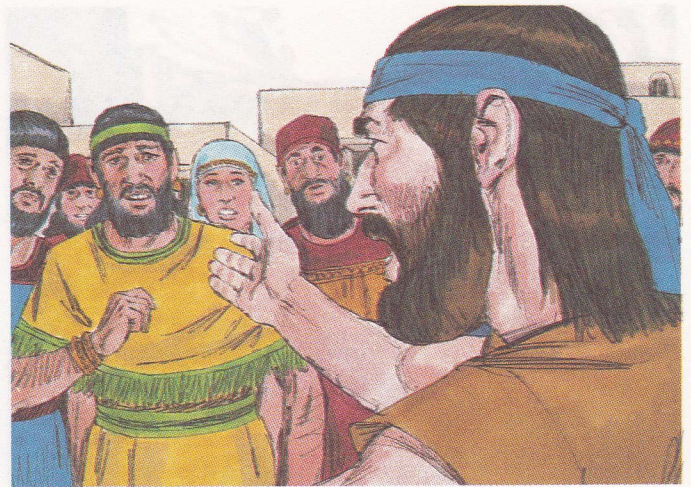
5 The sailors didn't want to hurt Jonah. But there was nothing else they could do. They threw Jonah into the stormy sea. Immediately the sea became calm! The sailors were amazed and frightened.



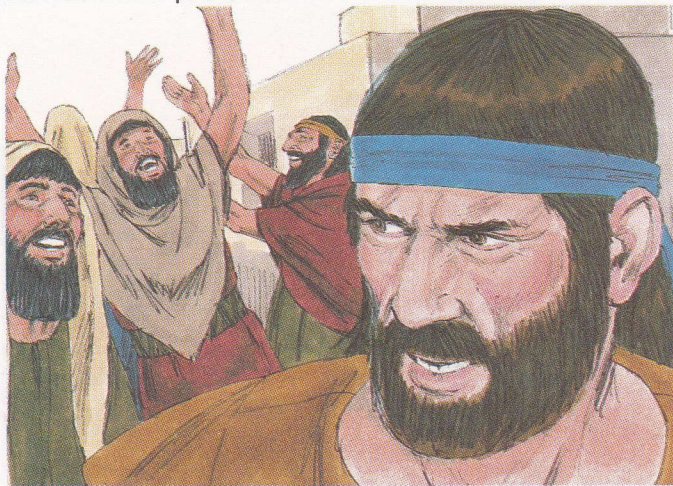
6 Jonah did not drown in the sea, for the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow him. Three days later, the fish spit Jonah up onto the land.



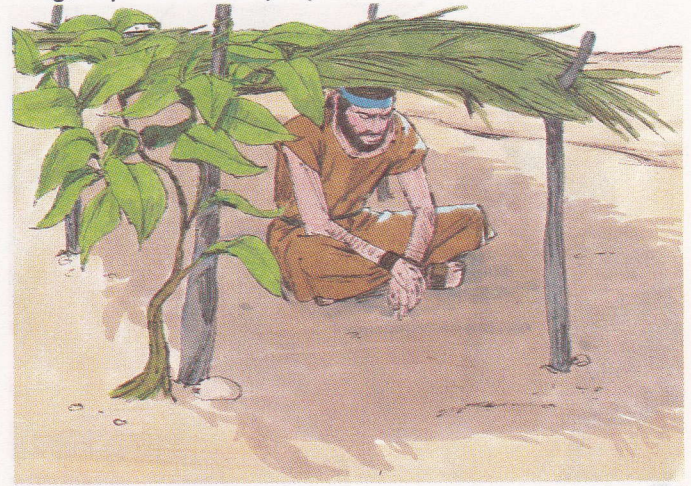
7 The Lord now spoke to Jonah a second time, saying, "Go and preach to the people of Nineveh." This time Jonah obeyed. He went straight to Nineveh and preached.



8 The message of the Lord was simple: "In forty days the city of Nineveh will be destroyed." The people of the city believed Jonah. All of them, even the king, repented and prayed to the Lord.



9 Therefore the Lord had mercy on them; he decided not to destroy them. This made Jonah very angry. "I knew you would forgive them!" he said. "That's why I didn't want to preach to them!"



10 Then Jonah went out to a hill near the city and built a little shelter. He sat there waiting to see what would happen. That night a vine grew up. It helped shade Jonah from the sun the next day.



11 But the day after that the vine died. As the hot east wind blew on Jonah, he said, "I wish I were dead." So God said, "Are you right to be so angry about this vine?" Jonah answered, "Yes!"



12 Then God said, "Jonah, you care so much about this vine, which you didn't even plant or work to make grow. Don't you think I should care what happens to this great city?"