



A Lincoln buddy of mine sells pre-shrunk, 100% cotton T-shirts with a singular theme: "I Will Not Apologize!" I smiled at his display in line at a local coffee shop, seeing "I Will Not Apologize for having Coffee Breath." Others declared: "I Will Not Apologize for Being Patriotic," "I Will Not Apologize for My Heritage," "I Will Not Apologize for My Body Size." I really like "I Will Not Apologize for the Constitution." One of my favorites as the proud owner of a Kawasaki 800 Vulcan cruiser is "I Will Not Apologize for My Loud Pipes." VaRooOM!!!

In everyday English, "to apologize" means to verbalize that you are sorry for something. I have felt apologetic about riding my bike home late on summer nights through quiet, sleepy residential streets of south Lincoln, but I still like the T-shirt.

1. APOLOGETICS—THE BIG FISH, IS IT TOO HARD TO SWALLOW?

We apologize in American English to say, "I am sorry." However, in Biblical Greek and Biblical theology, to make an apology is quite the opposite. To give a Biblical "apologetic" is to give a defense of your position, not your regrets. Apologetics is the art of "making a defensive argument from logic and reason." In fact, our English word "apologize" comes from the Greek word *apologia* (ἀπολογία). It has two parts: 'apo (from) + logos (logic, reason, debate, argument). When the Apostle Paul was accused of sedition in Jerusalem, in his preliminary trial before King Herod Agrippa, he told that ruler he was glad he could "make [his] defense before" him. The Greek word used there, in Acts 26:2, of Paul making his logical, legal, self-defensive, appropriately self-interested argument is "*apologia*." Put another

way, apologetics is using logic, God-given human reason, and the sciences to support the facts of what the Bible has already said. Biblical apologetics *assumes* the Bible is true, inspired, efficient, and sufficient. Apologetics endeavors to help believers and unbelievers alike realize that:

GOD'S WORLD MATCHES PERFECTLY WITH GOD'S WORD.

Our study the next three weeks will be a mixture of Bible study and Biblical apologetics. We will look Biblically at what the Scripture says about Jonah's *Big Ole' Fish*. Also, we will apologetically (with reason, science, and logic) look at three categories of possibility and several different viable options for what this leviathan could have been. Was it "a fish" in the way *we* think of fish?

2. A BIBLICAL SUMMARY OF JONAH 1:17

Jonah 1:17 "And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights."

THEOLOGY PROPER IN JONAH 1:17

Theology, generally studies all things related to God (the Bible, man, sin, heaven, hell, etc.). Theology proper is the study of God Himself. Here is a summary of key truths about God:

➡ **God was carefully, miraculously involved** in Jonah's life. The text says God "appointed" a fish. That Hebrew verb, *manah* (מָנָה), means "carefully select; meticulously designate." The LORD painstakingly picked that exact fish to become Jonah's designated driver for three nights in his own private, water-cooled, organic submarine.

All in the Capitol Community Are Welcome to be a Part of Regular Bible Study and Fellowship

SENATORS' WEDNESDAY STUDY: 7:00-8:05 AM, ROOM 1422 CAPITOL MINISTRIES, NEBRASKA WWW.CAPMIN.ORG

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➤ **Creator God appointed a fish that was so big** it did not find Jonah “too hard to swallow.”

➤ **God is intimately involved** with His creation and totally in control of it (unlike a Deist's god).

➤ **God is merciful.** He saved Jonah's life from a terrible drowning death in the Great Sea.

➤ **God is a Miracle Worker.** He orchestrated the facts and timing of Jonah's safe swallowing mere seconds before he let go of his final breath.

➤ **God is a communicating God.** He had not fruitfully communicated with the willful prophet but did with the rest of His creation, leading them in obedience. He spoke to three kingdoms in His creation: animal, vegetable, and mineral. He talked calm into the water's wild waves (mineral). He could “talk to the animals,” like Dr. Doolittle, commanding that animal water-monster. Jonah 4 will show Him speaking to a fast-growing gourd (vegetable) and another animal—a chewing worm. They all obeyed Him.

FISHOLOGY PROPER (*ICHTHYOLOGY*)

We have learned much about God Himself in Jonah 1:17. What about the fish? Ichthyology, a branch of zoology, is also called fish science. Let us study the Biblical data on the Big Ole' Fish.

THE BIBLICAL TEXT LIMITS OUR VIEW TO A HUGE “SEA CREATURE” PROWLING THE DEPTHS OF THE GREAT SEA.

The Hebrew for “great fish” is *dag gadol* (דָּג גָּדוֹל). *Gadol* means huge. *Dag* means masculine sea creature (not fish, whale, shark, or giant squid). It simply means a huge aquatic life form. Jesus Christ called Jonah's biological submarine a “sea monster” in Matthew 12:40.^a That English translation perfectly captures the gist of the original inspired Hebrew for “great fish.” So why do *we* call it a fish? In AD 405, the Christian

theologian Jerome translated the Bible from its original Hebrew into Latin (in *The Vulgate*). He translated *dag gadol* to Latin's *pisces granda*. Eleven hundred years later, in 1534, the English reformation scholar, William Tyndale, translated that phrase in *The Olde English Bible* using the words *greate fyshe*. Since then, most English translations call the sizeable sea creature “a fish.”

➤ Did the ancient Hebrew author of Jonah, writing eight centuries before Christ, mean that Jonah was swallowed by what we call “a fish”? The term *dag* used here in Jonah in 778 BC had none of the distinctions that were to be developed in the Linnaean system of taxonomy over 2,500 years later. In 1778, the Swedish botanist-zoologist, Carl von Linné (Linnaeus), set the foundation for our modern classification system of living things. He developed binomial nomenclature and categories like kingdom, genus, and species. However, the Bible's book of Jonah and the Biblical Hebrew language are devoid of terms that would distinguish a fish from a shark from a whale. So, from Biblical word studies, we cannot definitively conclude precisely what that “fish” was.

3. APOLOGETICS—USING SCIENCE AND LOGIC TO HELP US THINK BIBLICALLY

Apologetically, I offer these three options (all of them fishy) as Jonah's swallowing sea creature:

EXHIBIT CATEGORY I—FISH: WITH GILLS TO BREATHE WATER FOR OXYGEN

What we call fish and whales both need oxygen to survive. Whales have blowholes and lungs. They breathe air by surfacing to obtain oxygen. Fish and sharks also need oxygen but get it by breathing water through their gills to extract it. The distinction between water-breathing and air-breathing sea creatures is entirely absent in the Text's inspired words *dag gadol*. The words are broad enough to allow for great “fish” and great “whales.” After weeks of investigation in marine biology, here are three fishy apologetic proposals.

**➤ EXHIBIT "1-A"—THE WHALE SHARK**

One fish that could have swallowed Jonah is the whale shark. It is larger than some whales, but the whale shark (*rhincodon typus*) is 100% fish and the world's largest fish at that. At 65' long, it weighs a whopping 21 tons and has a tail as big as three grown men. That reminds me of a preacher's joke about Jonah, forced to check into "The Fish Tail Motel" for a three-night stay.

The whale shark's mouth gapes 6' wide. The average Semite in 776 BC was only 5' tall. A bit claustrophobic, I recall my anxiety when my boys were McDonalds-Playland-aged. At 6'-2"/220 pounds, I was trying, at the boys' request, to repeatedly slide through the 2'-diameter hard plastic tubes. A 5'-Jew could easily have slid through the 6'-mouth of the largest living fish. It was like swallowing goldfish! Such scientific facts cause some to say that this was indeed "*the Biblical behemoth that swallowed and spit out Jonah.*"^b Did *this* toothless fish ingest *that* Jew? Possibly.

THE TOOTHLESS WHALE SHARK, AT 65' LONG, IS THE WORLD'S LARGEST FISH.

➤ One objection to the shark's entombing Jonah is its fishy cold-bloodedness and the frigidity of the Mediterranean's depths. How could Jonah stay alive for three days in such numbing temperatures? Interviewing a medical doctor about this, I was fascinated that a person in shock could survive such cold, cramped conditions due to the human autonomic nervous system which automatically shuts the body down to a near coma-like condition. It automatically regulates a trickling supply of blood and precious oxygen to vital organs. It will deprive life-sustaining blood and oxygen from extremities like fingers, toes, ears, and nose all for warmth. Jonah's body would have responded to this numbing cold with what doctors call "the diving

reflex." Physiologically related are the facts that transplantable hearts are packed in salty ice, and blood-bank plasma is stored in refrigeration.

JONAH'S BODILY PROCESSES REFLEXIVELY SLOWED TO A NEAR COMATOSE STATE.

The day I interviewed that medical doctor he told me of a six-year-old Taiwanese boy just rescued from being trapped in frigid water for four days (87 hours) and lived (without drinking-water).



1-A: The Whale Shark



1-C: The Goliath-Jewfish Grouper

➤ EXHIBIT "1-B"—THE GREAT WHITE

Dropping into the Asian water world west of Joppa's seaport, we discover an abundance of Great White Sharks whose Latin name (*squalus carcharias*) means *the shark with jagged teeth*. They have gotten a bad rap as vicious killers due to Steven Spielberg's movie *Jaws*. *Jaws* author Peter Benchley spent his latter years dispelling his book's idea that these cold-blooded fish are cold-blooded killers of warm-blooded men. Great Whites can willingly retract and lay down their hundreds of serrated teeth, bound in flexible cartilage. Good for Jonah! Seamen have found inside Great Whites things like twelve undigested 400-pound tunas and a 1,500-pound horse.

GREAT WHITE SHARKS CAN SWALLOW OBJECTS WHOLE (LIKE SHARKS, DOLPHINS, AND SEALS) UP TO HALF THEIR BODY'S SIZE.



The cerebral Old Testament scholars Keil and Delitzsch are confident that this was the fish that became Jonah's organic submarine. Popular American preacher Charles R. Swindoll notes in his sermon, *Mr. Jones, Meet Mr. Jonah*, that in the Mediterranean, near Beirut, such a shark swallowed an entire horse. Another swallowed a sea cow (a manatee) the size of a lion! ^e

➤ EXHIBIT "1-C"—A GOLIATH JEW FISH

Perhaps requiring more of God's miraculous assistance to swallow Jonah would be the Jewfish Grouper (also known as the Goliath Grouper). Large-jawed and living in the deep where Jonah was jettisoned, this is the largest and best-known grouper. Weighing in at half a ton, the grouper's belly and swim bladder would have been pressed by Jonah's body. However, smaller creatures (like giant crocodiles) have swallowed humans whole. An interesting fact about the Jewfish Grouper that relates to Jonah 2 is its hermaphroditic nature. This grouper can reverse its sexuality and even (truly ^d) be both sexes at the same time.

➤ Those attending Senate Study two weeks ago heard me explain that, grammatically, the great fish *dag gadol* changed genders within the text. ^e It began as male, changed to female and back to male before he vomited Jonah onto the shore.

The Hassidic rabbis and Masorettes are those Hebrew scholars who cared most deeply about the careful study of every inspired word and letter of Scripture. They went to great lengths to explain this change of gender which was obvious to the reader of Hebrew Scriptures. Whole books have been written by these rabbis filled with possible explanations of this clear gender change.

4. SORRY NOT SORRY—I APOLOGIZE FOR THE FISH, AND “I WILL NOT APOLOGIZE!”

Until next week, let me encourage you “to apologize.” I mean that in the ancient Greek sense of the word. Be willing to use your best

mental faculties to synthesize these logical apologetic facts of modern scientific intelligence with the absolutes found in the inspired words of Scripture. Put more faith in God and His Bible than in your own mental abilities. The Christian walk is a walk “of faith” more so than “sight.” Nebraska Senate Studies are founded upon absolute confidence in the perfect reliability and infallible authority of the Bible's God “who cannot lie.” ^f It is in this sense that I would encourage you to have an attitude like the ones consistently expressed in my friend's many T-shirts. Those pre-shrunk, 100% cotton tees have one singular theme—“I Will Not Apologize.” Allow me to leave you with a last and favorite message from one of those T-shirts.

“I WILL NOT APOLOGIZE FOR BELIEVING IN ABSOLUTES!”

WILL YOU TAKE THE BAIT THIS WEEK?

Most Honorable Senator:

The world, the flesh, and (that old fisherman) the devil want to lure you into doubting your faith, your God, His Word, His morals, His absolutes, and His authority in our world (and in this building) as KING of kings. Do not take the bait. Swim clear of all such luring deceptions. Do so without apology.

Defending the faith,

Rev. Derry M. Gauthier V.D.M. (cell/text: 402-770-6270)

^a Matthew 12:40—“For just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” NASB

^b *Nature Conservancy*, January/February 1999, page 38.

^c Radio program *Insight for Living*. Notes on April 11, 1991, KGBI radio.

^d This is not transvestitism (cross-dressings) or transgenderism (choosing to “identify” outside your sex/gender) but true genital reproductive capability.

^e Jonah 1:17—*dag gadol* (masculine) ⇒ Jonah 2:1—*Dagah gadolah* (feminine) ⇒ Jonah 2:10—*dag gadol* (masc.). Cf. Spanish: *Señor* ⇒ *Señorita* ⇒ *Señor*.

^f *Titus* 1:1-2—“...for the faith of those chosen of God...in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.” (emphasis mine).

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