



His eyes were as big as his smile in Room #1022. His face lit as he reported, "It took me a lot of years of golfing to get mine!" I was happy for the senator's testimony of what every golfer longs for. In our story swapping, I was proud to tell him about my first—a coveted hole-in-one. I could not help smiling when I said I got mine the second time I had ever walked onto a golf course. My eyes were saucers and mouth in an oval of disbelief on that manicured tee at the Grand Island Riverside Country Club Golf Course. Promptly after that, my best golf game, I "retired" from golf. I probably will never come out of retirement. I do not want to spoil my record or my boast "every other time I golf, I get a hole-in-one."

Sometimes we wonder if people are telling us "tall tales." Exaggerated stories are probably told more often after fishing excursions than in golf clubhouses since we say, "Yeah, right! That's a fish tale if I have ever heard one." We express our disbelief in the lengthy stories by grinning anglers about their surprisingly lengthy fish.

1. THE BIG OLE' FISH—IS IT JUST TOO HARD TO SWALLOW?

Today we continue to study what cynics consider to be nothing more than *a fish tale*. The Bible claims a perfect record of history's most famous fish swimming in the book of Jonah. Last week, we plunged headlong into a study of Biblical apologetics, pondering logical and biological possibilities of what Jonah's fish may have been. Let us review the three "fishy" options we studied last week after we look at the two verses of Holy Scripture that form the Biblical base from which we will do our apologetic reasoning.

Jonah 1:17 & 2:10 *"And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.... Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land."*

➤ EXHIBIT "1-A"—THE WHALE SHARK

The world's largest fish is toothless, weighs 21 tons, is larger than some whales, and (without exaggerating) is much than a school bus.

➤ EXHIBIT "1-B"—THE GREAT WHITE

Hundreds of jaggedly sharp teeth can retract at the will of these water-breathing monsters. They can swallow horses whole, weighing 1.5 tons.

➤ EXHIBIT "1-C"—A GOLIATH JEW FISH

This hermaphroditic Mediterranean monster is fittingly named, if God appointed it to swallow the prodigal Jew in the well-loved book of Jonah.

2. BUT IS THERE A WHALE IN THIS TALE?

On the Fifth Day of Creation, God made great "sea monsters" (*tanniynim gidoliym*; גדרלים תנינים). Many believe^a these were the great whales.

Genesis 1:21 *"God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind...and God saw that it was good."*

Monstrous in size, the great whales are of the order *Cetacea* (*pronounced sit-AY-shub*). They are fascinatingly the largest creatures on earth, *not* excluding the dinosaurs. Apologetically speaking, I nominate them as the enormously best candidates in the first-ever supporting role as swimming saviors for Jonah the Jew.

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God indeed has glorified Himself in a special way in their creation. In Herman Melville's 1851 classic novel *Moby Dick (The Whale)*, the sailor, Stubb, was the confident, articulate second-mate to angry Captain Ahab. Stubb exclaimed:

**“IF GOD EVER WANTED TO BE
A FISH, HE'D BE A WHALE.
BELIEVE THAT,
HE'D BE A WHALE.”**

Whales *are* godlike in size. Interestingly, they also share with humans a “great urge to travel.”^b Did God use a roving great whale to reroute the travel plans of a geographically challenged, obediently dyslexic, prone-to-wander prophet?

EXHIBIT CATEGORY 2—WHALES: WITH LUNGS TO BREATHE AIR FOR OXYGEN

Whales have blowholes to breathe air, not gills, and unlike fish, surface to obtain vital oxygen. Whales are warm-blooded mammals which nurse their young, bearing them alive—all of which is unlike fish. After interviews with marine biologists, **apologetically**, I offer four *big fish* for your reflection: each of them *a whale of an option*.

➤ EXHIBIT “2-A”—THE KILLER WHALE (THINK “SEA WORLD”)

Commonly referred to as the orca, this massive oceanic dolphin is famous for playful athleticism and its clicking noises heard in aquatic theme parks like Sea World—Orlando. The huge orca is the smallest great whale we will consider in today's study. With a 6'-dorsal fin (almost as tall as Col. Brewer), at 26' long, it has 50 teeth that interlock at the upswing of its large muscular jaw.

The black-and-white killer is of interest since it has *never* been known to eat a human being. Swallowing is possible since they are voraciously eager to fill their huge stomachs and poised at the top of the food chain. They *often* swallow their food whole unless tearing is required.

Fortunately for Jonah, or anything else that it *can* swallow, the killer's teeth are not for chewing (but for tearing apart only the largest of prey).

➤ EXHIBIT “2-B”—THE SPERM WHALE (THINK “MOBY DICK”)

Underwater cameramen tell us that the sperm whale is “the submarine” of the great whales; it is able to dive nearly a mile deep. Abundant in the Mediterranean, sperm whales can hold their breath with their massive lungs a full 75 minutes.

This toothed whale gets its name from the rare sperm oil found in its head and the wax (called spermaceti) that accompanies it. Sperm oil lit the world's lamps in the days of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. In that novel, Moby Dick was an 80-ton, albino Sperm Whale. He was described, in the novel, to be “*like a mountain of snow....scarred like the hills of Jerusalem*” and “*as old as Genesis*.” Moby Dick plunged and resurfaced in and out of the waters below Captain Ahab's Nantucket whaling vessel filled with anxious harpooners.

➤ Because of the large supply of spermaceti wax and its immense sinus cavity, the whale's monstrous head is actually its most buoyant part. It has the largest brain of any animal with whom we share the planet—a whopping 20-pounder.^c Gliding gracefully through dark ocean depths, the 50-ton sperm whale eats a full ton of squid daily. Abundant in the Mediterranean, the sperm whale's nasal passage is huge. Did it house Jonah three days and nights?

THE SPERM WHALE'S NASAL PASSAGE IS 7' X 7' X 14'.

The Hebrew for “belly” in Jonah 1:17 does not mean stomach, but simply “the inside parts, the innards.” Jonah may have survived being lodged in the sinus cavity of a sperm whale. One sperm whale was being cut open or “flensed” with large long cutting tools called flensing blades. Flensing



through sinuses, the whalers were shocked to see a barking dog spring from the nasal cavity!

➤ As we studied the fish called the whale shark, we learned that a near-comatose Jonah would not have needed 700 cubic feet of air to live. That 700-cubic-foot air supply would have been refreshed every 75 minutes. Those biological facts interest me since scoffers put Jonah's three-day submarine ride high on their list of fairy tales. In the Disney classic cartoon *Pinocchio*, the puppet-maker Geppetto was depicted swallowed but safe and sound in a cavernous rib cage of a sperm whale named Monstro. Geppetto was deep in thought, writing busily by candlelight. Of course, Jonah would not have been that comfortable in the sinus cavity or required paper and pen to record the famed prayer we will study in Jonah chapter 2. He may have been miserably shrouded in the mucous strings in the gut of the 16-ton beast, but the sinus cavities of a sperm whale would have been comparatively comfy for his sleepy voyage in an underwater world.

➤ EXHIBIT "2-C"—HUMPBACK WHALES (THINK: "THE SONGS OF THE ...")

The humpback is known for its haunting songs sounding like the moans of drowning sailors. By God's grace, Jonah was saved from the sea and delivered from drowning, but did he become sushi for a humpback whale? If we could zoom alongside one in a Greenpeace motorized rubber raft we would realize just how tiny we are compared to this titanic creature. This mammal's fins alone are 15' long—three Jonahs laid on end.

A humpback's distinguishing expandable throat grooves (or pleats) run from chin to navel.

**A HUMPBACK'S THROAT,
INTENTIONALLY EXPANDED,
CAN HOLD A SCHOOL BUS &
10,000 GALLONS OF SEA.**

➤ Unlike the killer, the humpback is a toothless (or "baleen") whale. To feed, it swallows garage-sized portions of the sea and uses the straining structures called baleen to filter its food from the unwanted seawater. It then swipes a massive, 2,000-pound tongue to move the remaining meal in its mouth down its throat. Jonah would be in a school bus of hard knocks if God used a humpback to save his life. He may have learned lifelong lessons about the pain of disobedience amidst gassy, gastric gurgles in the pitch-black innards of a huge humpback whale.

➤ EXHIBIT "2-D"—THE BLUE WHALE (THINK "BOEING 727")

When I think of first mate Stubb's comments "*If God was to be a fish, He'd be a whale I tell ya'...*," I think of the blue whale. Blue whales are found in every ocean of the world and seem to be more mountain than mammal.

Proud skeptics who believe there is not a sea creature big enough to swallow Jonah should humble themselves before the blue whale. Its enormity is hard to fathom. Baby blue whales are 23' long and over 4,000 pounds at birth. Poor Mama blue! These baby mammals grow rapidly from the mammary secretions of their mother's milk, which is rich with nutrients in a cottage-cheese-like consistency. Baby blues gain 4,000 *more* pounds in just 7 days, then 200 pounds *per day* (*hello Jenny Craig®!*) and 4" in length every day!

➤ Full-grown adult blues are equally astounding. They weigh four times more than the biggest dinosaurs that have ever lived (including the "brontosaurus"/diplodocus). An adult male has the bodyweight equivalent of 40 African bull elephants. Their massive lungs (since they are air-breathing mammals not water-breathing fish) can inhale enough air to fill one of your constituents' minivans in 1.5 seconds. Blue whales' powerful lung exhalations shoot a *thar' she blows* column of pressurized air, mixed with water vapor, 50' (five stories high) into the Mediterranean sky.



**THE BLUE WHALE HAS A
HEART BIGGER THAN A
VOLKSWAGEN AND ARTERIES
THROUGH WHICH A
TODDLER COULD CRAWL. ITS
DEAFENING HEARTBEAT CAN
BE HEARD FOR TWO MILES
WITHIN THE OCEAN.**

➤ The blue whale is the size of a 727 jet, which could hold 189 passengers. Ask those mockers of the Bible if they think a blue whale could hold Jonah who was probably “*five foot nothing*” and may have not weighed much over “*a hundred and nothing*.” Tell them an African bull elephant could stand in the middle of the tongue of God’s mighty leviathan—the blue whale. He gave it an 8,800-pound tongue. If every member of the Unicameral weighed 179 pounds, the combined weight of all 49 members would not equal the weight of one pink tongue of a blue whale. An adult blue eats more fish in a year than caught by all the fisherman *in the world—combined!* It grows to 100 feet in length and 200 U.S. short tons in weight (almost half a million pounds). Indeed, the blue whale is king of the ocean and *more mountain than mammal*. God has glorified Himself indeed in this mighty sea creature.

A BIG OLE’ FISH AND OUR GREAT BIG GOD

Next week we will conclude our apologetics study about the great fish. We will explore one more possible category of “great fish” God could have carefully appointed to swallow Jonah to save him from a watery death. Until then I trust your faith has been strengthened and mind delighted by looking at some of the “plus-sized” creatures within God’s creation. Through this brief study, we see, apologetically, more evidence that God’s world is in compliance with and is consistent with God’s Word.

There is no need to scoff at or doubt the truths of this Scriptural revelation within Jonah that has stood the test of time, even for millennia before we were born. We have used our minds to think about God’s Word and God’s created world. I encourage you this 47th Day of the 105th Legislature’s First Session to meditate throughout the day and on your drive home tonight about Jonah’s God. Meditate on His great goodness, massive power, creative genius, ingenuity, and Scriptural truthfulness.

➤ After all, God’s grin must be bigger than an ocean-full of blue whales as He sits in heaven watching us think about and uncover biological and scientific truths regarding what He told us all along. The Lord God did indeed “appoint a great fish to swallow Jonah.”

May we be swallowed up in His glory, goodness, power, and purposes for our lives. After all:

**THE QUESTION IS NOT
“IS THERE A FISH BIG
ENOUGH?”
THE QUESTION IS
“IS THERE A GOD BIG
ENOUGH?”**

WHALE, WHALE, WHALE: GOD IS GOOD

Dear Senator:

Call me Stubb, but I believe in the goodness, creativity, and immensity of God when I declare, “*If God ever wanted to be a fish, He’d be a whale. Believe that, He’d be a whale.*”

To His glory and without apology,

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

^a Other scholars believe the *tanniyim* were the, now extinct, *plesiosaures*.

^b *National Geographic*, December 1976, Volume 150, Number 6, “The Imperiled Giants” by William Graves, page 759.

^c The never-forgetting elephant has 10 pounds of memory muscle in its brain. Humans have 3 pound brains. Tyrannosaurus Rex’s brain is walnut sized!

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