

From the Bits and Pieces series (#498) by Elder Ralph Harris
BETTER TO KNOW BEFORE WE SPEAK

It is important that we not take a dogmatic stand on any Bible subject or make any positive pronouncements with regard to it until we know all that is taught about it in the Scriptures. Let me propose an example. We have heard it argued that the Bible does not say Jonah was swallowed by a whale, but by a "great fish" (Jonah 1:17). It is true that the great fish that swallowed the prophet is not spoken of as a whale in the Book of Jonah, but in referring to that incident Christ Himself said it was a whale (Matt. 12:40). "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." This settles the matter for anyone who takes the Bible to be the inerrant word of God and believes it to have been written by divine inspiration (II Tim. 3:16).

We have also heard it argued that the Bible account of Jonah being swallowed by a whale couldn't be true, because a whale's throat is not big enough to swallow a man. But those who say such things not only fail to acknowledge God's power but they ignore the fact that this was a "prepared" fish. "The Lord had *prepared* a great fish to swallow up Jonah." Those of us who believe in the omnipotence of God (Rev. 19:6) have no problem believing that the same God who spoke the universe into existence could also just as easily prepare a fish that would be capable of swallowing that universe if He chose to do so.

If we make bold assertions with regard to what the Bible says, or does not say, on any subject without knowing all that is written, we are almost surely going to show our ignorance. Many a time I have been embarrassed for those who have tried to impress me with their Bible knowledge, for as soon as they opened their mouth on a given subject they exposed the fact that they were either unfamiliar with the Scriptures or else they did not understand what they had read. It pays us to be careful what we say about what the Bible teaches until we know what it teaches.

I've also heard people say that the Bible declares that before the end of time we will not be able to tell one season from another except by the budding of the trees. Those who say this need to read Genesis 8:22. —Elder Ralph Harris