

Jonah – Jonah and the Stone

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Welcome and a Father's Prayer

Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family, so welcome home.

Shabbat Shalom, everybody. Turn me down just a little bit — I'm intimidating myself. Wasn't that just a powerful prayer over the children that Jonathan brought? He was literally speaking my heart, something that I pray over my son every night, that God would give him a heart after Yeshua, that he would be a warrior in the kingdom of God, and that specifically in times of conflict he would have wisdom and patience, and specifically that he would not harbor unforgiveness or anger in his life.

Because the next generation is a funny thing, and I'm sure many of you have become parents long before I have, so I'm just pouring out my heart about my journey, because he's my first, and I'm learning all these things for the first time. I'm realizing the weight of what he is going to face in his life, and how it's going to be a greater weight, both the good things and the bad things that I have experienced in mine or that you've experienced in yours. The next generation is facing a world that we, as their guardians, are very unfamiliar with. And it's scary. Anybody ever get scared? Just a few of us? You guys are great — give me some of that courage.

It's scary because I see kind of the world that's coming, and I don't know how to equip my son to engage it. So a lot of time goes into prayer when I pray over him, and I'm very thankful that we have so many children here, and that we have leaders stepping up — men and women

stepping up to bless our children and to step forward on their behalf, such as Jonathan just did. That really touched my heart.

Back to Jonah

So I'm kind of excited, because I know we talked about Jonah last week, and some of you guys came to me like, "We're doing Jonah again? I thought we ended it last week." No, we didn't end it last week — we just kind of spoke about it in general. We kind of skipped through it. Today we're going to read the first chapter of Jonah. We're excited.

As I said, Jonah is a pretty special book to me. Just being — you know, favorite verses, [John 11](#), "Yeshua wept." It's nice and short, to the point, full of passion, but packaged in such a short phrase. Jonah, same thing. We were talking about the book of Jonah last week, and it's a book about conviction. It's a book that was written, for the most part, I believe, in a satire type of narration. It's written in a way where things, explosions, are bigger. They're magnified, and things that are supposed to be big are bigger, and the word "Gadol" in Hebrew appears like seven or eight times in the book to describe the storm, the waves, the city — the city, the city was big, big, big. It even describes the city as being this huge — Nineveh being huge, huge, huge — what, seven days to walk through, or whatnot. And the reality is, not seven days, it's a few day journey. We know how big ancient Nineveh actually was, and ancient Nineveh was not near as big as the book of Jonah tells us it is.

Not that the book of Jonah was lying — that was not the point of the author. But it's trying to make everything look, whoa, it's big, you know — like the Adam West Batman, when you get a punch, "bam," "wow." It's the same type of thing — big fish, big everything. So it's written in satire, and as we read through the first chapter today, I want you guys to look for that with those lenses on.

Jonah and the Stone

When we talk about what happens on the boat, we're not even going to talk about the fish today. We're going to talk about Jonah and the boat, and later on, "Jonah and the Stone" is what I named today's message. Awesome little graphic for it too. Jonah and the — not the whale, the stone. We're going to talk about that more today, and how there's a story in the New Testament that really — I didn't realize it until yesterday when I was reviewing my notes, and I thought about one incident in the New Testament. I said, well, we can kind of tie this in — and then I

start reading that story and I'm like, wow, this is the anti-story of Jonah. So we'll talk about that in a little while.

We spoke last week about the harsh reality of the scholarship about the book of Jonah, and how it's just interesting — we have two main thoughts of how the book of Jonah should be taken. Whether it's a history book written by Jonah, even though it lacks a lot of data that would give it that type of narrative — but there's a lot of prose to that side of going into the book of Jonah — or whether it was something that's called parable narrative. It was basically a parable story that took a real prophet during the time of Jeroboam II and placed him into a story that was meant to be satire, not in order to be a funny comic book story, but in order to teach us a lesson.

So whichever view has been debated for years among Christian scholarship, the point remains the same — there's something deeper in the story, and the point of the story is trying to teach us something. As we read through Jonah, I believe the author is trying to instill in us that — you know, we see this guy bumping into walls, and he hits a brick wall, and then he walks around the corner and trips over a pothole and falls on his face, and a bee stings him, and things just won't stop happening. And he gets swallowed by a fish, but he doesn't die — of course not, why would he die in this story? He's sitting in the fish among the guts, sitting there in the dark with his candle reading his King James Version Bible, and then he's going to repent — it's just these different things.

So I believe — and I'm going to give you these lenses to wear, you don't have to keep them, after you see a 3D movie you can throw them in the box at the end, you can throw them in the recycle box at the end of the sermon, that's fine — but I want to give you these lenses of it being a satire story in order to teach you a lesson.

A Story About a Bad Person

We see this story about Jonah — it's the only book of the Bible that's written about a prophet. Every other prophetic book is written in the words of the prophet. This is a narrative describing Jonah's story, and it's very unique in and of itself. The story of Jonah is about a bad person. He's not a great guy.

We talked about the whole intention of him running away from Nineveh last week — it had nothing to do with him being scared. We've heard messages about that, and we even see a lot of children's stories where a lot of us get the foundation of Jonah ingrained in us as children's stories — he was scared because Nineveh was the Assyrian Empire's biggest, baddest. It was the

Washington, D.C. of the ancient Near East, and many people believe that Jonah was just scared and didn't want to go in there because they were going to kill him.

In the fourth chapter of Jonah we see very clearly — no, he just hated the Ninevites and did not believe that they deserved the mercy and the love and the forgiveness of God. That's something that only belongs to him — and in this story, a Hebrew — that's only something that belongs to the Hebrews in this story. And he said, "I knew that you would do this, God. This is why I ran to Tarshish to get away from you, because I knew that your mercy and your love and your commitment and your promises and your will would come about no matter what, and I didn't want to be a part of it." So we're going to explore that motive a little bit more this week.

Jonah Represents Israel

The last part of the lens I've been describing is this: Jonah represents Israel. He represents the people of God, the covenant people of God, the people who have the Torah, the people who have the laws, the people who know the calendar, the people who know how to pronounce his name. They know clean and unclean. They know all about their God. And it's a story about their unwillingness to share the mercy and the grace in the kingdom of God with other people, in their own arrogance.

That was one commentary that I really enjoyed, and I don't know if I agree or disagree, but hey, let's talk about commentaries — can we talk about opinions? They can all be wrong, it's fine, it's just fun to talk about opinions. The opinion was that Jonah was written during the Persian era, long after Assyria had come and gone, long after the Babylonian exile ended and some of the Jews returned to Judea — a story about them, about how they've returned from the exile from Assyria, they've returned from the exile from Babylon, and now it's time for them to equip themselves with the mission they were equipped with from the beginning: to be a light to the nations.

And the whole book is about you, the people of God. It's about me. It's about us. And so when we read this book, you will find at times you will look at Jonah and you will say, wow, I'm glad I'm not like that. And when that happens—because the book is designed to provoke you to look at Jonah and be like, wow, what a jerk, scumbag—like this guy is just, he calls himself a man of God, really? Look at his actions. And it's designed for the reader to say, gosh, I would never do that. And then for that Star Wars moment that we spoke about last week, that lightsaber just, oh. This is about me because I'm totally like Jonah and I've totally done this. And how am I

judging Jonah when I'm just like this and God's just trying to get me to do his will? And so it's a very convicting story. This is how I read Jonah.

This Story Is About Me

I know that we're all familiar with Jonah. You guys think you're pretty familiar with this story. And sometimes it's very difficult to read a story that you feel you're so familiar with. So I was talking to, I think, Pete or Jay earlier today. We were speaking about how it's difficult because most of our foundations in the book of Jonah did not come from us reading the book of Jonah. It came from us opening up a pop-up book with a big whale or watching the VeggieTales syndrome—is what I heard one professor call it. And that defined the book for us. And so I invite you, when we're about to start reading the book here in a few seconds, I want to prepare you. Try to clear your mind of all opinions, preconceived notions about Jonah, and let's try to read it for the first time.

Beyond the VeggieTales

You ever watch a movie before you read the book? Usually you read a book and watch a movie. This is one of those instances where we've watched the movie and we've never read the book. Like the Lord of the Rings or whatever, and now we're going back to read the book and we're starting to see a lot of stuff that wasn't in the movie. Wow, Tolkien is long-winded. I mean, he spends half a page describing this tree that wasn't in the movie. He's putting a lot of emphasis on different things for a reason.

Asleep and Awake

So one scholar that I look up to, I heard him talk about the first chapter—that is Jonah chapter 1. If you have your Bibles, please turn with me there, because I would hope that you would be compelled to take notes, highlight, get your Sharpie out, whatever you do in your Bible, that you would be compelled to do that. But he talks about this chapter being a chapter that contains two different types of people: those people who are asleep and those people who are awake, okay? And as we go through the chapter, in the back of your mind I just want you to stick a pin in it. Are you someone who is asleep, or are you someone who is awake? Because the thing that the writer of the book of Jonah does is he takes all the typical stereotypes and just breaks them bad, flips them upside down. The book doesn't make any sense, but that's the reality of the world and something that God's trying to tell us. So we're just going to jump in. Jonah chapter 1.

****Jonah chapter 1, verse 1:****

"Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, son of Amittai, saying, Arise and go to Nineveh. So what's that word in verse 2? How does it start? Arise and go to Nineveh. That's going to be important later. Arise and what? The great city and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me. But, everybody say but, Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord and he went down to Joppa and to find a ship to go to Tarshish so he paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish away from the presence of the Lord but the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea and there was a mighty tempest."

What Jonah's Name Means

So right off the bat, as we discussed last week, Jonah means dove, typically. And we think of dove, and we think of Yeshua, and we think of grace, and we think of mercy, and really pretty, and at your wedding, right? So Jonah means dove, son of Amittai. And the root of Amittai means truth, but sometimes in the Tanakh it means faithfulness—the root of it. So we can just take that, this dove, the graceful dove, son of truth or truthfulness or faithfulness. Is the story about a man who reflects that name? No, it's like having a story—a story about a really, really, really big muscle guy whose name's tiny or something. That's how the author starts out.

The Dove Who Ran

And we see that God is commanding him to get up, to go to Nineveh, the city of great, for their evil has come up before me. But Jonah does what? He wants to flee from the presence of the Lord. And this is mentioned twice in this section of Scripture. And something interesting that I was reading in one of my commentaries—I think the new translation commentary I mentioned last week in my sources article—is this word. The ship threatened to break up, and I found this fascinating. I think it was the ESV translation. Did I cut it off? I did—apologies.

The ship threatened to break up. Now we're reading the story with these special lenses where things are gonna pop out and we're gonna go, hmm? Has a car ever threatened to fall apart on you—sometimes maybe, right? And so the word here from Lexem Bible Lexicon is, and it literally means to reckon, to count something. It refers to thinking about something often in a specific way, to keep account or make note of something. And so the author uses this word. It's kind of weird how it reads because "threatened" is an accurate term. It's almost like the ship is

contemplating breaking apart. Like, I'm thinking about it. Like, "This is a pretty bad storm, guys. I'm just going to go ahead and quit." Like, okay? Just odd. Little odd things.

A Storm Like No Other

And so the sailors were afraid, and each cried out to his own God, and they hurled cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and laid down and was fast asleep. So the captain came and said to him, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise! Call out to your God. Perhaps your God will give a thought about us. Maybe your God will notice us, that we may not perish."

And so the sailors are scared, and the first thing they do—just to show the intensity of what is happening here—there are sailors that are going from Jaffa all the way to Tarshish. And I still have the map in here from last week. We're going to cover that again. That was the farthest they could go, away from that area. Like, that was thousands of miles. I mean, it was incredibly incredible distance.

When Outsiders Pray

Do you think that they were carrying merchandise on the ship? Do you think they were just an Uber driver for Jonah? No, we're gonna go and sell stuff, hop on. And the first thing they—so the moment is so intense—they're willing to lose money, throw the stuff off the ship. "We're not gonna die for this. It's all lost anyway. Just do it."

So it's bringing us up to speed, trying to get us in their shoes. Wow, this is weird. And so they begin to cry out to their God. Except for it's not God, it's gods. Each to his own god. So these are polytheistic, non-believing. We would call these people one of our favorite words to use—starts with a P. Pagans, right? These polytheistic pagans, right, that are worshipping other gods. And each one of them is kind of doing a shotgun approach to trying to resolve this matter. "We're being cursed right now. Obviously something divine is happening. This is not normal. This wave—like, that is not normal. That wind is not—something's not right. This is something. One of our guys—you or you or you or you—have ticked off your God, and we need to address this, okay." So each one of them is praying to their own god: "Please help us. Please save us. If I've offended you, I'm sorry, my bad." Like, each one of them, it's not helping.

The Sleeper

And so the captain goes down and sees Jonah asleep. Jonah, the prophet of the one true God, is the only one not praying on the ship. Not only that, the pagan captain is the one that has to try to get him to pray to his God—the dove, son of faithfulness. And he's like, "Arise, get up, call out to your God. Maybe your God will notice us." Does God notice them? Very much so. He noticed them before because of Jonah, right?

And so here we have Jonah called by God to the city to spread God's kingdom, and I talk about these stereotypes. Jonah was sent to this city, Nineveh, over here, and we know from chapter 4 that he did not want to go—he would rather die than see God's grace and mercy be a revelation to these people that he hates, that he doesn't believe deserve the justice of God, or the mercy of God, and the forgiveness of God. And so he runs and he gets on a ship full of what? Pagan sailors. And he goes out to sea.

And now we have this setup right here where the pagan sailors are awake and they're knowing a God somewhere is doing something. And then what's Jonah doing?

Sleeping. The prophet of the one true God, sleeping. Not engaged, not aware. The one who has a relationship with the one true God is unaware of what God is doing because of his disobedience to that God. It's just rich.

The Geography of Disobedience

And so just a quick review. Here is my Google Maps with all the cutoff text. Over to the right here you have Nineveh-ish, right? Ancient city of Nineveh, modern-day Iraq. And then we have Jaffa down here, around mid-northern Israel. And then all the way over here we have Tarshish.

Now Jonah didn't go north, he didn't go south. Which way is Nineveh? East. I'm going to go west to the farthest point of the known world. And as we discussed last week, this was it. You couldn't go any further, which is fascinating. Sorry, I'm getting a kick out of this. You couldn't go any further.

And I want to point out something that I feel like the author is trying to kind of push: being asleep where you don't notice God anymore. And so if we can be real, it's a good point because it's getting real for Jonah. He's still oblivious. Oh, what's going on? I don't know. Sometimes we get into valleys in our lives, in our relationship and in our life in God through Yeshua, right?

Distraction and Distance

Anybody ever been there? Anybody ever been distracted at times? Or maybe this is you. It's been me before. I'm not gonna act like we don't have waves and valleys in it.

Sometimes we find ourselves feeling so far from God that we don't even feel that vitality of what the gospel is supposed to be anymore in our life, and how it's supposed to impact us.

Can someone close that door? Maybe somebody?

I'm sorry—I'm wanting to sing along. "We're the light, yeah."

The Revolutionary Gospel

In the first century, when the gospel went out from Judea to other little pagan lands, the apostles started going all over the world. This was a life-changing message of life—resurrection. Dying to the enslaved self that you are and being redeemed and purchased into a new life in God. And it was so revolutionary, and I don't think we get it to be perfectly honest. It was so revolutionary that pagans that were esteemed in their faith were throwing their gods away and saying, "You know what? I want to worship the God of Israel. I want to worship Yeshua as the Son of God as our King."

And there were people who were willing with smiles and boldness to walk into arenas to be burned alive or skinned or to the lions. Or you just—there you go—you got the middle image. And this was an acceptable end to their life, versus, "Yeah, I'll just walk away from this faith. That's fine. I mean, I just did it because everyone else was doing it. It's fine."

There was something about the message of the gospel that empowered people with a life that they had never felt before. This vitality, this mission of they are not their own—they've been redeemed now. They have a higher calling, a higher mission to deliver and establish the kingdom of God. And basically, it's like in the garden: expand the garden where God's presence dwells throughout the world. That was their job.

And I look at that, and sometimes throughout my life, I've looked at that and I've become jealous of that vitality. I've become jealous of that encouragement. I've become jealous of that excitement about who God is and who I am in Him.

The Spiritual Wandering

Sometimes do we ever come to a point where we feel like God has abandoned us? He's just no longer around us? And we're like, "Where's God at?" We come to a point where we no longer see the blessings of God in our lives, even though they're everywhere. We come to a point

where we're no longer aware and awake in our relationship with God. We're asleep. We fall asleep.

And I don't want to skip too far ahead, but we come to this point, and it's interesting because that point typically doesn't happen overnight. It's typically a journey that we take. And it's traced with our decisions that we make. In other words, typically, we don't find ourselves in the middle of a tempest, being overtaken by waves and so asleep that we have no idea what God is doing. Just overnight.

It takes a decision. Say, "You know what? I'm just going to step over here. I'm just going to go down to Tarshish. I'm just going to get on the ship. I'm going to go inside the ship. I'm going to go down to the lower parts of the ship. I'm going to lay down here at the side of the ship."

I'm not going to pray today. Not a big deal. I skip sometimes. Oops, I forgot. I'm just not going to do that today. I'm not going to open my scriptures today. Ah, that was offensive—that thing that person did. I'm not going to forgive them today. Oh, that's some really good, rich information about that other person. I'm going to go tell someone else, and I'm going to carry this negative information on. I'm just going to gossip just a little bit today. Just these little decisions. Fill in the blank. I'm not going to.

The Progressive Descent

And we wonder when we end up finally living a life that is lacking so much integrity that we can no longer define ourselves as a follower of the Christ. How did we get here? How did I get here? How? It happens because of the decisions that we make. It happens because of that first step: "I don't want to be around the presence of God today, so I'm gonna flee to the boat."

And I feel like that's exactly what's happened to Jonah. That's exactly what we're seeing with Jonah. There's something fascinating, and you heard me emphasize in the first chapter the phrase—the word "down." Did you hear me emphasize "down"? I was kind of setting you up. I was like, "I want them to know so when I get to this part... down."

So scripture gives us an indicator, a map of what happened to Jonah, and it involves going down—leaving the presence of God. He goes down to Jaffa in the northern area. So it was down to Jaffa. He goes down to the docks. He goes down to the boat. He goes down into the boat. And he lays down—down, down, down, down, down, down. And then he falls asleep. Where are we in going down and down and down?

And what is the next step that we're going to take that doesn't seem that big—just one more step down? It's like "that much." I mean, it's not a big step to go down another step. It's not that big of a deal. But when you look at it as a whole staircase, it becomes a big deal.

The Collateral Damage

And we find ourselves unaware of God's presence in our life because literally we're walking away from it. We're making decisions, and not only that, what's happening here is a perfect example of Jonah making so many bad decisions in his life. And so he has walked away from God's presence. He's tried to be successful at this in his own mind. And it's not only him that's being affected now. It's everybody around him. And he has no idea that everybody around them is now living in a hell because of the decisions that he's made to leave the presence of God.

We live in this individualistic nation and culture. You've heard me talk about individualistic cultures versus collectivistic cultures, and how the Bible was written to a collectivistic culture. It was written to a group of people where you're a brick in the wall. It may have been a bad analogy, I don't know. But you're a brick in a wall. You're not just a brick on the road, like in the dirt somewhere—individualistic.

And in our society, we're taught that as long as you do what you want to do, and it doesn't hurt anybody else, you're good, right? I heard one sermon a long time ago talking about whatever happens in Vegas—yeah, no big deal, no harm, no foul, right? As long as you don't get arrested or anything, I mean, you're good, you know? Like, it never happened, you know? And you can ride that wave for a while, making these decisions that affect your integrity and that affect how you think about people and that affect how you think about what my mission is in the kingdom of God. Do I really want to fulfill that wholeheartedly with both feet, or maybe just dip my toe in it whenever I want a nice little refreshing feel? You can make that decision. You can ride that wave where maybe your bad decisions will only affect you for a little while.

The Spillover

But at some point—and everybody here probably knows someone, or maybe it's you—at some point where it spills over. The reservoir is filled up and it spills over. And the decisions that you have been making for so long—these little decisions—have finally reached a point where they've made you into a wrecking ball in people's lives around you.

This is the story that we're reading right now. This is the story that the author—the writer—is telling ancient Israel for some reason. Guys, are you going to keep making these decisions to

not be the light unto the nations? Are you going to keep making these decisions to only serve God half-heartedly? Are you going to keep making these decisions to only try to keep God to yourself because he's special only to you?

Or are you going to try to go out and say, "You know what? Hey guys, this is meant to be shared. We're supposed to be priests of the world. We're supposed to be doing this job delivering the message to the world."

The Descent

We're supposed to be going to Nineveh, specifically if God tells us to go to Nineveh. And this is where we're at. What's interesting is we keep going down, so Jonah goes down, down, down, down to Joppa, into the boat, and down, down, down. And he goes to what city? What city is he destined for? Tarshish. So it was fascinating because I ran across this yesterday, and [Isaiah 66](#), 19 mentions Tarshish. And [Isaiah 66](#) is kind of more like an end-of-the-world book, depending on how you read it. It talks about new creation, but it also talks about God establishing the fullness of His kingdom, and messengers are going to be sent out to Tarshish and several other cities to tell them basically about God. And Tarshish and like four other cities are named as the cities. Now this is [Isaiah 66](#), so it's a prophecy about the end times, if you will, and it mentions this one city as a place where God's glory and fame are unknown. Nobody knows God in this city. His glory is not recognized, his fame. Who? Jonah is going down, down, down, down, down, until he falls asleep and is destined for the place where God is forgotten. Not just a children's story anymore, is it? A lot more fun when it's just about a stupid fish, huh?

Your Actions Contradict Your Words

And the moment that we think, wow, Jonah, this guy's bad. Like, wow, Jonah, get it through your thick skull. What's wrong with you? Don't you know who God is? You know His name? Come on, Jonah. Duh, is it that difficult? Kind of like us reading the accounts of the wilderness where Israel's going through and they're just falling on their face every single step. And we're like, if I was ancient Israel going through the wilderness, I'd never test God like that. You've just become ancient Israel in the world. You've just become Jonah. You've just become the Pharisee and the tax collector. You've just become the Pharisee when you believe that, when you look down on the Pharisee in the story. And so this book is meant to prick hearts very, very deeply. Lightsaber. And so we'll come to verse 7.

The Casting of Lots

So they said to one another, come, let us cast lots that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us. So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. And they said to him, tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? And what is your country?

So I want to stop for a second. Many of you know what casting lots is. Casting lots is something that was done in ancient Israel along with many other ancient cultures. And it happens many times in scripture. In the tabernacle, it's speculated. We have it especially in King Saul, even in the New Testament. Judas is dead. What are we going to do? We got all these guys, all outstanding men. Who are we going to pick? So casting lots is essentially like flipping a coin and saying, you know what? I'm taking my will completely out of this decision. The result will not be based on my agenda at all—all randomness. Cast lots, throw dice, flip a coin, whatever. And the mindset is: I cannot be held responsible in any way, shape, or form for the result of this because I am taking my will out of it. And I sure hope God intervenes because the randomness of this number is something that only God has the ability to control. Does that make sense? I mean, it's not really a far-fetched idea, but anyway, that's another discussion.

And so they're doing this on this boat and here are these pagans doing this. It wasn't necessarily pagan practice, but whatever. And the lot falls on who? Jonah. So God's there. He flips that coin—heads, Jonah. Snake eyes, Jonah. And so they point to him and they say, hey, what is your occupation? Can we have your resume? I mean, what does that have to do with anything? And where do you come from? And what is your country? And what people are you?

I Am a Hebrew

And he, Jonah, said to them, I am a Hebrew. Everybody say, I am a Hebrew. Right? I have some stout conviction. I am a Hebrew. I am the people of God. And I fear the Lord. It's not in this translation. The Lord there is all capital letters. Yahweh, the God of Israel, right? The name there is not a title. The name there is actually the name of God. So he's boldly proclaiming, and I fear the God of Israel. I feel you, right? I am a Hebrew. The God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.

So we have our lenses on. Here's Jonah. Just got woken up. He doesn't have a clue what's going on. You can almost see him yawning and wiping his eyes, and they're casting lots, and the waves are hitting them, and one guy almost falls off the side of the boat. Ah! No, we got you, bro. Come back up. And Jonah's just like, what's up, guys? What do you want? And the lots landed

on Jonah. Hey, what's your occupation? They're wet. They're mad. I mean, what's your occupation? Where do you come from? What people are you? I'm glad you asked. I am a Hebrew, and I fear the God of Israel. Yahweh, the God and maker of heaven and earth, the one who made the sea.

Fear, reverence. You guys know when you fear God, it's not being scared of God, it's a reverence, right? It's almost like a pious term, I guess, or a righteous term. We fear God and keep His commandments, right? We fear God to walk in His ways. We fear God to honor Him. We fear God because He is in complete control of everything in this world.

The Hypocrisy Exposed

And then he continues, This is the God of heaven, the maker of the seas and the dry land. I fear Him and I am a Hebrew. This is Jonah we're talking about! Does Jonah fear God? I'm a Hebrew though. And his words that come out of his mouth do not reflect in any way, shape, or form his actions up until this point. Right? It does not express it at all. Not at all. And this is the point where we say, Ah, Jonah, we caught you. You're a hypocrite. You're a hypocrite because your actions say something completely different than your words. How dare you say that you fear God, Jonah? How dare you proclaim yourself as a people of God? How dare you do that? Because your words speak nothing. Your actions are so far from your words right now. Oh, ouch, ouch.

And what's amazing is the story is fixing to tell us something that we experience today when the outside world, outside the body of Messiah, looks in and sees the complete hypocrisy of our actions not matching what we say and what we declare, what we believe. So the outside world today looks at us and says, What? That's a load of rubbish. What are you talking about? Well, I want you to imagine being on a boat that's about to sink. The boat is thinking about committing suicide because the storm is so bad. And you're sitting here and you have this guy who is a complete hypocrite because of his faith. And he's telling you that all this is happening because of him, but don't worry, I fear God. You wouldn't just get mad, you would get scared.

The Fear of God Revealed

Then the men were exceedingly afraid. Oh my goodness! What is this that you have done to us? What are you doing? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord because he had told them. So we go back—earlier in the chapter, he mentions twice that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, and one of those times was on the dock. And so you can

just assume that, as they asked him, What are you doing? What's your occupation? What are you doing? Imagine a customs form: We're going to Tarshish. Business, pleasure. What are you doing? And I'm fleeing from Yahweh. I'm fleeing from who? I don't care. Whatever. Hop on.

What's interesting is Jaffa was not an Israelite-held ground until a while after the Babylonian exile ended. It was actually Philistine controlled. So it itself was a pagan hub. And so when the reader is reading this, the story is taking place during the time when Assyria was still a big empire, right? When he went to Jaffa, it was controlled by pagans. That was not an Israelite port. I'm sure they had coastal ports, but he went to the one that was still controlled by pagans, right?

For he had told them. And I love this because they're talking to him and the declaration that he makes is, I serve the God of heaven, the maker of the sea and the dry land. The maker of the sea that I'm on right now in your boat with you. And they were afraid. Your God is causing this. What do we do?

And this is the point in the story where a lot of times we get distracted because we see this ruthless God, the ticked off God of the Old Testament, coming out again and fire shooting out of His eyes and the waves are going over and the boat just needs some Prozac and the men don't know what's going on. They're throwing off their money. They don't know what's going on. And oh, there's this ticked off God again that's going to kill everybody and drown everybody again.

And I want to give a different angle on this because we know that this God that people often say exists and that we worship is not the God of the story of Jonah, when we will see probably next week. He's the God of mercy and grace and what's that big L word—four letter L word? Love. That's kind of cheesy because it's so redundant, but it's true. This is the God of love. This is what a God looks like who is chasing after his child for the sake of justice and love. This is what a God looks like—a father—when they're chasing after a child that they believe is going the path of destruction, is going to destroy themselves if they don't intervene. This is the God that is chasing after Jonah with the storm and this ferocious mentality—to make a stand for what he is intending to do not only for Jonah but for the world. That's why this tempest is so harsh: because that's the reality of God's love. He's willing to have brutal love and brutal mercy to the point where it's radical. And as believers in Yeshua, we should know that. Right?

And so this is the God that I worship. This is the God that I worship.

We have Jonah. Is Jonah faulty? Is he kind of maybe imperfect? Is he a flawed witness of God? Maybe a little bit. The story paints him as the mascot of Jonah's faultiness in faith. Professor Mackey is reading commentary, and he makes a statement and just kind of leaves it. I really like

it. I loved it: Is God limited by how successful Jonah is as a perfect witness to God? That's a whole other dynamic I hadn't even considered. Jonah professes in chapter 4, "I knew that your love would overcome." Dagnabbit! Right?

The Sailors' Desperate Question

Everybody still good? Okay, so we're going to move on to verse 11. It's a short chapter. Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you that the sea may quiet down for us?" So the sailors are like, "All right, your God is in charge, and you've decided to get on our ship to run away from him—which is the God that created the sea that our ship is riding on right now. What do we got to do to fix this, Jonah?" We've already thrown away all our money, all we've got to our lives. Can we fix this?

So mark this moment. Pause for a minute. Jonah is willing to sacrifice himself to fix the situation. That's what we see a lot of times in the children's books. Jonah has realized that he has sinned against God Almighty, and that he deserves this, and he's brought this calamity upon all these other people. Now he's affecting their lives, and he's just like, "Just throw me into the sea. It'll be okay, and you'll live, right?" That's one way of looking at it—that he was trying to be humble and fix this wrong. The other way of looking at it, which is what I kind of agree with, is that he was willing to die in order to pursue and fulfill the mission that God had for him.

Why didn't the story just say Jonah repented and pleaded to God, "Take me to Nineveh. I repent. I will go"? If that was the case, if his heart was truly repented, I would expect the writer to show this in the form of the waves quieting down and Jonah coming to himself with tears softly rolling down his cheeks and a heartfelt cry into God: "God, I'm sorry. You are the God of love and justice, and that is outside the scope of who I am, but let me be your servant now." He does have a prayer like this—it happens in a different place, next chapter, but not here on the boat. And so he's like, "Just throw me into the sea, guys. Just kill me now."

And the water stopped. Look—this is awesome. "I know that because the great tempest came upon you." Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore, they called out to their pagan gods. The men did not want to kill Jonah, so they began rowing the ship hard. "We don't have that as an option for us, bro. You're staying with us." It's kind of like a righteous mentality. The pagans—the damned of God, the awful scum of the earth—deserve to die. Start rowing harder. We can make it back to land. No, no, no.

And what happened? God would not let them come back to land. It grew worse. God's keeping them there. Jonah's heart is not fixed yet. They begin to cry out to the Lord:

The First Prayer

"Oh Lord, oh Yahweh, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you. Oh Lord, have done it as it pleased you." So what they're saying is, "Please, we realize now we're going to have to throw him into the sea. Please do not charge us with his blood. We don't want to throw him into the sea. We don't want to see this man die. He is innocent in our eyes. Please, Father, forgive us for what we're about to do."

This is the first time that someone prays to God in the entire book of Jonah, and it's the pagans. Wow. Jonah couldn't even pray. I can't remember the last time I really prayed out and cried out to God on behalf of someone else.

So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made a vow.

Wearing the Jersey

He was sent to Nineveh to go convert the pagans—if you will, at least show God's love and mercy, show the kingdom of who God is to the pagans, the worst evil people. But he ran and got in a boat full of pagans. And this same mission became accomplished when he got on the boat. The mission he did not want to complete. Stereotypes. The prophet of God, the holy Hebrew, "I am the fearer of God." The pagans who worship other gods. Isn't that crazy? Right? And you see it. It's almost comical in kind of a dark way. Wow. I didn't see that coming. Like, why would the pagans be the ones?

The book was written to convict and to show you what God's heart is and what he wants you to pursue. It's not about the main priority. It's not about you identifying and feeling righteous with a label of being his children. That's a big part. Paul speaks about that, encouraging people. But wearing that jersey is not the most important thing to the kingdom. Going out and telling other people and asking them, "What size are you so I can get you a jersey?"

I heard an evangelist say once: the most important thing in the Bible is not that you know who Jesus is. Of course, when he made that statement, everyone was like, "What?" But then he says, "The most important thing in the Bible is that he knows who you are, because he's sending you out."

This is what God is trying to speak to the people that this book was written to. Who's reading the book right now? It's not about who you think you are in God. It's about how you're walking out who you're supposed to be in God. Right?

Three Days in the Depths

And so the last verse is verse 17: "And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." How we make this incident into like a five-minute portion of a cartoon is insane to me, but nevertheless. And we're going to see next week how Jonah doesn't die. If the story ended right now, it would be kind of like a big tragedy. Oh, well, people got saved, but then he died and he never got to fulfill his mission. The story continues. And essentially, Jonah's come to a place of death.

He writes this in a poem. He's in the belly of a fish with no oxygen and no light, and he's writing this intricate Hebrew poem to God, a prayer to God, which is one of those things that, trying to envision it in your mind, just kind of makes you laugh. That's funny looking. Like, just stinky. And of course he got swallowed by a fish—couldn't have been stuck on a raft. No. Boom. "Oh God, I cry out to you." Of course he does. I bet he does. But it's fascinating because he gets swallowed up in the depths.

And this is the moment we're going to see next week—Jonah's attitude changes towards God. It's no longer about him trying to do something for God; it's him realizing that he's at the bottom, weighed down by all the decisions he's made in his life. He's paralyzed because the weight has killed him. He might as well be dead, and he's lying there reflecting on all the decisions he's made, crying out to God: "God, obviously I cannot do this without you." That's what the whole prayer is about. The whole incident, if you will, is talking about how he's dead in God, but God will bring him out from Sheol, take him from the dead, resurrect him, bring him back into life.

And so we have this story of a man who is dead for three days and three nights in the belly of a fish, dead if you will. He's at the brink of Sheol, the realm of the dead. And then God uses this situation in him to make a powerful statement about life and resurrection. Jonah is brought back from the dead into life, and then he's sent to a city to preach life that saves a bunch of sinners. And Jesus sounds familiar, guys. I can't quite put my finger on it. We wonder when Yeshua talks about...

The Sign of Jonah

The sinful generation wants a sign. I'll give you one sign: the sign of Jonah. And we look at this and we're like, what is the sign of Jonah? Oh, for three days and three nights, Jonah was in the belly of a whale. So three days and three nights, the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth. And we're like, oh, 72 hours. Got to be 72 hours. I don't think Yeshua was trying to focus on the exact minute of how long he was going to be dead in correlation to Jonah. He was referencing back what God did at the time of Jonah in the belly of the whale and how Jonah was renewed in life as a new creation, if you will. He was on borrowed time at that point. He didn't have his own life anymore because he had died to himself anyway. And he came to life through the power of God after giving up on himself, letting go, and he was resurrected to life. And the first place he went was to deliver the salvation of God to the sinners.

Now, I could be wrong. I would like to think Yeshua was much more focused and hoping the Pharisees and everyone around would be like, "Wow, you're gonna do something really big—dying and resurrected. I mean, that's a big deal, but you're gonna do something big, to the point where it's going to be on par with or greater than—when the greater the motive, Jonah is here, greater than going into the greatest city and the most pagan part of the world and everybody falling on their knees and repenting, including the cows. That's the sign of Jonah that Yeshua was speaking about. And of course, three days and three nights were a part of that, and we know that, but I think there was more to it than that. And so we'll talk about that next week. I'm really excited about it.

Moving into Acts 10

So that brings me to moving on to my next section. I don't know how much time we got. We'll find it. We'll get through it. It'll be okay. Who will give me five more minutes?

Five, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 40, 50, 50. A very wise man a long time ago taught me that.

So in Acts chapter 10, I would like everybody to turn to Acts chapter 10 because something very profound happens in Acts chapter 10. We have a man by the name of Peter who is shown... that after a long life and a deprived life, he can finally go to Wendy's and get that Baconator burger, and God reveals to him the important things in life. No, we're going to do this right. This is Acts chapter 10. I am joking. We are going to read Acts chapter 10.

Can we read this chapter? We'll kind of read through it pretty quick. I just want you guys to see something. So in Caesarea, there is a man by the name of Cornelius. Cornelius—what? Pagan. But he's kind of converted. So he loves God now, but he's still not a Judean. And he's a centurion of the Italian cohort, as it was called. So a centurion is like a higher-up officer. He had

over about 100, more like 80, men under him. Centurion, century—100 men, 80 men that he commanded in the Roman army. He was an officer. Pretty legit guy, right? And so the thing about centurions was instead of being like aristocrats and political guys that would go up and try to get tribunes and get these official titles, the centurions were the guys who kind of worked their way up legitimately in the military to become an officer. That's how we know that we can identify them. So this was a hardworking man who did not have some political agenda to get where he was. And he was a devout man who feared God with all of his household, and he gave alms generously to the people and prayed constantly to God.

An Angel Appears to Cornelius

And one afternoon around three o'clock, he had a vision in which he saw clearly an angel of God coming to him, saying Cornelius. And he stared at him in terror saying, "What is it, Lord?" And he answered, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God." That is powerful. This Gentile pagan—no blood lineage back to Abraham, nothing. This guy who feared God, gave to the poor, and revered God—what Jonah was supposed to be doing. And an angel comes and says, "Hey, man, you guys have been getting these notifications every day of your good works. Bloop, bloop, Cornelius, Cornelius, Cornelius. And he sent me down here to let you know that. Like, you have come, your name has become a memorial. He remembers you." Right? It's incredible.

And now, "Now send men to Joppa for a certain Simon who is called Peter. Joppa—you guys know what Joppa is, right? The same city that Jonah made the decision to depart from God and go away from spreading the message of God to the Gentiles. We're going back to that city. The author, Luke, he's actually saying, oh, and his house is right on the beach—like, beachfront. He lives on the beach, on the shore, next to the boat, if you will. Maybe that's a stretch, but I'll throw it in there. Is Luke setting us up for a Jonah parallel?

"Send men to Joppa to find a man, Simon, who is called Peter. He is lodging with Simon the Tanner whose house is by the seaside."

We know what happens next. Peter is going to be sent to Cornelius to tell him about the grace and the love and the mercy and the salvation of God through the gospel of Yeshua. That's what Peter's mission is going to be. And it's fascinating because what better person to do it? Because in [Matthew 16:17](#)... remember, this is the point where Yeshua's like, "Who do you say I am?" And Peter's like, "You, you are the son of God, like you're the king, you're the Messiah." And Yeshua's like, "Man, this isn't flesh and blood that revealed this to you, this is God, like this is

good." But he calls Peter by his full name: Simon, son of Jonah, in [Matthew 16:17](#). Now, why is that a big deal? It's a big deal because in John's account of when this happens, he doesn't say son of Jonah, he says son of John. So Matthew's account specifically spells it "son of Jonah." For whatever reason, maybe it was a misspelling, maybe it was supposed to be "Jonah" and "John" both, I don't know. But it's just fascinating. Son of the dove, Peter. You will now be called Peter—Petra, right? Which means stone, rock, the rock. You're going to be the first upon this rock. I'm going to build my first, right? And we know what happens there.

Hence the title, Jonah and the.

Peter's Vision of the Sheet

And so the next day in verse... oh, I'm missing verses for you. I apologize. Let's see here. I haven't kept up—I didn't have this slide. Never mind, I didn't put all this in there, so you just have to listen to me and follow along. Verse 9: "The next day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up to a housetop about the sixth hour to pray. And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while he was preparing it, he fell into a trance and saw the heavens opened like a great sheet descending out of heaven, being let down by four corners upon the earth."

So you ever get the munchies while you're praying? This happened to Peter—hungry, go make a hot pocket or whatever. Not hot, but—regardless. And so he does this, but during his time of prayer, he goes into this trance, this hypnotic state where he's looking—it happens, it does happen—he's so focused on something, and in this sheet that comes out of heaven where all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." And Peter was like, "But no, Lord. I have not eaten anything common or unclean."

And the voice came to him a second time: "What God has made clean, do not call common." And this happened three times.

So Jonah was hesitant to go to Nineveh, and God stonewalled his hesitation by putting him in a place—in a whale—for three days and three nights. And God's trying to tell Peter something about don't call something that I've made common unclean. I mean, I've made common uncommon, you know, or that I do not call something I've made clean common. And it's just interesting that his rebuke to him, he just keeps repeating himself three times again. He quit hesitating.

The Spirit's Command to Peter

Now, in verse 17, while Peter was inwardly perplexed—he don't know what's going to happen, what do I do?—and as to what the vision he had seen might mean, behold, the men that were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate and called out to ask whether Simon, who is called Peter, was lodging there. And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go." Or, "Arise and go." The Spirit spoke to him and said, "Arise and go."

The same thing that's mentioned in [Jonah 1-2](#) and [Jonah 3-2](#). That could be a coincidence. In the Septuagint, the same Greek phrase. Of course it would be, but the Spirit of God spoke to Peter, "Arise and go." Where am I going?

"Go down to the company without hesitation. For I have sent them." And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one who you're looking for. What reason are you coming?" And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright, God-fearing man who was well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say."

A Message of Reconciliation

So we invited you to be his guests. And the next day he rose, went away with them, and some of the brothers from Jaffa accompanied him. And on the following day they entered Caesarea. And Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.

When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down on his feet and worshipped him. Cornelius sees Peter walk in and what does he do? Falls down and gives him honor and praise. And you, sir, you're the man that they wanted me to come see.

And then Peter looks at him and says what? He says, stand up. I lost my place here. Enter Caesarea. He says, "Stand up, for I too am a man." Some translations will say "I too am just a man." That's profound. When we talk about Jonah, Jonah's whole issue was that he's a Hebrew and that the Ninevites don't deserve God because they're not his equals. In Jonah chapter 4, starting in verse 1, the whole city of Nineveh has repented. And Jonah's just distraught. He's beside himself. He's mad. The fourth chapter is not included in most kids' books, by the way. "Jonah is greatly displeased and became furious at God. And he prayed to the Lord, 'Please, Lord, isn't this what I said while I was still in my own country? That's why I fled toward Tarshish in the first place. I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to become angry, rich in faithful love, one who relents from sending disaster. And now, Lord, just take my life from me, for it's better for me to die than to live now.'" Because these people that he

sees so beneath him are now in God's grace, and he can't stand this. How could you let this happen? Get up. What are you doing? I too am just a man. Stop it.

Peter: The Anti-Jonah

I submit that Peter is the anti-Jonah. Stand up. I'm too a man.

And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered together. And he said unto them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection, and I asked, why you sent me?"

That right there—when he's talking about it being not a good thing for a Jew to come into a house of someone who's not Jewish—this was something really stirred up in the post-Hasmonean era. The whole idea of the Maccabean revolt was to take out the Greeks who were coming and trying to change the identity of the Judeans. "You are no longer the people of God of Israel, you're no longer Jews. You need to become like us. You need to become Greeks essentially. Eat the pig. It'll be okay, I promise it tastes great. You'll love it. Come on, just do it." And deny—deny your identity—and you are no longer a Judean people of the God of Israel. "No, you need to be Greek like us, right?" And that was the whole cultural concept.

And post-revolt, what do you think was taught to the children in Judea as the number one priority over that? Do you think it was, "Hey guys, we need to continue being faithful to God as our number one priority"? Or do you think based on what just happened—and the atrocities that took place in front of their eyes—we need to make sure that you always know that you are a Jew, no matter what? And you are a people of God because you are a Jew. And you need to start doing these things—these outward signs of what the Dead Sea Scrolls call the works of the law—circumcision, Sabbath, kosher. These things that you wear like jerseys on the outside to show people that you're a Jew and therefore you're justified before God.

Identity and Righteousness

The identity was the main thing that was pushed.

And this is exactly what Paul goes up against in [Romans 3](#) and 4 when he's talking to the Gentiles in one chapter and the Jews in another. And he's just reaming both crowds. But when he's talking to the Jews, he's saying, "Who do you think you are? You think that you're better

because you think that Abraham was not righteous before he was circumcised? That doesn't establish your righteousness." Righteousness.

And Paul wasn't rebuking Torah. That's nonsense. But he was rebuking holding Torah up as this qualifier that says, "Look, I'm wearing Torah as a jersey, so therefore in my identity, God has to accept me as the people of God." And so all of these Judeans versus the world were very, very strict in Judea. In the rest of the diaspora, not really, but in Judea that was the case.

And so Peter's recounting this and the traditions that go along with it, and he's like, "This is unacceptable, but God has shown me"—verse 28—"God has shown me that I should not call any person unclean or clean. That he is made clean."

And then what's he do? Cornelius recounts the whole story from four days ago, and Peter opens his mouth and says, "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality." That's the verse that you should highlight—Acts chapter 10, verse 34. This is the point where Peter truly becomes the anti-Jonah.

God Shows No Partiality

Peter opens his mouth and says, "Truly I understand"—or maybe it should say "I now understand," because Peter had already worked through that whole thing with Paul about table fellowship anyway—but truly, "I understand that God shows no partiality. In every nation, anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him. And we are the witnesses of this."

It's fascinating because later on, chapter 11, it specifically says that Cornelius and his household were saved. They entered as new creations, entered into the eternal age of living in Yeshua and who Yeshua is.

And it's fascinating because in [Acts 11](#), verses 1 or 2, the first thing that happens when word comes that Peter is preaching the gospel—the gospel of the Judeans to the pagans—is the circumcision party of believers objected, saying "No, that's not acceptable." Jonah was hostile to God when God's plan prevailed among the pagans. And the people in Acts chapter 11, likened unto Jonah, were hostile to Peter, who was the emissary of God sent to take the message among the pagans.

God Sends Men

And I want to bring up one more thing. Is this interesting? Kind of thought-provoking? Kind of heart-provoking even? I'm not trying to stand up here and say, "Yeah, I've read all this, and I know it's convicting for all you." It's not me—I'm over here like, "Oh gosh."

It's fascinating because Yeshua didn't send angels to deliver the gospel. God didn't send an angel to speak to Cornelius about the gospel. He sent men—men to go forth and give the message of reconciliation, of God's love, of God's mercy, of forgiveness, and the message of the kingdom: Be loyal to the kingdom of God. That you are accepted into the kingdom. Will you come walk with my King? Will you come walk in His ways? Will you die to yourself and be resurrected to life, raised to life in the name of the King of Israel, Yeshua? That's the gospel.

The Choice Before Us

And each one of us is a Peter. Each one of us is a Jonah standing on the shores of Jaffa. Are we going to turn east, head to Nineveh, or are we going to turn west and head to Tarshish? And that's the decision each of us needs to audit ourselves about, because you're either awake and aware of what God is doing in the world or you're asleep. Either going up, up, up or down, down, down.

That's my conclusion. I hope this journey through Jonah is interesting—it surely has been for me. But more importantly, I hope you understand that Jonah was not initially meant to be a children's story. It was meant to be written for a very mature audience so that they would grow up. Amen.

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