

# OpenTheo

## Jonah



### **Bible Book Overviews** - Steve Gregg

In "Jonah," Steve Gregg provides a thorough analysis of the biblical text of the book of Jonah. He highlights how the story of Jonah reflects God's willingness to forgive and offer repentance to those who turn away from evil. Gregg also explores the historical accuracy of the book and addresses common misconceptions about Jonah's story, including the significance of the fish and the duration of Jonah's time inside it. Ultimately, Gregg emphasizes the importance of having compassion for those who do not have knowledge of God, and the call for evangelization and repentance.

### **Transcript**

We're going to be studying the book of Jonah. It's a short book, four short chapters. You can read through the whole book in about 10-15 minutes, actually.

But it's possible to read through a short book and miss some of the important things that God has in mind for us to gain from it, because these books of the prophets, like the rest of the scripture, are inspired and they contain God's message to us. It's interesting that this is, of all the prophetic books, Jonah is the only one that is entirely a historical narrative. Now, Jeremiah has a little bit of historical narrative, as does Ezekiel, and Isaiah has some.

But most of the books of the prophets are primarily made up of oracles of the prophets speaking to, usually Israel or Judah, and occasionally to a non-Jewish nation. It's not very common that the prophets were sent to pagan nations. Although in the larger prophets, like Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, there are blocks of chapters in them, where a chapter or so might be addressed to Babylon, or Assyria, or Edom, or the Philistines, or some other group that's not Israel.

But there are three prophetic books, all of them belong to what we call the minor prophets, that are addressed to non-Jewish audiences, and no part of them is addressed to Jews. And that's pretty unusual in the Old Testament. Jonah is one, and his prophecy was to a city called Nineveh, which was the capital of Assyria.

The Assyrian Empire is the empire that destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel in 722

BC. You may remember after David's time, Solomon reigned, and after Solomon died, his son Rehoboam reigned in Jerusalem, and then during his reign, the nation of Israel divided into two nations. The northern ten tribes rebelled against David's successors, and the tribe of Judah and Benjamin remained loyal.

And the ten tribes to the north formed their own nation, and they called that nation Israel, and the southern kingdom was called Judah. Well, these kingdoms ran parallel to each other for a long time, each having their own kings, separate from each other, they were independent from each other, and the northern kingdom fell in 722 to the Assyrians. Sometime later, about 20 years later or so, the Assyrians also attacked the capital of Judah to the south, and the capital of Judah was Jerusalem.

At that time, however, Judah had one of the few good kings that they ever had, and that was Hezekiah, and under the counsel of Isaiah, Hezekiah sought the Lord and prayed for deliverance, and this huge army of the Assyrians had surrounded Jerusalem, and Jerusalem was no match for them, but they were no match for God. And God sent an angel one night who killed 185,000 of the Assyrian troops outside the walls of Jerusalem, and so in the morning when they found so many of them dead, they were spooked, and they withdrew and didn't bother Judah anymore. So the Assyrian empire had destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and attempted to do the same in the south, but the godly king Hezekiah, in seeking the Lord, was able to preserve the nation from destruction, and they were much later conquered by the Babylonians.

After the Babylonians, they conquered the Assyrians. So the Assyrians were the superpower in the Near East in the time of Jonah and in some of the biblical story time, but then, of course, later the Babylonians came, and they became the new superpower, and they conquered the Assyrians. Now, Jonah lived at a time where Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was 40 days from its own destruction.

That was the message that God sent Jonah to take to Nineveh. He said, go and tell them in 40 days Nineveh will perish. Now, it's not entirely clear who would have destroyed them.

Perhaps natural causes would have destroyed them, because the Babylonian empire, which actually did conquer them 150 years later than Jonah's time, had not really risen to the point where it was a significant power in Jonah's day, and therefore would not really be likely to conquer or even attack Assyria. So we're not told exactly what the nature of the destruction of Nineveh would have been at that early time before the Babylonians really existed as a power to destroy Nineveh, which is what later happened. But God told Jonah that Nineveh was going to be destroyed.

Now, Jonah was not very interested in Nineveh, although Assyria had not yet destroyed his own nation, because he lived at least some 30 or more years before that. Nonetheless, he didn't like the Assyrians. First of all, Jews didn't like Gentiles in general.

Jews were pretty smug about being the people of God. The Gentiles were not. And so they didn't really care that much about the fate of the Gentiles.

They figured the Gentiles were all worthy of judgment. They're all going to hell anyway. And so what did he care if Nineveh was going to perish? It was a pagan nation's capital.

And beyond the generic hatred for Gentiles that many Jews had, Jonah knew that Assyria was a threat to his own people. They were swallowing up other nations in the region, and his own nation was threatened. He'd love it if the Ninevites, you know, perished.

He would have been very happy to see the destruction of the Assyrian power. So when God said, go warn them, Jonah didn't want to warn them. He just wanted to buy some time.

He only needed to wait 40 days and Nineveh would perish. So he decided to take a cruise and go the other direction on the Mediterranean, go west to Spain. And it wasn't called Spain back then, but that's where he set sail for Tarshish.

And, of course, God apprehended him. And the way that God apprehended him has become a very famous story. Because God sent a storm to endanger the ship that he was on, and he was thrown overboard at his own request.

And then, of course, he was swallowed by a great fish. And three days and three nights later, he was vomited on the shore. And God commissioned him again, go to Nineveh and give him this message.

So this time Jonah, not wishing to have a repeat voyage like that, some people... But we actually had a... We actually went on a cruise not too long ago. It was about a year ago. And there were some things very... What should I say? Not desirable about it.

There were some things that went wrong. But it wasn't like Jonah's. Jonah had a terrible storm and a submarine ride as well.

And it was very unpleasant, very dark, very stinky, I'm sure. So when he was vomited ashore, he said, I don't want another cruise like that, so I'm going to obey this time. And he went to Nineveh and proclaimed the message.

Now, interestingly, the people of Nineveh and even the king were so smitten in their conscience by his message that they actually repented. Which is something, of course, that we never find Israel or Judah doing when the prophets preach to them. But here these pagans, the first time they hear anything from one of God's prophets, they actually respond and repent.

And so Jonah knew that God was now not going to destroy Nineveh, even though he said he would. Let me show you something. Jeremiah, in chapter 18, tells us something very

generic about how God deals with nations.

In Jeremiah 18, 7 through 10, the prophet said, the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom to pluck it up, to pull it down and to destroy it, which is, of course, what he was threatening to do to Nineveh. If that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will repent of the disaster that I thought I would bring upon it. So that happened in the case of Jonah's recipients.

They repented and God repented of the destruction he was going to bring upon it. Then God says, and the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom to build and to plant it, if it does evil in my sight so that it does not obey my voice, then I will repent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it. So Paul says this cuts both ways.

If a nation is in trouble with God, but they repent, they will be out of trouble. If a nation is on good terms with God, but they go bad, well, they will be in trouble. So he said, I will repent of the good things I said I would do.

And by the way, this latter part, we can see had to do with Israel itself, because Israel is the only nation in the Bible that God ever said he was going to build and plant it. But he said, if I ever say about a nation, I'm going to build and plant it. But if they turn against me, I'm going to destroy them.

I'm going to repent of all the good I said. So that did happen to Israel. They later, after Jeremiah's time, Judah at least, was conquered by Babylon.

Several centuries later, the restored nation was destroyed by the Romans. And so, even though Israel once had promises that God had made for them, that he blessed them and so forth, he said, oh, you turn from me, I'm going to change my mind about that. And he did.

But what we see in Jonah is the first part of this statement. Anytime I say I'm going to destroy a nation, if they repent and turn from evil, I will repent of what I said I would do. And it actually says in Jonah that when God saw that Nineveh had repented, God repented, it says, which means changed his mind of the evil that he said he would do.

Now, Jonah, therefore, knew that Nineveh would not be destroyed at this point, which was a disappointment. And now when you and I try to bring someone to Christ, if they convert, we're excited about it. We'd love it if we could convert the whole nation.

But Jonah converted a whole nation here, at least a whole capital city of a nation, of an empire. And he wasn't happy about it because he knew that God would now not destroy them. And he was quite eager to see them destroyed.

So he was the most reluctant preacher and the most and had the worst attitude of any

preacher I've ever heard of. And so he went out to pout and he went and sat on a hillside outside Nineveh to watch it, to see if maybe, you know, see what was going to happen. And he was out in the sun there and he was very uncomfortable.

And a fast growing plant grew up while he was there. The Bible says the Lord prepared it. So it was kind of a miraculous thing, just like the fish was kind of a miraculous thing.

And this plant grew up overnight and gave him shade and he was glad for the shade. But then some kind of a worm, the Bible says, some kind of a bug or something destroyed that plant and it withered up. So he was out in the sun again and in the heat and he was complaining about that.

And God said, well, you know, you care about that plant that you didn't work for. You know, you don't deserve it. It was a comfort to you and now it's gone.

You care about that plant. You don't care about these people in Nineveh, all these people that were about to perish. You care about the plant perishing because you're uncomfortable with it gone.

But you didn't care about the hundred and twenty thousand people in Nineveh who don't know which way is up. They don't know their left hand from the right. They don't know anything.

They're ignorant of the ways of God. And you would have had them destroyed. You've had me destroy them.

And God was prepared to if they had repented. But they did. So this is the whole story.

I just told you the whole story of the book. There's nothing else in it. But we're going to look at it verse by verse.

But I want to give you some background about Jonah a little bit. The name Jonah means dove in Hebrew, which is not, as far as I know, significant to the book itself. A dove is usually associated with peace, sometimes in the Bible with the Holy Spirit.

He was a spirit filled prophet, though he didn't have much of a spiritual attitude, obviously. So I don't really know that the name, the meaning of his name is going to be significant to us. But Jonah is known to have lived historically from a statement we read in Second Kings, chapter 14.

If you've read the books of Kings, you know that this is the history of the monarchy, both the northern and the southern kingdom of Israel and Judah. And in Second Kings 14, during the reign of Jeroboam II, it says this in verse 25. He, meaning Jeroboam II, restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah.

According to the word of the Lord, God spoke, the Lord God of Israel, which he had

spoken through his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath-Hefer. Now, that's the same Jonah that we have in the book of Jonah. And we don't really understand much about this because it just says that Jeroboam recovered some property for the country.

He annexed some territory that apparently had been his before, says he recovered it. And he did so according to the prophesying of Jonah, this Jonah. Now, Jonah is said to be the son of Amittai, but that doesn't give us much information.

We don't know who Amittai was. He was from Gath-Hefer. Gath-Hefer was a city up in the northern kingdom.

So he's one of the prophets of the north. It's kind of interesting that the Jews, once the kingdom was divided, were almost as prejudiced against the Israelites of the north as they were against Gentiles. Not quite.

But in Jesus' day, these northern kingdoms had intermarried with Gentiles and became what we call the Samaritans. And the Jews had tremendous disgust for Samaritans. Samaria was the region north of Judah in the time of Christ and had been that and Galilee together had been the region of the northern tribes in the days of Rehoboam.

But the reason I mention this is that when the Pharisees and the chief priests were plotting against Jesus in John chapter 7 and verse 52, they were plotting to kill Jesus and there was a secret admirer of Jesus among them named Nicodemus. And Nicodemus spoke up for Jesus and said, what, does our law condemn a man before it hears what he says and sees what he does? And these chief priests didn't expect any opposition to their plan from within their own circle. They snapped at him and said, what, are you also a Galilean? Search and look for no prophet arises out of Galilee.

I remember they had very low view of Galileans, but they had forgotten there were prophets who had arisen out of Galilee. Jonah being one of them, Elijah and Elisha being others. Amos was a Galilean prophet, so they were not quite accurate, even though they were Bible scholars.

They said no prophet rises out of Galilee. But Jonah did, and he was a prophet and he was from Gath Hefer. Now, Gath was a city of the Philistines, but there were five Philistine cities in the land of Israel.

One of them was Gath, and then there were villages around them that were not in those walled Philistine cities. And they were sometimes associated geographically with them. So Gath Hefer was a city of the Jews that was in the region of Gath, the Philistine city.

That's what Gath Hefer refers to. There is a Jewish tradition, though it's not confirmed anywhere, that Jonah was the son of the widow of Zarephath. Now, you might remember Elijah had, during the famine and the days of Ahab and Jezebel, traveled out of the

country because Jezebel was trying to hunt him down.

And he'd gone up into Zarephath in the Gentile region to the north there, and a woman and her son, a widow, were about ready to starve. And Elijah came and said, make me a cake and give it to me. She said, I only have a little bit of flour and a little bit of oil.

I was about to make my last muffin and give it to my son and me, and then we're going to die from the famine. And Elijah said, give it to me and you'll live. And she did, and there was enough food for all of them.

And then the flour and the oil didn't run out for the whole three and a half years of the famine. So this woman and her son were preserved from starvation by playing hostess to Elijah in their home and feeding him. There is a Jewish tradition that Jonah was the son of that woman.

But Jewish tradition doesn't always have solid historical basis. It's what the rabbis come up with. And a lot of times these stories arise years later, centuries later.

So we don't know. We can't confirm that he was. But that's kind of an interesting connection in the Jewish mind about him.

Contemporary with Jonah were Amos and Hosea in the northern kingdom. Like Nahum and like Obadiah, Jonah is one of three prophets of Israel who actually didn't prophesy to Israel. Jonah, as we saw, prophesied against Nineveh.

So did Nahum, only it was like 100 and something years later. Nahum came and Nineveh, which had repented in the days of Jonah, had had plenty of time to return back to their evil ways. Now, several generations later, you can certainly remember a couple of generations back.

If you're old enough, how different America was than is now culturally, sinfully, spiritually. A lot more sympathy for the things of God two generations ago than now. And so you can see that even with the great revival in Nineveh in the time of Jonah, you know, several generations later, they had turned back to their evil ways.

And Nahum was sent to them to prophesy their impending doom. And and they Nineveh was eventually destroyed in 612 B.C. by the Babylonians. OK, so and by the Medes, by the Medes and the Babylonians were a confederacy against them at that time.

When we read, oh, by the way, Obadiah is another prophet who spoke to a pagan nation that he spoke to Edom, the Edomites. The one chapter long book Obadiah is a prophet against the Edomites. The New Testament would suggest that Jonah was in at least one or two senses, a type of Christ.

Now, you know, the term a type of Christ, the word to pass in the Greek type means a

pattern. And many things in the Old Testament are types or patterns of Christ. For example, Paul tells us in Romans five that Adam was a type of Christ.

We know Bible scholars will tell us that David was a type of Christ. He certainly was. And there are many characters in the Old Testament that are a type of Christ, meaning they weren't Christ.

They were someone else. They were an ordinary person. But events in their lives, at least the ones that are recorded, are orchestrated by God to resemble something Christ would do.

So they're kind of like a foreshadowing of Christ. And Jesus himself is the one who identified Jonah this way over in Matthew, chapter 12. And Jesus said in verse 40 and 41, for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish.

So will the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment with this generation and condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah. And indeed, a greater than Jonah is here.

Now, there's two ways in which Jonah is kind of a type of Christ. One is that he resembled Christ in being buried, as it were, for three days and emerging alive again. Now, Jonah may have died.

Some some commentators believe that Jonah actually died in the belly of the whale and then was resurrected by God and is vomited out. The the book of Jonah doesn't say that. But some people think that what Jesus said would imply that because as Jonah as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish.

So shall the son of man be three days and three nights of the heart of the earth. They think, well, the son of man was dead in the heart of the earth. And if Jonah's was like that in the belly of the world, that he must have been dead in the belly of the whale.

Also, in chapter two of Jonah, when he's praying, he says something about how he had descended down to shale, which is the Hebrew word for the grave. And and therefore they say, well, he must have died in the whale's belly and resurrected. I believe that's reading more into the story than we are required to and maybe more than we're entitled to.

I, I believe it would be mentioned very clearly if Jonah had died and risen again, since that's a pretty unusual kind of miracle. Certainly being swallowed by a fish and being vomited out alive is also an unusual miracle. But but to be resurrected from the dead and have no mention of it in a story that's full of mentioning miracles.

I mean, there's there's a miraculous storm. There's a miraculous ceasing of the storm. There's a miraculous fish.



There's a miraculous vomiting out of Jonah alive. There's a miraculous plant that grows up to shade him in a miraculous worm that kills it. And there's a miraculous revival in Nineveh.

I mean, the book's full of miracles. And if Jonah had actually died and risen again, that'd be among the chief miracles of the book. And it doesn't mention it.

So I think I think rather simply the fact that Jonah was consumed by the fish and came out three and three days, three nights later is what resembles Jesus being swallowed by the earth as it were buried and then emerging alive afterwards. That's the comparison that Jesus made. But he also makes a contrast.

And Jonah can be a type of Christ in contrast also, because when when Paul says in Romans five that Adam is a type of Christ, it's really a contrasting type because Adam, through his sin, brought sin on the whole world. Christ, through his righteousness, brought righteousness on on many. So Paul says that's Adam's a type of Christ, but in a sense of a type in in contrast, both of them affected a whole race.

But they did so in opposite ways. And so also Jonah and Jesus both preached. To sinners.

Jesus preached to the Jews and Jonah to Gentiles, but they had opposite results. The Jews, for the most part, rejected Jesus and the Gentiles accepted what Jonah did and in his message. So that's why Jesus indicates that the people of Jonah are more righteous than the Jews.

Now, that's a pretty harsh statement to say to Jews who are so, so convinced that they're the greatest people ever because God gave them the law. But that's what Jesus said. And it's not the only time Jesus pointed out that Gentiles were more receptive to his word than the Jews were.

When the centurion in Matthew 8, who was a Gentile, said to Jesus, listen, my my servant needs to be healed. But I am not going to ask you to come to my house. I'm a Gentile.

I can't expect you to come into my house, but just say the word and it'll be done. And she said, wow, I have not encountered such faith in all of Israel. Here's a Gentile who's got an exceptional amount of faith.

I haven't met a Jew with this kind of faith. He says, I've not met I've not encountered this kind of faith in all Israel. So Jesus sometimes did make this point that the Gentiles receive more effect in Luke, chapter four, when Jesus was preaching in his own hometown of Nazareth.

I think it's around verse 24 begins, he talks about how he's preaching. He says, you know, in the days of Elijah, there are many Jewish widows who could have stood a

miraculous provision of food from God. But it wasn't a Jew.

It was a Gentile would have verified that Elijah was sent to and she received the benefits, presuming that she had faith. And the people in Israel that were passed over did not. They were worshippers of Baal.

And then she said, and in the days of Elisha, there are many lepers in Israel, Jewish lepers who were never healed. But a Gentile name in the Syrian, he was healed. He's a Gentile.

And Jesus saying those two things almost got thrown off a cliff. If you read Luke, chapter four, so the Jews didn't like this kind of contrast between themselves and Gentiles. But on many occasions, Jesus points out, you know, Gentiles have a better track record of responding to God's word than you Jews do.

And that's the point he makes in Matthew 12, 41. The people of Nineveh, they're more righteous than you because they responded to the preaching of your don't rise up and point the finger at you and condemn you in the judgment because you didn't receive the preaching of one greater than Jonah. Jesus referred to himself as one greater than Jonah.

Now, the repentance of Nineveh. Is there any historical record of this? There is not outside the Bible. Sometimes when we read of things in the Bible, like the Exodus, where the nation of Egypt was suffered a great deal from the 10 plagues and then the armies perished in the sea and so forth and Israel escaped.

People say, well, we don't seem to have any secular historical records of such a thing happening to Egypt. Therefore, the Bible is wrong. Now, this is a very dangerous thing to suggest, honestly, not just because you're, you know, blasphemy against the word of God, but simply it's a way to set yourself up for embarrassment.

Because many times skeptics have said, well, the Bible is wrong about something about some historical character. And it turned out later discoveries prove them wrong. Like the Hittites in the Old Testament were very commonly mentioned.

But until the 1800s, scholars couldn't find any evidence that the Hittites had ever existed. And so, of course, skeptics said, well, the Hittites, they never existed. The Bible is just fiction.

It's just making them up. Until they found Hittite civilization and they uncovered enough of Hittite civilization to document 1500 years of that civilization, one of the greatest civilizations in the Middle East in the time of Abraham. Same thing with the fall of Babylon.

All the secular historians and artifacts that had been found suggested that when Babylon fell, the king of Babylon was named Nabonidus. Herodotus and Thucydides, the Greek

historians writing 400 years before Christ, they said that Babylon fell during the reign of King Nabonidus of Babylon. But in Daniel 5, it says the last king of Babylon, when it fell, was Belshazzar, which is not the same as Nabonidus.

So, the critics said, well, the Bible is wrong. And, of course, who cares? It's just fiction. It's just myths.

Until 1853, when a temple in Ur of the Chaldeans was found to a god, worshipped by Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon. There's an inscription there where he said, he wrote, may reverence for you, speaking to this god, this deity, may reverence for you dwell in my firstborn favorite son, Belshazzar. Now, Belshazzar had never been heard of except in Daniel 5. Daniel 5 is the only place in the Bible and, frankly, the only place in any written histories of the ancient world.

Only Daniel 5 mentions Belshazzar, but now archaeologists have discovered Belshazzar. He was the son of Nabonidus. And when Babylon fell, we now know, because more has been found since 1853 about him, that Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, was in semi-retirement in Arabia when the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon.

And his son, Belshazzar, was given the rule of the city itself and was present when Cyrus and the Medes came in. And so, the Bible is correct. What's more, the correctness of the Bible is shown in even, we could say, an accidental way.

Because in Daniel 5, Belshazzar, when he sees the writing on the wall, says, anyone who can interpret this for me, I'll make him third ruler of the kingdom. Now, why did he say the third ruler? There's no hint in Daniel why he'd say the third ruler. Why not the second? Well, we now know from archaeology that Belshazzar himself was the second.

His father, Nabonidus, was the first. He couldn't give away a position above that of third ruler. So, I mean, there's all these incidental things where the Bible proves to be true, where the cynics and skeptics always said it was not.

So, if someone says, well, there's no evidence of the Exodus, there's no evidence of Nineveh repenting like this, well, if you're going to say that the biblical record is not sufficient historical record, then you're on the losing side. You're on the wrong side of history. Because everyone who says that eventually gets embarrassed.

No, we have not found evidence yet of the Exodus or of the repentance of the Ninevites. But some of these things we may never find because it's not the kind of thing that nations record about themselves. Most ancient kings made sure that their court historians recorded only the things that weren't embarrassing to them.

If a historian of the king was writing his history and wrote something that was embarrassing to the king, off with his head. Get me a new historian here who will say wonderful things about me. The Exodus would have been the most humiliating defeat of

the Egyptians and a pharaoh in their history.

And no doubt they would be very careful to leave that out of their records. But also the Ninevites repentance. I'm not saying that they would be embarrassed of that later because it turned out well and it wasn't really a humiliation to them.

But, you know, revivals aren't just, they're not really the kind of things that make it into all secular histories. I've studied the history of Christian revivals since the time of Christ and we do have records of them, but we have much more history, historiography written now than they did in ancient times. I don't know that the if you get a book on American history or English history, that you're going to really find much about the revivals.

They're going to be interested more about wars and politics and things like that. You know, a short lived revival in Nineveh might not be the kind of thing that later historians would even care to mention. But we have it in Jonah.

You see, the point is, whenever there's, whenever the Bible says something is historically true and we can't confirm it from outside sources, the critic always will say, well, see, the Bible must not be true. These other sources are true. Herodotus said that Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon.

Daniel says it was Belshazzar. Daniel must be wrong. Well, as it turns out, they were both right.

But who's to say that Herodotus couldn't be wrong and the Bible right? The Bible is historically accurate. And just the fact that we don't have confirmation about everything it says from outside historical sources doesn't really shed any reasonable doubt on the historicity of it. The reason that many people think Jonah is not historical is because they have an a priori rejection of miracles.

They have a worldview called naturalism, which means there's only nature. There's no supernatural. There's no ghosts.

There's no God. There's no angels. There's no miracles.

Those are supernatural things. So we only have a natural world with natural laws. It's pretty much how they look at it.

And that being so, that's their starting point. They've decided before they even inquire. Well, somebody who's already decided, well, I'm not even going to inquire into it because I know miracles don't happen.

Well, they're just simply exhibiting their prejudice, their bigotry. An open-minded person would say, well, maybe I haven't seen a miracle, but that doesn't mean God's never done any. Certainly, Christians all believe in miracles.

They believe in the resurrection of Christ and the miracles he did. So there shouldn't be any difficulty in believing in the same God doing miracles in the Old Testament. Jonah has, as I said, several miracles.

We think of the fish and the three days and three nights and so forth as the main plot of the story. But it's not. It's only part of the story.

There's four chapters and the fish only occupies one of them. And it's an early one. There's more things after that.

Some perhaps equally, if not more miraculous, like the conversion of a whole city. Or like the gourd appearing overnight and then dying overnight. I mean, this just the book is every every chapter has a miracle in it.

And so the fish is only one. Now, I will say this, that because many people say, well, a man could not live inside of a fish for three days and three nights and come out alive. There's been many Christians who've tried to prove otherwise.

And many Christian commentators and documents have tried to use the story of a man named Bartley. Who was said to be a modern day Jonah. This story, I believe, happened in the eighteen hundreds, if I'm not mistaken, in the Falkland Islands.

I'm going to read you just Wikipedia about him that you can find much on the Internet about James Barkley as the modern day Jonah. This is how the story is summarized on Wikipedia. The story is reported is that during a whaling expedition off the Falkland Islands, Bartley's boat was attacked by the whale and he landed inside the whale's mouth.

He survived the ordeal and was carved and was carved out of the stomach by his peers when they not knowing he was inside, caught and began skinning the whale because the hot weather, which would have rotted the whale meat. It was said to be I'm sorry, it was said that he was in the whale for 36 hours. And it was also said that his skin had been bleached by the gastric juices and that he was blind the rest of his life.

He was, however, supposed to have returned to work within three weeks of his account. He died 18 years later and his tombstone is in Gloucester. It says James Bartley, a modern day Jonah.

While the veracity of the story is in question, it is physically possible for a sperm whale to swallow a human whole, as they have been known to swallow giant squid whole, which are bigger than humans. However, such a person would drown or suffocate in the whale's stomach, says Wikipedia under their article on James Bartley. Now, I will say this.

The story may not be reliable. For one thing, the boat he was on, they've looked at the actually register. I mean, people have gone back to look at the records and there was no

one named James Bartley registered on the crew of that particular boat.

And it wasn't a whaling boat. It was another kind of boat. So some people said, well, this didn't happen.

And yet some of the details of the story, including his burial and so forth, and his tombstone would seem to be. It's repeated a great deal in newspapers and things like that at the time. But it's just in question.

We don't know whether this really happened or not. Christians sometimes think it would help if we could find a modern day case of someone who really did survive in the belly of a whale and come out alive. Then that would show that it could happen to Jonah.

But there's no need to do that. That's like people saying we need to go up on Mount Erat and find the ark, because if we find it, we'll really know that Noah's flood was true. Well, guess what? I know that Noah's flood was true without anyone finding the ark.

I don't need anyone to find an ark to let me know that Noah's flood is true. I know because God's word says it. I don't need someone to find a modern case of a man surviving in a whale and come out alive in order to know that this happened to Jonah.

Because the word of God says that. Jesus said it happened. Jonah said it happened and Jesus said it happened.

That's two witnesses. And that's good enough for me. Even one would be enough.

It was just Jesus. So, also we should note that there's no suggestion in the book of Jonah that this was a natural case of surviving. Everything about the story was miraculous.

Even if a man would drown or suffocate in the belly of a whale, although I saw Pinocchio and I saw that a man could, and his goldfish and his cat could all survive. And a big whale had a big room inside there and when the whale sneezed, they escaped. If you didn't see Pinocchio when you were a kid.

Actually, I don't think that's a true story. But the story of Bartley may or may not be. Whether Bartley really had that experience or not, Jonah did.

And we have confirmation from Jesus' own lips on that. And it was a miracle, perhaps. Maybe it's possible, naturally.

But whether it is or not, this is a work of God that we're talking about. I remember Billy Graham saying, I believe Jonah was swallowed by the whale because God can do anything. He says, if God wants to, he thinks, he said, I think Jonah could have swallowed the whale.

I suppose that's possible. Jesus said that with God, nothing's impossible, including a

camel going through the eye of a needle. I suppose for a whale going through the gullet of a man, that would be possible if God wanted it to.

I can't quite picture how that would happen, but nothing's impossible with God. That's what Jesus said in that very connection. Okay, so did Nineveh really repent? Did that really happen? Apparently it did.

The Bible says it did. And that's enough for me. Okay, let me just kind of go through the book very quickly and make some explanatory commentary on it.

Jonah, I'm reading, by the way, if you wonder, I'm reading the New King James. I don't know if people have different versions of that here, but Jonah chapter one, verse one. Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their wickedness has come up before me.

That's kind of what God said to Abraham when he said, I'm going down to check out Sodom and Gomorrah, because their wickedness has come up before me. It's like, it's as if God's hearing reports from heaven about what's going on on earth. He's hearing some pretty wicked nations around there need to be maybe judged.

It's kind of a, we'd have to say it's kind of an anthropomorphism where God is being talked about as if he's a person. It's a literary device that we find often in the Bible. Like when God comes and says, where's your brother? Like he doesn't know, you know, he's depicts God as if he, you know, as if he doesn't know things and so forth.

And so when he's walking with Abraham in Genesis 18, you know, the wickedness of Sodom has come up before me. I mean, I've heard a report of it. I'm going down there.

He says, and if it's true, I'll know. Well, like he didn't already. So, I mean, the Bible talks that way.

Like God is getting reports from people and things like that. But it's not trying to tell us that God didn't really know or that he depends on such reports. So he says Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish.

Now Tarshish is Tartarus, which is an ancient location in what would now be southern Spain. So he's going west from Israel, the opposite direction, Assyria and Nineveh to the east. All he had to do is buy time.

He knew that 40 days away at sea would be long enough to see Nineveh go down. But God wasn't going to let Jonah thwart his plans quite that easily. He says he fled to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

Now you can't really flee from the presence of the Lord. You know, God is everywhere. In Psalm 139, David said to where can I go to flee your presence? He said, if I ascended to

heaven, you're there.

If I make my bed in Sheol, you're there. If I take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost islands of the sea, even there your hand will guide me. You know, the darkness is light before you.

Nothing is hidden from you. So David made it very clear that you can't really run away from the presence of the Lord. But it may be that what this means, he tried to flee from the presence of the Lord, is that he's fleeing from his commission as a prophet.

One who stands in the presence of the Lord, receives messages for people and gives them to people. He might be saying, I'm quitting this job. I'm fleeing from my, in the presence of the Lord role as a prophet.

It might not mean that he was trying to really get away from God in the literal sense or from the presence of God. Because God, of course, is everywhere. You can't do that.

Verse four, but the Lord sent out a great wind. Now, this is the first kind of intervention of God and supernatural. I mean, wind isn't supernatural, but they got sent it is at least providential.

God sent out a great wind on the sea and there was a mighty tempest on the sea so that the ship was about to be broken up. Then the mariners were afraid and every man cried out to his God. These were pagans.

These were not Jews. So many gods cried out to him. And they threw their cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten the load.

But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. So just just like Jesus could sleep through a storm when the when his disciples, the mariners were at their wits end. Jesus was able to sleep soundly in the storm.

Jonah, who's also a type of Christ, seems to be able to do that, too. Now, usually that would be the mark of a clean conscience. But Jonah's conscience couldn't be clean.

He was just probably really relieved to feel like he had escaped the commission of God and and he felt it was safe. And he's apparently just a sound sleeper as well. So the captain came to him and said to him, what do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God.

Perhaps your God will consider us so that we may not perish. And they said to one another, come, let us cast lots that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us. So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.

Now, casting lots, of course, is like drawing straws or throwing dice or doing something



like that. It's a game of chance to sort of choose one person out of all the participants and focus attention on that person as the winner or in this case, the loser. The idea here being that they knew God was some God was doing this.

They didn't know who the real God was. They had their gods and they didn't even know whose God Jonah. Call on your God.

But we know that there's some divine origin of this tempest because it must have been beyond the scope of a natural storm. And these were seasoned mariners. These were professionals.

They'd been in storms before. Almost anyone has been at sea a lot, has been through some pretty scary storms. But this one must have been quite exceptional.

Must have been tearing the boat apart. And they said, oh, this is supernatural. We need to find out whose God is angry at somebody here.

And the lot fell on Jonah. So it's interesting. This we could call that a miracle, too, because he was the guy.

And when they cast lots, lo and behold, he was identified as the guy in a game of chance. But the Bible says actually in Proverbs 16, 32 says the lot is cast into the lap, but it's every decision is from the Lord. That is in the in the provinces, they could cast lots to know the mind of God in cases.

In fact, that's how the disciples replaced Judas. In Acts, chapter one, there were two candidates who both seemed to be equally qualified. But they cast lots.

They said, Lord, show us which one of these you've chosen. They cast lots and the lot fell on Matthias. So that's how they understood that to be the will of God.

So casting lots. I don't know when it's the right thing to do and when it's not the right thing to do. But apparently sometimes that's the way God makes his will known.

And he certainly did in this case, because Jonah is the one who gets fingered by it. Verse eight. Then they said to him, please tell us for whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And what of what people are you? And he said to them, I am a Hebrew and I fear Yahweh, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.

Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, why have you done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of Yahweh because he had told them. Then they said to him, what shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us? For the sea was growing more tempestuous. And he said to them, pick me up and throw me into the sea.

Then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me. Nevertheless, the men rode hard to bring the ship to land, but they could not.

For the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. Now, he said, I am the one at fault. You throw me overboard, God will calm the sea for you.

But they were decent people. They cared more for his life than he cared for the Ninevites' life. He didn't care if they got wiped out.

There was no skin off his nose. But for them, they could have just thrown him overboard and said, well, maybe this will work. What do we care? But they actually had some humanitarian spark in them.

They said, we don't throw you overboard. So they kept rowing, kept trying to fight the sea, see if there's any other way than killing this guy to get out of their trouble. And therefore, they cried out to the Lord when they saw that it wasn't working.

And they said, we, now, by the way, it says they cried out to Yahweh. When you have the word Lord in all capitals in your Bible, it means that in the Hebrew text, it's Yahweh. If it's not in all capitals, it's in the Hebrew Adonai.

But Adonai is kind of a generic term for a Lord. Yahweh is the specific name of Israel's God, as opposed to the different names for gods that the heathen worship, like Molech and Baal and Asher and so forth. So these guys who had cried out to their pagan gods, now they're converted.

Now they know that the God of Israel is a supernatural God. He sent this storm. So they cried out to him.

They cried out to Yahweh and said, we pray, oh Yahweh, please do not let us perish for this man's life and do not charge us with innocent blood for you, oh Yahweh, have done as you as pleased you. So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared Yahweh exceedingly and offered a sacrifice to Yahweh and made vows.

Here, Jonah seems to really have a knack for converting Gentiles. Not only is he the only known evangelist to convert a whole city of pagans, he can't even help but convert the shipmates who are pagans. And he's not even preaching to them.

It's like when God has his anointing on all of his messengers, sometimes they can't help but impact people in the way that God has anointed them to do so. So here, these guys, they're now worshipping Yahweh and offering sacrifices to him instead of their pagan gods. Verse 17, now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah.

And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. You know, although

the story of the fish in Jonah is its most famous feature, the fish is only mentioned in two different verses. Here, where it swallows him, and then later when it vomits him out.

The fish is really not a very prominent character in the story. He's just the, like I say, he's just the transport. When Jonah wanted to be thrown overboard, he probably wanted to drown.

He just thought, well, he didn't know there's a fish down there. He didn't know that God was going to put him in a fish. All he knows is I'm being thrown into a tempestuous sea without a boat and without a life preserver.

I think he just wanted to die. He wanted to die. And like he did at the end of the book, he still wanted to die.

He says, I'm angry unto death, just let me die. He's kind of a pouty kind of a guy. I don't know, he's just not a very winsome character, honestly.

But he probably thought he was escaping his commission by being thrown overboard. But to his chagrin, he was rescued by a fish. Now, by the way, one of my former pastors said that he doesn't know why people have a hard time thinking God could keep a man alive for three days, three nights in the belly of a fish.

We keep lots of men alive under polar ice caps in a mechanical submarine. If we can do that, if man can do that, can't God do that? I mean, why would that be a problem to God? To do something that man already does in our time? Well, anyway, he's there three days and three nights. And that's where Jesus takes the expression three days and three nights.

And in Matthew 12, 40, he says, as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of you. Now, by the way, in the King James, it says in Matthew 12, 40, that he was in a whale. In the book of Jonah, it says a great fish.

Now, a whale is not a fish. Technically, a whale is a mammal like you and me. But that's kind of a worldly way of categorizing.

Yeah, scientists say, oh, the Bible's wrong. Jesus said it was a whale. And it says in Jonah, there was a great fish.

It must be a contradiction. Well, wait a minute. Wait.

How? Who authorized us to say that a whale is a mammal and not a fish? Well, that's because we follow the Linnaean system of taxonomy, which is a man-made system. You know, we say, OK, if something has hair and warm blood and gives live birth to its young and nurses them with milk, it's a mammal. Well, that's how we're classifying a mammal.

What if we were in a society that didn't do that? What if we said if something has a big like tail that's made for propelling through water and it's got kind of a, you know, a torpedo shaped body and it lives underwater, we're going to call that a fish. Who's to say they couldn't do that? We use other classifications. But that's a modern classification system.

We have no right to insist that people in ancient times classified things the way we do. For example, when God is giving the lesson Leviticus of clean and unclean foods among the fowl, which we would say birds that are unclean, he lists bats. We say bats aren't birds.

They're mammals. Yeah. By our classification.

But if an ancient people want to say everything that flies around the wings is a bird, who's to say they can't do that? It's strictly an arbitrary set of criteria for deciding what's a mammal, what's a bird. We don't even have to have a classification called mammals. That's a man made classification.

The point is. That if Jesus said whale and Jonah said great fish, it would only be because people in those days classified whales as great fish and they've got every right to do so. Now, the truth is, though, that the word that Jesus used in the Greek isn't whale.

It's a great sea creature or a great sea monster. The Jesus said Jonah was three days, three nights in the belly of the great sea creature. Well, a big fish is a big sea creature.

So there's no contradiction, even even apparent there. So anyway, now, the three days and three nights. This is difficult because if Jesus was, in fact, crucified on Friday and rose on Sunday, there were not three days and three nights between Friday afternoon and Sunday morning.

I mean, think about it. Friday is a day. Friday night is a night.

Saturday is a day. Saturday night's a night. That's two nights and two days.

Sunday is a day. But he wasn't in there Sunday night. So there's no three days and three nights.

For this reason, many people speculate Jesus might have been crucified on Thursday or even Wednesday. There's different theories about it. I don't care which one's right, because to tell you the truth, three days and three nights is a Hebrew idiom.

It's an idiomatic expression. There are many of them in the Bible because it's written in Hebrew or by Hebrew people. And to the Jews, a day and a night is the way they spoke of any part of a day.

We know this because, for example, they found records, archaeologists found records of

what they call a five day quarantine. They said they have to be quarantined for five days and five nights. But when you counted up the actual days they mentioned, it's really only three days and nights plus a bit of a day before the first one and a bit of a day afterwards.

A part of a day was counted as a day and a night. That's just the way the Jews talked. So if Jesus was in the tomb Friday, that is part of Friday, Saturday and a part of Sunday, the Jews would have no problem speaking of that as three days and three nights.

And Jesus did actually choose that term in order to match it to this statement, three days, three nights. And Jonah, he spoke with Jonah. But most of the time Jesus said he would rise on the third day.

Now if he was in the tomb three days and three nights and then rose, that would be the fourth day. So if he was crucified on Friday and raised Sunday, that's the third day. And that's the traditional date.

A good Friday is when he died, he rose Sunday. Sunday is the third day after Friday. Now only once in all the Bible does Jesus say he'd be three days and three nights.

And that's when he's mimicking the language of Jonah because he's talking about the comparison to Jonah. And he's using an expression that Jews would recognize to mean at least parts of three days. That's all it would mean to them.

But three or four times Jesus said he would rise on the third day. And even after the event, Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, when he started with the resurrection, and this is decades after the resurrection of Christ, he certainly knew how long it was that Jesus was in the tomb. He said that this is the gospel.

Jesus was, he died for our sins according to the scripture. He was buried and he rose again the third day according to the scripture. So it doesn't seem possible that Jesus could rise the third day and still be three days and three nights.

And so his three days and three nights, I think, is best understood as the use of the common manner of Jewish speaking about such things. And it may also be that Jonah is using it that way, too. We don't know which actual days and nights Jonah was in the whale now or the fish.

Chapter two, then Jonah prayed to the Lord, his God, from the fish's belly. Now, when I was living in Northern California near a college, we saw in the newspapers that the college was one of the humanist club in the college, which would be atheists. They were sponsoring a speaker to come in and talk about the humor, the humanist view of the Bible.

So I'd like to go hear that. And I did. And the man just kind of made fun of the Bible.

He's just a skeptic. You know, he didn't believe anything in the Bible. And one thing he said was, I was sort of Jonah in the whale.

You know, this this man gets swallowed by a whale. And what does he do while he's in there? He says, well, what would you do? He did what anyone do. He wrote poetry.

And he yuck, yuck, yuck. He's joking. He's trying to make it look ridiculous.

He wrote poetry. Well, it's true that chapter two, which has Jonah's prayer is poetry. But we're not told he wrote it when he was in the belly of the whale.

I mean, of course, the man was trying to make it look silly. It's not silly. What Jonah did is pray.

And that seems a very reasonable thing for a man to do when he's swallowed by a whale. I suppose there's not many men who do anything else than that. So, I mean, to make it so ridiculous, he wrote this poetry.

The Bible doesn't say he wrote anything. We don't even know if he wrote the book of Jonah. Someone else could have written about him.

But whether he wrote it or not, he didn't write it while he was in the belly. I don't think he had parchment and pen and ink in the belly of the whale. Oh, before you throw me over, make sure I have enough writing material so I can write down this prayer while I'm in the whale's belly.

Now, he remembers prayer easily enough and wrote it later, no doubt. And here's his prayer. And this whole chapter is his prayer.

He prayed to the Lord, his God from the fish's belly, kind of repented of his bad attitude, too. He said, I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction. And he has answered me out of the belly of shale.

I cried and you have heard my voice for you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas. And the flood surrounded me. All your billows and your waves passed over me.

Then I said, I have been cast out of your sight. I will look again toward your holy temple. Now, by the way, these almost every line in this prayer can there are lines similar to it or identical in some cases in the Psalms.

Here and there in the Psalms are very typical prayers such as David wrote at an earlier generation. In fact, Jonah living after David's time might have known the Psalms and might have tended to pray in the same kind of language that David had used. But it's interesting that he says in verse four, yet I will look again toward your holy temple.

What? He's in the total darkness in the bottom of the ocean in a whale. He obviously has

hope. He obviously expects to be delivered.

I don't know if I would, I mean, expect to be if I swallowed by a big animal. And I don't know if I'd have any hope of being delivered unless God promised it. If God had promised it, then certainly we could believe it.

But we don't see that even have that promise. He just had this hope that God was not done with him. Someday I'll be I'll be looking at the temple again.

The waters encompass me even to my soul. The deep closed around me. Weeds were wrapped around my head.

I went down to the moorings of the mountains. The earth with its bars closed behind me forever. Now, this forever, of course, I end up being three days.

But the point here is this is poetic language. The weeds wrapping around his head, I think of Jonah as a type of Christ. Jesus had weeds wrapped around his head to the crown of thorns.

And it says, yet you have brought up my life from the pit. Oh, Lord, my God. I was saying this by faith because it hadn't happened yet.

But he obviously expected to be to be delivered by God. Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice to you with the voice of Thanksgiving.

I will pay what I vowed. Salvation is of the Lord. So the Lord spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Now, the man could not have expected salvation from any other source in the condition he was in. But he said salvation from the Lord. The Lord is the Savior.

By the way, the name Jesus means Yahweh is salvation. And in this he's saying salvation is of Yahweh. So he's basically his declaration is very much like calling out on the name of Jesus.

Not that he was not that he knew about Jesus, but he's his declaration that salvation is of Yahweh. That's that's exactly what the name Jesus means. So the Lord spoke to the fish that vomited Jonah on dry land.

Now the word chapter three of the Lord came to Jonah the second time saying arise, go to Nineveh. That great city and preach to it the message that I tell you. So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord.

Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three day journey in extent. Now three day journey, almost all commentators would say means it takes three days to walk the perimeter. Now the city itself is walls have been found by archaeologists.

And it would not take three days to walk around the perimeter of those walls. But there were also suburbs around Nineveh and it says it was a great city. We could say he's talking about greater Nineveh, just like there's greater Los Angeles, greater New York City and so forth.

It's not just the city itself. It's the various birds and suburbs and so forth. That would be all considered to be the sprawl, the city sprawl.

And to walk around the whole populous area would apparently take about three days to journey around it. So verse four and Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk of the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

This one line is the only prophecy in the Bible in this book of the Bible. Like I said, almost all prophets write books of prophecy. This one's a book of history, historical narrative with only one prophecy.

And it's a process of not coming true because the people repented and it was a conditional prophecy. Though notice that he doesn't mention any conditions. He doesn't say unless you repent, you're going to be destroyed in 40 days.

He just says it's going to happen. But we saw in Jeremiah says if I ever say it's going to happen to any people, if they repent, I won't do it. So even if he doesn't mention the conditions, they are always.

There's always a subtext. If God says, I'm going to bless you, there's a subject. Unless, of course, you rebel against me and do evil, then.

Then no. And likewise, if he says, I'm going to destroy you. There's the subtext, unless you repent, obviously, then that I won't.

And that that is seen in when Jeremiah spoke there in Jeremiah 18 and also here in this story. Because it says. The people of Nineveh believed God proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least.

And this is a means of in ancient times of showing that they were sorry and repented. The word came to the king of Nineveh and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe and covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king.

And his nobles saying, let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock taste anything, nor let them eat or drink water. In other words, they're fasting. Fasting with repentance was a commonplace disease.

Even the animals have to fast. Everyone's got to fast. Now, the interesting thing here is



this was a bottom up revival.

This is not some king like Josiah and Judah proclaiming that everyone had to repent and the people just kind of, OK, if you say so. But this is the people first repent. The people heard the people were convicted.

The people called a fast and the king was kind of swept up in it. He agreed to it, too. But this was something that happened from from the grassroots level.

God, through his spirit, just moving people to repent. And then it just kind of just swelled up into something that came all the way up to the throne. And the king himself is also proclaiming a fast for man and beast.

But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth and cry mightily to God. Yes, let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent and turn away from his fierce anger so that we may not perish? Now, he didn't he didn't even know the promise in Jeremiah.

The king is a pagan. He doesn't know. Maybe God will have mercy.

We don't know. But let's just repent. Let's fast.

Let's seek the face and mercy of God. Maybe who knows? Maybe he'll give us a break. Maybe he'll forgive.

Maybe he won't kill us. Then God saw their work and they turned from their evil way. And God repented from the disaster that he had said he would bring upon them.

And he did not do it, which, of course, echoes the words of Jeremiah 18, where he says, if I see them repent, I will repent of the evil I said I would do. Now, the final chapter is very short, but it displeased Jonah exceedingly. And he became angry.

So he prayed to the Lord and said, Oh, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my own country? Therefore, I fled previously to Tarshish, for I know that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, one who relents or repents from doing harm. Therefore, now, oh, Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live. What a hissy fit.

He's a real drama queen. Oh, just kill me. If you're not going to wipe them out, just kill me.

It's better for me to die. I said I knew before I left home you were going to do this. Now, he didn't actually know for sure that they would repent, but he knew that if they did, I know you're a God who's merciful.

I knew that if they would repent, you'd do something like this and spare them. You'd

forgive them. And I didn't want that.

That's why I didn't want to come here. That's why I took ship to Tarshish, she says, because I knew this could happen. So now it's happened.

I didn't get my way. Just kill me. Now, see, if God doesn't do things your way, the mature thing to do is not say, I just want to die.

I didn't get my way. It's better to say, you know, I guess God had a better idea. My plans are not what God is obligated to follow.

I might prefer that things go well for me and my family, my kids. I might prefer that, you know, none of my children get sick or die. I prefer that my parents live long, healthy lives and die in their sleep.

You know, without I prefer all kinds of things. But if it happens otherwise and God says, no, this is the way it's going to be. Well, then I don't say, oh, then just kill me, God.

You know, it's ridiculous. What a baby. So anyway, he says, just kill me.

And then the Lord said, is it right for you to be angry? Now, God says this to him twice, as we'll see. Jonah went out of the city and sat at the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade.

Apparently, it wasn't adequate till he might see what would become of the city. And the Lord prepared a plant. The King James says a gourd, but the Hebrew word is not known what kind of plant it was.

Just some unidentified plant and made it come up over Jonah. So it might be shade for his head to deliver him from the misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant.

He liked it when things were good for him. But as morning dawned the next day, God prepared a worm and it so damaged the plant that it withered and didn't provide shade for him anymore the next day. And it happened when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind and the sun beat on Jonah's head so that he grew faint and he wished death for himself and said, it's better for me to die than to live.

Then God said to Jonah, is it right for you to be angry about the plant? Now, twice he says, is it right for you to be angry? And you know, that question alone should be enough for any reasonable person to, if they're getting mad at something, if you meet somebody who's mad, a Christian especially, they're angry at somebody, you say, well, are you doing the right thing by being angry? Do you really have that good a reason to be angry? In most cases, they would hopefully say, well, you know, probably not. I guess, I guess not. So not so much.

But Jonah, he holds sticks to his guns. He says, yes, yes, I am right to be angry, even to

death. I'm so angry I want to die.

But the Lord said, you have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city in which are more than 120,000 persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left and also much livestock, since the livestock, I guess, fasted too, he threw them in there. I guess, spare them too.

But he says Nineveh had like 120,000 people who he says did not know their right hand from their left. Now, what's that mean? Some people think it means there were that many little children who had not reached the age of knowing their right from their left, because babies aren't born knowing that, but children learn it fairly early on. So it's saying that those who they knew so little, they didn't know their right hand from their left, means there are 120,000 children and then the whole population of the city would be much larger.

Most experts would say the city wasn't large enough for that to be the meaning. But it could be that all the inhabitants of the city, adults included, were referred to as not knowing their right hand from their left. Not literally.

Again, that's a Hebrew idiom. In Deuteronomy, God said to Israel, make sure you don't turn to, you keep my laws and don't turn to the right hand or the left. These are different ways of deviating from what's right.

And there is a pagan Babylonian expression known from the period, from other findings of the time, that the Babylonians used the expression of the left hand and the right hand to mean justice and what is right, or law and order. These are different meanings that the people of that period used and meant when they said the right hand and the left. So basically, God's probably saying, these people don't know which way is up.

These people don't know morality at all. They've never had the law like you Jews have had. I gave you the law, you wouldn't know it either.

But these people haven't even had that advantage. They don't know which way is right, which way is wrong. They've got no revelation from God and you don't pity them? Sure, they're bad people.

But they don't know how bad they are. I mean, who knows how they'd be if they'd gotten the advantages you Jews have had. And this is something that is a rebuke to really any of us who have been acquainted with the Bible or with Christian teaching most of our lives.

That we look at people who are maybe Muslim extremists or some other kind of people that are, or frankly, people looting in the streets and burning down other people's businesses. How could anyone be so evil? How could anyone be so crazy? Well, I guess

that's how people are who don't have any knowledge of God. We've lived in a country that's had so much widespread knowledge of God that people have been pretty much restrained knowing right from wrong because the church and the Bible have been so influential.

But you see the last generation, so the Bible hasn't been influential. The church has not been influential in the culture. And now we've got a bunch of young fools, frankly, who don't know.

They don't know what's right and wrong. They've been told by their teachers and their college professors certain things. And because they don't know God, they don't know how to judge all things and hold fast what is good like Paul tells us to do.

We can judge everything by description. If someone tells us something is foolish, that's foolish. That's ridiculous.

We know we have a standard to measure by. But people who don't have the Bible don't have that standard. That doesn't mean it's okay for them to do wrong.

Nineveh wasn't getting a free pass. If they hadn't repented, they were going to be wiped out. So will they.

So will the people who don't know God and who do wicked things. But we should have some sense of compassion for those who have never even been told what the right thing is. People who have never heard the gospel, for example.

And the lesson of this book at the very end seems to be this. You're so interested in your own comfort, you lost your house. You lost your job.

You lost the gourd that was providing shade over your head. You lost what was convenient to you. And you're about ready to have a hissy fit and say, It's better for me to die.

God, where were you? How dare you do this to me? And yet there's millions of people out there who don't even have the advantage you have of knowing who God is. They don't know the gospel. They don't know the Bible.

And shouldn't you have at least as much interest in them as in yourself? How about more? I mean, we are so mindful of the discomforts and the losses that we suffer. And that becomes a big trial to us in many cases. Like, you know, why would God do this to me? And we're so narcissistic.

We're so self-focused that we don't remember. We have had so many advantages. God owes us none of them.

And those people out there don't... I mean, they're lost. They're facing judgment. They're

facing condemnation.

And we're worried about whether we're out in the sun without a shade. You know, that's what Jonah was doing. The gourd is gone.

I'm angry. Now I'm hot again. God says, Yeah, you care about that gourd? You didn't even earn it.

You didn't do anything to make it happen. It just came in the night and left the night. It's a temporal passing thing.

But these people, these people aren't like a plant. It's not something that comes and goes in a day and it's all had no significance in the long term. These are human beings.

And they don't know any better. Shouldn't I have had compassion on them, God said. And we see in Jonah how much more compassion God has for sinners than even God's people have for them.

That doesn't mean God can let them off the hook. Sinners still have to be judged if they don't repent. But God wants all to repent.

God's not willing that any should perish. That all should come to repentance. And of course, Jonah was supposed to be the evangelist.

And he was. He actually, he didn't bring any good news. He only brought bad news.

You're going to perish. But apparently God used that and he converted a whole city and a whole ship. But because it didn't go his way, he didn't rejoice in it.

Where in the New Testament, it's sort of like the Pharisees. All these tax collectors and sinners were coming to Christ to be saved. That's a good thing.

The Pharisees should be glad. Oh, well, we're for God. It's great to see these people come back to God.

And Jesus said, well, you know, this is like a prodigal who's come home. This is like a sheep that was lost has been found. This is like a coin that was lost by someone who had very few coins and she found it.

She calls all her friends, come rejoice with me. The prodigal son's father said, come and let's have a party because my son was lost. Now he's found.

That's God's heart for the lost. And we see it in Jonah. We don't see it in Jonah, the man.

It's conspicuous by its absence from him. But we see it in the book. God says, listen, I have compassion on these people.

I see these people a little more sympathetically than you do. Because I know how little they know. And probably you'd be no better if you knew as little as they do.

You might even be worse. So that's the lesson of Jonah. There's more lessons in it, by the way, but we've used up the time allotted.

So I'm going to go ahead and end it with that.