

## **Jonah (1.7.18)**

Jonah 1:1-3

**Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me." But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.**

Matthew 12: 38-42

**Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just 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 at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.**

## **Historical Context**

**Nineveh** at the time of Jonah (mid to late 700 B.C.), was the capitol city of

Assyria and the Assyrian Empire which encompassed what we now know today as Syria, Turkey, Iran, and Iraq. *Nineveh* was a massive city (150,000 pop.) - with a circumference of nearly sixty miles. The Assyrian empire collapsed in 604 B.C along with the desolation of its greatest city, *Nineveh*. 100 years ago our knowledge of the Assyrian empire and the magnificent capital *Nineveh* was extremely limited, almost non-existent. In fact, *Nineveh* was so laid waste that it was considered a total myth of the Bible throughout most recent centuries. Ancient historians, generational memories, biblical references of course survived to reveal the impact of its power, greatness, and character but very little was known about its fate and exact location. Other cities which had perished, as *Palmyra*, *Persepolis*, and *Thebes*, had left ruins to mark their sites and tell the story of their former greatness; but of this city, imperial *Nineveh*, not a single evidence seemed to remain, and the very place on which it had stood was only matter of speculation and conjecture. In fulfillment of the prophecy of ***Nahum***, God made "*an utter end of the place.*" It became a "*desolation.*"

After being lost for more than two thousand-five hundred years, the city was discovered and disinterred. It was discovered by the Frenchman Paul Emil Botta, and the Englishman Austen Henry Layard, in the mid-nineteenth century. The site of ancient *Nineveh* was extensively excavated, and its occupational levels reach far back to the beginning of civilization. Shockingly *Nineveh*'s location is almost adjacent to *Mosul* across the *Tigris River* on the eastern bank. The core city itself, with the walls around it, was 4 miles long and 2 miles wide. It is interesting that the prophet *Jonah* described the "great city" of *Nineveh* as a "3 days journey" across, obviously referring to the whole territory as does other parts of the Bible. At

the time of Botta and Layrd's discovery the residents of *Mosul* and *Iraqi* government had no clue it was there, mostly because there was no physical evidence of its existence, secondly because of their historical and biblical illiteracy. Botta and Layard began to search the vast mounds that lay along the eastern bank of the *Tigris River* opposite the side of *Mosul*. After extensive excavation the Arabs whom they employed in the project, came upon the ruins of a building at the mound of *Khorsabad*, which, on further exploration, turned out to be the royal palace of *Sargon*, one of the Assyrian kings.

The Nineveh culture brought many scientific, philosophical and practical advances to humanity including things that we take for granted today. Everyday most of us lock our doors when we leave the house, locks and keys were invented and used in ancient Nineveh. They also invented a system that kept time and ascribed 360 degrees to a circle. They are given credit for inventing paved roads, the first postal system, the first use of iron, the first libraries, the first plumbing, flush toilets and sewage aqueducts. They came up with the first governmental administration of dividing of territories ruled by local governors reporting to a central authority.

But yet, they could not sustain enough of a moral and ethical standard to avoid being consumed by wickedness, perversion, and evil. The story of Jonah includes their repentance, and for a time it was better. Eventually, their godless hearts became the cause of Nineveh's judgment and its ultimate destruction.

Nahum 2:8-10

**Though Nineveh of old was like a pool of water, Now they flee away. Halt! they cry; But no one turns back. Take spoil of silver! Take spoil of gold! There is no end of treasure, Or wealth of every desirable prize. She is empty, desolate, and waste! The heart melts, and the knees shake; Much pain is in every side, And all their faces are drained of color."**

## **Introduction**

Most people are so familiar with the story of Jonah that nothing in it surprises or interests them anymore, including the fact that it begins with the word "and." If one of Cathy Caskey's students began one of their English essays with the word "and." she would probably wonder if they had lost the ability to use the English language - in most cases, they have... lol! Interestingly enough, Jonah is one of fourteen Old Testament books that open with the word "and." All of these books like Jonah remind us of God's "ongoing story" of mercy, forgiveness, and His love that continues on and on throughout history until it finally includes you and I today. Though the Bible is comprised of sixty-six different books, it always tells only one story; and God keeps communicating that message to us, even though we don't always take the time listen to it.

## **Why Jonah?**

As we enter 2018, with the challenge of the **521 Multiplied** before us, you are probably asking **why Jonah?** That answer is simple - why not. The

more complete answer is that you eventually will find out (as did I), that there are many similarities and connections to the emotive personality, predictable behavior, and the spiritual message and mission of Jonah. All of those can be used as powerful teaching moments for ourselves personally to move forward into faith and the exciting challenge of the 521 Multiplied.

### **Who is Jonah?**

The next good question would likely be **who is Jonah?** Was he real? Or, was he and his story nothing more than an ancient allegory? Anyone who chooses to consider the Book of Jonah an allegory or a parable should note that **2 Kings 14:25** identifies Jonah as a real person, a Jewish prophet from *Gath-Hepher* in *Zebulun* who ministered in the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the reign of *Jeroboam II* (793-753 B.C.) should also note (from our opening scripture reading in Matthew 12), that Jesus considered Jonah a real and significantly historic person and referred to him as a "type and shadow" of His own death, burial, and resurrection.

The rule and reign of *Jeroboam II* was a time of great prosperity in Israel; the nation regained lost territory and expanded both its boundaries and influence. But it was also a time of moral and spiritual decay as the nation moved away from God and into many forms of paganism and worship of idols. Jonah's contemporaries *Hosea* and *Amos* both courageously denounced the wickedness of the rulers, priests, and people. It's worth noting that *Hosea* and *Amos* also showed God's merciful concern for other nations, which will be one of our central messages from Jonah.

While Jonah had a ministry to Nineveh, at the time a major city in Assyria, he also had a ministry to Israel through the story of his message and mission in Nineveh. In this process, Jonah realizes God's compassion and mercy for people outside Israel, even those who were their enemies. Israel repeatedly ignored and disobeyed God's calling on them to be a blessing to the Gentiles (Genesis 12:1-3), but, like Jonah, God was not letting them off the hook. He expected them to do something with what they had been given. And, like Jonah, they had to be disciplined. History shows that Assyria would conquer Israel and Babylon would take Judah into captivity. Jonah's book and story clearly illustrates the sovereignty of God, as well as great love and mercy. He is the "God of the second chance," even for rebellious nation like Israel, and a stubborn prophet like Jonah.

### **What is Jonah's Story?**

Of course, after meeting him, we logically should have a curiosity for his **Jonah's story?** By now I probably do not have to tell you it's not simply about a great fish (mentioned only four times), or a great city (named nine times), or even a stubborn and disobedient prophet (mentioned eighteen times). It's about God and people - all people! God is mentioned thirty-eight times in these four short chapters, and if you eliminated Him from the book, the story wouldn't make sense. The book and story of Jonah is about the will and expectations of God and how we respond to them. It's also about the love and mercy of God and how we use it to make difference with others. In fact, the story about Jonah is about so much more than a big city, big fish, and a prophet with a big attitude. Let me tell you about a little artistic and biblical history that might help me explain just how wide open the story of Jonah truly is.

There is a church called St. John's about an hour outside of Amsterdam, North Holland - Netherlands, in the town Gouda (yes, famous for the cheese). Cheese is not the point. Gouda is really a town built around St. John's, the famous Dutch church. The history of St. John's is not only remarkable but its beauty is breathtaking," The church is the length of a football field and a half, with 70 stained-glass windows, with all but two of them from the late 1500s. The most recent is a window from 1947 depicting the liberation of Holland, with airplanes, a concentration camp and a man making a "V for victory" sign. The largest of the beautiful windows at St. John's is more than 60 feet high.

Because I love history and stained glass, I have a little background about the history of this church and how the beautiful stained-glass window depictions came to be. Originally, St. John's was a Catholic church. In 1552 it had been struck by lightning and almost destroyed. The people of Gouda decided to rebuild it, and asked various individuals and groups from the community to donate windows designed with biblical themes, characters and their stories. Their response and contribution was miraculous. They created and added to the church all but two of its present day stained-glass depictions. In 1573, because of the force of the Protestant Reformation and its movement, the Gouda council prohibited the practice of Roman Catholicism, and in the summer, it changed hands and was opened for the Protestant Dutch Reformed faith, which still worships there today. In 1939, the stained glass was removed in fear of being destroyed because of the war with Germany. Later during the war, in 1944, when 51,000 men were called for service from Amsterdam and Rotterdam, about 2800 men were

marched to Gouda, where they spent the night in this church on November 10, 1944.

I tell you this story about St. John's for one reason. One of the most magnificent of the 70 windows is the depiction of Jonah and his story. Among the great gothic architecture St. John's and its breathtaking beauty is the window depiction of Jonah, made and donated by a fisherman named Dirck Crabreth in 1560. The window is Jonah's story and a sermon in itself. In the background are the storm clouds and the ship. Jonah is being thrown overboard and intercepted by the whale. In the foreground is a mighty mouth and part of a huge blue eye. The Prophet is emerging, his body language suggesting determination; his clothing, action. His eyes look at you; there is a glimmer of humor in his expression. His finger points to a banner he is carrying, with a slogan in Latin: "*Behold, something greater than Jonah is here,*" a quotation from Matthew 12:41, which links Jonah and Jesus (more on that later). My whole point is to say to all of us today... there is something here for us greater than Jonah. That message is of course - Jesus. But, what Jesus wants from us is greater than what we are and what we have! This isn't just about a wicked city, a giant fish, and a disobedient Jew.



## **Jonah (1.14.18)**

### **The Five Storylines of Jonah**

**The Rebellion** - (Jonah 1:1–3). The story begins as Jonah the son of Amittai is called by God:

**“Go to Nineveh, that great city, and speak out against it; I am aware of how wicked its people are.”**

Ordinarily when a prophet is told, **“Arise, go to X”** the story then continues, **“And so the prophet arose and went to X.”** But not so much with Jonah. When God told Jonah to go northeast to Nineveh, he sets out 180 degrees opposite, toward Joppa, to catch a boat to Tarshish (probably Spain). Immediately we are left thinking... what will happen to a prophet who so blatantly disobeys a direct command from God? Surely this can't be good. And if you have a sense of God's heart, you also wonder what will happen to the city of Nineveh because of Jonah disobedience? This is more than just a thickening plot-line for an interesting story. It is unfortunately a repeated human behavior that always has a terrible consequence. The next question should then be - is this a teachable moment for me?

**The Storm** - (Jonah 1:4–16). Here is the answer to what happens to Jonah. The Lord sends a storm, the story continues, and the ship carrying Jonah is in danger of breaking up and sinking - leaving all of its passengers to perish. Now we meet the ship's crew. Historical research from an ancient Midrasha (a Jewish Seminary for women) tells that a ship

with that kind of travel range would have had a crew from at least 50 to 70 nations of the world. This would have been for the purpose of commerce and control of the ship. In any case they were not Israelites (Jews) and would be considered outsiders and gentiles by those who would hear the story. How did this crew respond to this violent storm? Of course, **they prayed**, "each one to his own god." Then **they act**, throwing the cargo overboard to lighten the ship. And where is Jonah, the hero/anti-hero of our story? The captain finds him down in the hold (space for cargo) of the ship, sound asleep. The captain (again, an "outsider") seems a decent and pious sort, too. His first words are not, "Why aren't you helping?" but "Why aren't you praying?" He says to Jonah,

**"Get up and pray to your god for help. Maybe he will feel sorry for us and spare our lives."**

The storm gets worse. The crew cast lots to determine who is responsible for their misfortune. Perhaps there is a criminal on board. Of course, the lot falls on Jonah.

Now the crew comes at Jonah with a barrage of questions, like CNN going after Sarah Huckabee Sanders. "Who are you? What are you doing here? Where are you from? What is your work?" Jonah tells them that he is a Hebrew who worships the Lord, the God of Heaven, who made both sea and land. Jonah tells the terrified men that he is running away from the Lord.

**“Throw me overboard and the storm will end and the sea will calm down,”**

But they do not listen to Jonah, and ironically the sailors try to save his life. They row all the harder to reach the shore. Their sense of duty and human compassion and concern is impressive under the circumstances - they owe Jonah nothing. But their efforts are in vain because storm and sea become even more difficult and treacherous. Finally, they throw Jonah overboard and the sea becomes calm. The awestruck crew offer a sacrifice and promise to serve the God of Israel.

**The Fish** - (Jonah 1:17–2:10). The story could have ended there, with Jonah disappearing under the waves. Then the point of Jonah’s story would have been, “Don’t disobey the Lord’s call!” But there is more. Jonah has not been forgotten and left to drown at sea. God sends a great fish to swallow Jonah; for three days and three nights the prophet makes his home in the fish’s belly. From there the bible says the he offered a prayer to the Lord. British author Aldous Huxley (Brave New World - 1932) wrote a sketch of the scene:

“Seated upon the convex mound  
of one vast kidney Jonah prays  
and Sings his canticles and hymns.  
Making the hollow vault resound  
God’s goodness and mysterious ways  
‘Till the great fish spouts music as he swims.”

Then the Lord gives the command, the fish spits Jonah up on the shore-line and there he is, sitting in the sunshine.

**The City** - (Jonah 3:1–10). We are right back where we started from. The Lord speaks to Jonah, “Arise, go to Nineveh....This time Jonah having gotten his sea legs under him knows better than to disobey. He “arose and went to Nineveh.” However, he goes without sincere or genuine enthusiasm to deliver his message, five words in Hebrew: **“In forty days Nineveh will be destroyed.”**

This announcement is like a spark that sets off an explosion of Ninevite repentance - from top to bottom. From the king to the humblest servants, even the animals, all put on sackcloth and sit in ashes to show that they are sorry for their sins. And God changes his mind and decides, not to punish them. Nineveh will survive - for a while!

**The Question** - (Jonah 4:1–11). How does Jonah feel about all this? We might expect him to be happy. Then when he returned home and his family asks him, “How did it go in Nineveh?” he would be overjoyed! What evangelist would not be delighted at the response of the people of Nineveh! But as we see in the real story, Jonah is not happy at all about how things went. “Lord, didn’t I say before I left home that this is just what you would do?” he complains. “That’s why I did my best to run away to Tarshish. I knew that you are a loving and merciful God, always patient, always kind, and always ready to change your mind and not punish. Now

then, Lord, let me die. I am better off dead than alive." (Jonah 4:2–3).

Here is what I hear Jonah saying. "If those outsiders from Nineveh get in, then I want out!" Do you hear that too? Well, in so many words he is - and even more.

Next Jonah sits outside the city of Nineveh and just looking at it, wondering what is going to happen. The heat is unbearable. The Lord causes a plant to grow, giving him some shade. This changes his mood briefly, until God commands a worm to attack the plant and it dies, prompting Jonah to tell God that he is "so deeply grieved about the plant that he wants to die." Jonah is still angry when the Lord asks him a question:

**"You cared about the plant, which you did not work for and which you did not grow, which appeared overnight and perished overnight. And should not I care about Nineveh, that great City, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not yet know their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well?"**

And, there the story ends. Jonah, like you and I, must answer the questions.

**Do I care about what God cares about?**

**If I do, then what am I doing about it?**

## **Jonah (1.21.18)**

### **Jonah's Big Picture: What He Lost In Rebellion - What He Gained In Repentance**

#### **Rebellion**

##### **(Jonah 1:4-10)**

In Jonah's big picture scenario it is wise for us to consider and compare all that he lost in rebellion. Once we have considered the losses and compared the gains, there is logically only one solution for those of us who want to multiply the 521 (maximizing what we have been given by God). First do not rebel against God - but continue to move obediently forward in the full understanding His calling and the blessing of His grace. Secondly, must also maintain and nurture a right heart and fulfill genuine intentions towards God. To do this we do not rely on our expectations of Him and His grace. We are called by God to lead in love, and to serve all people as we lead those who will follow. To rebel against that calling and opportunity is never going to produce the outcome we desire for our life and the lives of those we love.

**Consider that Jonah lost the voice of God (1:4).** We don't read that "the word of the Lord came to Jonah," but that a great storm broke loose over the waters. God was no longer speaking to Jonah through His word; He was speaking to him through His works: the sea, the wind, the rain, the thunder, and even the great fish. Everything in nature was obeying God but Jonah! God even spoke to him through the mercy and superstition of crew

(verses 6-10) who didn't know Jehovah. It's a sad thing when a servant and believer of God gets called out by unbelieving pagans.

**Compare how we often times** believe we are not hearing God's voice. It is probably a good point to ask ourselves if there is even the slightest hint of rebellion in our hearts our attitude towards God in how we are living, loving and leading.

**Consider that Jonah lost his spiritual energy (1:5).** He went to sleep during a fierce storm and was totally unconcerned about the safety of others. The sailors were throwing the ship's wares and cargo overboard, and Jonah was about to lose everything, but he still slept on. "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man" (Proverbs 24:33, NIV).

**Compare how we often times** feel drained of faith and spiritual strength, wondering where is the voice of God and why isn't He talking when we need Him. It is probably a good point to ask ourselves if maybe he was speaking to us while we were too busy to listen, or perhaps we simply did not want to hear what He was saying.

**Consider that Jonah lost his power in prayer (1:5-6).** Even the unbelieving, paganistic crew of *The Perversus* were calling on whatever gods they could think of for help while the only man on board who knew how to pray to the one true God, slept. But of course, that would mean that Jonah would have to confess and repent of his sins, while also deciding to obey

what God had asked him to do. But because he was not yet ready to do that - his prayers for saving himself and the crew were useless. *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me"* (Psalm 66:18). If Jonah did pray, his prayer wasn't answered.

**Compare how we often times** pray for help, favor, and blessing while we are not thinking, speaking, or living like we know that we should. In that condition God is not obligated or interested in our prayer. Loss of power and righteous expectation in prayer is one of the first indications that our hearts and minds have gotten too far from God and the direction He wants us going. God does not bless, favor, or click "Like" to our personal rebellion post. We need to repent - we need to get right with Him.

**Consider that Jonah lost his testimony (1:7-10).** He certainly wasn't living up to his name, for Jonah means "dove," and the dove is a symbol of peace. Jonah's father's name was Ammitai, which means "faithful, truthful," something that Jonah was not. We've already seen that he wasn't living up to his high calling as a Jew, for he had brought everybody trouble instead of blessing, nor was he living up to his calling as a prophet, for he had no message for them from God. When the lot pointed to Jonah as the culprit, he could no longer avoid making a decision.

## **Repentance**

### **(Jonah 2:1-4)**

From an experience of rebellion and discipline. Jonah turns to an experience of repentance and dedication, and God graciously gives him a



new beginning. There is no doubt that Jonah expected to die in the storm at sea, but in spite of his terror, when he woke up inside the fish, he realized that God had for the moment, graciously spared him. As with the Prodigal Son, whom Jonah in his rebellion greatly resembles (Luke 15:11-24), it was the goodness of God that brought him to repentance (Romans 2:4). You can see the progression of both Jonah's emotional and spiritual experience in his prayer. He prayed for God's help (Jonah 2:1-2). "Then Jonah prayed" (2:1) suggests that it was at the end of the three days and three nights when Jonah turned to the Lord for help, but we probably shouldn't press the word "then" too far. The Hebrew text simply reads, "And Jonah prayed." Surely Jonah prayed as he went down into the depths of the sea, certain that he would drown. That would be the normal thing for any person to do, and that's the picture we get from verses 5 and 7. His prayer was born out of affliction, not affection. He cried out to God because he was in danger, not because he delighted in the Lord. It is better that he should pray compelled by any motive than not to pray at all. It's doubtful whether any believer always prays with pure and righteous motives, for our desires and God's directions sometimes conflict.

However, in spite of the fact that he prayed, Jonah still wasn't happy with the will of God. In chapter 1, he was afraid of the will of God and rebelled against it, but now he wants God's will simply because it's the only way out of his danger, and the belly of the fish. The comparisons to us today are familiar... Jonah saw the will of God as something to turn to in an emergency, not something to live by every day of one's life.

## **Exceedingly Jonah**

### **Prophet v Disciple**

#### **1.28.18**

Excerpts from Jonah 1-4

**And 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. Then 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? What is your country? And of what people are you?" And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.**

**Therefore they called out to the Lord, "O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you." So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.**

**Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.**

**But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed to the Lord and said, "O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." And the Lord said, "Do you do well to be angry?"**

**So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."**

Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh. Why? He had already made up his mind what the outcome would be. And here is the crazy part... he was correct. Not something that is often brought up in the story of Jonah, but none the less, very true and telling. We know the tale. "The word of the LORD came to Jonah," speaking to message – not The Word as in John 1 or Genesis 1, being the actual spoken creation, or pervading understanding or knowledge of all things, the undercurrent of reason (more on this later). Jonah received this message and then chose not to exhort this revealed message to the appointed audience. He was swallowed by the fish, whined and complained (or sucked up, brown nosed) and begrudgingly went to deliver God's message to Nineveh. After this, he was upset at the people's repentance, complained some more, and then the book ends. Again, why didn't he want to go to Nineveh?

He hated them. The Assyrian Empire was the enemy. Foreign gods, barbaric practices, wars, battles, pain, hurt, resentment... Why should they be deserving of a prophetic word from God?

**Well, what is a prophetic word, or what is the responsibility of a prophet?**

A prophet is a spokesperson for God. The prophet admonishes, warns, directs, encourages, intercedes, teaches and counsels. He brings the word of God to the people of God and calls the people to respond.

Jeremiah gives us insight into the role of a prophet (chapter 23:18-22) by calling out false prophets, saying:

**For who among them has stood in the council of the Lord**

**to see and to hear his word,**

**or who has paid attention to his word and listened?**

**Behold, the storm of the Lord!**

**Wrath has gone forth,**

**a whirling tempest;**

**it will burst upon the head of the wicked.**

**The anger of the Lord will not turn back**

**until he has executed and accomplished**

**the intents of his heart.**

**In the latter days you will understand it clearly.**

**"I did not send the prophets,**

**yet they ran;**

**I did not speak to them,**

**yet they prophesied.**

**But if they had stood in my council,**

**then they would have proclaimed my words to my people,**

**and they would have turned them from their evil way,**

**and from the evil of their deeds.**

- Standing in the council of God
- Seeing and hearing the word of God
- Paying attention or listening to the word of God
- Proclaiming the word(s) of God to the people

That's a lot of stuff about the word of God.

**dabar:** speech, word

**Original Word:** דָּבָר

**Part of Speech:** Noun Masculine

**Transliteration:** dabar

**Phonetic Spelling:** (daw-baw')

**Short Definition:** word

Interesting to note that prophets are not God. They also are not Jesus. Jesus is the Word of God (capitol W) – and there is a big difference here. A prophet is not a mind reader. A prophet is not a perfect person. A prophet is not without sin. Sound like

anyone you know? Now, I don't mean to hurt the feelings of current day "prophets" who proclaim that they know all and can see all and are infallible. Well, if they get their feelings hurt, then they should have seen that coming I guess.

Prophets are susceptible to the ravages of sin the same as you and me (adjective emotions – exceedingly). However, they have, through calling or devotion, an immense responsibility to spend time standing in the council of God, seeing and hearing God, and more than that paying attention to and listening to God, and one step further, proclaiming the Truth or message (word) that they receive from God.

A prophet must be a man of prayer. In order to stand in the council of God, he must access him the only way that we, as mortal, flesh and blood human beings can, in prayer.

John 4:24

**God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.**

A prophet must wait on God to receive his word. If it were as easy as just simply asking and receiving immediate response from God, I do believe we would have many more prophets today. Again, I apologize to the many current day "prophets" out there.

Psalm 25:5

**Lead me in your truth and teach me,**

**for you are the God of my salvation;**

**for you I wait all the day long.**

Isaiah 51:1-6

**"Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness,**

**you who seek the Lord:**

**look to the rock from which you were hewn,**

**and to the quarry from which you were dug.**

**Look to Abraham your father**

**and to Sarah who bore you;**

**for he was but one when I called him,**

**that I might bless him and multiply him.**

**For the Lord comforts Zion;**

**he comforts all her waste places**

**and makes her wilderness like Eden,**

**her desert like the garden of the Lord;**

**joy and gladness will be found in her,**

**thanksgiving and the voice of song.**

**"Give attention to me, my people,**

**and give ear to me, my nation;**

**for a law will go out from me,**

**and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples.**

**My righteousness draws near,**

**my salvation has gone out,**

**and my arms will judge the peoples;**

**the coastlands hope for me,  
and for my arm they wait.**

A prophet, most times, must suffer in order to fulfill God's purposes. It helps not only with the formation of their person and soul, but it enforces the legitimacy of their message and makes it more consumable.

Ezekiel 4:4-6

**Then lie on your left side, and place the punishment of the house of Israel upon it. For the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their punishment. For I assign to you a number of days, 390 days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment. So long shall you bear the punishment of the house of Israel. And when you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side, and bear the punishment of the house of Judah. Forty days I assign you, a day for each year.**

Hebrews 11:32-38

**And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— of whom the world was not**



**worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.**

A prophet must speak encouragement. Just because we know the verses of destruction does not mean that prophets are all doom and gloom.

1 Corinthians 14:3-4

**On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.**

A prophet must offer guidance and direction. They have advised kings and generals, and they need to do the same for the body of Christ (in an encouraging manner – with Love - or not at all).

1 Samuel 22:5

**Then the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not remain in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah." So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth.**

Make this connection with me today. A prophet and a disciple – do they truly differ? I know that the spiritual gifts that we learn about can designate that certain actions fall upon certain individuals, but I am here today to tell you that no gifts can fall upon those who do not follow the way of the prophet – it is the way to the disciple, it is the teaching of Jesus.

- **Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me.**
- **Whatever you ask for in my name, it will come to you.**
- **Go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**

Pray to God. Spend time with him, in his council. This means:

- **Be present – make time in your life for time with God**
- **Speak your requests – concerns – adoration – thankfulness**
- **See Him and hear Him both in prayer time and in your day-to-day**
- **Pay attention and listen to God – Shut Up! Sometimes**

Wait on God and His timing. Do not rush, do not worry, but trust in him.

- **Make your request**
- **Spend your time (seeing, hearing, paying attention, and listening)**
- **Do not act or speak out of turn, confirm that God has directed**

Suffer for the sake of Jesus. You have to be willing to feel and you have to be willing to allow God to provide for you physically, emotionally, spiritually, and even financially.

- **Enter pain**
- **Enter doubt**
- **Trust His direction**
- **Forgive**

Speak encouragement upon your neighbors and your enemies.

- **Stop hating on people**

- **Stop making excuses, for yourself and others**
- **Stop tearing others and their dreams and ministries down (God will tear down what He does not want)**
- **Stop!**

Offer guidance and direction to your friends, to your family, and to your community. This is one of those “if, then” ones. IF you can do the above, THEN do this.

- **Listen to others first**
- **Bring that to God**
- **Share what God shares with you (after you have waited on God)**

Jonah's trip to Tarshish was him burying his talent in the back yard. He knew God – he was an ultimate 5 most times – but he decided, through his adjective emotions, what path he would take. And God knew all along what would happen, what needed to happen with Jonah.

God was teaching Jonah about the condition of man. Nineveh is the condition of man. Though they would ultimately choose death, God wanted to offer life. God did offer life. God still does offer life.

**Prophets shared a word from God. Because of Jesus, we share the Word of God.**

## **Jonah**

**(2.4.18 – 2.11.18)**

### **Jonah's Big Picture: What He Lost In Rebellion - What He Gained In Repentance**

Jonah 2:2-5

**"I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; Yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.' The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord!"**

## **Rebellion**

**(Jonah 1:4-10)**

In Jonah's big picture scenario it is wise for us to consider and compare

all that he lost in rebellion. Once we have considered the losses and compared the gains, there is logically only one solution for those of us who want to multiply the 521 (maximizing what we have been given by God). First do not rebel against God - but continue to move obediently forward in the full understanding of His calling and the blessing of His grace. Secondly, we must also maintain and nurture a right heart and fulfill our genuine intentions towards God. To do this, we do not rely solely on our expectations of Him and His grace. He has already done his part - Jesus. It is now our time to step up and be who He wants us to be and do what He wants us to do. In other words fulfill His expectations of us. We are called by God to lead in love, and to serve all people as we lead those who will follow. To rebel against that calling and opportunity is never going to produce the outcome we desire for our life and the lives of those we love. In Jonah's rebellion against God's expectations of him, there was a lot that he lost

**Consider that Jonah lost the voice of God (1:4).** We don't read that "the word of the Lord came to Jonah," but that a great storm broke loose over the waters. God was no longer speaking to Jonah through His word; He was speaking to him through His works: the sea, the wind, the rain, the thunder, and even the great fish. Crazy how everything in nature at that point was obeying God but Jonah! God even spoke to him through the mercy and superstition of the crew (verses 6-10) who didn't know Jehovah God. It's a sad thing when a servant and believer of God gets called out by unbelieving pagans.

**Compare how we often times** believe we are not hearing God's voice. It is probably a good point to ask ourselves if there is even the slightest hint of rebellion in our hearts our attitude towards God in how we are living, loving and leading.

**Consider that Jonah lost his spiritual energy (1:5).** He went to sleep during a fierce storm and was totally unconcerned about the safety of others. The sailors were throwing the ship's wares and cargo overboard, and Jonah was about to lose everything, but he still slept on. "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man" (Proverbs 24:33, NIV).

**Compare how we often times** feel drained of faith and spiritual strength, wondering where is the voice of God and why isn't He talking when we need Him. It is probably a good point to ask ourselves if maybe he was speaking to us while we were too busy to listen, or perhaps we simply did not want to hear what He was saying.

**Consider that Jonah lost his power in prayer (1:5-6).** Even the unbelieving, pagan crew of *The Perversus* were calling on whatever gods they could think of for help while the only man on board who knew how to pray to the one true God, slept. But of course, that would mean that Jonah would have to confess and repent of his sins, while also deciding to obey what God had asked him to do. But because he was not yet ready to do that - his prayers for saving himself and the crew were useless. "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me*" (Psalm 66:18). If Jonah did pray, his

prayer wasn't answered.

**Compare how we often times** pray for help, favor, and blessing while we are not thinking, speaking, or living like we know that we should. In that condition God is not obligated or interested in our prayer. Loss of power and righteous expectation in prayer is one of the first indications that our hearts and minds have gotten too far from God and the direction He wants us going. God does not bless, favor, or click "Like" to our personal rebellion post. We need to repent - we need to get right with Him.

**Consider that Jonah lost his witness (1:7-10).** He certainly wasn't living up to his name, for Jonah means "dove," and the dove is a symbol of peace. Jonah's father's name was Ammitai, which means "faithful, truthful," something that Jonah was not. We've already seen that he wasn't living up to his high calling as a Jew, for he had brought everybody trouble instead of blessing, nor was he living up to his calling as a prophet, for he had no message for them from God. When the lot pointed to Jonah as the bad-guy, he could no longer keep silent or avoid making a decision.

## **Repentance**

### **(Jonah 2:1-4)**

From an experience of rebellion and discipline. Jonah turns to an experience of repentance and dedication, and God graciously gives him a new beginning. There is no doubt that Jonah for a time expected to die in the storm at sea, but in spite of his terror, when he woke up inside the fish, he realized that God had at least for the moment, graciously spared him.

Just like the story of the Prodigal Son's rebellion (Luke 15:11-24), Jonah also found his moment of mercy where God that brought him to repentance (Romans 2:4). In Jonah's repentance moment, you can see the emotional and spiritual progression as he desperately turns to God in a prayer (Jonah 2:1-2). Jonah's prayer for help came at the end of a three day hellish nightmare, at which point he finally surrendered to God's conditions, expectations, and his calling to Nineveh. The Hebrew text simply reads, "And Jonah prayed." However, it's hard for me to imagine that Jonah wasn't praying from the very moment they threw his rebellious behind overboard to drown. To repent and pray for help would be the normal thing for any person of faith to do, and that's the picture we finally get from Jonah in verses 2-9, of chapter 2. His prayer was born out of affliction and fear, and He cried out to God because he was in danger of His judgment, not necessarily because he was delighting in His word, but because he was ready to obey His word. But it is important to note that it is always better to pray motivated by any reason or circumstance than not to pray at all. It's doubtful whether any believer always prays with pure and righteous motives - our desires and God's directions are most always in contention until we completely surrender.

However, in spite of the fact that he repented out of desperation, Jonah repented and prayed. No he still wasn't happy about what God expected of him, but because of his unique mission and message Jonah's would always struggle with what God asked. The lens of history will forever can show that Jonah's repentance was primarily motivated because he wanted God's intervention and rescue from his life-threatening



circumstances (the belly of a fish somewhere in the western Mediterranean). The comparisons to us today are familiar enough to make a connection. Jonah saw the will of God as something to turn to in case of an emergency or crisis, not something to be lived out in his love of God and neighbor in surrendered obedience every day of his life. Does that not sound familiar? However, God got from Jonah what He wanted - the message delivered to the people He wanted it delivered to. When Jonah repented he got what he wanted - to live and not die. Here are a few of the things that Jonah gained in repentance.

**In Repentance - Jonah could Pray in Good Conscience for God's Favor and Help.**

**In Repentance - Jonah could Accept and Receive God's Discipline not Resent and Resist it.**

**In Repentance - Jonah could Trust God's Purposes and Promises for not only His Life, but also the Lives of Others.**

**In Repentance - Jonah could Surrender and Embrace God's Will, Taking it on His Own.**

**In Repentance - Jonah could Save not only Himself, but Thousands upon Thousands of his Enemies.**

**Jonah**

**(2.18.18)**

### **The Final Connection: Jonah-Jesus-521**

The mission of our day is God's mercy made available for people of all color, creed, and culture. From every dark and hidden corner to every great and wicked city of the world. The message of that mission is that God cares for all people, and He loves all people, and He has made a way of hope for all people. As noble and glorious as that sounds, there is also a painful reality that comes with it. Not everyone wants God's mercy, nor will they love Him back - most will reject His gift to them. The word about that rejection for us on the inside is this... in spite of what we think, feel, or want, God loves and cares for the ones on the outside too - and until such time as we hear differently (like Jonah) that is our mission and that is our message! He loves (as we all sang the song growing up) all the little children of the world - and He wants us to tell them, sometimes over and over again!! It is not far from what Jesus said,

**"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world,**

**and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God."**

Jonah, as everybody at Reunion knows by now, is a story about a prophet and about a "great fish," which, by the time Matthew wrote his biography of Jesus, had been transformed in the popular imagination into some species of whale (Matthew 12:40). In the *Good News Bible*, for example, a series of twenty-one sketches trace the course of Jonah's story—but there is no picture of the whale! Such a huge creature, however (as we have learned), cannot be so easily dismissed from the prophetic themes and messages of Jonah. There are spiritually significant connections to Jonah and his story everywhere.

The most significant is a primary connection of the Jonah story with our hope in Christ, and then our call from Christ that comes from the New Testament. Jesus said,

Matthew 12:40

**"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"**

Jonah's experience of being swallowed and then delivered is understood

by most all non-liberal theologians as a type of preview of the death and resurrection of Jesus - it is called a Christo-logical interpretation. This interpretation of the Jonah story gives us a pretty clear preview of the story of Jesus. It is also called it a *"type and shadow."* Let me explain.

Front and center of the Sistine Chapel in Rome, is Michelangelo's *Jonah and the Great Fish*. Knowing that the bible is filled with people of much more significance and impact, I wondered how did the little and bizarre story of Jonah occupy such an important position in historical art and the creative mind and beauty of Michelangelo? The answer of course was in the words of Jesus... *"behold, something greater than Jonah is here."* By now I hope that we have all agreed that there is something extremely unique about Jonah in the Bible and his story to us. Think for a moment about the four weeks we have invested into Jonah. Let me tell you what has been happening - full circle it has been a process of us making connection to Jonah - and then the connection of Jonah to Christ - Christ to Jonah - moving then to the connection of Christ to us, completed with the connection of us back to Jonah. Interesting, right? So, to finish this series I want to walk us back through the connection of Jonah to Christ. Let's answer a couple of important questions.

**Does the Old Testament and its characters and covenants truly connect to Christ and the New Testament covenant?**

**If so, doesn't that make Jonah and other Old Testament prophets like him not only relevant, but vital to our understanding and**

## revelation of faith?

Jonah was a type of Christ in that he was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. Just as he underwent a typical death and resurrection, so our Lord Jesus died and was raised for our justification. After Jonah was typically resurrected from the belly of the fish he went to the Gentiles. After Jesus was raised from the dead He went, through His apostles, to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. Another significant example is that Jonah is the only Hebrew prophet (Old Covenant) called by God to address and deliver a salvation message to a nation other than Israel, making him (in this context) a *pre-cursor* to the New Covenant to be revealed to all people of all nations and through the person of Jesus Christ.

These Jonah images portray and prefigure Jesus's prayerful agony as he accepted his bitter cup of suffering in Gethsemane, his being lifted up, and his feeling forsaken on Calvary. These were followed by the images of his death and resurrection ministry. In Jonah's miraculous third-day deliverance from the Lord's great fish, you and I can easily visualize the dynamic image of Jesus's rising from the dead with his third-day resurrection. Jesus himself called attention to this likeness when he referred to it with His disciples as "the sign of Jonah." The miraculous image of Jonah's mission and message to Nineveh's and their repentance followed by an era of peace and the fear of God, in a worldly city provides images that symbolize the Lord's second coming as the world's Savior and Judge.

So Jonah was considered the first "ecumenical" of the Hebrew "Old Covenant" prophets, reminding not only Israel but all peoples that "God the Creator of all" exists, loves and cares for all. When I look at Michelangelo's painting it says far more to me than... *"here is a painting of the rebellious prophet whose God caused a great fish to swallow him because he refused deliver a message that would save the enemies of his people."* What I see is the heart and Spirit of the same God who not only raised Jesus from the dead, but also the same God who created the heavens and the earth, and the God who spoke not only through the Hebrew prophets, but also through the sacred writings and self-sacrifice of generations of believing gentiles - consisting of all race, creed and country. I see the God who spoke through the thinkers, the orators, the artists, the poets, the musicians, the singers and songwriters, and through men and women both willing and un-willing, approved and unapproved to show His unfailing and unending love for all mankind. That is a type (reflection of) and shadow (of things to come) of Jesus and His unrestricted and unending love.

The God of the Bible both Old Testament and New, has never been the exclusive property of rabbis and, theologians, scholars and priests, professors and preachers. It has never been the sole possession of nations, religions, kingdoms and cultures. Though many have tried to lay exclusive claim to its content and universal authority and influence, it's only possessor and authority is itself and the God who inspired it by His Spirit. Christ remains the Word of God, given to all, and for all.

**The Bible and its stories, its lessons, its truth, its meaning, and its hope has always been the book for all the people. Red, yellow, black, and white. Muslim, Jewish, Atheist, Agnostic, and Christian. Heterosexual, homosexual, gay, straight, gender-specific, gender-not or gender-neutral. Accepted or rejected, obeyed, disobeyed, believed or not believed - the Bible is the everlasting word of God for all people. And that is our 521 Multiplied connection. What God has given to all of us at Reunion is not just for us - it is for all the people and must be multiplied.**