

# JONAH



DIVE INTO GOD'S PATIENT, SAVING GRACE

**Rev. Dr. Randy Rozelle**

# Jonah's Setting (Part 1)

*“Jeroboam II restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which He spoke by His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher.”*

*2 Kings 14:23-27*



# Jonah's Setting (Part 2)

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# Jeroboam II

**Reigned 41 years (793 - 753 BC) in Israel/Northern Kingdom**

- Territorial expansion
- Financial prosperity
- Social, moral, and religious degeneration
- God did not give up on the Northern Kingdom yet but continued to send them true prophets (until 722 BC).
- *Jonah* written around 790 BC.

# About *Jonah*

- Most widely known among 12 Minor Prophets
- Not a theological lightweight (39 of its 48 Bible verses reference God)
- Double act: Moses-Pharaoh; David-Goliath; Daniel-The Lion's Den; Jonah-The Whale
- Not a fish story: only mentioned in 2:1, 2, and 11, how can “the great fish” be center stage?
- God's open-ended question to Jonah!

**Literary masterpiece:**  
simple storyline, structure,  
repetition, humor, hyperbole,  
irony, double-meaning

# Great-ness (*gadol*) in *Jonah*

- 15x in just 48 verses!
- *great*: city (v2); wind (v4); storm (v4); fear (v10); storm (v12); fear (v16); fish (2:1); city (3:2); city (3:3); ones/people (3:5); ones/nobles (3:7); evil (4:1); joy (4:6); become great (4:10); city (4:11)

**Genre: Historical Narrative**

**NOT allegory, myth, or parable**



# Genre: Historical Narrative

**NOT** allegory, myth, or parable

1. No other book in Scripture is allegorical.
2. Opens: “And it came to pass” (cf. Josh 1:1)
3. Jonah is identified as a historical person.
4. Nineveh is a historical city.
5. God has a real relationship with Jonah.
6. Jesus speaks of Jonah as historical !!!

**“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, someone greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the Sheba....”**

**~Jesus, Matthew 12:39-41; cf. 16:4; Luke 11:29-32**

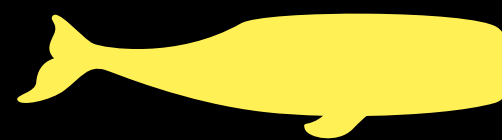
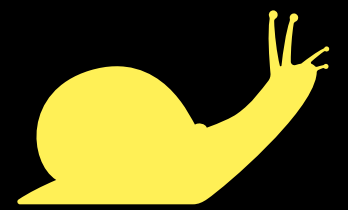
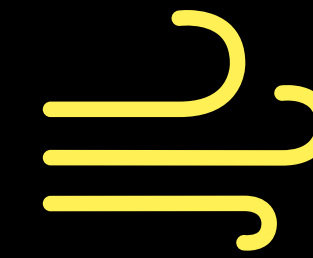
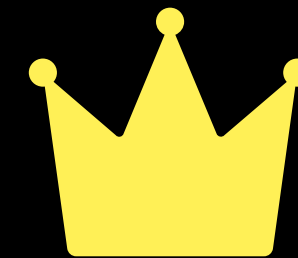
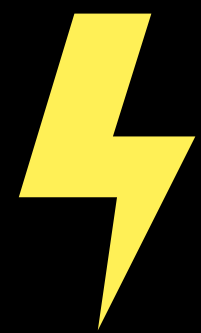
# Themes

- God's sovereignty: heavens, sea, land, creatures
- God can do what He pleases
- God's pouting, wayward prophet
- God's heart for the nations - even Assyria!
- God's mercy and forgiveness - His to dispense

# Great Irony

- Jonah sleeps - heathens pray
- Prophet turns away - pagans turn toward
- Jonah's selfish salvation (2:10; 3:10-4:1)
- God cools down - Jonah heats up
- Luther: "God's Word bears fruit mainly where it is least expected and conversely, produces the least where it's most expected."

# Inline with God @ Beginning



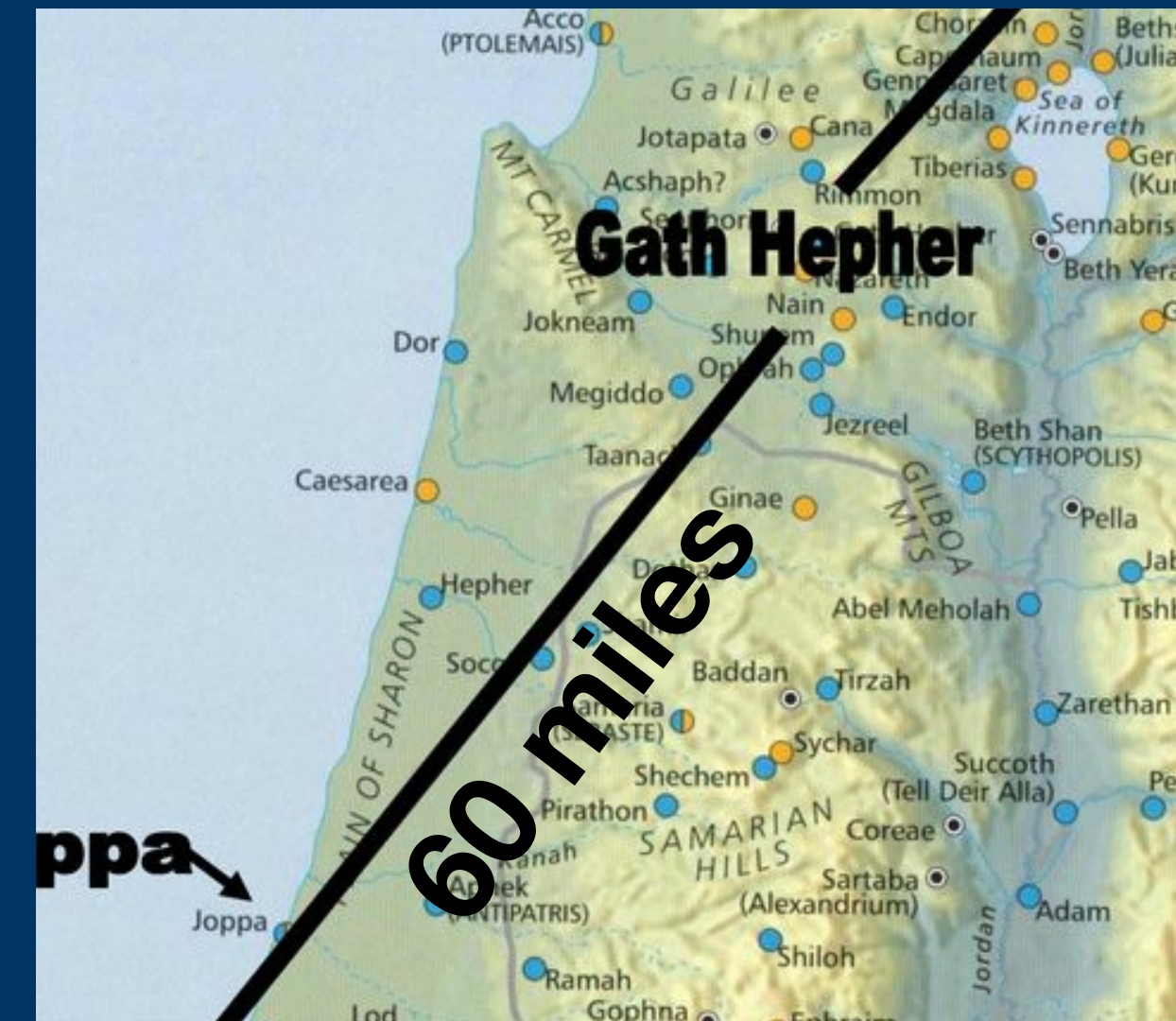
# Jonah 1:1-3

*And it happened that the word of the LORD came to Jonah, son of Amitti, saying: “**Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and call/cry against it that their evil has ascended to My presence/face.**” But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the face/presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and he found a ship that was going to Tarshish and he gave its wages and he went down in it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence/face of the LORD.*



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# Why Jonah's Mad-Dash Away?

## Nineveh "The Great City":

- Capital City of Assyria
- Bible Depictions:
  - "their evil" - Jonah 1:2
  - "a bee" - Isa 7:18
  - "razor that completely shaves away" - Isa 7:20
  - "the rod of God's anger & staff of His indignation" - Isa 10:5
  - "[Judah] eat their own dung & drink their own urine" - Isa 36:12
- Rings put through their lips or noses; sometimes hands, feet, noses, and ears cut off; eyes gouged out; tongues torn from mouths; prisoners were skinned alive and set on fire; their skins were hung near enemy city gates in order to collect tribute & bear witness.



# Why Jonah's Mad-Dash Away?

## Nineveh "The Great City":

- Assyrian King Ashru-Nasirpal II (883-859 BC): "I stormed the mountain peaks and took them. In the midst of the mighty mountains I slaughtered them; with their blood I dyed the mountain red like wool. With the rest of them I darkened the gullies and precipices of the mountains. I carried off their spoil and their possessions. The heads of their warriors I cut off, and I formed them into a pillar over against the city; their young men and their maidens I burned in the fire. I built a pillar over against the city gates, and I flayed all the chief men who had revolted, and I covered the pillar with their skins; some I walled up within the pillar, some I impaled upon the pillar on stakes, and others I bound to stakes around the pillar."

Does Jonah fear for his own life in Nineveh; not want them to hear (and possibly heed) God's word; or other?

## Jonah 1:4-6

And THE LORD hurled (**cast violently**) a great wind to the sea and there was a great storm on the sea and the ship reckoned to be broken. And the sailors feared and they cried out - each man to his god, and they hurled the articles which were on the ship to the sea to cause to lighten from upon them, but JONAH went down to the extreme parts/recesses of the vessel and he laid down and was in a heavy sleep. The chief of the sailors (**rope puller**) came near to him and said to him: “What’s with you being in a heavy sleep? Arise! Call to your God! Perhaps the God will be considerate to us and we will not perish.”

# Reflection Point:

- Whom does Jonah's sin affect?
- Can any human efforts save themselves?
- What power struggle continues in the text?
- Religious & spiritual, but to no avail. Why?
- Irony: What does the pagan captain admonish the LORD's prophet to do?
- Why would verse 6 sound so familiar to Jonah?

## Jonah 1:7-10

And they said - a man to his fellow: “Come, and let us cause to fall lots so we may know on account of whom this evil has come to us.” And they caused to fall lots and the lot fell on Jonah. And they said to him: “Tell us now on whose account this evil has come to us. What is your work, and from where have you come? What is your land, and from where are your people?” And he said to them, “**I am a Hebrew. And the LORD God of the heavens I fear who made the sea and the dry land.**” And the men feared a great fear and they said to him: “What is this you have done?” For the men knew that from the face/presence of the LORD he was fleeing for he had told them.

# Reflection Point:

- Even the pagan sailors realize what?
- Interrogation: vocation, origin, homeland, people
- What does Jonah's creed/confession say as well as NOT say? (his first words in the book)
- For v10b see Genesis 3:8, 13; 4:10; 12:18 = a "formula of indictment!"
- How do biblical texts emphasize words/phrases?
- Who's more like an insider/outsider thus far?

# Jonah 1:11-16

And they said to him: “What shall we do to you so that the sea may calm down from upon us, for the sea is going (1:2) and storming?” He said to them: **“Lift me and hurl me to the sea so that the sea will become calm from upon you, for I am knowing that on account of me this great storm is upon you.”** The men dug to try to return to the dry land, but they were not able because the sea was going and storming upon them.

# Jonah 1:11-16

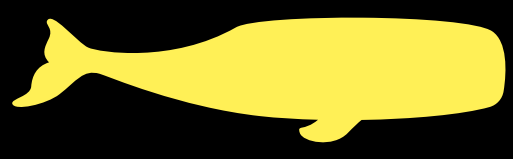
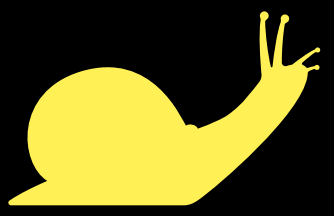
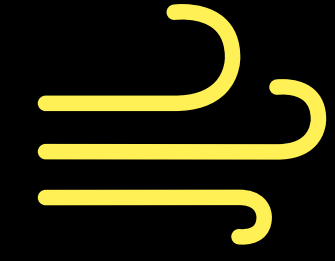
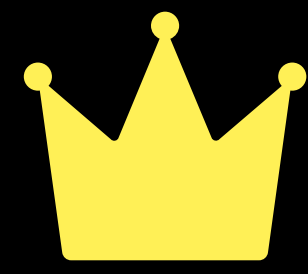
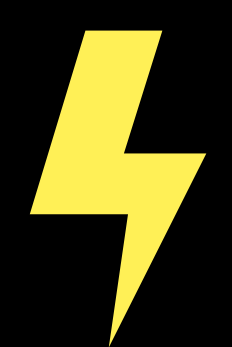
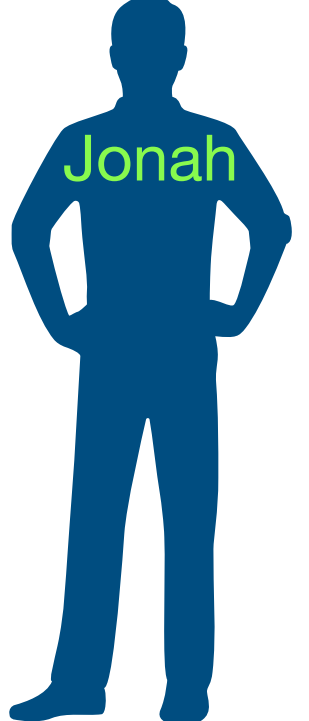
And they called to the LORD and they said, “Please, O LORD! Please do not let us perish by the soul of this man, and do not put upon us innocent blood, for You, O LORD, just as You please, You do.” And they lifted Jonah and they hurled him to the sea, and the sea stood from its raging. And the men feared a great fear for the LORD. And they sacrificed a sacrifice to the LORD, and they vowed vows.



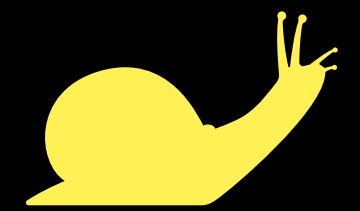
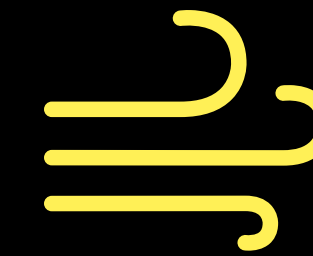
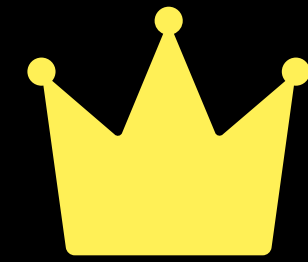
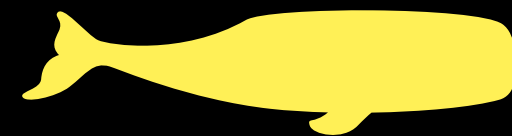
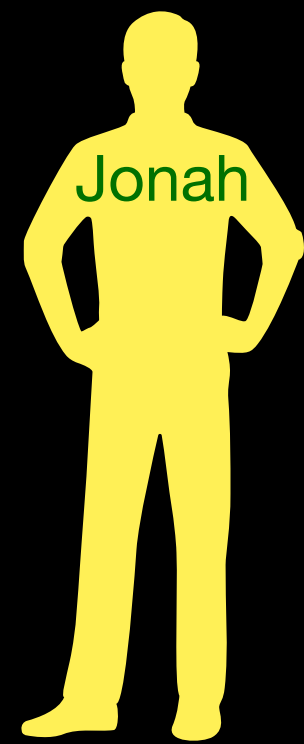
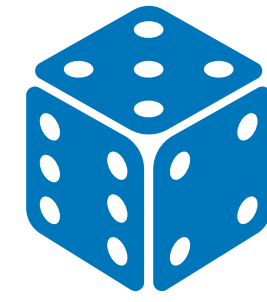
# Reflection Point:

- What's Jonah's analysis and solution?
- What's virtuous about these pagan sailors v13?
- What's profound about their confession v14?
- Compare their "feared a great fear" v16 & v10.
- What evidence of their genuineness is given?
- How would you update the chart now?

# Inline with God: after Chapter 1?



# Inline with God: after Chapter 1



# Jonah 2:1-6

And the LORD assigned a great fish to swallow Jonah, and it came to pass that Jonah in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. And Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish. And he said: *“I called from my distress to the LORD and He answered me. From the belly of Sheol I cried for help; You heard my voice. You caused to send me deep in the heart of the seas and a river surrounded me. All of Your breakers and all of Your waves passed over me. And I myself said: ‘I am being driven out from in front of Your eyes; nevertheless, I will again cause to look to Your holy temple. Waters engulfed me to the soul; primeval deep surrounded me. Reeds were bound to my head.’”*

Cape Cod lobster diver Michael Packard was swallowed by a humpback whale and spit out 40 seconds later.

[nypost.com](https://www.nypost.com) by Natalie O'Neill, **June 11, 2021**

In 1891 a British Admiral testified that a man named James Bartley was eaten by a sperm whale in the South Atlantic only to be cut out of the creature's stomach alive 36 hours later.

Colusa Daily Sun, Volume XIII, Number 299, **21 June 1897**.  
<https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DCS18970621.2.13&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-----1>

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# Reflection Point:

- What does v1 convey?
  - LORD + *assign* = act of salvation
  - God + *assign* = act of judgment
- Which direction is Jonah going?
- What does v2 convey?
- vv3-10: Aquatic Poem (echoes the Psalter)
- v3: Who is Jonah calling to the LORD for?
- What's Jonah's mood here? Who's to blame?

# Jonah 2:7-11

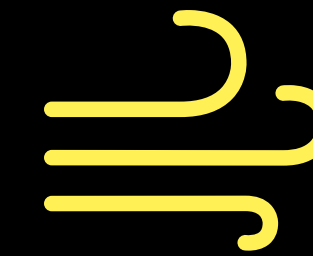
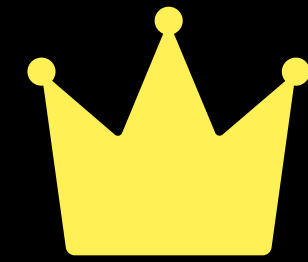
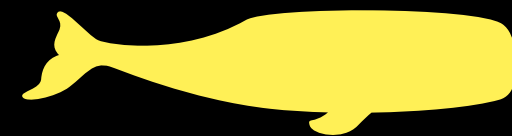
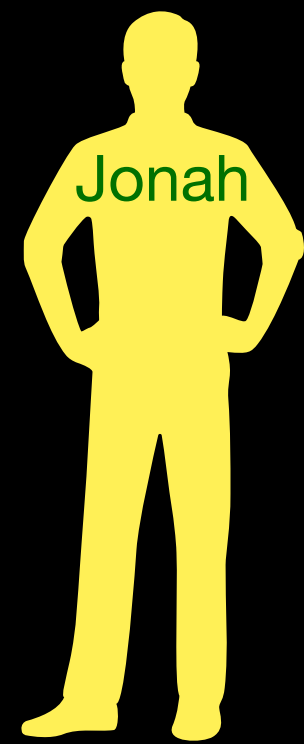
*“To the roots of the mountains I have gone down. The earth with its bars was about me forever. But You have caused my life to go up from the pit, O LORD, my God. When my soul fainted away within me, the LORD I remembered. My prayer came to You, to Your holy temple. Those who regard worthless idols forsake their steadfast love. But I with a voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to You; what I have vowed, I will complete. Salvation is to the LORD.”* And the LORD spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah to the dry land.



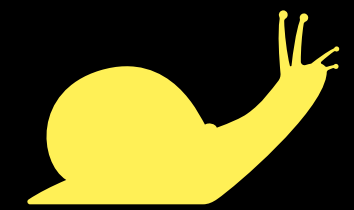
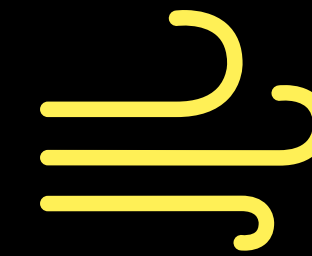
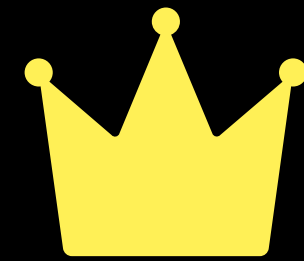
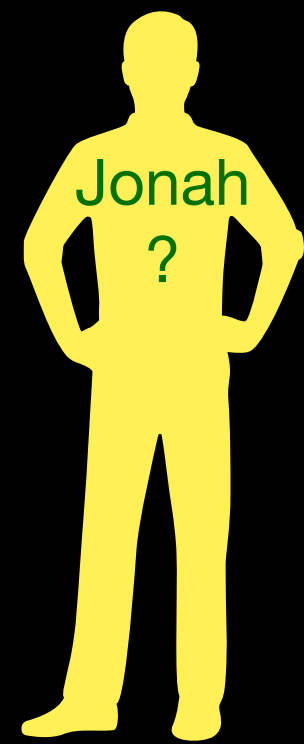
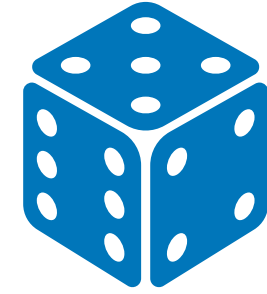
# Reflection Point:

- How do these verses underscore the patient, steadfast love of the LORD?
- How does remembering what God has done in the past impact our present and future?
- How does Jonah seem to regard the sailors?
- Does Jonah have an idol?
- “Salvation is to the LORD” - Chs. 1-2 already?
- What is “the fish’s vomiting” to Jonah? The fish?

# Inline with God: after Chapter 1



# Inline with God: after Chapter 2



# Jonah 3:1-3

And the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying: “**Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and call to her the calling which I am speaking to you.**” And Jonah arose and he went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was a great city to God, a walk/journey of three days.

# Reflection Point:

- Jonah is the only biblical prophet who must be given his assignment a second time!
- Does anything seem missing in vv. 1-2?
- What does the text tell us about Nineveh?
- It's about 500 miles from Mediterranean coast to Nineveh. If a camel can travel 15-37 miles per day, how long would a caravan take?

# Jonah 3:4-6

And Jonah began to go in the city, a journey of one day, and he called out and said, “**Still 40 days and Nineveh will be overturned/changed.**” And the men of Nineveh caused to believe/trust (Heb. *‘aman*) in God, and they called a fast and they wore sackcloths from the greatest of them unto the smallest of them. And the word reached to the king of Nineveh and he arose from his throne and he removed his cloak from upon him and he covered himself with sackcloth and he sat on the dust.

# Reflection Point:

- What leads to such widespread repentance and faith in Nineveh? Today? (cf. Luke 24:46-47)
- How is 40 often used in the Bible?
- What role will the men of Jonah even play on the Last Day? (Matthew 12:41)

# Jonah 3:7-9

And he caused to cry out and he said: “In Nineveh, from a decree of the king and his great ones/nobles: **Let the man and the beast, the cattle and the flock not taste anything. Let them not pasture/feed. And water let them not drink. But let the man and the beast cover themselves with sackcloth and let them call to God with strength, and let them turn - a man from his evil way and from the violence which is in their palms. Who knows? THE God may turn and relent and turn from the fury of his nose/anger so that we will not perish.**”



# Reflection Point:

- The king and his nobles proclaim a hope that rests where?
- This is the most comprehensive repentance recorded anywhere in Scripture! Notice the sincere remorse for and turning from.
- Animals too (cf. Gen 9:8-17; Deut 22:6-7)
- Compare Nineveh to Genesis 6:5-7, 11-12.

# Jonah 3:10

And THE God saw their doings, that they turned from their evil way, and THE God relented over the evil which He had spoken to do to them, and He did not do it.

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Marcion cited “evil” here to support his view that the OT God was “meaner” vs the wholly good God revealed by Jesus in the NT.

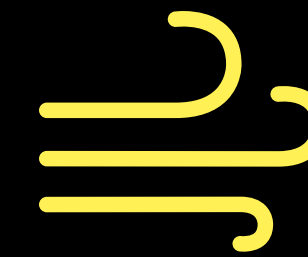
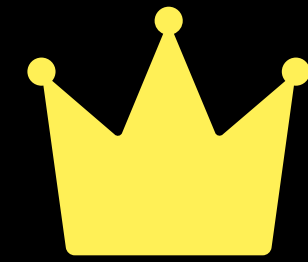
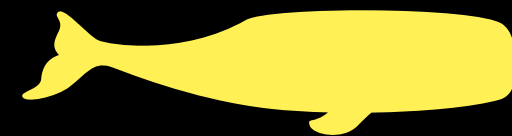
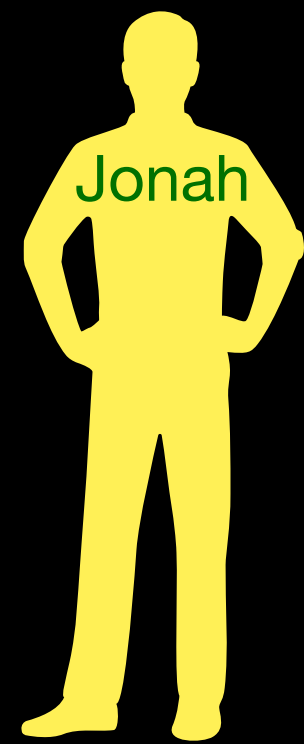
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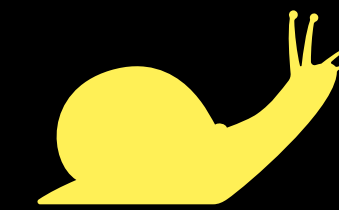
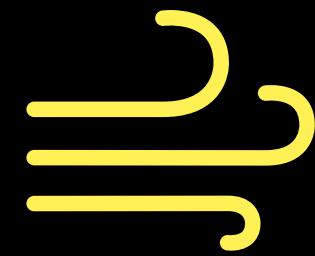
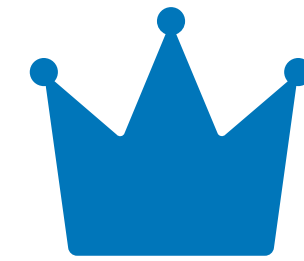
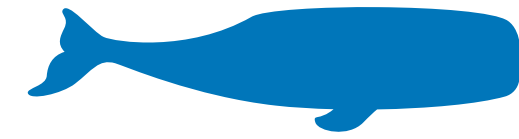
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Tertullian: “What therefore He had justly decreed, having no evil purpose in His decree, He decreed from the principle of justice, not from malevolence.” (*Against Marcion*, 2.24)

# Inline with God: after Chapter 2

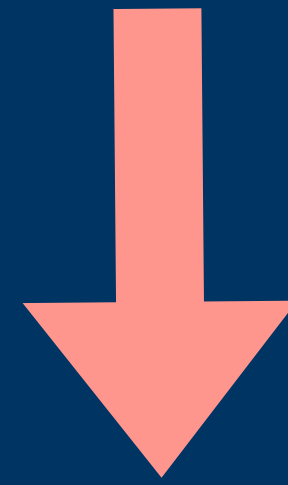


# Inline with God: after Chapter 3



# Chapter 4

climax of the book



Probes deeply into the character  
of **THE LORD** & of Jonah (47 words each)

# Jonah 3:10

And THE God saw their doings, that they turned from their evil way, and THE God relented over the evil which He had spoken to do to them, and He did not do it.



# Jonah 4:1-4

But it was evil to Jonah - a great evil - so he burned with anger. And he prayed to the LORD and he said, “Please, LORD, was this not my word when I was still in my land? Therefore, I sought beforehand to flee to Tarshish because I’m knowing that You are a gracious God and compassionate, slow of anger, and great in steadfast love, and One who relents over the evil. And now, O LORD, take please my soul from me for good is my death from my life.” And the LORD said, “Is it good...the burning with anger [that is] to you?”

# Reflection Point:

- The irony between end of Ch. 3 & start of Ch. 4!
- Nineveh, the storm, king/his people, and God have all turned from their evil except for....?
- What's Jonah's *WHY* (v2) for his actions in 1:3?
- Jonah would rather die than see an entire, evil Gentile city receive God's mercy and turn to Him!
- God's grace is not ours to allot!
- Who needs saving from evil now?

# Jonah 4:5-8

And Jonah went out from the city and he sat to the east of the city. And he made for himself there a booth and he sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen with the city. And the LORD God assigned a plant and it went up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to make shade to deliver him from his evil. And Jonah rejoiced over the plant with great joy. And the God assigned a worm when the dawn came up the next day and it struck the plant and it withered. And when the sun rose, God assigned a scorching east wind, and the sun struck upon the head of Jonah. So he enwrapped himself, asked his soul to die, and said, **“My death is better than my life.”**

# Reflection Point:

- Why does Jonah still build a booth east of Nineveh to wait out the full 40 days?
- What 3 things does the LORD employ toward the goal of saving Jonah from his evil?
- What's the one time in this book when Jonah is truly happy?
- Why Jonah's 2nd death wish/prayer?

# Jonah 4:9-11

And God said to Jonah, “Is it good, the burning anger to you over the plant?” And Jonah said, “It is good, the burning anger that’s to me, even till death.” And the LORD said, “YOU are concerned about the plant for which you did not labor and you did not cause it to become great, which was a son of a night and a son of a night it perished. But I cannot be concerned about Nineveh, the great city, which there is in it more than 120,000 a man who does not know his right from his left, and many a beast/animal?”


# Reflection Point:

- In v4 “The LORD said” ... in v9 “God said to Jonah” - the relationship is deteriorating!
- Jonah can regard a “here-and-gone plant” but God shouldn’t regard a “great and gravely-spiritually ignorant city” with thousands of people and animals in it? (Ps 36:6)
- Note how God’s 3-?s (4, 9, 11) gain momentum!
- How does chapter 4/Jonah end? Why?

# Reflection Point:

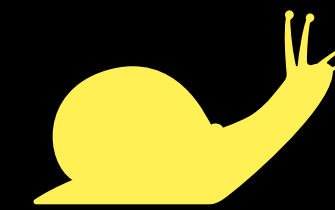
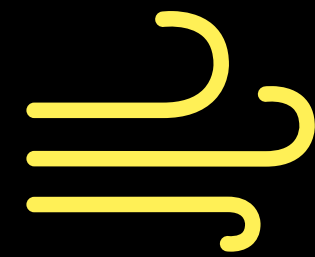
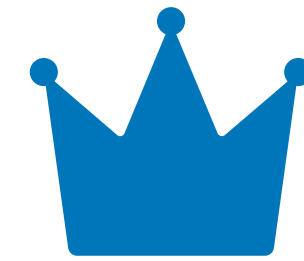
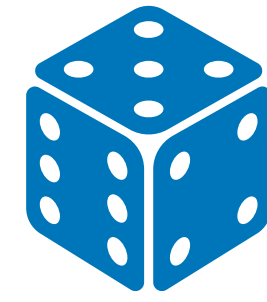
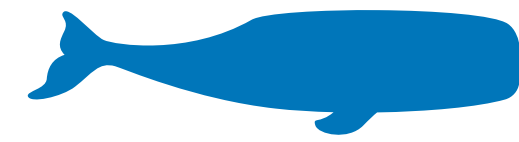
- 4:11 = the “rhetoric of entrapment” - the ending is left intentionally open.
- Does Jonah...
  - Repent, sacrifice, and make vows?
  - Go back to Nineveh and embrace God’s mercy for all people?
  - Stomp back to Joppa still angry/burning?
  - Walk away from his grace-filled God?

# Final Thoughts:

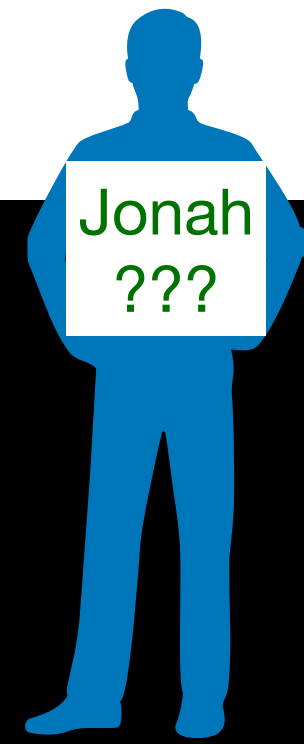
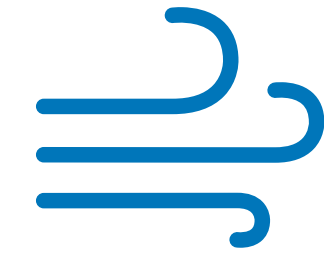
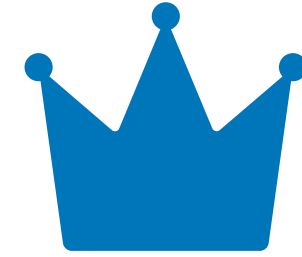
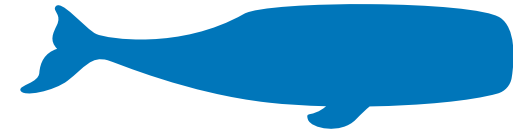
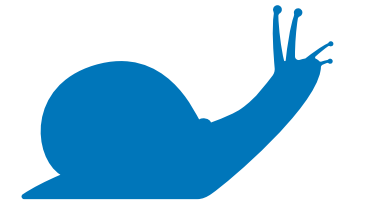
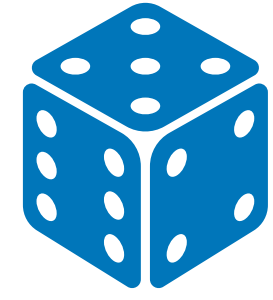
- Prequel to Jonah: Genesis 12:1-3 (cf. Isa 49:6)
- Sequel to Jonah: Matthew 28:19-20 (cf. 24:14)
- God has the first word in Jonah and the last word!
- Same God w/same  for everyone walking in the darkness of sin, unbelief, brokenness, and eternal death (Acts 1:8).
- We share Jonah's propensity to arrogate God's favor to ourselves & be suspicious of, cold towards, or even exclusive of "outsiders."



# Inline with God: after Chapter 3

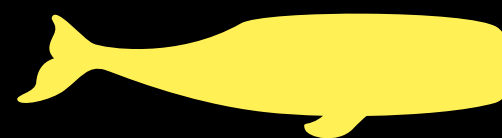
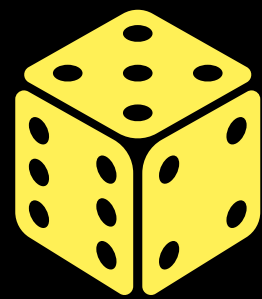
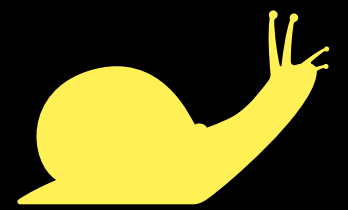
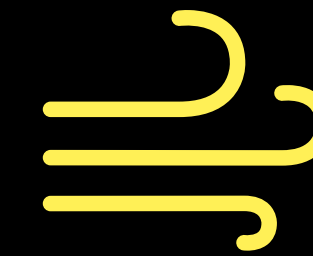
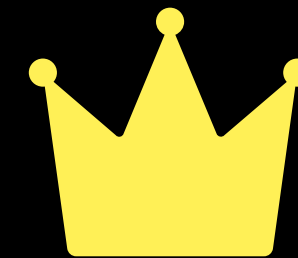
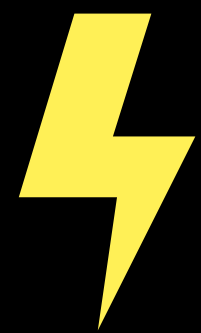


# Inline with God: after Chapter 4



Jonah  
???

# Inline with God @ Beginning



# Inline with God: after Chapter 4

