

# Jonah: Running from the Reality of Grace

Series: Major Message from the "Minor Prophets"

July 2, 2017 – Brad Bailey

Jonah 1:1-2

*The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: <sup>2</sup> "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."*

## Running from God

Jonah 1:1-3

*But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.*

Jonah 1:4-6

*Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. <sup>5</sup> All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. <sup>6</sup> The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us, and we will not perish."*

Jonah 1:17-2:1

*But the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights. From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God.*

## The God of Second Chances

Jonah 3:1-5, 8-10

*Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: <sup>2</sup> "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you." <sup>3</sup> Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city--a visit required three days. <sup>4</sup> On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." <sup>5</sup> The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.*

*"Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. <sup>9</sup> Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish." <sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.*

## The Pride that Alienates Us

Jonah 4:1-3

*But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. <sup>2</sup> He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. <sup>3</sup> Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."*

Jonah 4:4, 9-11

*<sup>4</sup> But the LORD replied, "Have you any right to be angry?" ...<sup>9</sup> But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?" "I do," he said. "I am angry enough to die." <sup>10</sup> But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. <sup>11</sup> But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"*

Luke 15:28-32

*"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' <sup>31</sup> "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"*

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### Intro

This week our **nation celebrates it's independence**. And like all countries... over time such holidays become more about a time to have fun than to be sobered by the nature of freedom. There can be a strange mix of two types of pride that we can celebrate. When we feel a pride in the source and sacrifices... those who formed it... and the ideas that shaped this country... one is ultimately humbled...grateful...and we want to be faithful to that source.

But there is another pride.... chanting “We're #1”...as if there is something inherently special about us... and that we deserve this. Such pride can get a bit convoluted... when we think we ourselves are better people simply because of being here. It can defy truly being more American...because it is turned away from the source...the ideas...that are at the root of America...and begins to claim that those who live here simply deserve what we have.

**I share that thought because it may be an analogy to something far more dangerous.**

**A far more insidious shift** can take place in **the way many of us may believe that we have been saved by the grace of God. Many of us believe that the human soul is destined to face the consequences of going our own way...but that there is news of grace...God's grace at work...if we will receive it.** And that is what the **Gospel is....good news of God's grace.**

**Grace. It is the air of freedom we claim every day... the good news of grace.**

**But have we really accepted grace? [1]**

**Today... God has a challenge for each of us.**

**It come in the life of Jonah.**

We are continuing our new summer focus on the section of Book in the Bible referred to as The Minor Prophets. The prophets were those God raised up to declare the truth to those around them.

**The “Minor Prophets”** refers to the **final twelve books of the Old Testament** and the term **“minor”** refers only to their shorter length ...not their importance.

**There is a major message in each of these prophets....**which speaks to us today. In these voices we hear how the heart of our God confronts the unfaithfulness of human life...with the reality of consequences and hope.

Today we continue with the **Book of Jonah**. Probably **best known** because of Jonah being swallowed by a whale... but today we **get to hear what Jonah is really about...** and hear God's heart.

What we discover is that **Jonah is a story of us...and our relationship with grace.**

It begins...

**Jonah 1:1-2 (NIV)**

**The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: <sup>2</sup> "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."**

**Jonah... is a prophet who had some history.** Had helped warn one of Israel's kings to fortify the northern wall... and with it declare that God was not going to allow Israel to be destroyed. God would save them. Jonah was clearly remembered for such a role. All this must only have intensified Jonah's sense of national and spiritual pride as a son of Israel. [2]

**Now God calls him again...to go to Nineveh.**

**Nineveh** - "the **great** city of Nineveh"

Great it was - Jonah's assigned destination could not have been more imposing. Around this era in history, the nation of Assyria stood as the dominant force in the ancient near east...and the nation of Israel's greatest fear..., and its centralization of power resided in its capital city,

**How real is such a place and story? Many may think it's more legend. Some wondered about such a city.**

**Until the city of Nineveh was discovered and excavated in 1846. Continued excavation has revealed the magnitude of this once great city.**

**How many have heard of ISIS? Heard of the city of Mosul...in Iraq?** Most of us have been watching it for three years. Three years ago this very month... after ISIS took control of the city of Mosul. This very week...the efforts to drive them out are finally being completed street by street.

Now here is what you may not know. The city of Mosul is essentially upon the city of Nineveh. There around Mosul are the massive gates and walls and ongoing excavation of ancient Nineveh. And when Isis took the city...they blew up one of the gates of Nineveh...and then as the world watched...they blew up one of the revered mosque...the mosque of the saint of Jonah. Yes...where it is believed his remain s...previously as an Assyrian church...then mosque.

**[Can include images of the mosque before and after...of people inspect the destroyed Mosque of The Prophet Younis] [3]**

**Why Nineveh?** Because **God was well aware of it's wickedness...** and the suffering so many experienced.

*The Assyrians had a reputation for cruelty that is hard for us to fathom.* Arguably one of the **most barbaric places in all of human history.**

Their **kings kept records** in which they boated of **what they did to their enemies...** of skinning people alive, decapitation, mutilation, ripping out the tongues, making a pyramid of human heads, piercing the chin with a rope and forcing prisoners to live in kennels like dogs. [4]

**“The very fact that Jonah was even sent to such a place reveals that God’s capacity to forgive is greater than our capacity to sin.” (TT)**

### **Running from God**

**Jonah 1:2-3 (NIV)**

**But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.**

**But Jonah ran. But he ran not to obey but to flee.**

**Those Ninevites. Apparently... there is something in Jonah’s heart towards them...that can’t join God.**

**Do you have any such group... who are “those” people for you?**

**Democrats...Republicans? Terrorists? Family who have hurt you deeply?**

**We may assume that he was simply afraid of Nineveh... but who is he really running away from? It says he ran away from the Lord.**

**We could title ACT ONE...that of Running from God.**

**Running from God is always an interesting choice. For as God spoke earlier:**

*Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the LORD. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD. - Jeremiah 23:24*

**We are not told why he is running at this point... but we do know where.**

**Tarshish**

**The furthest known place from where he was supposed to be.**

When you run from God...you never know where you will end up.

When we decide to disobey God, there is always a boat going to Tarshish.

I spent a **significant season in my younger life running from God.** I had in a committed season... but compromised...and instead of simply resolving...I ran...and found it strange...that no matter how far I ran from God...thought I could hide out...He was always right there.

**Jonah 1:4-6 (NIV)**

**Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. <sup>5</sup> All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. <sup>6</sup> The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us, and we will not perish."**

**Then the Lord sent a great wind... violent storm...**

If Jonah was **lost in the illusion that he could control his world...God was glad to help him** realize otherwise... through the **power of this storm**. To the ancients ...the sea was a reminder of the world they could not control...or tame.

And now...**everyone** on this ship is **in danger**...which is **what happens** when we run from God.

And we are told... **they are more engaged than he is**. We are told that **Jonah had gone down** into the hull... **down below deck**.....where he **fell into a deep sleep**.

**What a picture of what happens** when one **withdraws from God**...they end up withdrawing from the needs at hand... and from their own humanity.

*“Flight from God always leads downward. It culminates not in the vivacious life we imagined but in what amounts only to stagnant sleep. You thereby rob other people of the blessing God intends to give them through you, because you’re less than you’re meant to be.” - Tullian Tchividjian [5]*

Now the text goes on to describe how Jonah told them who he was...told them to throw him overboard...but they refused and tried to row for shore...and when all became futile...they threw him overboard...and that is when we read...

**Jonah 1:17-2:1 (NIV)**

**But the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights. From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God.**

This is often the scene depicted of Jonah. Along with countless artists depicting it...and countless writers drawing from it...many have tried to understand how it could be possible. Is there such a fish...perhaps a whale...that he might survive in? Many claim so ...but perhaps miss what is described. It says God “provided”...and many translations use the word “prepared”...which doesn’t imply that God simply used what was common...but perhaps prepared what was not common.

What becomes clear...is that...

**God was not creating a prison to punish...but a hospital for the soul.**

“The fish’s belly was not Jonah’s prison or death chamber...but only a temporary hospital for his soul and a protection for his body from the ocean depths.” (TT)

From here Jonah prays...he calls out to God. And God releases him... and then we discover **THE SECOND ACT**...

**The God of Second Chances**

**Jonah 3:1-10 (NIV)**

**Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: <sup>2</sup> “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.” <sup>3</sup> Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city--a visit required three days. <sup>4</sup>**

**On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." <sup>5</sup> The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.**

And the king declared

**<sup>8</sup> ... Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. <sup>9</sup> Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish." <sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.**

Amazing ... those given to such evil would respond so deeply.  
It's hard to imagine... I want more dramatic details.

**It's the power of grace and it's real.**

It's been discovered that following the time of Jonah... Nineveh rose to it's greatest height of greatness....for 100 years...and then began to weaken as it waned...and was destroyed.

**Nineveh... is real...and was given a second chance.**

**In truth....there are lives in this room that have been violently destructive...and found the transforming power of God's grace.**

**"God responds to great sin with great mercy!" [6]**

**But what of Jonah?**

**But the second chance is as much about Jonah.**

"Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time..."

God could have chosen someone else at this point. Why come back to the one who so utterly ran?

> Here we begin to sense something of **how relates to each one of us**. He's not done with Jonah. God has a bigger plan... but he cares about the individual.

*God comes after Jonah...not because God needs Jonah...but because Jonah needs God.*

**And now what we might call the FINAL ACT....**

**The Pride that Alienates Us**

**Jonah 4:1-3 (NIV)**

**But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. <sup>2</sup> He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. <sup>3</sup> Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."**

*“But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry.”*

Something seems very **off kilter**. Something has become **twisted**.

God had been gracious...on terms that offended Jonah...that Jonah’s heart could not join in.

Why? It appears that Jonah’s identity was at stake. He had found his value in his being one of the good people...

Jonah has the right religion and proper politics; he serves the true God and hates the worst sinners...but he forgot who he really is... a sinner....who is loved not for what he deserves...but despite what he deserves.

**Stuck in the unfairness.**

**If humanity could see itself honestly...I think we would see the truth of our own hearts. We claim we want grace... we like to accuse God – “How can you judge anyone? Why should there be such consequences for sin and self-rule?**

**But the human heart defies itself. We may like forgiveness of ourselves...or the idea in general...but when we feel someone has done a great wrong against us... which in all truth pales in comparison to how we disregard God...and we resent grace for others more than we can fathom.**

**When the spotlight is on the human heart... what we will see is that in truth....we need grace more than we can fathom...and yet we refuse grace for others.**

**The spotlight is on Jonah... but it’s really on what can lie in all of us.**

**This is what the life of Jonah reveals to us.**

**We who may think we live by grace...are actually refusing it.**

**Jonah was the religious... right people... good...**

**But God won’t give up on Jonah... he has grace for Jonah...a grace that is being refused.**

**Jonah 4:4- (NIV)**

**<sup>4</sup> But the LORD replied, "Have you any right to be angry?"**

Jonah went out and sat down outside the city sulking...and God grew a vine to give him shade...and Jonah loved the vine...and then sent a worm to eat it...and Jonah grew bitter...and claims again he wants to die.

**<sup>9</sup> But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?" "I do," he said. "I am angry enough to die." <sup>10</sup> But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. <sup>11</sup> But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who**

**cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"**

God says...you don't really understand what you deserve... you don't see who you really are...so you don't know forgiveness....grace...and are lost.

It ends with no response... we aren't told what Jonah will do.  
There stands Jonah ....filled with the anger of his self-righteousness... separated from God's grace.

It is the position of every one of us who thinks we deserve God's forgiveness and favor.

**If there is any doubt this is our story... Jesus makes it very clear.**

**He tells a story that is profoundly parallel.**

**Prodigal son.... Younger son...horrible... could have been justly killed for such disgrace...like the Ninevites... and would eventually come to his sense... and the Father forgives him.... throws a party ...we might think the story ends...but Jesus goes on... and tells us about the older brother.**

**He was out working in the field...hears all the joy from the party...and the servants tell him about the party for his brother.**

**Luke 15:28-32 (NIV)**

<sup>28</sup> "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' <sup>31</sup> "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

**The older son... who in such a culture was deemed the deserving one....like the religious leaders at the time of Jesus ...like Jonah...and perhaps like us who may feel we have come to the right positions ...and proper practices.**

The **rule keepers need the Gospel** just as badly as the rule breakers. Jonah and the older brother have become proud of keeping the rules... and mad that God would show such compassion to such horrible sinners. It reveals that they are aren't doing what God wants simply because they love God and are thankful for his grace...but because it makes them feel good...like successful rule keepers.

That is the **pride that ultimately alienates us.**

**Just like Jonah...we're told the older son "...became angry and refused to go in."**



Each hears how another has received grace... and instead of sharing in the joy...we **hear resentment.**

**Have you ever heard a testimony...** thought 'what favor... grace'... and found a part of yourself **comparing** such an experience with your own... and then doubting God's love... or complaining?

"...**never gave me even a young goat** so I could celebrate with my friends." – never rescued me in such a dramatic fashion... **never had a prophetic word** to me like that... never provided that kind of **miraculous financial** help.

**How many of us can become focused on what "fair" or "unfair?"**

**One minute you are thankful for what you got for Christmas...till you see what your sibling got.**

**One minute you feel special to God...and then you hear someone else's experience and think you've been neglected.**

**We feel forgotten... and that GOD ISN'T FAIR.**

**In this complaint... often silent... we turn our hearts away from home... close, but turned.**

> **God's grace isn't fair...it's never deserved. [7]**

**Two economies – Justice (deserve) & Grace (no one deserves) [8]**

**Our resentment reflects a pride that will alienate us.**

**There is an anger in Jonah that is killing him... he says he might as well be dead. Why? Because God doesn't seem to be honoring the deserving person he believes he is... but the truth is that such a person doesn't exist.**

That a part of our own hearts can wander off there too. This may be especially hard to come to terms with... for I know of **few terms** that **we decry** and **distance** ourselves from identifying with than.... '**self righteousness.**'

It can be clothed in conservative as well as liberal clothing.

- **Our Protection of a False Self**

**"Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders."**

**Those words may sound reasonable...but listen again. What he describes is quite idealized. We can all form an idealized self that tries to prove our worth.**

In such hiddenness... we exchange being good for being close... being valuable for being close.

- **The dilemma** we face is that the **false self can never be loved... because it doesn't exist.**
- We've been playing hide n' seek so long...gotten so good...but it only leaves us hiding... lost.

> In our hiddenness... we've **hidden so well... we don't know how to be found. [9]**

Such pride... alienates us.

With the words "this son of yours" the older brother distances himself from his brother as well as from his father. He is left outside... unable to join anyone. [10]

But the story offers hope...

Just like Jonah..."the father goes out to plead with him."

God cares for Jonah...for the older son...and for us.

Just like Jonah... the story ends without knowing what they do. They are left alienated in their anger.

It's as if these stories always had us in mind. They were meant to speak to all of us.

We are be every bit as loved...but we may be every bit as lost.

Self-righteousness is powerful...and it's also personal. No one can give it up but ourselves.

We are left without a decision... because the decision is one we each must make.

We are invited to home of grace... where there's joy.

That is the Gospel. We never get beyond it. [11]

We may think that we are "saved by grace"... but that we have outgrown that position...that we are now on the right side so we have moved on from such a position...and now are better than those who are not so faithful. [12]

We may think... we are no longer condemned ...and how true it is...how amazing. But what is really amazing is that you were never exonerated...never declared innocent in yourself.

Gospel...does not declare that you are good and therefore blessed...but rather it declares God has come to bring grace... and therefore give your heart to him.

Closing: So God pleads with every human life...come out of hiding... take off the false self...and join the life of grace.

**Resources:** In trying to capture an overall message from the whole Book of Jonah, I particularly appreciate Tullian Tchividjian's book, *Surprised by Grace: God's Relentless Pursuit of Rebels*. (Note if quoting last name is pronounced "cha-vi-jin." It rhymes with religion). Having been drawn back to the parallel I find in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son, I am drawn back to so much of Henri Nouwen's rich reflection in *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming*.

**Notes:**

1. Another way to open up a reflection upon Jonah...and the nature of surprising conflict religious people (which is ultimately all people) may have with God...is to consider the nature of "infatuation"...in which we think we "love" someone...but in truth are projecting our ideas

onto them. Infatuation begins with a moment of connection... stay up talking late...rush of connection ...falling in love ... “they are amazing.” The only problem is...we actually only have begun to know them...so how did they become so ideal. We fill in all the blank space. We project what we want them to be...to believe...to think...to value. It’s only a matter of time before they suddenly are not who we made them to be.

I think there may be a similar dynamic with God. We may “know God”...some of what we presume about God...may be what we want...think... feel. At some point we will come to junctures where God won’t fit our terms.

2. As Tullian Tchividjian describes in *Surprised By Grace: God's Relentless Pursuit Of Rebel,*

Jonah’s background is mentioned earlier in the Bible, in the book of 2 Kings. There we read that Jonah had experienced a rare treat for a Hebrew prophet: he foretold something good for the nation of Israel, then saw it quickly happen.

It was during the days of Israel's King Jeroboam II, who reigned over the northern kingdom of Israel in the first half of the eighth century BC. This king beefed up a long section of Israel's northern border, strengthening its defense against any potential Assyrian invaders. King Jeroboam did this not just to implement his own military strategy, but, by the gracious prompting of God, he did it "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 14:25).

Restoring this border was more than a mere maintenance measure. It was a critically urgent accomplishment in a moment of profound national need, as we quickly sense from the next verses: "For the Lord saw that the affliction of Israel was very bitter . . . and there was none to help Israel." God made it clear that he would *not* "blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, so he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam" (14:26-27).

So God truly cared for Israel, enough to act immediately—through its king—to fortify its national defenses. And Jonah had been given the privilege of conveying this good news to his countrymen. Here was a deliberate act of the Lord's deliverance; by this "he *saved* them."

Jonah must have won lasting fame after uttering this prophecy and quickly seeing it come to fruition through King Jeroboam's capable military leadership. The prophet had spoken, and what he'd spoken came to pass—the ultimate professional test for any prophet.

3. – History of ancient Nineveh

4. One cites James Bruckner, *The NIV Application Commentary: Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2004), 94.

5. “Flight from God always leads downward. It culminates not in the vivacious life we imagined but in what amounts only to stagnant sleep. *Running from God keeps you from “breathing” and*

*living the life he intends you to live. You thereby rob other people of the blessing God intends to give them through you, because you're less than you're meant to be.*

It's why so many people seem to exist without ever really living. In fact, they *aren't* really living; they're only going through the motions—rarely if ever experiencing the internal *shalom* they were designed to enjoy from God, because they're running from him.” — [Tullian Tchividjian](#), [Surprised By Grace: God's Relentless Pursuit Of Rebels](#)

6. Nineveh / Mosul history

<http://www.ancient.eu/nineveh/>

ISIS' Destruction of Tomb of Jonah Uncovers Ancient Palace of Biblical King Sennacherib  
Read more at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/isis-destruction-tomb-of-jonah-uncovers-ancient-palace-biblical-king-sennacherib-176429/#C0BExMc8XoTTfgYu.99>

Extremists destroy Jonah's tomb, officials say - **By Dana Ford and Mohammed Tawfeeq**, CNN

Updated 5:04 PM ET, Fri July 25, 2014

<http://www.cnn.com/2014/07/24/world/iraq-violence/index.html>

### **Further info on historical accuracy issues of Jonah**

Some resources specific to the possibility of Jonah being swallowed and held in fish

Jonah and the Great Fish by [Don Landis](#) on September 5, 2006

<https://answersingenesis.org/bible-characters/jonah-and-the-great-fish/>

Jonah and the "Whale"? by Dave Miller, Ph.D. -

<http://apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=6&article=69>

Jonah and the Whale Jan 17, 2012 @ 12:44 by [Scot McKnight](#)

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/2012/01/17/jonah-and-the-whale/>

A few key points”

Several resources one may engage:

“In my assessment, the book is presented to us as a historical account. It is ascribed to a historical prophet (cf. 2 Kings 14:25), and it contains no authorial comments or literary clues that suggest it is a parable.” - <http://reformedanswers.org/answer.asp/file/39913>

Many argue that since Jesus refers to Jonah...that it must be true. While it can be contended that 1) Jesus lived his earthly incarnate life with the limits of human understanding, and 2) Jesus

understood that truth can be manifested in what is not historical (such as his parable stories)...HOWEVER, Jesus also identifies Jonah as a prophets who was real like all prophets.

Jesus indicated that his death, burial and resurrection would take place "just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites" (Luke 11:30). He also indicated that on the Day of Judgment the Ninevites would condemn the unbelievers of Jesus' generation (Luke 11:32). Both of these details especially the second indicate that Jesus believed that the story of Jonah was historical.

Is Jonah Historical? - Dec 15, 2011 by [Scot McKnight](#)

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/2011/12/15/is-jonah-historical/>

The Historicity of Jonah Examined [Sam Shamoun](#)

[http://www.answering-islam.org/Shamoun/jonah\\_historicity.htm](http://www.answering-islam.org/Shamoun/jonah_historicity.htm)

Jonah, the "Whale," and Dr. Seuss: Asking Historical Questions without Alienating Conservative Students\*- Eric A. Seibert - *The Conrad Grebel Review* 28, no. 2 (Spring 2010)

<https://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/publications/conrad-grebel-review/issues/spring-2010/jonah-whale-and-dr-seuss-asking-historical>

This is a liberal school guide to helping conservatives who may take Bible too literally. SO this argues for liberal views of OT.

[Historically, how was Jonah classified in terms of literary genre?](#)

Forum with some good reference to the early church

The Historicity of the Book of Jonah.

[http://biblehub.com/library/wishard/concerning\\_the\\_assumptions\\_of\\_destructive\\_criticism/viii\\_the\\_historicity\\_of\\_the.htm](http://biblehub.com/library/wishard/concerning_the_assumptions_of_destructive_criticism/viii_the_historicity_of_the.htm)

Jonah: A "Fish Story" or History? - BY WAYNE JACKSON

<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/315-jonah-a-fish-story-or-history>

7. Tullian Tchividjian...in Surprised By Grace: God's Relentless Pursuit Of Rebels

"God's ability to clean things up is infinitely greater than our ability to mess things up."

"God's capacity to forgive is greater than our capacity to sin; while our sin reaches far, God's grace reaches farther. It's a message revealing the radical contrast between the sinful heart of mankind and the gracious heart of mankind's Creator."

“Grace can be defined as unconditional acceptance granted to an undeserving person by an unobligated giver.”

8. As Phillip Yancy states...”in each of these Old Testament stories the scandal of grace rumbles under the surface until finally, in Jesus' parables, it burst forth in a dramatic upheaval to reshape the moral landscape.”

- Parable of day laborers

Jesus' parable of the workers and their grossly unfair paychecks confronts this scandal head-on. In a contemporary Jewish version of this story, the workers hired late in the afternoon work so hard that the employer, impressed, decides to award them a full day's wages. Not so in Jesus' version, which notes that the last crop of workers have been idly standing around in the marketplace, something only lazy, shiftless workers would do during harvest season. Moreover, these laggards do nothing to distinguish themselves, and the other workers are shocked by the pay they receive. What employer in his right mind would pay the same amount for one hour's work as for twelve!

Jesus' story makes no economic sense, and that was his intent. He was giving us a parable about grace, which cannot be calculated like a day's wages. Grace is not about finishing last or first; it is about not counting. ? -Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace?*, p 61

There are two economies – Justice (deserve) & Grace (no one deserves)

9. Such a false self can grow every time we face the separation between our inner self and outer self.

As Brennan Manning describes...

“The noonday devil of the Christian life is the temptation to lose the inner self while preserving the shell of edifying behavior. Suddenly I discover that I am ministering to AIDS victims to enhance my resume. I find I renounced ice cream for Lent to lose five of meditation and contemplation to create the impression that I am a man of prayer. At some unremembered moment I have lost the connection between internal purity of heart and external works of piety. In the most humiliating sense of the word, I have become a legalist. I have fallen victim to what T.S. Eliot calls the greatest sin: to do the right thing for the wrong reason.”

1 John 1:8-10

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. [9] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. [10] If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

10. As Henri Nouwen describes in his book, "The Prodigal Son" ....

“He looks at the two of them as aliens who have lost all sense of reality and engage in a relationship that is completely inappropriate, considering the true facts of the prodigal's life. The elder son no longer has a brother. Nor, any longer, a father. Both have become strangers to him. His brother, a sinner, he looks down on with disdain; his father, a slave owner, he looks up at with fear.

Here I see how lost the elder son is. He has become a foreigner in his own house. True communion is gone. Every relationship is pervaded by the darkness. To be afraid or to show disdain, to suffer submission or to enforce control, to be an oppressor or to be a victim: these have become the choices for one outside of the light. Sins cannot be confessed, forgiveness cannot be received, the mutuality of love cannot exist. True communion has become impossible.”

11. Henri Nouwen - The story of the elder son answers all of these agonizing questions, making it very plain that God does not love the younger son more than the elder. In the story the father goes out to the elder son just as he did to the younger, urges him to come in, and says, "My son, you are with me always, and all I have is yours."

These are the words I must pay attention to and allow to penetrate to the center of my self. God calls me "my son." The Greek word for son that Luke uses here is teknon, "an affectionate form of address," as Joseph A. Fitzmyer says. Literally translated, what the father says is "child." This affectionate approach becomes even clearer in the words that follow. The harsh and bitter reproaches of the son are not met with words of judgment. There is no recrimination or accusation. - Henri Nouwen, "The Prodigal Son"

12. Colossians 1:9-14 (NIV)

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.<sup>10</sup> And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,<sup>11</sup> being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully<sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.<sup>13</sup> For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,<sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

13. I am indebted to Tullian Tchividjian's grasp of Jonah...and the strong indictment it brings to our religiosity. As he adds so pointedly:

“Jesus’ teaching consistently attracted the irreligious while offending the Bible-believing, religious people of his day. However, in the main, our churches today do not have this effect. The kind of outsiders Jesus attracted do not bother coming to our churches, even our most avant-garde ones. We tend to draw buttoned-down, moralistic people. The licentious and liberated or

the broken and marginal avoid church. That can only mean one thing. If the preaching of our ministers and the practice of our parishioners do not have the same effect on people that Jesus had, then we must not be declaring the same message that Jesus did.<sup>2</sup>”

— Tullian Tchividjian, *Surprised By Grace: God's Relentless Pursuit Of Rebels*