

Christ in Prophecy
Jesus in the Old Testament 39
Reluctant Obedience (Jonah)
Key Verse: Jonah 2:9

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Part 1

Tim Moore: Welcome to this episode of Christ in Prophecy. Today, our series will take us to the book of Jonah. We've labeled this episode Reluctant Obedience because when called by God to a particular task, Jonah fled in the opposite direction.

Nathan Jones: Jonah didn't just flee to the ends of the earth, he actually fled to the depths of the sea. But the Lord preserved him, protected him, and anointed him to become a messenger of God.

Tim Moore: All right, Nathan, so exactly what was God's charge to Jonah that he was so reluctant to obey?

Nathan Jones: Well, Jonah had to go to the hated enemies, the Ninevites, a city 500 miles from his hometown, which is Gath-hepher, which is a fun name to say. Gath-hepher.

Tim Moore: Gath-hepher, yes.

Nathan Jones: And so, it's actually near Nazareth, where Jesus will be born. So, it was just really local. And he didn't want to go the 500 miles up to the Ninevites to give a message to the Gentiles, of all people, that God wanted them to repent and return to Him. So, it's fascinating that Jonah had no concept of wanting to do this because he hated the Assyrians. The Assyrians were people at the time period known for exceptional cruelty. Whenever they conquered somebody, they would make a line of captives, they would put hooks through their noses, they'd strip them naked, and they'd march them that 500 miles or so up to Nineveh. They tortured them. And they reveled in their cruelty. And so, they were obviously very hated by the Israelites.

Now, the Israelites at the time were at 780-745 BC on the timeline. So, the Northern kingdom of Israel is still there, and that's who Jonah was primarily giving a message to. We can actually go to the 2 Kings 14:23-25, where he was prophet to Jeroboam II. He actually advised Jeroboam to expand the land of Israel, because Assyria wasn't quite the threat it was at the time, it was in a weakened state. But God shows through Jonah that he loved the people of Nineveh. And so, he tells Jonah, "Okay, you're going to go to your hated enemy and you're going to give them this message."

Well, we all know the story. Every child knows the story of Jonah. He says, "No way, I'm going to go as far away as possible. And so, he boards a ship in Joppa, or which is Jaffa. Jaffa today. And he's going to go to Tarshish. And where is Tarshish in the world of the Old Testament?"

Tim Moore: Well, it's as far away in the Mediterranean Sea as you can get. So, he's wanting to go far, far away so God can't get to him to actually cause him to fulfill His Word.

Nathan Jones: So, it wasn't the distance of 500 miles, it was he was ready to go to the ends of the earth. It was Spain or possibly Great Britain in modern context was what Tarshish is. He goes out there, he gets on a boat, he falls asleep. And the fishermen are calling oh, they're calling to their gods, because this big storm came and they wake him up. They cast lots and he says, all right, they find out that it's him. They throw him into the water to stop the storm. And what's beautiful is that the people on the boat all start worshipping Yahweh, he brings the gospel message about God, basically to them. And he's swallowed by what the Bible says is a large sea creature. It could be a fish. It could be a whale. For those who argue one or the other, it doesn't matter it was a large sea creature. And for three days and three nights he was in that belly of that fish or that whale. And finally, he repented. He prayed to the Lord. That's chapter two. In chapter three he's spit out, he goes into Nineveh and he has a special message for the Ninevites.

Tim Moore: Yeah, he has a very important message, but it's not one that's really loving. You know, we oftentimes wonder how we should deliver a word from the Lord. And it needs to be tactful. It needs to be loving. Jonah's message to the Ninevites was, yet 40 days and you're all going to die. In other words, he didn't give them any hope. He didn't offer any word of encouragement. He just pronounced judgment. Yet 40 days and Nineveh will be overthrown. That was his message. And yet inherent in that message the Ninevites understood that judgment was going to come upon them. And so, as the king responds, well, maybe perhaps God will turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish. If what? If we repent, and if we show remorse for our behavior, for our wickedness, and for our violence. And so, he orders that every man, woman and child, every creature, be covered in sackcloth and ashes as a demonstration of their penitence. And that's exactly what happened. The Lord relented. And of course, Jonah wasn't very happy about that either.

Nathan Jones: He wasn't. And it's interesting that Jonah's message was only just five words in the original Hebrew chapter three, verse four, five words. And yet within three days of giving that message and possibly he looked kind of funny. When I co-wrote the book "12 Faith Journeys of the Minor Prophets" my co-author Steve Howell was hilarious. He kind of had Jonah demonstrate like that Veggie Tales movie, kind of pale and weird looking that it would attract people. But with just a five word message, the people all the way up to the king, even the cattle were put in sackcloth and made to repent. They were they didn't want to be destroyed at all.

And it's interesting, like what you said, what Jonah's reaction to that. You would think that Jonah would say, all right I've given the message. Good, God's going to give them compassion. But we read now in chapter four, which is the last chapter of Jonah, and Jonah immediately launches at God, "I know you're compassionate." He actually quotes Exodus 34:6, he says, "God, I know your compassionate, I know you're loving, and You would relent and save these people?" He doesn't want that. So, he goes up on the hill. He makes himself this little place.

Tim Moore: And he pouts.

Nathan Jones: He pouts and he watches, waiting for the judgment like fire, I guess from the sky to come down. And even while Jonah's sitting there, God provides for him.

Tim Moore: He certainly does. You know, Jonah demonstrates our own human heart, which sometimes does not match that of God. He was aggravated that God would relent. And he said, "That's why I didn't want to come here in the first place, because I knew you were a God of compassion." And of course, God was compassionate to Jonah.

I'm going to back up for just a moment because I think there's great importance in understanding what the author, what Jonah is describing, even as he fled from the Lord. It says that when the Lord had called him to this task, he went down to Joppa. And then he went down to the sea. He got on a boat. He went down into the boat. And as they started to sail towards Tarshish, he went down into the hold. And as a great storm arose and the men look for who is the cause of this storm. Why are the gods? Why is God angry with us? And Jonah revealed to them, "Well, it's actually my God, the true and living God, and He's angry because I've disobeyed Him." And so, they cast him down into the sea, and he was swallowed by the great sea creature, the fish. And he went down to the depths. Down, down, down, down, down. Every time he is fleeing from God, it is a progression down.

And then finally he comes to the end of himself. And it says in chapter two, "That out of his distress he called to the Lord. He cried for help from the depth of Sheol." He talks about being at the depths of the sea, the roots of the mountains themselves. And God heard his voice. And so, then he is vomited up onto dry land. He goes up to Nineveh. And it begins an ascension as he's actually obeying the Lord.

I'm reminded here, you know, we look for Christophanies, this is a Christophany in that the Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven, laying aside His heavenly glory and humbling Himself. He descended down into the grave, as the Apostles Creed cites. He descended into Hell or Hades, always being obedient to God. And then He was glorified. He was raised up from the grave. He was lifted up into the sky with the apostles looking on. And He ascended into Heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. So, Jonah's life is a type of what happened in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

And yet there's also an important distinction. Sometimes many of these types of Christ have certain parallels, but there's always a contrast, because Jonah was a reluctantly, obedient prophet, and Jesus Christ was always submissively, obedient to the Father.

We can look at King David. He also has many parallels, but certainly Jesus did not parallel David's life of wickedness and adultery. And so, every human type, every human foreshadowing of Christ falls far short.

And on that note, you and I have a great exemplar that has been so important in our lives, who has been a very gifted, obedient servant for many years, but yet would testify there was a time when he, too, was running from the Lord.

Nathan Jones: Well, that's right. This ministry wouldn't even exist if it wasn't for our founder, Dr. David Reagan. Back in 1980 he turned to the Lord and he was going to start this ministry. But there was quite a story before that. Maybe we could just hear it from him firsthand.

Tim Moore: Yeah, let's let Dr. David Reagan tell his testimony in his own words.

Dr. Reagan: I established this ministry in 1980, having spent 20 years as a professor and administrator in higher education. And during those years I was an active student of the Bible and I often taught and even preached. And although I was very successful in my academic career, I was miserable because I was running from the Lord.

You see, the Lord graciously called me into the ministry when I was 20 years old, but I was too caught up with trying to achieve worldly success to respond positively to the Lord's call. So, I started running from the Lord. And in the process I made Jonah look like an amateur.

Let me just summarize by saying that in a foolish attempt to get God off my back, I finally decided to meet Him halfway. And I was to quickly discover that God is not interested in anyone meeting Him halfway. He wants a full surrender. My supposedly ingenious idea was to open a Christian store in Dallas that provided books, recordings, Bibles, church supplies. But the business did not succeed. And I ended up owing a bank \$100,000, which in today's terms would be about \$300,000.

I began to wallow in self-pity and think about suicide when the Lord performed a remarkable miracle in my life that got my eyes off me and onto Him. And it was not some sort of miraculous payoff of the debt, oh, no, no, no, I still owed the debt. But now my eyes were on Jesus and I had hope.

You know, folks, as I look back over the 35 years of this ministry since 1980, I am just overwhelmed by what can be happen as the result of a very small and timid step of faith. We have gone from broadcasting a radio program on one station in Dallas, Texas, to airing a television program on eight national networks that have access to over 100 million homes in the United States alone.

When I took that small step of faith in 1980, I was not identified with any denominational group. I had no track record as a minister or evangelist. There was no Internet that I could use to promote the ministry, and I had literally no idea how I would be able to sustain the ministry. I just knew for certain in my heart that God had called me to serve Him by proclaiming the soon return of His Son. I simply had to trust that He would supply all my needs. And that is exactly what He did in many different, miraculous ways.

My friends, God responds to faith, and I want to urge you to reach out to God today in faith for whatever your need may be. If it's salvation, then repent of your sins and receive Jesus by faith as your Lord and Savior. You will receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and through the Spirit, you will receive new strength to deal with the problems in your life. If you are already a born again child of God, then I would urge you to step out in faith and allow the Holy Spirit to take over every aspect of your life. I can guarantee you that faith will be blessed. God is on His throne. He still hears prayers. He still answers prayers. He still performs miracles. But you must reach out to Him in faith.

I want to conclude, 1 Peter 5:6-7. And here's what it says, "Humble yourselves, under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him because He cares for you."

Part 2

Tim Moore: Well, Nathan, what a great testimony of patience, and perseverance, and the grace of God. You wonder how many people today are miserable in their lives because they have not yielded to God's will. And yet we are so blessed and grateful that Dr. David Reagan did yield 42 years ago, and here we are today, following in his footsteps.

Nathan Jones: And all the lives that were changed because of this ministry over the last 40 some years. Well, folks, if you want to get a down to earth book that will bring you up in the Lord and your faith and just help you grow, Dr. David Reagan continues his testimony in his book "Trusting God: Learning to Walk by Faith." We're offering it for gift of \$20 or more, and that

includes shipping. And you can order it on our website at lamlblion.com or just call the number below. We think you'll be inspired and uplifted by reading his testimony.

Tim Moore: Well, you know, as we return to the book of Jonah, and we've discussed how he is a type of Christ and that he went down, down, down, and finally, when yielding and obeying, he came up, up, up. So, there are parallels. We also see a great irony, at least I do in Jonah's attitude. He did not want the Ninevites to receive grace, but he needed grace because God could have said, fine, you're not going to obey what I told you to do, and just written him off and left him in the belly of that fish. He would have been fish food. But instead, God gave him grace, and yet Jonah didn't want to extend it to others.

Nathan Jones: No, he did not. I think he's if you could look back, he was probably a very Type A personality. He was very forceful, very strong, very convicted in his passion, so much so that he would challenge God himself. And it's interesting that when he's in the belly of the whale or the fish, he kind of, well actually he does very much so, repents and realized that there's nowhere you can go where you can get away from God. You can't escape God. He is omnipresent and He is everywhere. So, he does repent. But it doesn't change his personality. So, when we get to chapter four in Jonah, you know, he's actually upset that the Ninevites repented, he wants them dead. He hates them. And rightly so, it wouldn't be just by—

Tim Moore: Justifiably so, we can say.

Nathan Jones: Yeah, by 722 B.C. the Syrians are going to go down and destroy Israel and drag all these people up. Jonah, if he was still alive then would be killed by the Ninevites likely. So, he had justifiable reasons for hating them. At the time he really did, so he goes up on top of this hill. He sits there and he waits for fire to come down and destroy Nineveh. But God, he takes care of Jonah. He has a vine grow and kind of shade him for a day. But then God does something else, which is fascinating, right?

Tim Moore: Yes. He actually causes the vine to wither because He raises up a worm who eats the vine. And then Jonah is mad because he's lost the vine. Now I'm sitting here in the heat. And over and over again, God seems to be telling Jonah, you don't get it yet, do you? Because I provided the vine. I provided the grace. And then God shows His own heart of compassion when he says, "Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their left and right hand, as well as many animals." And we don't know if that 120,000 is literally how many people there were who were just ignorant morally of left and right, what is right and wrong, or if that's how many children just had not yet come to the age of understanding the difference between left and right. But it was a great city, and God's compassion was for the Ninevites, just as it was for the people in Noah's day, he let Noah be a preacher of righteousness. And just as Jesus Christ justifiable in His indignation toward the people who rejected Him, still wept over the city of Jerusalem because they did not come to saving salvation.

Nathan Jones: It's almost kind of comical because if you go to chapter 4, verse 8 he says, "It is better for me to die than live." So, I don't know if he's the stereotypical Jewish grandpa, "Oh, vey, it is better for me to die, than to live." I mean he's really going on. And I just love it because what he said, God says, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plan? Is it right for me to angry even to death?" But the Lord says, "You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in night and perished in night. Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city?"

Now, it's wonderful to learn about Nineveh at that time period, is when it took them three days to spread the message. It took three day to get through Nineveh. Now, a city of 125,000-150,000 isn't big in today's standards. But back then it was large enough that it was eight miles to walk around it. And it would be the dominant world power at the time, leading up to the Babylonians. So, it was an important time period. And what is beautiful too is not only did the Ninevites repent, but God stayed off His judgment almost another 200 years. You have to go up to the book of Nahum to find out Nineveh's final destruction. But God held back His punishment when he repented. And what a message for us today.

Tim Moore: What a tremendous message. And again, I love Dave's testimony because he says, as many of us, as all of us really could there was a period in all of our lives when we were not obeying God, or when we strayed from God. And God in His graciousness continues to call us and restores us. He is perseverant in pursuing us even when we don't pursue Him. My goodness He sent Jesus Christ to pursue us. And as Paul says, "Even while we are sinners Christ died for us." And so, that great love, that pursuit of His beloved is evident throughout Scripture, and it certainly evident in Jonah's life. We've talked about the Christophany of Jonah as a type of Christ, almost in parallel and in contrast, simultaneously with Jesus Christ. But there is another great.

Nathan Jones: Oh, yeah.

Tim Moore: Prophetic message in the story of Jonah. And it is almost would be easily dismissed, but Jesus Himself said, I will give you no other sign, but the sign of Jonah. For three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth. So, how does that come to bear in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection?

Nathan Jones: Well, I love that, Matthew 12:39-41, the Pharisees are asking for a sign and Jesus says, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." So here we got a reference, validates of course that Jonah is a legitimate book.

Tim Moore: Exactly.

Nathan Jones: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." And this is interesting, verse 41, "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; indeed, a greater than Jonah is here." And so, He's saying is that, hey, we know that the people in Nineveh repented. We will actually probably in heaven see a Ninevite one day from that time period, the king of Nineveh, we might meet one day because he repented and turned to Yahweh God. But at the same time, he gave a sign using Jonah. Jonah stayed three days in the darkness in Sheol, death. Well, we know that when Jesus Christ was crucified for three days, he was in Sheol or Hades giving some kind of message and leading those who were in Paradise, the compartment that is for the dead and faithful before His sacrifice, and He led the train up to heaven.

Tim Moore: Led a train of captives.

Nathan Jones: Up to Heaven, right. So, when you die now, as a Christian, a believer in Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven because of His shed blood. We go directly to heaven. But in the Old Testament, they go to Sheol in Paradise, waiting to be taken up to heaven. So, we know the

Ninevites are there. But yet, who will not be there? Jesus was saying it would be the Pharisees because they had someone greater than Jonah; they had the Messiah Himself, the Son of God right there.

Tim Moore: I think that's why Jesus condemns some of the cities of Galilee, because they had Him in person. They had His ministry. They saw His great signs and wonders, the healings, and they still refused, largely and collectively to believe. And He said it will be easier for Sodom and Gomorrah. It will be easier for the city of Tyre than for these cities because you have witnessed all that God has done through me, through my manifest presence. I often say that I think God's judgment will be very harsh on places like America because we know better than to have strayed from Him so far. The Ninevites, given this not so loving message of judgment, still understood that it was coming from the living God and they repented. Boy, we should, too. I think there's something else instructive, though. We here at Lamb & Lion Ministries clearly believe that Jesus was in the grave for three days and three nights in fulfillment of this. We take seriously the fulfillment of all Bible prophecy. And so, you and I believe that Jesus did not necessarily die on Friday and raise again on Saturday night, because I do the math, that's not three days and three nights.

Nathan Jones: Yes. We have a great article on our website if you go to christinprophecy.org just type in Jonah in the search, and Dr. Reagan wrote an excellent article about when the sign of Jonah happened. More than likely there was actually two holy days that week, so He would have been crucified on a Wednesday, and so that's where the little confusion comes. But despite either way, He was there three days in the earth, so to speak, and of course, His spirit down in Hades. And that He resurrected from the dead, and like Jonah was spit up out of that fish, it was like He was given new life again. So, when Jesus, by beating death, beat sin for us, beat the consequences of sin, which is eternal death, so that we all might have life as well.

Tim Moore: Exactly right. I think there's something very poignant about the fact that Jesus Christ was in the grave for three days, three nights. There was a Jewish, I guess, almost a fable that perhaps a person could come back alive within a short period of time. But wait three days, there's no way, the spirit is completely gone. And obviously, even Jonah being able to live for three days, he testifies in his prayer that he had come close to dying. He had fainted within that fish's belly. We have seen in modern days sailors be spit up from whales and they're virtually bleached after a much shorter time. So, it was miraculous that Jonah lived. It was God's power demonstrated in the life of Jesus Christ that He descended into the grave, He died, and yet three days later, through His own power, He rose again. And that also testifies to the power of God that can bring all of us back to life from death. And we can have life right now, not our best life forever, because that's still coming, but we can have eternal life and it starts the moment we put our trust in Jesus Christ.

Nathan Jones: And it really shows the compassion of God, too, because we tend to think Old Testament, God was only interested in Israel. And the Israelite's only thought God was interested in Israel, they didn't care about the Gentiles. But God had set up Israel to be an example, a living example, that would attract people to Yahweh, God, to put their faith in Him. As we saw throughout history, they're human. They failed, like much of us in the church do today, of being a good Christian example. But it showed that God loved those idolatrous fishermen or sea captains and the guys in Jonah's boat, they turn to Yahweh. God loved an evil city that was known for torturing and tormenting their people in Nineveh. And God sent a prophet up to there to give them the message, and they repented. And it was almost you

wonder if it wasn't to shame Israel, so that Israel would say, wait, God is bringing salvation to the Gentiles. Likewise, today with the Church Age, God is bringing salvation to the Gentiles to get the Jewish people jealous and hopefully turn them back to him during the Tribulation.

Tim Moore: I love you using that phrase because our friend Olivier Melnick has sat right here and said, part of you Gentile believers' job is to make Jewish people jealous. Jealous that you are in relationship with the living God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And to make us jealous, to want to have your joy, your love, your blessed hope. And so, we Christians should be exuding joy, love and pointing people to our Blessed Hope. I love how Jonah captures almost the heart of the entire Gospel in our key verse for today. So, in Jonah 2:9, the last phrase as Jonah's concluding his prayer that he had uttered from the belly of the fish, he sums it all up and says, "Salvation is from the Lord." And indeed, it is salvation for the Ninevites, salvation for the Jewish people, salvation for you and me is from the Lord.

Nathan Jones: Amen, brother. Well, that's it's an amazing message. I think we get so focused on the fish part of the story we miss the salvation part of the story.

Tim Moore: We do miss the salvation part of the story. Well, Nathan, we've entitled this episode Reluctant Obedience, and we would obviously encourage willing obedience, energetic obedience and enthusiastic obedience. But those adjectives sometimes are subject to our own emotions or our biorhythms or whatever else ebbs and flows in our natural makeup. And so, what is really required is our heart, or our will, to be subject to and obedient to God regardless of our emotions.

And I'm reminded of Jesus' parable in Matthew chapter 21, where the father comes to two sons and gives them a task to go out and serve him in a field. And one responds affirmatively but does not go. And the other one says, I don't think I want to do that, but ends up obeying the father. And Jesus asked the chief priest and the elders very poignantly, which of the two did the will of the father?

Nathan Jones: That's a deep question we should all be asking ourselves, Tim. Well, folks, that's our show for today. We hope you've enjoyed the dialog and been motivated towards eager obedience, even when Jonah didn't always show it.

Tim Moore: Well, we are so grateful for the call God placed on David Reagan's life and on Dave's eventual obedience. What a joy to follow in his footsteps here at Lamb and Lion Ministries these past years. Join Nathan and me again next week for another episode of Christ in Prophecy. Until then, look up and be watchful for our Lord, who offers salvation to all who will obey Him is drawing near. Godspeed.

End of Program