

## 1. Intro

### Prophets >>

\_\_A Hebrew prophet named Jonah definitely gets schooled in this story - he gets owned, PWNED in fact, like a noob - by God himself.

\_\_We find Jonah in the the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible; 39 books of the Old Testament divided into three groupings: The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

- Law or Torah | Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.
- Prophets or Nevi'im | Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.
- Writings or Ketuvim | Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles.

\_\_Jonah was part of the Prophets.

\_\_Within this group called the Prophets, there is a subgroup of books called the 12 Prophets or Minor Prophets (see italicized books above). Jonah is a Minor Prophet.

\_\_Jonah stands out among the rest of the minor leaguers because it is a riveting short story about a prophet, rather than a record of a certain prophet's message.

### It Goes Down in History >>

\_\_Read Jonah 1:1-6

\_\_Here's how it goes down:

- God tells him to go to Nineveh, warn of judgment. Jonah runs, gets on a boat to Tarshish.
- Next week, sailors throw him overboard, he gets swallowed by a great fish, lives in there for three days.
- Fish pukes him out on the beach, he preaches to Nineveh, Nineveh repents.

\_\_Normal response to the great fish thing: Are you serious? For real?

\_\_The question: Should we view this book as history or parable?

\_\_Three sources for an answer:

- Google - lots of Christian websites angry about liberals and evolution. Moving on.
- Jewish commentary - disagreement over the centuries among rabbis. Quote: "The repentance of the Ninevites, from a psychological standpoint, is less plausible than the physical possibility of the miracles that happened to Jonah. There is nothing like it anywhere else in the Bible."
- New Testament - see below!

## 2. Jesus and Jonah

### Rabbi Jesus >>

\_\_Luke 11 says: "When the crowds were increasing, Jesus began to say, "This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation... The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here."

\_\_Matthew adds: "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."

\_\_Jesus, our authoritative Rabbi, seems to teach that the story of Jonah really happened, and he calls it out to justify and explain the events that are happening in his own life.

\_\_Is this the whole point, that Jonah is literal history? No, you can believe it's parable and be fine. You just may not be in line with Rabbi Jesus.

### What About Jonah? >>

\_\_Jonah was a prophet in Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II from 782 to 753 B.C.

\_\_This is some 1300 years after Abraham, about 150 years before the Babylonian exile, 250 years before the return and completion of the second Temple, and roughly 700 years before Jesus.

\_\_The Assyrian empire was strong, but Israel was also strong, expanding its boundaries and experiencing great prosperity. The sense of nationalistic pride was huge:

- Had "Support the Troops" ribbons on the back of their mini-vans,
- Flew Israelite flags in their front yards,
- You were with Israel, or you were with the terrorists.

\_\_Nineveh was definitely not with Israel.

\_\_Jonah not interested in going *there*.

\_\_The Jonah character: reveals satire, irony, high drama, comedy. He's kind of like Brett from Flight of the Conchords.

### **3. Nineveh - A "Secret Treasure"**

#### God of the City >>

\_\_Nineveh an ancient and powerful city in the Assyrian empire, just north of present day Baghdad. A bustling urban center.

\_\_Cities - bad stuff happens there.

\_\_A *Monocle* magazine all about cultural, business, and economic developments in global cities, listed Burlington, VT as one of the world's five secret treasures, "a winner" among cities - not unlike Nineveh.

\_\_Jonah + Nineveh are very relevant to Dwell + Burlington. Will we be like Jonah?

\_\_Jonah is not the hero of this story - God is. Let this book challenge and school your view of God.

#### Run Jonah Run >>

\_\_Last Tuesday, because of a piece of recent legislation in our state, a group of demonstrators from Westborough Baptist Church in Kansas came to Montpelier and our Nineveh, Burlington.

\_\_They seem to bear a Jonah-like message of impending judgment. But was their message like the one God wanted Jonah to bring?

- Answer: emphatically, enthusiastically, unflinchingly, NO.
- Nor was it anything like the gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

\_\_Jonah ran from God for a reason.

\_\_Think of *Run Lola Run*, breathless desperation to flee the mission.

\_\_Because he knew what God had in mind for Nineveh. And it was not judgment at all, but reconciliation.

\_\_Jonah, in all his ethnocentric, nationalistic, religious pride, would have loved nothing more than to see the city of Nineveh leveled, just like those Westborough Baptist folks smile with glee while they hold up hate-filled signs about Hell.

\_\_But both of them couldn't be further from the heart of God which has been made clear to us in Jesus Christ.