

# LEARNING FROM A RELUCTANT PROPHET

The Reluctant Prophet, Pt. 1: Jonah 1:1-4

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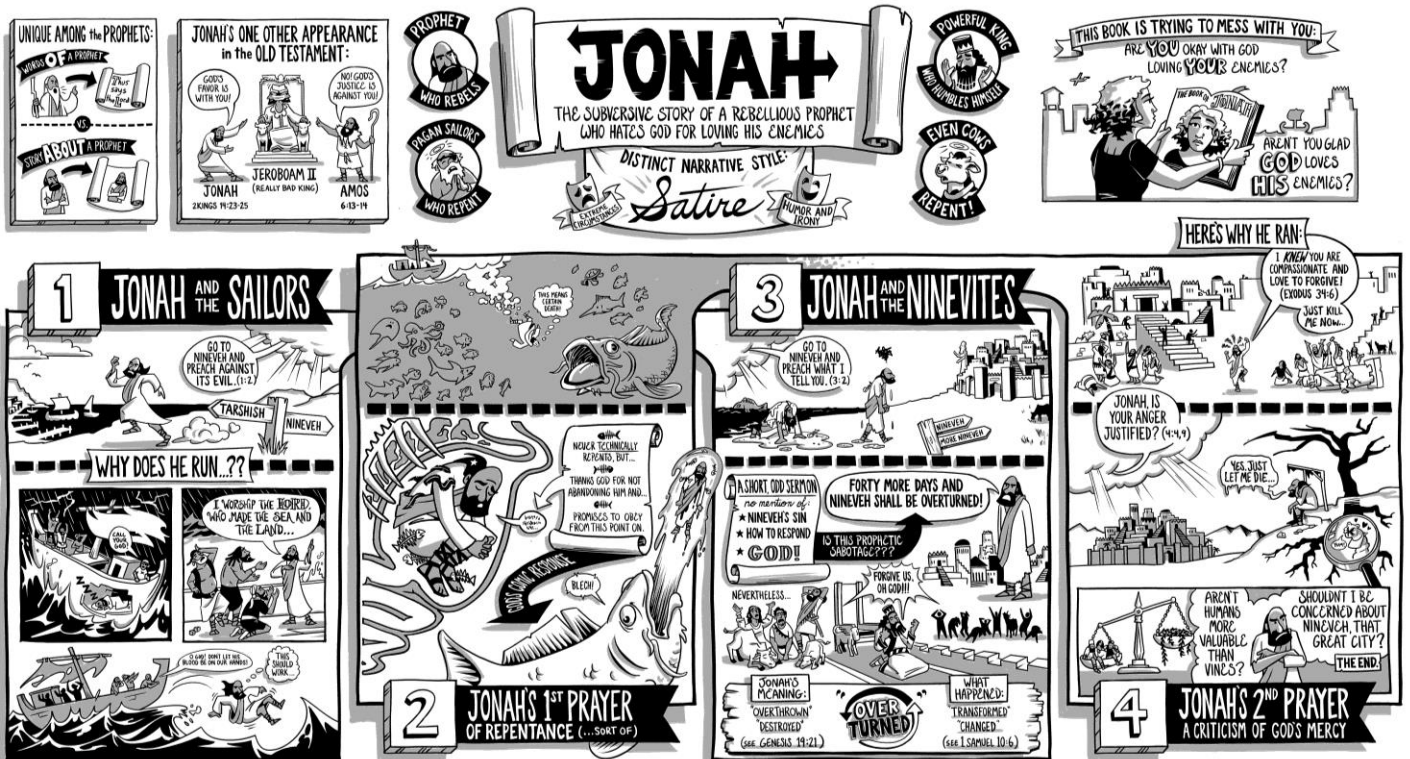
## Reading Jonah so that we learn Jonah's lessons

<sup>1</sup> 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."

<sup>3</sup> 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

1. Jonah really was a prophet, so he knew that preaching is dangerous and powerful
2. Watch for what God is doing, usually behind the scenes
3. Watch for what is *gadōl* and what is *ra'ah*
4. Watch for the "direction signals" in Jonah



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## A little background

<sup>23</sup> In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel became king in Samaria, and he reigned forty-one years. <sup>24</sup> He did evil in the eyes of the LORD and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit. <sup>25</sup> He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, in accordance with the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hopher.

### 2 Kings 14

<sup>10</sup> Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: “Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. <sup>11</sup> For this is what Amos is saying:

“ ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword,  
and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.’ ”

<sup>12</sup> Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. <sup>13</sup> Don’t prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king’s sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom.”

<sup>14</sup> Amos answered Amaziah, “I was neither a prophet nor a prophet’s son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. <sup>15</sup> But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’ <sup>16</sup> Now then, hear the word of the LORD. You say,

“ ‘Do not prophesy against Israel, and stop preaching against the house of Isaac.’ ”

<sup>17</sup> “Therefore this is what the LORD says:

“ ‘Your wife will become a prostitute in the city, and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword. Your land will be measured and divided up, and you yourself will die in a pagan country. And Israel will certainly go into exile, away from their native land.’ ”

### Amos 6



## Learning with Jonah

1. Jonah knows that he can't please Jeroboam II and the Lord

<sup>14</sup> *Amos answered Amaziah, "I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. <sup>15</sup> But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' <sup>16</sup> Now then, hear the word of the LORD. You say, " 'Do not prophesy against Israel, and stop preaching against the house of Isaac.' "*

Amos

2. Jonah knows that God's message is always good news

<sup>3</sup> *For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is always before me.  
<sup>4</sup> Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you are proved right when you speak  
and justified when you judge.*

Psalm 51 (Paul quotes this text in Romans 3:4)

3. Jesus is the "sign" that gives meaning to the story of Jonah

Side question: Does Jesus' understanding of Jonah mean that it is more than just an allegory?

<sup>29</sup> *As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. <sup>30</sup> For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. <sup>31</sup> The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here. <sup>32</sup> The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here.*

Luke 11

4. Jonah learns running from God's revealed will is dangerous

<sup>7</sup> *Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?*  
Jeremiah 28

5. The "great wind" begins to teach Jonah lessons about God's salvation

*"What I have vowed I will make good.  
Salvation comes from the LORD."*

Jonah 2:9, the prophet's profession after God provides through the storm

## **Resources for further study**

The Bible Project team does a great job of introducing Jonah at <https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-jonah/>

Spurgeon has five sermons on Jonah at this Monergism site: <https://www.biblebb.com/brefindex/jon.htm>

Doug's Logos library includes a helpful Bible study by Paul Mackrell (Day One Publishing, 2007)

Erik Manning has an interesting discussion of the scientific questions around the Jonah sign/miracle at <https://crossexamined.org/the-mind-blowing-meaning-behind-the-sign-of-jonah/>