

Kings and Prophets 15-01-09b

Let's resume our study now. We're looking at the book of Jonah and Kind of like the great fish. We're trying to take it all in one swallow here.

We're trying to get it all in one chunk By the way, it is interesting that although So much has been written and said and thought about whether or not This required a lot of supernatural intervention It doesn't say God created a fish God appointed a fish and one of the things that we notice in the book of Jonah is How often God works through? Natural means and This is Observable throughout the biblical record throughout human history while God could Have just miraculously put some sort of bubble around Jonah Could have just kept him alive his Body could have just sunk to the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea. He could have laid on the bottom in the in the mud He talks about seaweed wrapped around his head and so on. He could have just laid on the bottom.

Why a fish? The fish represents something and the fish is a natural means for Jonah's preservation now the Providential appearance of the fish and the action of the fish in swallowing Jonah all of these are divinely instigated divinely appointed but God divinely employs Natural means and this has some traction when you think about I am NOT averse although. I don't think it's necessary. I'm not averse to seeing explanations for example of volcanic activity being implicated in the plagues that preceded Pharaoh in Egypt releasing Moses and the children of Israel God can use natural means now Who can predict those things but God God gives Moses the information ahead of time of what is coming next and that of course is God's supernatural knowledge, but there's nothing to say that God didn't use a Providentially Instigated volcanic eruption north and west of Egypt to produce the conditions that led to the lice and the flies and the frogs and the darkness and the other Types of plagues that Are recorded in the Bible same thing here? Yes, it is the work of God You can't count on a great fish swallowing you and spitting you out three days later anytime you fall overboard in the Mediterranean but Why a fish and later why a Gourd why a worm why an east wind why not just an angel coming by and Sticking an umbrella in the sand.

Why not an angel taking the umbrella away? Why does God use natural means? It is as though God Works within the physical universe and within his own creation and does just enough Almost always using natural means to achieve his will an earthquake And so on well, anyway, we we have come to the Second chapter of Jonah and For a reason unknown to myself I've turned away from it. Here we go So in verse 17 the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days Three nights what I started to say is in terms of natural means There are a lot of recorded instances of people being swallowed whole by fish in the Mediterranean Sea Much more often they are Of the great white shark variety from 20 to 30 feet in length the span of the jaws of these fish It can exceed six feet and There are many recorded instances in the 1700s and 1800s in recent history as well as in ancient history recorded by Jerome and other guys where Whole human beings have been found inside These

great fish some of them are related to Tunnies. Some of them are related to sharks It is possible for some that there's some objection that the throat of a whale won't admit something as big as a man It didn't have to be a whale probably was not a whale The word that Jesus uses in the New Testament That's related to our word cetacean Is a class of fish it doesn't mean a whale even though it is translated that way in some versions That it also means a great fish just like the word used here But it isn't necessarily a supernatural fish the actions of the fish the preservation of Jonah alive inside the fish By the way, there's at least one case where they have found a man alive inside one of these fish You can do the research.

It's it's historically recorded They also found the corpse of a woman Whole They found two Tunnies and a fully clothed man. There's another case where they found a guy This is several hundred years ago 1700s. I think they found a guy in a complete coat of chain mail Whole and entire inside one of these sharks anything larger than about a 20-foot great white can swallow a human being whole and remember That humans at this time Seem to have been quite a bit shorter This is why Saul Was head and shoulders above the others in Israel.

This is why Goliath at Something between six and seven feet tall was considered a giant and so Jonah if he was any kind of a Typical, you know five something foot tall guy wouldn't would have been no trouble at all For the fish to swallow him the miraculous part is that the fish was there to do so the Jonah survived alive for the three days and That at God's direction he is spewed out, but we have in chapter 2 this prayer of Jonah and What is particularly interesting here? We don't have time to chase them all down. But if you look at these statements Virtually everything Jonah says here is quotations of the Psalms He knows the book of Psalms he is an educated Prophet he knows his scriptures. He has memorized the Psalms and this is what comes to his mind to his heart to his soul in The midst of this judgment.

He remembers the word of the Lord and he prays the Word of God back to God This is the best kind of prayer So he says I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction and he answered me Out of the belly of Sheol. I cried and you heard my voice For you cast me into the deep into the heart of the seas flood surrounded me your bellows and your waves passed over me then I said I Have been cast out of your sight yet. I will look again toward your holy temple What kingdom is Jonah from? Okay, Northern Kingdom, right? Where's the temple? Southern Kingdom, so does he say I'm gonna visit the temple? I'm gonna look toward the temple why he's a Northern Kingdom guy It's gonna be an extraordinary circumstance for him to actually travel down to Judah go to Jerusalem and visit the temple But he will look toward God's Holy Temple.

He knows that that is the place of the Shekinah resident among God's people I Will look toward your Holy Temple The waters surrounded me to my soul the deep closed around me weeds wrapped around my head I went down to the mornings of the mountains the earth with its bars closed behind me forever Yet you have brought up my life from the pit. Where is Jonah as he is? Praying where is he? He's in the fish But he speaks of his life as having already been preserved and brought up from the pit even though at the moment he's At least metaphorically speaking in the pit. He's in the pit of the fish's stomach for sure And I like I kind of imagined when he

says the bars of the earth have closed around me Maybe he's feeling through the stomach lining of the great fish that these ribs, you know, like like bars He says well, you know, I I've got a verse for that You know weeds wrapped around my head.

How much light is there inside? You know, this is not What is a Geppetto in the Disney thing where he's inside the fish and he's got a little candle and a table and chair How much light is there there is no light at all it is pitch black dark This is inside a fish underwater So he's doing everything by feel and so who knows what's actually wrapped around his head he It smells like seaweed. It feels like seaweed. He can't see it But he says there's seaweed wrapped around my head.

I can only imagine what's wrapped around his head I don't know where that fish has been or what he's been eating the earth with its bars closed behind me forever Notice the use of the word forever The earth has closed around me forever Yet you have brought my life up from the pit. So what does forever mean? well context context context Forever can imply Something hopeless But God is the God of the impossible what's not possible with men is possible with God with God all things are possible Oh Lord my God when my soul fainted within me. I remembered the Lord and my prayer went up to you into your holy temple Different holy temple now, right or maybe it's the same when he says I will look toward your holy temple Your prayer goes to the holy temple Jonah is either imagining God listening in the temple in Jerusalem or as It says in the Psalms the Lord is in his holy temple.

Let all the earth keep silence before him the ultimate heavenly temple Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own mercy What's our historical context? We've been working hard to Progress through Kings and Chronicles. What kingdom are we talking about? What exists throughout this land? What is it that Jeroboam the second has encouraged just like his namesake? What is the purpose of this book? ultimately What is the theme of the book is the theme of the book Jonah and the fish what is the theme of the book It is the not the great fish it is the great God if there's one thing you remember from this survey Jonah is not about the great fish Jonah is about the great God here. You have it in the penultimate statement in this prayer Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own mercy Forsake the source of mercy forsake the God of mercy Notice forsake He's not talking about the Gentiles who have only ever served idols What does it mean to forsake a thing you have to be with it? to forsake it, right I Can't forsake the ballet I've never been in the ballet.

I've never been to a ballet. I've never been anywhere near a ballet I can't forsake the ballet. I can't forsake New Delhi in India Well, I'm gonna forsake New Delhi.

I've never been there. I've never been anywhere near it What does it mean to forsake a thing you were there and you left? God says I will never leave thee nor forsake thee What what's the old classic? traditional phrase out of the wedding vow forsaking all others cleaving only unto this woman Cleaving to this woman and forsaking all others Why well because I've Had access to others may have dated others may have spent some quality time with others. I forsake them

all I'm gonna cleave to this one And leave it all behind Great Gospel song I'll leave it all behind.

I will forsake this earth for the heavenly realms I've been here, but I'm leaving so what does this mean? Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own mercy. This is their own God. These are the People of God in the northern kingdom of Israel who have turned from God to idols What is the book of Jonah? What is the story of Jonah designed to do the same thing that everything else? God has been doing of a natural and supernatural nature in the northern kingdom to turn his people back to himself The issue is God relationship with God Obligation for faithfulness and obedience to God that's that's what we're talking about here Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own mercy, but I will sacrifice to you with the voice of thanksgiving I will pay what I have vowed deliverance Salvation is of the Lord and once again I would have broken the path the chapter after verse 9 and made verse 10 the first verse in the next chapter But notice something Especially given my desired chapter breaks.

How did the first chapter end? What was going on as the first chapter ends? The sailors feared the Lord exceedingly and did what? What what two things did they do? Offer sacrifice and made vows Yonah at the end of the second chapter is doing what? making sacrifices offering sacrifices and making vows There is a symmetry here who did it first? The Gentile Phoenician salts the sailors got there a whole chapter ahead of Jonah the prophet of God who has forsaken the presence of the Lord and is now looking toward the presence of God and Sending his prayers into the presence of God. He says it twice. That's what the Holy Temple is It represents the presence of God.

That's what the temple is for, right? Is a place for the presence of God to reside So there is a great symmetry here, but there is also an order and because of Jonah's disobedience The Gentiles are going to get there first It doesn't say after the sailors put him on the spot Jonah offered sacrifices and made vows does it? Even with his acknowledgement even recognizing the truth that this whole storm and whole situation is because of him That's not the point where he changes his mind It takes three days inside the fish For him to change his mind it takes the sailors three hours It takes Jonah three days That's the hardness of heart That can characterize God's own people who ought to know better Look at what Paul says about the Israelites in in Romans 9 10 11 to them belong the ordinances the promises the heritage the custodianship and Those branches had to be broken off out of the tree of God's plan and purpose because of unbelief and Gentile branches have been grafted in Take heed That you learn the lesson of those broken branches or you too can be snapped off Right, that's Paul's message in Romans So the Lord in verse 10 once this prayer goes up God spoke to the fish I I've just sat and mused on this for about 10 minutes It doesn't say God appointed the fish to go to the shore. It says God spoke to the fish Think about this Look at chapter 1 verse 1 The Word of the Lord came to Jonah and in verse 3 Jonah went the other way God spoke to a dumb fish and the fish immediately vomited Jonah on to dry land Who's smarter? It's just a stinging stinging rebuke Dumb fish have got more sense than Jonah Phoenician sailors have got way more sense than Jonah Well that brings us to chapter 3 Now the Word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time What does this tell you? What did Jonah do once he? picked himself up off the sand of The

seashore, what did he do? He did not go to Nineveh God has delivered him God has responded to his prayer miraculously Granted him his life. And what does he do? If he was on his way to Nineveh the Word of the Lord would not come to him the second time Why does the Word of the Lord come to him the second time? Because he is not following the Word of the Lord that came to him the first time God has to repeat himself This is one thing parents, you know really get tired of This is one of the things they tell you you shouldn't have to do with a well-trained dog You shouldn't be saying stay stay stay stay If you train your dog well you say stay and the dog sticks like glue until you give him the command for release and if you have to keep repeating the command, it's because You're you're a poor master and or you have a poorly trained dog You shouldn't have to repeat the command Parents ideally would love to be able to give to give an instruction one time just like a Marine Corps officer I give an order.

I don't expect to have to repeat myself. I don't want to come back and say Where is that which I ordered? You to do and bring or perform an hour ago. I give an order.

I expect it to be obeyed That's why they put the leaves on your hat so that you can walk around and give orders and they're done This is the God of the universe giving an order Jonah after the three days in the fish after the miraculous deliverance Spit out onto the dry land Did not comply He's not on his way to Nineveh. That's why you have verse 1 of chapter 3 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time saying get up Arise Why does he have to give the command to arise? Because he's not going anywhere. He is static.

He is stationary. He is not moving Get up Go to Nineveh that great city and preach to it the message that I tell you now There's a lot of evangelistic Exhortation that comes out of this and other passages, you know You got to go tell everybody go tell it on the mountain over the hills and everywhere go tell everything and everybody ubiquitously Notice God gives Jonah from the beginning a designated target He doesn't say go to Assyria. He doesn't say go to All ye lands He says go to Nineveh.

Why does he say go to Nineveh and Why does he say it at this time to this prophet? Why didn't he say it to Elisha? Why didn't he say it to Elijah? Why didn't he say it to any other man of God at any other time in history God at this time at this place? Sends Jonah to this city. Why? because God knows in His omniscience that there is at this time at this place a group of people who will Respond if they are confronted Doesn't send him to Damascus Doesn't send him to Carchemish doesn't send him to Joppa Doesn't send him to Tarshish Doesn't send him to Samaria Doesn't send him to any city other than Nineveh go to Nineveh Not only does God designate the target audience Specifically, but God says I will give you the message I'm not telling you to go and just preach whatever comes into your mind Go and give a lengthy series on the Psalms You go to this particular set of people and I will give you the specific message. I want delivered to them preach the message that I tell you I Tell you who I tell you where and I tell you what? Who is instigating this instance of evangelistic effort Who's dictating everything about it? God It's not a general commission.

It's not a ubiquitous command. It is a specific set of orders to Jonah alone To the Ninevites alone with one message alone that God designates So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord now Nineveh was an exceeding great city How big an extent? Furlongs leagues cubits Acres When have you ever seen the extent of a city given in terms of time Ever how about the city built four square? Well, what are its dimensions? Is that given in terms of time? And what is the time here by the way archaeology says that it wasn't that big a city in Jonah's day Actually, it was But that's not the issue. The issue is you have the same period of time Repeated how long was he in the belly of the fish three days.

What is the extent of the city? Unusually uniquely it is given in terms of a time Now if Jonah had been obedient How long would it have taken him in chapter 1 verse 1 and 2 to fulfill his commission How long would it have taken? Three days it takes three days to canvas the city takes three days to deliver the message to everybody in Nineveh instead He spends that three days in the belly of the fish absorbing a message from God out of the Psalms Once he has absorbed a message for three days. He is now ready to go deliver a message for three days You cannot preach and teach what you have not observed and absorbed yourself make sense He gets a three-day Bible class in the belly of the fish so that he can deliver a three-day Bible class in Nineveh You cannot deliver what you have not learned you cannot preach what you have not taken to heart This is the key for any teacher any believer who speaks the truth to another believer in love you can't pontificate You can't Expatiate you can't bloviate on things that you have not Digested and absorbed and learned first yourself. That's why it's three days We are supposed to think back to Jonah's recent three day encounter with the truth of God recognition of the truth of God acknowledgement of the truth of God But he is certainly a reluctant preacher Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk He cried out and said yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown the people of Nineveh believed God Is this because of Jonah's enthusiasm his commitment his eloquence? his persuasive arguments These are people who were already known to God as those ready to change their minds God has prepared the ground in advance.

All it takes is this specific message To give them something to which they can respond their hearts are already prepared Jonah didn't wreak a revival He brings the word so that a revival that is already in sippin incipient already massive already Already Looked for by the hearts of these people they are ready to abandon violence They are ready to have a change of heart and change of mind Jonah delivers this message and immediately there is this mass repentance He doesn't even get to the rest of the city He does it for one day and the news travels through the rest of the city before he can even get there he goes one day's journey and And Delivers yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown 40 days is the is the time of testing the time of waiting the time of trial you're on trial Jesus was on trial 40 days in the wilderness Israel was on trial 40 years in the wilderness We know this throughout scripture. It is the number of testing 40 days well the people don't I have to wait the 40 days after the first day. There's 39 days left and And they're already repentant Jonah hasn't even made it to the other two-thirds of the city and they're repenting and The word came to the king of Nineveh Notice the word came to the king

of Nineveh Jonah didn't come to the king of Nineveh The word has been transmitted like lightning as soon as people hear it.

They share it with their neighbors because they This is something that is looked for God knew that these hearts were prepared God Sovereignly arranged that there would be a generation of repentant people in Nineveh to create this picture King of Nineveh arose from his throne laid aside his robe covered himself with sackcloth and sackcloth and sat in ashes Caused it to be proclaimed and published Throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles Jonah is supposed to be the guy getting this news out The king just takes that right out of his hands Jonah does it for one day? The king just takes over the king and his nobles Publish and perpetrate and And proliferate this message all through the land. It just it takes off Jonah loses control of it almost immediately The message is co-opted and and spread far beyond anything that he could do Let neither man nor beast bird nor flock taste anything herd nor flock. Do not let them eat or drink water Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth and cry mightily to God Yes, let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.

Why the animals? this is a recognition that they are dealing with the Creator God and That everything he has created belongs to him. This is not the God of the plains This is not the God of the mountains, this is not the God of the sea. This is not the God of storms this is the Creator God and all of the animals came from his hand just as all of the people did and Everything that is within their control Needs to acknowledge this Creator God this goes back to the knowledge That God created everything Who can tell if God will turn and relent and turn away from his fierce anger so that we may not perish? God saw their works that they turned from their evil way and God Relented from the disaster that he had said he would bring upon them and he did not do it.

He is a merciful God At their repentance he relents. What has he just done in the days of Jeroboam? He has relented he has given them back territory that they lost he has given them respite from military defeat and famine and loss and bitter hardship God has Relented he is Removing the judgment that they richly deserve the Ninevites richly deserve judgment for their evil and their violence Violence is the specific sin For which they are indicted and which they confess and that they change their minds about its violence That was the sin by the way Before the flood that was the sin by the way in Sodom remember violence and God suspends the judgment because they turn there weren't even ten righteous men there wasn't ten people who would turn in Sodom There was nobody but the six Willing to get on the ark before the flood Here the entire city changes its mind They're all Gentiles Well, it displeased Jonah exceedingly verse 4 Notice that chapter 3 ends kind of like chapter 1 and chapter 2 with people acknowledging God through their works Seeking to please God by Acknowledging him in what they are doing. They sacrifice their food.

They sacrifice and forgo their water They humble themselves and everything within their control their livestock their beasts Looking to and acknowledging God. Well, this displeases Jonah He prays to the Lord and says Lord. This is what I said when I was still in my country

That's why I fled to Tarshish I know that you're a gracious and merciful God slow to anger abundant and loving-kindness who relents from doing harm I know this and I find it annoying What's going on in the northern kingdom Jeroboam the second God is relenting our people turning No The Gentiles have got enough sense a fish has enough sense Phoenician sailors have enough sense Not God's own people Not the dove Who is the son of God's truth? Now Oh Lord take my life from me.

It is better for me to die than to live just wipe us out We don't want to turn we don't want to recognize that your grace extends even beyond us Think about this now in the big picture. I'm running out of time. I need to close but The time in the belly of the fish as we know from the remarks of the Lord Jesus The sign of Jonah is the only sign that will be given to the wicked generation that put Jesus on the cross As Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights The Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.

What does the time in the fish represent? death Death and burial right heart of the earth The bars surround me What does being sped up on dry land represent in Jonah's experience Resurrection what is possible through that resurrection? Witness to salvation for the world beyond God's people. This is true of the Lord Jesus. It is also true of the nation of Israel itself This is again what Paul talks about in Romans 9 10 and 11 through their disobedience Salvation has come to the Gentiles through the death of the nation of Israel for a time The grace of God has been spread abroad to the Gentiles in accordance with the promises going all the way back to Abraham You will be a light to the Gentiles.

You will be the father of many nations and God is using the disobedience. This is the same thing when Joseph's brothers Seemingly put him to death. It is through that death that deliverance comes to the entire nation of Egypt even before it comes to Joseph's own brothers, right Egypt is delivered through the famine and Is already enjoying that deliverance before Joseph's own brethren and his father come down to enjoy that same deliverance It is a consistent picture and in the midst of the Evil reign of Jeroboam the second God says look I've been calling you to myself I've been showing you that you have a covenant responsibility to be obedient to follow the law of Moses But let me and people say well why all I'm hurting is myself if I want to do this, why not just let me God gives them the big picture in the book of Jonah.

It's not just about you Jonah says look if I want to run off the other direction throw me in the sea. What is it if I Suffer the results of my bad decision God says no I'm using you for something bigger than yourself and he spit upon dry land and recommissioned because it's not just about Jonah if God just wanted to discipline Jonah for disobedience he'd have drowned and that would be the end of the book of Jonah Your life is more than you The existence of the nation of Israel is more than the nation of Israel it is salvation for the world and it is their witness even through their disobedience that broadcasts the good news of the grace of God the mercy of God and even though they are reluctant and even Disappointed that that is the message as you find in Jonah chapter 4 I knew you were a merciful God you were gonna spread grace abroad beyond our own nation, and I just think that's awful It doesn't matter God uses them in spite of

themselves God will use us in spite of ourselves, but how much better to use us in the positive sense use us because we are faithful Use us to exploit his grace that has come to us as Gentiles as the church because of Israel's Disobedience Paul says they have been set aside for a time. They've been broken out of the tree so that we could be grafted in heed the example Don't be broken off and lose out who wants to spend three days in a fish with seaweed wrapped around their head Who wants to have to be constantly chided? Who wants to be miserable sitting on the side of the hill be moaning God's grace to others? Why not rejoice why not be part of the crew that reaps the fields that are white to harvest harvest of righteousness harvest of inheritance Opportunity to reflect the glory of God in through obedience and faithfulness Why take the Jonah route? Let's learn from that example.

This is set before the people of Israel specifically the northern kingdom When you embrace idolatry you are forsaking your mercy you are forsaking the God of your salvation Why will you die? Oh house of Israel? That's why the book of Jonah That's why the ministry of Jonah and the story of Jonah occurs at this place and at this time God accompanies it with unwarranted undeserved grace and prosperity in restoring territory to the northern kingdom under a Disobedient king he brings grace and deliverance to Nineveh Under the ministry of a disobedient prophet all of these things are written for our instruction. It mirrors human history It mirrors specifically the death burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ through whom You end up with the church you end up with us. It's a really wonderful Symmetrical picture.

Well, that is the book of Jonah We're going to move on next time to look at the other prophets who minister at this time Thinking specifically of Hosea coming up next we'll also be looking at Amos and Joel Eventually, but we'll look next at Hosea. What is the message of Hosea? Why does it come at this time in the history of Israel? That's what we'll see next time. Let's close here in a word of prayer father.

Thank you for the truth of your word Thank you for its beauty and its power to lay bare the very Center and thoughts and motivations within our souls. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will use these truths to help us to Renew a right spirit to be cleansed and purged and fitted for service to Purge out the leaven that defiles us to take advantage of the wonderful positive opportunities that you have for us in this age and at this time to reflect your glory and Be a light to those around us even in a dark and fallen generation. We pray these things in Jesus name.

Amen