



*The January 20th inaugural speech of “45” was, not surprisingly, a reiteration of President Donald Trump stump speeches from a hard-beaten campaign trail ending with that key slogan: “And yes, together, we will Make America Great Again.” As we begin our 16-week study in Jonah, we see not a newly-elected POTUS but the eternal King of kings—Jehovah, the God of the Bible. God has eternally been in power, but in the 32nd book in the Bible, we see Him inaugurate a great prophet—Jonah. The Lord commissioned him to help an ancient powerful capital city in 776 BC—Nineveh—to be “Great Again.”*

## INTRODUCTION

*The theme of Jonah's book, which he himself had “one whale of a time” accepting, is “God is God and I am Not!” Jonah rebelled against the executive orders of Jehovah in such a way that the book's four chapters will show him as a **Prodigal Prophet**, a **Praying Prophet**, a **Preaching Prophet**, and, finally, a **Pouting Prophet**.*

## 1. GOD—ETERNALLY INAUGURATED

God's leadership—Jehovah's Jurisdiction—is the theme of Jonah. We will submerge deep in thought about what Jesus called “the sea monster”<sup>a</sup> famously quoting Jonah 1:17<sup>b</sup>, but that titanic fish plays a very minor role in the overall book. God was at center stage intervening to change His world by His Word. In His Word, God had spoken, and He had not stuttered. God is eternal and infinitely good. God is omniscient (all-knowing) and also omnipotent (all-powerful). He is sovereign (which means He “over-reigns”). It is as if God Himself has sworn this Inaugural Oath in His white throne room in eternity past:

**“I DO SOLEMNLY SWEAR THAT I WILL FAITHFULLY EXECUTE THE OFFICE OF GOD OF THE UNIVERSE, AND WILL TO THE BEST OF MY OMNIPOTENT ABILITY, PRESERVE, PROTECT AND DEFEND THE LAWS UPON WHICH I FOUNDED THE UNIVERSE...SO HELP ME, ME!”<sup>c</sup>**

God is “large and in charge.” He is sovereign and supreme. He did not come into the execution of His power at 12:00 noon, January 20, 2017. He has never been impeached from, termed out of, or elected to office. While His favorability ratings *have* wavered (in Jonah's heart and Nineveh's capital), He had not abandoned His great white throne. Indeed, here, He initiated significant change for Jonah and Nineveh.

**Jonah 1:1** “*And the word of Jehovah came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, ‘Arise, go to Nineveh the great city...’*”

## 2. JONAH—INAUGURATED TO SPEAK UP

God spoke *to* Jonah so He could speak *through* Jonah, the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC Israelite prophet. Prophet, in Hebrew, means “*mouthpiece*.”<sup>d</sup> When prophets appear on the Scriptural scene, it is because God wants to speak and inaugurate change. When all is well, Jehovah needs no thundering, bug-eyed, boney-fingered prophet. God is God, but when change is needed He does go looking for leaders to stand up and speak up.

**LEADERS STAND UP AND  
LEADERS SPEAK UP!**

All in the Capitol Community Are Welcome to be a Part of Regular Bible Study and Fellowship

SENATORS' WEDNESDAY STUDY: 7:00-8:05 AM, ROOM 1422 CAPITOL MINISTRIES, NEBRASKA [WWW.CAPMIN.ORG](http://WWW.CAPMIN.ORG)

STAFF WEDNESDAY STUDY: 12:00-1:00, ROOM 1306 PHONE: 402-327-0011 REV. PERRY M. GAUTHIER, V.D.M.

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### 3. NINEVEH—A CAPITAL TO BE REACHED

One vital trait we see about God in verse one is His great love for great cities...and for all peoples. "God is love" is an essential tenet of Christian theology. God created only one human race. He is not racist. His love is truly bipartisan. This loving God is also holy and as such was on a campaign trail to inaugurate change, not in Jonah's homeland but the land of a powerful, enemy (Assyria) and her capital (Nineveh). Jonah 3:3 calls it "*an exceedingly great city*," literally (in Hebrew)—"*a city a-great-one-to-God*." As we saw in "Rebuilding America and Nebraska," great cities are hubs of great influence—the nerve centers of culture, and capital cities are of capital importance in God's mind. God loves people, and consistently God loves the leaders who lead the people in the most populous cities.

### GOD LOVES LEADERS AND GOD LOVES CAPITAL CITIES.

### 4. "AND"—THE STORYLINE CONTINUES

The very first words in books of the Bible are always important and so, too, with Jonah which begins with "And..." as is properly translated in the KJV. That 3-letter word, translated in the oldest English translations as "Now," is important since it links Jonah to its context (the text around the text with which one is dealing). Contextually, Jonah is one part of a block of twelve books in the Old Testament which the rabbis refer to as "The Twelve." A gang of twelve, so to speak, minor prophets wrote to present one unified theme. Also, the book of Jonah is Velcro-strapped to its pre-text, the book before it, the minor prophetic book of Obadiah. Obadiah's final verse is a hinge point.

***Obadiah 1:21 "The deliverers will ascend Mount Zion to judge the mountain of Esau, and the kingdom will be the LORD's" (emphasis mine).***

Obadiah's 21 verses make it the Old Testament's shortest book. Its theme is that God will reign over Esau (the nation of Edom). The Edomites (descendants of Esau) were pagan persecutors of the nation of Israel. Yet, in Obadiah, Jehovah God promises His people deliverance from the Edomites and that He *will still* have His proper dominion as LORD of all the earth. God *will* rule Israel and Edom AND (now in Jonah 1:1) Assyria's capital—Nineveh. The God of the Bible desires and always has desired and always has had the right to rule all the peoples of the world as its Creator and omnibenevolent King.<sup>e</sup>

**"JONAH IS VELCRO-STRAPPED TO OBADIAH, CONTINUING ITS THEME OF THE SOVEREIGN LORDSHIP OF GOD—THE GOD WHO WOULD BE KING."<sup>f</sup>**

The theme of Jonah, often preached at missions conferences, is not "missions" *or* "evangelism." If it were, the book would end after Jonah 3:10 which concludes the account of the greatest revival recorded in all the Bible's 1,189 chapters.

**THE THEME OF JONAH—GOD IS GOD AND I AM NOT!**

### 5. CONTRASTS: JONAH VERSUS NINEVEH

Fans and foes must all agree that the newly inaugurated President Donald John Trump got right to work. Jonah—not so much. Shockingly, he went AWOL. When a loving God who would be King speaks, His Bible prophets listen. That is their job. They listen up, stand up, and speak up according to "thus saith the LORD." God's calling Jonah to reach the Ninevites is a study in contrasts that further illustrates that Jehovah, the God of the Bible, is a loving God for all peoples.

**Jonah 1:1a-2b** "... to Jonah... go to Nineveh."

Note the contrasts between Jonah the evangelist-preacher and those he was supposed to reach.

⇒ **RELIGIOUS CONTRASTS:** Jonah was a famous monotheistic Hebrew dedicated to loving Yahweh his God alone with all his heart, soul, and strength as commanded in Deut. 6:4-5. The Ninevites were notoriously pagan (polytheistic) Assyrians whose worship included the fish god.

⇒ **RACIAL CONTRASTS:** Jonah was a Jew by race (as well as religion). The Ninevites were Assyrians. Both races were descendants from Noah's son Shem and, therefore, "Shemites." We call them Semites. Yet these two Semitic peoples had long forgotten their shared ancestry, having become bitter enemies because of the next contrast.

⇒ **MILITARISTIC CONTRASTS:** Jonah's native Israel and the Ninevites' Assyria were vehement enemy nations. Nineveh's juggernaut *vermacht* steamrollered across all ancient Middle Eastern lands, crushing opposing nations with world-renowned cruelty. Their warfare methods make the Nazis look like Sunday School children.

⇒ **MORAL CONTRASTS:** We have every reason to believe that Jonah's life was well ordered until Jonah 1:3. In Matthew 12:41, Jesus called Himself "*great-er than Jonah*" implying that Jonah was *great*. Jonah was as a man of God and a prophet used by God to perfectly predict national Israelite expansion in 2 Kings 14:25. The Ninevites, contrastingly, were known for their moral wickedness and blood-curdling violence. In Jonah 1:2, it was *the stench* of their evils that had *arisen* (literally "*in My face*"<sup>g</sup>)—*stinking to high heaven*, we might say—before the LORD. Their vicious evils are what caused Jehovah God to flex His holy muscles of judgment and inaugurate a prophet for a tour of duty in a foreign land.

Jonah could not see past the moral, militaristic (political), racial, or religious contrasts. Can we?

We are too like Jonah, I fear, in his failings and feelings and fleings. Like the hymn *Come Thou Fount* says "*Prone to wander, Lord I feel it...prone to leave the God I love.*" God is the loving and rightful King of all the earth. Why then was the newly inaugurated Jonah so instantly treasonous? We will see why he was (and we are) as we look at the Prodigal Prophet's Feelings and his Fleeing.

**6. PRODIGAL FEELINGS**

Sin begins in the heart. When God speaks, a prodigal's feelings keep him from listening. A prodigal's feelings talk back, "*Hey Lord, I am God and You are not.*" The prodigal feels, "*I've got a better plan, a better pathway, and a better process—and I can also probably do everything I want for a better price.*"

In Gethsemane's Garden, Jesus modeled a humble and perfect heart. He was the antithesis of proud Jonah with his prodigal feelings. In the passion of the Christ, He was so entirely gripped by fear that He sweat great drops of blood. However, He said, "*Not My will but Thine be done.*" Contrastingly, Jonah's prodigal feelings led to his prodigal fleeing: first privately, then publicly.

**7. FLEEING ON PRIVATE PRODIGAL PATHS**

Jonah thought wrongly about God. Mentally, he went down the wrong path. It starts in the heart. Whenever we study the Bible in Room 1422 together, we drill our minds to think rightly.

**RIGHT LIVING COMES FROM  
RIGHT THINKING, AND RIGHT  
THINKING COMES FROM  
THINKING RIGHTLY  
ABOUT GOD. <sup>h</sup>**

Prodigal thoughts lead to prodigal lives. We will learn more in Jonah 4 about Jonah's mental and emotional state. God is omnipresent, yet Jonah actually thought he could "*flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went...*" (Jonah 1:20).



Jonah lived 150 years after King David, who had his share of wrong thinking, wrong living, and public scandal. Yet David penned this question perfectly when he thought rightly about his God:

**Psalm 139:7f** *“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? <sup>8</sup>If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.”*

I have long since forgotten the name of the Christian man who told of how he felt he could get away with anything but lost everything (including his marriage) due to a series of sinful choices. What has stuck with me for the 35 years since is how he described sin affecting his senses:

**IN THE GRIP OF SIN, GOD  
SEEMS STRANGELY DISTANT.**

## 8. FLEEING ON PUBLIC PRODIGAL PATHS

**Jonah 1:3** *“So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.”*

### A PRODIGAL'S PUBLIC FINDING:

Jonah's prodigal thinking had now *gone public*. He ventured out from his home in Gath-Hepher, fleeing his fatherland. He headed southwest to modern-day Jaffa's seaport. His prodigal pathway took him in the exact opposite direction of God's will. God said, *“Go east young man!”* He said, *“West sounds perfect!”* Note that he also *“found”* a ship to carry him further in his disobedient trek. Remember that circumstances alone are not an indication of the will of God. Jonah *“found”* a ship but it was clearly not God's will (or God's clearly revealed Word) that he should ever get on that ship heading southwest because Tarshish was northeast!

### A PRODIGAL'S PUBLICLY PAID FARE:

Jonah's sin, like ours, cost him something. All people will always pay a high price for sin. It is a foundational principle in God's moral universe—just like gravity. Sin always pulls us *down*. We always reap what we sow. A great preacher<sup>i</sup> said:

“Jonah Chapter One shows us that when we run from God, we'll always pay our own fare, we'll never get where we thought we'd go, and we never get a refund on the unused portion of our ticket.”

Jonah got right to work—as a Prodigal Prophet!

## PRODIGAL PATHS & POLITICAL LEADERS

Dear Senator:

Whether you are a seasoned senator or newly “inaugurated,” take time this week to reflect on how you led yourself, your thought life, actions, habits, and moral choices. Are you willing to pay *certain prices* for *certain sins*? How are you prone to wander—do you feel that? How are *you* prone to flee the God you love? I exhort you: as disciples of Christ in the political arena, flee from the bad example of willful Jonah's jaded Journey. Submit, instead, like Jesus did, to Jehovah's Jurisdiction.

For Jehovah is the rightful King of all the earth,

Rev. Perry M. Gauthier V.D.M. (cell/text: 402-770-6270)

<sup>a</sup> Matthew 12:40—Other English versions translate the original inspired Hebrew words *“Dag Gadol”* as *“great fish”* (NKJV, TLB), *“the whale”* (KJV, RSV, ASV), *“huge fish”* (NIV). Also of interest are the Latin *“ceti”* (Vulgate) and Spanish *“gran pez”* (Reina-Valera).

<sup>b</sup> Jonah 1:17—“The LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish 3 days and 3 nights.” (NASU)

<sup>c</sup> The Constitution's Twentieth Amendment mandates the time that the following oath precede the execution of the office of the presidency—12:00 noon on January 20th: *“I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.”* The newly elected or re-elected President traditionally adds *“so help me God”* to the statement mandated in Article II of the Constitution.

<sup>d</sup> Hebrew: *nabi-*“to announce, declare, bubble forth as a fountain.”

<sup>e</sup> Many theologians argue that the ideal form of government is the benevolent kingship of a loving monarch.

<sup>f</sup> The Living Bible paraphrases Obadiah 1:21c as *“...and the Lord shall be King!”*

<sup>g</sup> *Lapanay* is a compound formed from *Le+pan* (before+the face).

<sup>h</sup> Earl Radmacher, past President of Western Theological Seminary.

<sup>i</sup> The late great Presbyterian preacher, Dr. Donald Gray Barnhouse. Printing compliments of Mr. Larry Moon at [www.stardigitalprint.com](http://www.stardigitalprint.com)