

“We Who Wrestle With God” by Jordan B. Peterson

Jonah and the Eternal Abyss Ch. 9

Ch. 8 Review: In chapter 8 we discussed the materialism and orgiastic celebration of the Jewish people. They were far from being the people of the true living God. It took 3 generations for them to become God’s people going into the promised land. Moses died and was buried in Moab.

The Time of Jonah

In the half-century during which the prophet Jonah ministered (800-750 B.C.), a significant event affected the northern kingdom of Israel: King Jeroboam II (793-753 B.C.) restored her traditional borders, ending almost a century of sporadic seesaw conflict between Israel and Damascus. Prior to this time, the king of Damascus had been able to control the internal affairs in the northern kingdom. Assyria remained the real threat from the north at this time. Have you considered the centuries of conflict of Israel?

It was during this time that the Lord sent Amos and Hosea to announce to his people Israel that he would “spare them no longer” (AM 7:8; 8:2) but would send them into exile “beyond Damascus” to Assyria. During this time the Lord also sent Jonah to Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, to warn it of the imminent danger of divine judgement.

Jonah 1:1-3 – “The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish.” Tarshish was the furthest you could get away from Nineveh at the time. Why did Jonah refuse to obey God’s will and direction?

Socrates

Socrates (469-399 BC) was an Athenian philosopher and teacher who is considered the founder of Western philosophy. He was a key figure in the history of philosophy, emphasizing self-awareness and the pursuit of knowledge. Socrates is known for his Socratic method, which involved asking probing questions to encourage critical thinking and self-examination. Why did Socrates not flee Athens when he was warned against his teaching of free thinking against the Athenian gods? Why was Socrates put to death? Socrates was arguably guilty of the crimes with which he was charged, impiety and corrupting the youth, because he did reject the city's gods and he did inspire disrespect for authority among his youthful followers (though that was not his intention). He was accordingly convicted and sentenced to death by poison. How does his decision to stay in Athens compare to Jonah’s decision?

The Storm

Jonah 1:4 – Jonah has fled in a ship and gone to the depths of the ship to escape by sleeping. “Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up.” What other examples of sleeping to shirk responsibility are in the Bible? Why is this a short-term solution to a long-term problem?

Jonah told the men on the ship to throw him overboard to save themselves. What does this tell us about the character of Jonah?

Jonah 1:15-17 – “Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him. But the Lord provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights.” What spiritual lessons can we take from this scripture....?

1. The men on the ship
2. Jonah’s mindset towards God
3. God’s provision and message for Jonah
4. Prophecy for the future

What does Jordan Peterson say about the story of Jonah?

“Jonah’s story is a warning: pick up your damn cross and bear it or face the consequences. And what is worse, yet, than the cross? Hell: hell for you, for those you love, and for everyone else – and a hell that is on you, of your doing for remaining silent when you have something to say; for running away or escaping into unconsciousness when the voice of God, as the ineluctable call of conscience, makes itself known.” What does this mean?

Jonah prayed to God and He commanded the fish to vomit him up on dry land. Again, God told Jonah: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”

Jonah did so and the king and people of Nineveh turned from their evil ways. Jonah’s warning to the people of Nineveh created such a scare that the entire city of over 120,000 people repented. Why was Jonah’s testimony so powerful?

Jonah 3:10 – “When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.” When have we seen God change his plan to destroy a people? What does this tell us? Jonah was displeased at the result of his preaching. He considered the Ninevites his enemy and though he warned them as God had told him to do, he deeply wanted their destruction. His motives were not in line with God’s. When have you seen this in your life when your desires and opinions were not in line with God’s? Did you learn from this time?

God gives Jonah a vine to shade him in the desert but then provides a worm to eat the vine the next day. God then provided “scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah’s head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die.” What is God trying to teach Jonah?

Jonah 10:11 – “But the Lord said, “You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?” What is God telling Jonah?

The commission God gave to Jonah displayed his mercy and compassion to the Ninevites, and his last word to Jonah emphatically proclaimed that concern for every creature, both man and animal. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but desires rather that they turn from their ways and live. Jonah and his countrymen traditionally rejoiced in God’s special mercies to Israel but wished only his wrath on their enemies. God here rebukes such hardness and proclaims his own gracious benevolence. Do you see it?