

1:4-9

In last week's study, we were introduced to Jonah. While studying verses 1-3, we met Jonah, and learned of his background and his world. We also learned of God's mission for Jonah, to go to Nineveh of the Assyrians, and cry against the city. However, Jonah decided that he would flee from this mission, so in disobedience to God's command, Jonah heads the opposite direction. He gets on a boat going to Tarshish. This is where we find Jonah just before verse 4.

⁴ The LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up.

Jonah 1:4 NASB95

Disobeying God's word is definitely not a good idea! Why is God so upset about this, that He is putting Jonah's life and the life of the crew at such great risk? Why is Jonah's mission so significant to God and us?



In his *Table Talk*, published in 1566 AD, Martin Luther says of Jonah:

*The history of the prophet Jonah is almost incredible, sounding more strange than any poet's fable; if it were not in the Bible, I should take it for a lie; for consider, how for the space of three days he was in the great belly of the whale, whereas in three hours he might have been digested and changed into the nature, flesh and blood of that monster; may not this be said, to live in the midst of death? In comparison to this miracle, the wonderful passage through the Red Sea was nothing.*¹

Martin Luther, the Great Reformer, seems to be having trouble believing that the book of Jonah is factual, for he says, "...if it were not in the Bible, I should take it for a lie..." He calls it a grand miracle that Jonah survived being in the whale's stomach for three days; a miracle that outshines even the parting of the Red Sea. It seems that in this case, Martin Luther has completely missed the point of Jonah. It seems that he has conflated a miracle with what is supposed to be a sign and/or a prophesy.

¹ Luther, Martin, *Table Talk*, Translated by WILLIAM HAZLITT, Esq (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2004), p. 162.

**THE FOLLOWING PROPHECY HAS BEEN APPROVED FOR
ALL AUDIENCES
BY THE HOLY SCRIPTURE OF GOD**

To better understand the purpose of Biblical prophecies, I like to think of them as movie previews. In my youth, the height of entertainment for me was the movie theater. My favorite part of the movie going experience, I must confess, was the movie previews in the beginning. In a time before YouTube and Netflix, this was really the only way to know what films were coming out in the future. The previews were short, yet exciting and compelling. They gave the audience a teaser to pique interest in the movie which they represented, without giving away too much. They also gave us a way to recognize the movie when it did come out. In this way, movie previews are kind of like Bible prophecy.

Paul tells us the purpose of prophesy, in 1 Corinthians 14:3,

³ But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.

1 Corinthians 14:3 NASB95

Besides giving us a preview of upcoming events, Bible prophesy ought to edify, exhort, and console those who hear. Just like a movie preview doesn't spoil its full feature film, Bible prophesy isn't meant to 'predict' the future. Predicting the future would be divination.

²⁶ 'You shall not eat [anything] with the blood, nor practice divination or soothsaying.

Leviticus 19:26 NASB95

Bible prophesy helps us see the Signature of God; to recognize His works; to edify, exhort, and console each other; to get a sneak peek into God's plan.

When Christ was asked by Pharisees and Sadducees to provide a sign, He tells them,

⁴ "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah." And He left them and went away.

Matthew 16:4 NASB95

The word "sign" used here, is translated from the Greek word, **σημεῖον** (Strong's G4592), *Sēmeion* (say-mi'-on)

1. a sign, mark, token
 1. that by which a person or a thing is distinguished from others and is known
 2. a sign, prodigy, portent, i.e. an unusual occurrence, transcending the common course of nature
 1. of signs portending remarkable events soon to happen

2. of miracles and wonders by which God authenticates the men sent by him, or by which men prove that the cause they are pleading is God's

The second part of the second definition seems to be most relevant here. The Pharisees and Sadducees appear to be asking for Jesus's divine ID badge, i.e. the Signature of God. An interesting comparison presents itself here: the Pharisees (and Sadducees) and the Bereans of Acts 17. Whereas the Pharisees and Sadducees demand a sign, the Bereans searched the Scriptures! Indeed, Christ authenticates His identity and mandate by pointing His inquisitors to Scripture, Jonah!

Bible prophesy primarily falls into two categories: Declarative and Symbolic. Declarative prophesies are the "Thus sayeth the LORD" passages. For example, Isaiah 7:14, and Daniel 9:25,

¹⁴ *"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.*

Isaiah 7:14 NASB95

²⁵ *"So you are to know and discern [that] from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince [there will be] seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.*

Daniel 9:25 NASB95

Symbolic prophesies are called "types" or "models" by academics. These are prophesies which are acted out, often with the actor being unaware of their roll. For example. Genesis 22:2, and Hosea 1:2,

² *He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."*

Genesis 22:2 NASB95

² *When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and [have] children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD."*

Hosea 1:2 NASB95

Answering the Pharisees and Sadducees, Jesus tells them that the only sign they will get (have already gotten) is the sign of the prophet Jonah. He seems to be attributing symbolic prophesy to Jonah! Jesus added another qualification to Scriptural prophesy in John 5:39,

³⁹ *"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me;"*

John 5:39 NASB95

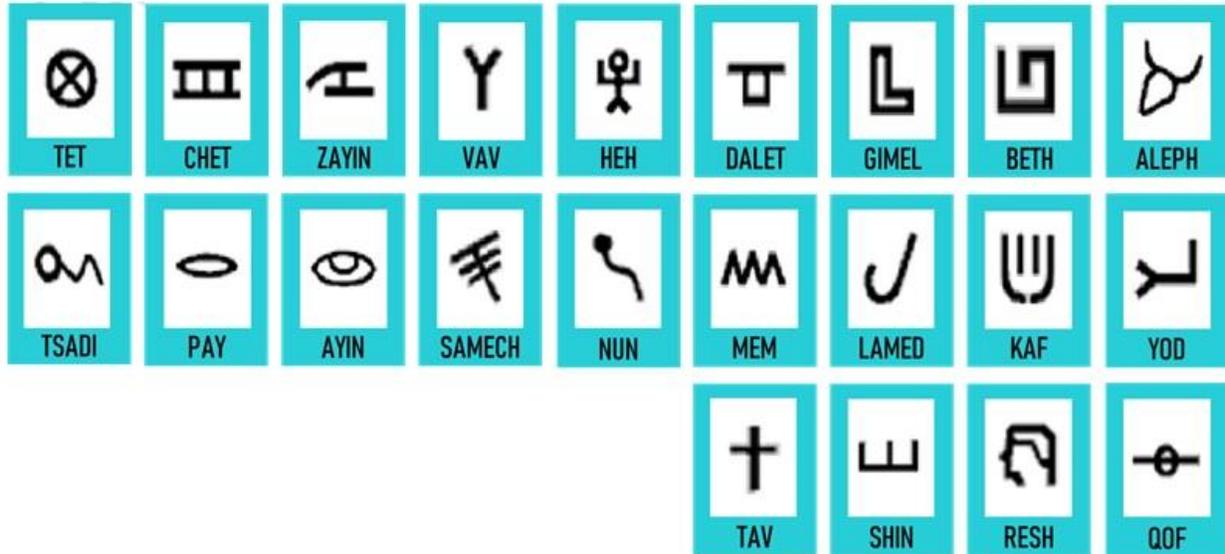
All of Scripture points to Him; He is on every page. Prophesy also, must ultimately point to Him!

So then, where is Christ in Jonah? Let's start by looking at Jonah's name in Hebrew:

יוֹנָה

(**Hebrew is read from right to left!**)

Jonah's name consists of the letters י (yod), נ (nun), and ה (heh). Conspicuously, a few things are missing, such as ו (vav with cholam) and ם (kamatz). This formation of the letters of the Hebrew Alphabet were instituted AFTER the Babylonian captivity. Originally, Hebrew didn't contain much in the way of vowels. The vowels would have been inferred. After the Babylonian captivity, not only did the look of the letters change, but devices were added to written Hebrew to note vowels. The missing devices, the vav with cholam and the kamatz, are there as a guide to pronunciation; the vowels "o" and "ah" respectively. They are NOT part of the alphabetic letters of Jonah's name. The closest equivalent in English would be punctuation marks. Before, Hebrew lettering used pictographs, roughly like Egyptian hieroglyphs.



Since Jonah lived almost two-hundred years before the Babylonian conquest, his name would have been written with three letters, "yod" "nun" and "heh", using the Hebrew pictographs.



The pictograph, or little picture, which represented the letter "yod" was an arm, bent at the elbow, the thumb and fingers separated, as if presenting something.



The "nun" pictograph was a seed.



The “heh” was a stick-figure picture of a man with his arms raised, as if showing something to the world.

Jonah 1:4

		DESCRIPTION	MEANINGS
	 YOD	ARM	WORK, DEED, FINISHED WORK
	 NUN	SEED	FISH, SPROUT, OFFSPRING, HEIR TO THE THRONE, FAITHFULNESS
	 HEH	ARMS RAISED	BEHOLD, SHOW, REVEAL

These pictures were used, not only to represent letters, but also because they had meanings in and of themselves. The “yod” which is an arm/hand meant word, deed, finished work, etc. The “nun” which is a seed, represented a fish, a sprout, an offspring, the Heir to the Throne, faithfulness, etc. The “heh” which is a man with his arms raised, meant to show, behold, to reveal, etc.

Thus, if one of the Pharisees, who was questioning Jesus and demanding a sign (Matthew 16:3-4,) looked at the meanings of the letters of Jonah’s name, he might come up with:

Jonah 1:4

		DESCRIPTION	MEANINGS
י	י	ARM	WORK, DEED, FINISHED WORK
נ	נ	SEED	FISH, SPROUT, OFFSPRING, HEIR TO THE THRONE, FAITHFULNESS
ה	ה	ARMS RAISED	BEHOLD, SHOW, REVEAL

THE DEED OF THE FISH WILL REVEAL....

The DEED of the FISH will REVEAL. Perhaps, he will ask himself, "What will the deed of the fish reveal?" This question will, maybe, cause him to look at Jonah's name again.

Jonah 1:4

		DESCRIPTION	MEANINGS
י	י	ARM	WORK, DEED, FINISHED WORK
נ	נ	SEED	FISH, SPROUT, OFFSPRING, HEIR TO THE THRONE, FAITHFULNESS
ה	ה	ARMS RAISED	BEHOLD, SHOW, REVEAL

THE DEED OF THE FISH WILL REVEAL....

REVELATION

THE FINISHED WORK OF THE HEIR TO THE THRONE, BEHOLD!

It's just possible that he would see another sentence: The FINISHED WORK of the HEIR TO THE THRONE, BEHOLD!

The deed of the fish will reveal the Finished Work of the Heir to the Throne, behold!

Our friend the Pharisee might even remember that Christ explained what He meant by the "sign of the prophet Jonah!

³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." ³⁹ But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and [yet] no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; ⁴⁰ for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

This passage sounds an awful lot like, “the deed of the fish will reveal the Finished Work of the Heir to the Throne, Behold!”

To be clear, none of this is “bible code,” nor divination, not even prophesy. If we compare Biblical prophesy to movie previews, this would be the equivalent of a “spoiler warning.” All this is saying is that something amazing is about to happen, Behold! This is showing a sign: a Signature of God!

This shows the significance of Jonah’s mission_ and Jonah didn’t have a clue.

⁵ Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten [it] for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep.

Jonah 1:5 NASB95

This storm was so terrible that the sailors, who made a living by buying/selling/transporting goods, started throwing their cargo overboard, hoping to save their lives. Yet, Jonah was asleep in the hold of the boat.



This should be a familiar scene:

²⁴ And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep.

Matthew 8:24 NASB95

Jonah parallels Jesus by being asleep on a boat during a bad storm. That’s where the similarity ends. Jesus was asleep during the storm because He knew that the seas and wind obey Him! Jonah was asleep during the storm for a completely different reason:

⁴ "You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him.

⁵ "But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you.

Deuteronomy 13:4-5 NASB95

Jonah knew, without a shadow of doubt, that his disobedience, as a prophet of God, will bring about his death. When the storm hits, Jonah knows that this is his end, so he simply accepts his fate. He accepts death over completing his mission to Nineveh. There is little detail about the mission, thus far. Nineveh’s sin is great, and God has had enough. The LORD sends Jonah to confront Assyrian wickedness, but Jonah decides to die instead.

⁶ So the captain approached him and said, "How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps [your] god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish." ⁷ Each man said to his mate, "Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity [has struck] us." So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.

Jonah 1:6-7 NASB95

The sailors are so desperate that they cast lots to see who is responsible for this awful storm. The lot falls on Jonah, because God is not going to let him take the easy way out.

³³ *The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.*

Proverbs 16:33 NASB95

Now that everyone on the boat knows that Jonah is the reason for their impending doom, they question him:

⁸ *Then they said to him, "Tell us, now! On whose account [has] this calamity [struck] us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?"* ⁹ *He said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land."*

Jonah 1:8-9 NASB95

Jonah's answer is exceptional. In one sentence, he clearly and powerfully witnesses for the LORD.

Jonah probably never expected to explain himself to a bunch of Gentile sailors. As far as he is concerned, this is between him, God, and those horrible blood-thirsty Assyrians. But God had another idea:

⁸ *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.*
⁹ *"For [as] the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.*

Isaiah 55:8-9 NASB95

God knew that Jonah would run from his duty. So, God puts Jonah in such a singular and unique position that pagan men seek out his testimony of the LORD. God gives Jonah an opportunity to minister and witness to these Gentile men.

Obviously, God can and does use unique situations to show Himself through His people. However, God wouldn't throw a life-threatening storm in the way every time He wants His people to testify of Him. Instead, God wants people who are so unique and effective as to reflect His Light and Goodness.

⁹ *But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR [God's] OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*

1 Peter 2:9 NASB95

In this passage, Peter defines us, as the body of Christ, as His church. Peter calls the people of God exceedingly unique as to witness the excellence and love and care and marvelous Light of our LORD.

Paul tells Titus:

³ *For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.* ⁴ *But when the kindness of God our Savior and [His] love for mankind appeared,* ⁵ *He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,*

Titus 3:3-5 NASB95

He shows us, that even though we were wicked at the beginning, God can and will save us...

¹ If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have [the gift of] prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ And if I give all my possessions to feed [the poor,] and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 NASB95

...with His Agape Love. Without such Love, we are capable of nothing of value or goodness. Without such Love, we are nothing.

³⁴ "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 13:34-35 NASB95

Our new commandment: to Love one another, as He loved us. The greatest Commandment is to love God, to love each other, to love our neighbor as ourselves, to even love our enemies: Because He Loved us first. This Love becomes for us like the storm was for Jonah: it presents us as a chosen people of God's own possession; unique, Loved, and Loving_ That we may be witnesses of His undying Love.

²⁰ "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the [life] which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Galatians 2:20 NASB95

