

# Christ Is Greater 04 Greater Than Jonah

by Neil Fraser

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*The sermon emphasizes that Jesus is greater than Jonah, highlighting the significance of Jonah's story as a foreshadowing of Christ's redemptive work and the call to repentance and salvation.*

**Duration:** 43:32

**Scripture:** Psalm 69:1, Jonah 1:17 - 2:1, Matthew 12:41

**Topics:** "Salvation Story", "Spiritual Resurrection"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Jonah and how his experience in the belly of the great fish teaches us about salvation. Jonah initially prayed and made promises to God, but nothing happened until he realized that salvation is of the Lord and that he couldn't save himself. Once Jonah acknowledged this, he was vomited out onto dry land, symbolizing a firm foundation. The preacher emphasizes that the power of Jonah's message came from the fact that he was a dead and raised man, and only someone who has experienced spiritual death and resurrection can effectively preach the message of God. The sermon concludes with a tribute to the hospitality and kindness received during the preacher's time at Parker the Palms.

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## Transcript

Thank you for coming out tonight. And it was just as I said to my wife before I came, we'll likely be so busy that the week will go past before we're ready for it to pass. And so it has proved.

Here we are tonight on my last message with you at this time, and it's just as if we had just started. I want to thank you all for your kindness to us while we're here, for the pleasure of being together, for your expressions of help received in the word. That's the biggest thing that can come to us, I think.

Expressions of appreciation and help from the people of God. It's been wonderful. And then I want to pay special tribute to Park of the Palms for its hospitality, for those wonderful meals that we get.

I don't know any place, and I'm honest about it, I don't know any other place that serves better meals than we have at Park of the Palms. And I'm going to put a special note into its magazine, I think, when I go back once more. I hope you read my article this month in the January Letters of Interest.

Put your hand up if you read it. That's scandalous. Half the time, right.

I just wonder when you're going to get time, brother. You're a very busy man. Anyway, I want to thank you all for your kindness in many ways.

And for those wonderful little tea parties we had after the meetings in the various homes. And all the other homes where we could have had it had we had time. For those of you who have ministered to us in any way, including the offerings, we want to thank you.

Now we want to read, first of all, our text again, please. For those of you who have not been here, each morning we have spoken on a survey of the New Testament. We have surveyed all the books in the New Testament in five days.

And in the evening messages, our general subject was Jesus is greater. We spoke of him as being greater than Abraham, greater than our father Abraham, the Jews asked long ago. We found out that our Lord was indeed.

Of a greater than our father Jacob, said the woman of Samaria. And we found out that he was greater than Jacob. This man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, we read.

And we spoke of Christ greater than Moses. Last night our subject was a greater than Solomon is yet. And tonight our subject is contained in verse 41 of Matthew chapter 12.

Matthew chapter 12, please. And verse 41. And you'll notice that it says the men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it.

Because they repented of the preaching of Jonas and behold a greater than Jonas is here. Now please shall we turn to the book of Jonah. If you can find it.

Back in there somewhere. Book of Jonah please, and we shall read the last verse of chapter one and read the whole of chapter two. Then prayed Jonah unto his brother, the seventeenth verse of chapter one brother.

Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly.

And said, I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord. And he heard me. Out of the belly of hell cried I. And thou heardest my voice.

For thou hast cast me into the deep, into the midst of the sea. And the floods compass me about. All thy billows and thy waves pass over me.

Then I said, I'm cast out of thy sight. Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about even to the soul.

The depths closed me round about. The weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains.

The earth with her bars was about me forever. Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption. O Lord my God.

When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord in my prayer came in unto thee, unto thine holy temple. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto thee with a voice of thanksgiving.

I will pay that which I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord. And the Lord spake unto the fish.

And it vomited out, Jonah, upon the dry land. And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city. And preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

The Lord will add to us his blessing. A greater than Jonah is here. Now I do not think that the Jews would regard Jonah as very great.

I do not know that they thought a great deal about him. Probably, a great deal often, probably because his ministry was so largely and so effectually to the Gentiles. And the Jews did not like the Gentiles.

As far as the Jew was concerned, the Gentiles were the dogs that could only hope to eat some of the crumbs that might fall from the table. And Jonah was the apostle to the Gentiles. He lived in Gethsemane, and Gethsemane was in Galilee.

And Judean Jews did not have much use for Galilean Jews. They thought themselves just a little bit better than they. So I do not think that Jonah was regarded as greater.

By his countrymen, the Jews. Nor do I think that Jonah was a great man because he was a spiritual man. I do not think that his character would indicate that as far as the word of God tells us.

Because the story of Jonah is the story of a man who ran away from his assignment. Commanded by the Lord to go east, he went west. And got away from his assignment as far as possible.

And when God in his mercy brought him back and said, Now you go and do the preaching I have bidden you to do. And he went and did it. To his surprise, his preaching was phenomenally successful.

And instead of being deeply appreciative of the success of his ministry, he was angry. You would have imagined that in that great city where there were 120,000 people, of whom the Bible says they could not discern between the right hand or the left, that that man, if he were a man of God, would be mightily pleased at the success of his ministry. And he was not.

He sulked about it. He would have been more glad had that city come under the judgment of God. For then his reputation as a prophet would have been upheld.

But that which made him angry and sulky was the fact that his reputation was ruined as far as he was concerned. He had preached, 40 days and Nineveh shall be destroyed. He had gone into that Gentile city and preached that in 40 days the city would be overthrown.

And it wasn't overthrown. And it wasn't overthrown for a hundred years. To his great surprise, the king of Nineveh, from the king on the throne to the beggar in the dungeon, they forthwith repented and cried mightily to God.

The king commended and showed the example himself, and it says he ordered a fast. He ordered a complete fast over the great city of Nineveh. A surrender of the appetite.

He ordered them to lay aside their beautiful clothes and put on sackcloth. A surrender of their appearance. And he ordered them to sit in ashes.

A surrender of their ambition. Their appetite, their appearance, their ambition must all be surrendered because of the preaching of the prophet. And they cried mightily to God.

And God did it not, and spared that great city. And Jonah was unhappy about it. No, Jonah wasn't a great man because he was a spiritual man.

No. Jonah was only great because he was a sign. The great thing to understand is the sign of the prophet Jonah.

That's it. He's only great because of the sign. And the Lord said on two occasions, This evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and no sign will be given it.

But, the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. That was the sign of the prophet Jonah.

And if we do not understand the sign of the prophet Jonah, we shall be ignorant of ourselves. And we shall be ignorant of the future of Israel. And we shall be ignorant of the superiority of Jesus Christ our Lord.

My subject there for tonight might be called, Jonah, the Jews, and Jesus. Jonah, the Jews, and Jesus. Or if you want another J, Jonah, the justified, that's us, and the Jews, and Jesus.

For Jonah is a sign to us all. That's what we want to think about in our message this evening. The man and his message.

The man was a sign, and his message was a sentence. Just one sentence. A one sentence message.

But the power of that message was because of the man that brought it. And because the man, though not intrinsically worthy, was a dead and raised man. And only a dead and raised man can bring a proper message of God.

And Jonah, to all intents and purposes, was a man who in his own confession went down to the very belly of hell and was raised out of it. And as a dead and resurrected man, he went and in the power of that sign brought a sentence through by which all Nineveh was converted to God. And the credential of any preacher is that he be a dead and risen man.

If ye then be raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. A dead and raised man. And that was his credential.

And it's yours, and it's mine. So I want tonight to pick up those three things, the Lord helping me. First of all, we shall think of Jonah as a type of ourselves.

And then we shall think of Jonah as a type of the nation of Israel. And then we shall think of the sign of the prophet Jonah as the sign of the death and burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. And then I trust we'll be able to say I'm greater than Jonah is here.

First of all, then, he is the type of every man and every woman who shall ever know the joy and blessing of salvation, of justification, shall we say. For here's a story of a man who in spite of the command of God went his own way, which was a downward way, all the way. Commanded by God to go eastward, I said.

He said, no, I'm going westward. I'm going to Tarshish. And Tarshish means destruction, I'm told.

Destruction, breaking up, destruction. But he went by way of Joppa, and Joppa means pleasant, pleasant. He went to Tarshish by way of Joppa.

Lots of people are going to destruction the pleasant way. Oh, they're not drunkards. They're not thieves.

They're not immoral. They're good neighbors, good friends, good workmates, good wives, good husbands. But there's this about them, they've never been born again, never been converted.

I wonder if I'm speaking tonight to somebody like that and me. You're a very respectable woman. You're a good man by the world's standards.

But there's this about you, you have never been converted. And you're on your way to destruction. Jesus said, wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be that go in therein.

Because straight is the gate, narrow. And narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it. If you're going to heaven, friends, you must be prepared to be in the minority.

For few there be that find it. And those on the broad road are usually broad-minded people. Very broad-minded.

They just hate those narrow people. Those people say that you must be born again to enter the kingdom of God. But Jesus said, you can be going on the broad road by the clean side of the broad road, by way of Joppa.

There's Joppa. And you'll notice the downward course. It says he went down to Joppa.

He went down to a ship. He went down to the bottom of the ship. And he went down to the bottom of the sea.

Down to the belly of the fish, and in that fish, down to what he calls the belly of hell itself. It was a downward course. And the course of human race by nature is a downward course, dear friends.

It's a downward course. Now, Jonah paid the fare. He didn't have to go, but he did.

And he paid the fare. Every person who lands in hell pays the fare. God doesn't send them.

No. They pay the fare. Every person who goes to hell goes in spite of the spilled blood of Jesus Christ.

And by their sins they pay their own fare to destruction. That's very seldom. And then to make matters worse, Jonah went down into the bottom of the ship and was fast asleep.

Asleep on his way to hell. Asleep on his way to destruction. Oh, the heathen sailors might be crying out in their terror against the storm to their gods.

And the only man who might have reached them was asleep. Isn't that a tragedy, friends? Isn't that a tragedy? That the people you and I might reach for Jesus Christ are on their way to hell because we're asleep. And we don't bring them the word of life.

Right? But he was awakened. He was awakened by God and by men. Awake, thou sleepers! What are you sleeping for? And we're all about to perish for a life.

Arise and call upon your God. And so be thou to heal us. And Jonah got properly wakened up.

Wasn't it a wonderful thing in your experience, my brother, when you got properly wakened up? Remember when it happened? I hope you do. And my sister? Wasn't it wonderful when you really got properly wakened up? And God took sleep from your eyes and slumber from your eyelids. And you said, I've got to settle it.

I've got to be saved. Jonah got wakened up. And they said to him, what's your name? What's your occupation? Where did you come from? Tell us all about it.

And he told them the whole story. Confessed his sin. And he says once more, the only thing you can do to get out of this is to throw me overboard.

And the cause of it? You'll have to throw me overboard and the storm will be come to you. And yet, to the credit of those heathen sailors that didn't want to do it. And they tried and tried in their own strength to ride out the storm, but in vain.

And at last they appealed to Jonah's God and said, O Jehovah, let us not perish for this man's life. And they threw him overboard. And the Bible says that the sea was calm about them.

And the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights. And then he began to pray.

And he began to promise. O Lord, if you just get me out of here. He began to vow.

He began to pray. He began to promise. And nothing happened.

And suddenly he stopped his vowing and his promising. And you know what he said? He uttered four words and before he knew it, he was out. You know what those four words were? Salvation is of the Lord.

Lord, you've got to do it. I can't. I'm all through promising.

If ever I'm going to be saved, the Lord will have to do it. Salvation is of the Lord. And the next thing you read, he's out.

He's vomited out on the dry land. Notice what it says. The dry land.

Not the mud. No. God put something firm under his feet.

Dry land. You know, some folks seem to land in the mud when they start out. Jonah wasn't in the mud.

Sometimes folks are like that. They don't really feel secure in Christ. Oh, it's just awful hard.

Sometimes I think I'm saved and then sometimes I think I'm not. Sometimes I feel all right and sometimes I don't feel all right and I'm really in the mud. God wants you to be on the dry land.

He wants you to put your foot down firm on the promises of God. He wants you to really believe that having believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, you'll pass out of death into life. And life eternal.

Life eternal. I like what Dr., what was his name of the 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia? Thank you. Dr. Barnhouse.

I like what he said on one occasion. This might do you good. He says, Before John 3.16 said, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have life for six months.

Could you lose it in five months? No. You've got it for six months. But suppose he said that he so loved the world that he gave his Son that whosoever believeth on him shall not perish but have life for ten years.

Could you lose it in nine years? No. You've got it for ten years. Suppose he said that whosoever believeth on him shall not perish but have life for 999 years.

Or rather for a thousand years. You'll not perish. You'll have life for a thousand years.

Could you lose that life in 999 years? No. You've got it for a thousand years. But suppose he said God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him shall not perish but have life everlasting.

When do you lose it? You don't lose it. Amen? What a feeble amen. I'm ashamed of you.

I am. I've been trying my best for a week to have people say amen to you and I'm going away without it. It's terrible.

Even my wife doesn't say it. Well, there it is. God wants you friends to be on the dry land to be able to say thank God I'll never perish.

The future is not mine to hold on to. It's his to hold on to me. That's my first point.

Now the second thing is that the sign of the prophet Jonah is the sign to the children of Israel. That means this. That the nation of Israel failed in the assignment given to it by God.

They were meant to be a light to lighten the Gentiles. They were meant to be God's object lesson of what happens to a nation that believes God and trusts God and obeys God. They weren't meant to isolate themselves from the nations in such a way that they never communicated with the nations.

Instead of that, they refused to go out to the Gentiles. They were the dogs. Israel were the favorite children of the table.

They hated anybody that would preach to Gentiles. That's why they led the Lord Jesus out to the brow of the hill to cast him down and kill him because he suggested in his first public message that there were times when God passed by a Jew and blessed a Gentile. In the synagogue at Nazareth he said, let me tell you something.

Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah the prophet. But to none of them was Elijah sent but to a woman of Sarepta, a Gentile. And he watched while their faces clouded over.

And he said there were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha and not one of them was cleansed. Think of that. Not one leper was cleansed in all the days of Elisha but name of the Syrian, name of the Gentile and they led him out to throw him over the hill.

They failed in their assignment to the Gentiles. And for that they are cast into and cast away by God as Jonah was cast away. You read that in Romans chapter 11.

For if the casting away of them be the enriching of the Gentiles what will the receiving of them be but life from the dead. You see when Jonah was cast into the sea blessing came to the Gentiles. As soon as he was cast into the sea the sea ceased from its raging and blessing came to those Gentiles.

Not only physical blessing but spiritual blessing. But you can't help but notice that whereas at the beginning of the storm they cried to their gods afterwards they cried to the God of Jonah. And now, O Jehovah, we beseech thee they had become believers in Jonah's God.

Now Israel are cast out as a nation if the casting away of them be. They've been cast out. And because of the casting away of Israel enrichment has come to the Gentiles as a result.

What about Israel then today? They're swallowed up of the nations. They're swallowed up in the sea. But you know, the whale vomited out Jonah.

And the Jews have been getting vomited out in our day. They've been vomited out of Russia. They've been vomited out of other countries.

And they're finding a homeland in their own land of Palestine. And what does that mean? It means this. That the next step is the preaching of Israel to the Gentile nations resulting in their conversion to God.

That's the next thing in the divine program. Isaiah chapter 66 shows you that. One day God's going to take a remnant of Israel and send them all over the world with a message.

They will be God's messengers to the Gentile nations even as Jonah was sent back vomited out of the fish to bring the message of God. And as Jonah saw success beyond his imagination the day is coming when beyond the imaginations of men a multitude that says the Bible that no man can number out of every nation will be turned to the living God. So that the sign of the prophet Jonah is the sign of the nation of Israel.

Now the third thing is that the sign of the prophet Jonah is the sign of Jesus. Of Jesus Christ our Lord. By that I mean this.

As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish so the Son of Man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Now if you fail to see the type you'll fail to see the antitype in his fullness. And that's why when you come to the second chapter of Jonah it's really a place to stand with unshod feet.

You may not have thought about it but it is indeed. You know why? Because the cries of Jonah are the very cries of Jesus. The cries of Jonah are the repetition of the cries of Jesus in the 69th Psalm.

Read it down and you'll find it. What does the 69th Psalm say? Save me O God for the waters come into my soul. I sink in deep mire where there's no standing.

The floods drown me. And he goes on to describe his suffering. The suffering Messiah in the 69th Psalm.

And now read with me please in Jonah Chapter 2 Verse 2 I said I cried by reason of my affliction. According to Brother Geoffrey Bull the author of those books When Iron Gates Yield and the like who wrote a book on Jonah a very fine one by the way a man to whom I'm indebted for a great deal in the second chapter of Jonah. Read it when you get time.

Geoffrey Bull's book on the book of Jonah. Just trying to think of the title if my wife will remind me of it. Something about the man and his message.

Anyway he points this out that well we'll read it together that the word affliction is a word that means straightness. Straightness. And he records the words of Christ I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straightened until it be accomplished.

I cried by reason of my straightness unto the Lord and he heard me out of the belly of hell. The word hell here is sheol. It's really not the grave as the margin of some of our Bibles say.

For the word of grave in the Hebrew Bible in the Old Testament is kiber. Kiber is always the grave. But sheol is always the unseen world.

The world of the departed. Whether good or bad. And Jonah is praying from the unseen world.

Out of the very belly of hell. Now the word belly here is not the same word belly that you have at the end of chapter one. It's a different word in the Hebrew Bible.

The belly in chapter one is the place where Jonah's body was. The belly in chapter two, a different word, is apparently the place where his soul is. Out of the belly of sheol cried I and thou heardest my voice.

May I say just right here at this point that your interpretation of Jonah's words in Jonah chapter two it all depends on whether you view Jonah as speaking figuratively or literally. If he's speaking figuratively he didn't die in the belly of the fish. If he's speaking literally he did die.

Through that, the sign of the prophet Jonah is a bigger thing and a deeper thing than we realize. And Jesus says there'll be no sign be given to the generation but the sign of the prophet Jonah. And if his language is not simply figurative but literal then the sign of the prophet Jonah is the death and resurrection of Jonah.

I want you to think about that. Now let's notice. Out of the belly of sheol cried I. Notice verse three.

For thou hast cast me into the deep in the midst of the sea. The floods compass me about. All thy waves and thy billows pass over me.

Do you ever read that elsewhere? Of course you have. You've read that in the 42nd Psalm. Messianic utterance.

Verse four. Then I said I am cast out of thy sight yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. The waters compass me about even to the soul.

Do you know the expression even to the soul? If you follow it through the Old Testament I think you'll discover it's something more than sufferings while still alive. It also embraces waters to the soul. The actual sufferings of hell itself.

All right. The depths closed around about me. The weeds were wrecked about my head.

I went down to the bottoms of the mountains. The earth was abarged about me yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption. Corruption.

The word that's used for the Messiah in Psalm 16. Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell. The place where Jonah said his soul was.

Neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption. Do you see? All right. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord and my prayer came into him into thine holy temple.

And so on. Now as I say it all depends how you're prepared to take the words of Jonah. If they're just figurative and they might well be.

Nobody knows for sure. If they're figurative they describe his physical sufferings while still alive in the belly of the fish. And the miracle consisted of him being able to stay alive in spite of the digestive processes in the belly of the whale and was sent forth alive after three days.

It's possible. History will tell us of a man who was swallowed by a great fish and survived. On the other hand if the language is not figurative but literal then the miracle consists not in Jonah being able to stay alive in the fish, but in Jonah dying.

And literally he goes down to the very belly of Sheol itself. The belly of the fish a different word, has his body. The belly of him has the soul.

It may be so. And if it's so, I'm not stating it but if it's so, then the sign of Jonah is a bigger thing than perhaps we have ever realized. No sign will be given but the sign of a dead and raised man.

Now a greater than Jonah's is here. Why? Because all Jonah's sufferings were the result of his disobedience. And all the sufferings of Jesus Christ our Lord were the result of his obedience.

Blessed be his name. You know, Paul speaks about that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. And Jesus our Lord prayed three prayers.

He said, Lord, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. If it be possible, let this pass. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.

If it be possible. He recognized the will of God as good. He prayed again.

He says, Lord, if this cup may not pass, except I drink it, thy will be done. He accepted it. The acceptable will of God.

And then he prayed again. And he says, the cup which my father hath given me shall I not drink it? And it was the perfect will of God for him. Do you see that? I think it's lovely.

I do. The three prayers of Christ show us that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. In all Jonah's suffering, all his casting into the sea, all that he endured in the belly of the fish, he owed it to his own

disobedience.

But the Lord Jesus Christ owed it to his complete obedience. And to his submission to that Father's will. And when you read the second chapter of Jonah, and read into it the sufferings of Christ, and not Jonah, it does you good.

It does you good indeed. All the things that he says, and all the things that result in. And our Lord was driven back from the dead, and he stood on the shore.

Can you see that lone man Jonah, vomited out by the fish, standing firmly on the shore, a man all alone. A man just delivered from the angry sea on the belly of the fish stands alone on the shore. What a day, dear friends, it may not be too far away, when Israel, delivered from the sea of their great tribulation, vomited up from wherever they were, will stand firm in their own land.

What a day. And what a day it was when the Lord Jesus Christ, we read, John 21, stood on the shore. He stood on the shore.

Have you ever noticed that when he stood on the shore, John 21, seven persons came to him, the perfect number. They didn't all come to him in the same way. One left the others and went through the waters and reached him on the shore.

The other six came all together over the waters. The waters didn't touch them. The other six came all together over the waters.

But whether through or over, all seven met him on the shore. They met the Lord Man on the shore. And some of these days, friends, those who have gone through the waters of death, and those who will go over them all together, are going to meet the Lord on the shore.

Amen. And so shall we ever be with the Lord, and we'll be amongst them. Blessed be the name.

Ten thousand hallelujahs to the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Shall we pray? Gracious God, our Father, we thank Thee indeed that a greater than Jonas is here.

Here, not just in Palestine 1900 years ago, but here, in Park of the Palms, in this night, in January 73. We thank Thee for it. Oh, we bring You our tribute.

Our tribute of worship. Oh God, our Father, Lord Jesus Christ, Thou art the greatest, the very greatest. There is none like Thee.

Thou art altogether lovely. The fairest of ten thousand, conspicuous among ten thousand to ourselves. Part us with Thy blessing, oh God.

The love of God. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The abiding presence and comfort of the Holy Ghost.

Amen.

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