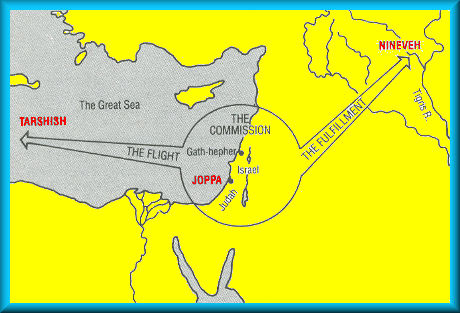
***“Studying the Gentile Prophets”—Jonah 3***

**Jonah is sent again to Nineveh, ABOUT 760 B.C., (Assyria was in control of the world from 930 B.C.-612 B.C.), a city of three days' journey across its boundaries, about a 550 mile journey from the coast (took Jonah more than a month to get there from the “vomit landing on the banks of the Mediterranean”), (being sixty miles in circumference, according to Diodorus Siculus),** [**Jonah 3:1-4**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Jonah+3:1-4&t1=en_nas)**. The inhabitants, in consequence of the prophet's preaching, repent in dust and ashes,** [**Jonah 3:5-9**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Jonah+3:5-9&t1=en_nas)**. God, seeing that they were deeply humbled on account of their sins, and that they turned away from all their iniquities, repents of the evil with which he had threatened them,** [**Jonah 3:10**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Jonah+3:10&t1=en_nas)**. Jonah, sent to Nineveh, flees to Tarshish,** [**Jonah 1:1-3**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Jonah+1:1-3&t1=en_nas)**. He is overtaken by a great tempest,** [**Jonah 1:4-14**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Jonah+1:4-14&t1=en_nas)**; thrown into the sea,** [**Jonah 1:15**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Jonah+1:15&t1=en_nas)**,** [**Jonah 1:16**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Jonah+1:16&t1=en_nas)**; and swallowed by a fish, in the belly of which his dead body is miraculously preserved three days and three nights,** [**Jonah 1:17**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Jonah+1:17&t1=en_nas)**. Nineveh—which represents the world in its natural greatness, full of pride and iniquity, regardless of God and of His authority—had deserved the righteous judgment of God.** [](https://visualunit.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/jonah_map.png)

**REVIEW PRIOR INCIDENTS IN NINEVEH:**

**1. Two plagues, 765 and 759 B.C.**

**2. Total eclipse of the sun, June 15, 763 B.C.**



**Jonah Preaches God's Message of Repentance. 3:1-10**

**A. God Again Commissions Jonah. 3:1-2**

**B. Jonah Obeys God. 3:3-4**

**C. Nineveh Repents. 3:5-10**

**Jonah 3:1-2, “Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.”**

1. **Name some prophets from Galilee.** 
   1. **Jonah, John 7:52, “**They answered and said to him, “Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7%3A52&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-26381a)] out of Galilee,” **and 2 Kings 14:25, “**He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who *was* from Gath Hepher.”
   2. **Nahum, Nahum 1:1, “**The burdenagainst Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.”
2. **Compare God’s command in Jonah 3, “Arise, got to Nineveh,” with the first command to Jonah 1:2, “Arise and ….cry out against it?” Why the difference in God’s command to Jonah?** 
   1. **Discuss this conclusion: Grace came with His death. See Galatians 2:21, “**I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain,” **3:10, “**For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them,” **13, “**Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree,” **17, “**And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect,” **and 18, “**For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise; but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.” **SINCE GRACE CAME WITH JESUS’ DEATH, DID GRACE ALSO COME WITH JONAH’S DEATH?**
3. **Why does God describe Nineveh as “great” three times? Jonah 1:2, 3:2, and 4:11.**
4. **Reference two incidents which could have influenced Nineveh’s easy repentance: 2 plagues in 759 B.C. and a total solar eclipse.**
   1. **How could these have softened pagan hearts?**
5. **Review “Dagon” the fish god? See I Samuel 5:2-7, “**When the Philistines took the ark of God; they brought it into the house of Dagonand set it by Dagon. 3And when the people of Ashdod arose early in the morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and set it in its place again. 4And when they arose early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. The head of Dagon and both the palms of its hands *were* broken off on the threshold; only Dagon’s *torso*was left of it. 5Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor any who come into Dagon’s house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.6But the hand of the Lord was heavy on the people of Ashdod, and He ravaged them and struck them with tumors, *both* Ashdod and its territory. 7And when the men of Ashdod saw how *it was,* they said, “The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand is harsh toward us and Dagon our god.” **The Ark of the Covenant against Dagon. \*\*\*\*See Fish Note at End**
   1. **Talk about how God using a fish in Jonah’s story might have impacted the reception which Jonah received from the people of Nineveh.**
   2. **What about other reference to fish in the Bible?**
      1. **i. See** [**Matthew 13:47**](http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Matthew-13-47/)**, “**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind.”
      2. **ii. Refer to Matthew 4:19, “**Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” **….fishers of men.**
      3. **Iii. “Loaves and Fishes”—Matthew 14:17, “**And they said to Him, “We have here only five loaves and two fish,” **Luke 9:16, “**So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them,” **and Mark 6:41, “**And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave *them* to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among *them* all.”

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dagon_2.jpg)

1. **Which prophets were contemporary with Jonah? Elijah, I Kings 17-21 and 2 Kings 1-2, Elisha, 2 Kings 2-9 and 13.**
2. **Explain this phrase, “God is the God of second chances.” Apply it to Jonah**. Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time: This shows the amazing love of God to His wayward people. Though Jonah did everything he could to resist the first call of God, after Jonah repented God called him again - though God was under no obligation to do it. He did it out of mercy and grace.
   1. **Is** “the word of the Lord” the same word as first given to Jonah? - The same oracle as that before given; and which, from what he had felt and seen of the justice and mercy of the Lord, he was now prepared to obey.
   2. **Parallel Jonah 3:1 with Jonah 1:1-2, “**Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.” **Cite the difference in these two verses.** What is the here the books opening remarks, almost word for word, the author skillfully conveys the idea that Jonah is being offered a new beginning.
   3. **Detail God’s instruction to Jonah.** **Preach to it the message that I tell you**: Instead of telling Jonah to *cry out against* Nineveh, this time God simply tells Jonah to go there and wait for further instructions. God often works this way, and our flesh often finds it irritating that He does.
   4. Discuss this command: “And preach to it the message that I tell you.” - הקריאה את וקרא vekera eth hakkeriah, "And cry the cry that I bid thee." Be my herald, and faithfully deliver my message. The word κηρυξ in Greek answers to the Hebrew קורא kore: **both signifying a crier, a herald, a preacher;** one that makes proclamation with a loud and earnest cry.
      1. Compare Jonah’s calling with John the Baptist and Jesus Christ in Isaiah 40:3, ““The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God and John 7:18-37, ““He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him. 19Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?” 20The people answered and said, “You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?” 21Jesus answered and said to them, “I did one work, and you all marvel. 22Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. 23If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the Law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? 24Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” 25Now some of them from Jerusalem said, “Is this not He whom they seek to kill? 26But look! He speaks boldly, and they say nothing to Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7%3A18-37&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-26355a)] the Christ? 27However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from.” 28Then Jesus cried out, as He taught in the temple, saying, “You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. 29But[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7%3A18-37&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-26358b)] I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me.” 30Therefore they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. 31And many of the people believed in Him, and said, “When the Christ comes, will He do more signs than these which this *Man* has done?”32The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things concerning Him, and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him. 33Then Jesus said to them,“I shall be with you a little while longer, and *then* I go to Him who sent Me. 34You will seek Me and not find *Me,* and where I am you cannot come.” 35Then the Jews said among themselves, “Where does He intend to go that we shall not find Him? Does He intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? 36What is this thing that He said, ‘You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come’?”37On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.” Such was John Baptist, [Isaiah 40:3](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Isaiah+40:3&t1=en_nas); such was Jesus Christ, [John 7:18-37](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=John+7:18-37&t1=en_nas); and such were all his apostles. And such earnestness becomes a ministry that has to do with immortal souls, asleep and dead in sin, hanging on the brink of perdition, and insensible of their state.
3. **Where else do we see “second chances” in the Bible?**
   1. **Abraham denying Sarah, Genesis 12:15, “**The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh’s house,” **and Genesis 20:2, “**Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She *is* my sister.” And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.”
   2. **Moses’ murdering an Egyptian, Exodus 2:12, “**12so he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.”
   3. **David committed adultery and murder, 2 Samuel 11:4, 15, “**Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house….. And he wrote in the letter, saying, “Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die.”
   4. **Peter denied Christ, Matthew 26:74, “**Then he began to curse and swear, *saying,* “I do not know the Man!” Immediately a rooster crowed.”
   5. **John Mark abandoned Paul and Barnabas, Acts 13:13, “**Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.”

**Jonah 2:3-4, “So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey *in extent*. And Jonah began to enter the city on the first days walk. Then he cried out and said, yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”**

1. **Talk about Nineveh. Compare with Jonah 1:1-3. Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord**. Jonah now obeys the call and goes to Nineveh.
   1. **How far was Nineveh? Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent**: The idea behind this statement probably refers to how long it would take to walk around the city of Greater Nineveh - the metropolitan area around the city. Strabo says, lib. xvi., πολυ μειζων ην της Βαβυλωνος, "it was much larger than Babylon:" and Ninus, the builder, not only proposed to make it the largest city of the world, but the largest that could be built by man. And as we find, from the lowest computation, that it was at least fifty-four or sixty English miles in circumference, it would take the prophet three days to walk round upon the walls, and announce from them the terrible message, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh will be destroyed!"
      1. **Reference Genesis 10:10, “**And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.” This was the capital of the Assyrian empire, and one of the most ancient cities of the world, [Genesis 10:10](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Genesis+10:10&t1=en_nas); and one of the largest, as it was three days' journey in circumference. Ancient writers represent it as oblong; being in length one hundred and fifty stadia, and ninety in breadth, the compass being four hundred and eighty stadia. Now as the stadium is allowed to have been equal to our furlong, eight of which make a mile, this amounts **to fifty-four English miles**: see on [Jonah 3:3](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Jonah+3:3&t1=en_nas). But we must not suppose that all this space was covered with compact streets and buildings; it took in a considerable space of country, probably all the cultivated ground necessary to support all the inhabitants of that district. It is reported to have had walls one hundred feet high, and so broad that three chariots might run abreast upon them. It was situated on the Tigris, or a little to the west, or on the west side of that river. It was well peopled, and had at this time **120,000 persons** in it reputed to be in a state of infancy, which on a moderate computation **would make the whole number six hundred thousand persons.** **Mosul is generally supposed to be the same as the ancient Nineveh. It is in the province of Dearbekir, on the west bank of the Tigris.**
2. **What is the only prophecy phrase in this entire book?** Verse 4. **Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!** Jonah emphasized to the people of Nineveh what would happen if they did not repent - the city would be **overthrown** in judgment. Undoubtedly, this was not Jonah’s *whole* message to the people of Nineveh; but clearly it was his emphasis.
   1. **Since “40 days” is a probationary period in the Bible, discuss this “testing” of God in this story.**
   2. **Site other “40 days” incidents in the Bible.**
      1. **The flood, Genesis 7:17, “**Now the flood was on the earth forty days. The waters increased and lifted up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.”
      2. **Moses on the Mount, Exodus 24:18, “**So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.”
      3. **Israel’s wanderings, Numbers 32:13, “**So the Lord’s anger was aroused against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was gone.”
      4. **Elijah, flight to Horeb, I Kings 19:8, “**So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.”
      5. **Temptation of Jesus, Matthew 4:2, ‘**And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.”
   3. **How does this story apply to YOU? I Thessalonians 5:6-9, “**Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do,* but let us watch and be sober. 7For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. 8But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation. 9For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,” **Hebrews 9:27, “**And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,” **John 5:24, “**Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”
   4. **Define** “**Overthrown.” Use Genesis 19:25, “**So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground,” **Lamentations 4:6, “**The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people  
      Is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, Which was overthrown in a moment, With no hand to help her,”  **and Amos 4:11, “**I overthrew *some* of you,  
      As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, And you were like a firebrand plucked from the burning; Yet you have not returned to Me,” Says the Lord **.**  **Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.”**
   5. **How do we know that Jonah preached this with earnestness**? HE CRIED OUT. We see that Jonah preached this message with earnestness. And such earnestness becomes a ministry that has to do with immortal souls, asleep and dead in sin.

**Jonah 3:5-9, “So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. But 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. Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?”**

1. **Verse 5 shows a staggering impact of Jonah’s message. Examine.**
2. **What was the response of the people of Nineveh?** **The people of Nineveh believed God**: Repentance begins with believing God. As we believe Him and His Word, we have the power to transform our lives as He wills. You can’t *believe God* apart from the Word of God. Therefore, any real revival or repentance will begin with faithful preaching and faithful hearing of God’s Word, just as it was in Nineveh.
   1. Why did they proclaim a fast? **Proclaimed a fast -** And never was there one so general, so deep, and so effectual. Men and women, old and young, high and low, and even the cattle themselves, all kept such a fast as the total abstinence from food implies. **The people of Nineveh . . . proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth**: Repentance means *doing* something. The people of Nineveh fasted, mourned as if for the dead, and they did it from the highest to the lowest (**from the greatest to the least of them**).
   2. **What is the picture of sackcloth**? **Review Genesis 37:34,** “Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days,” **2 Samuel 3:31,** “Preparation For BurialGestures[Clothing](http://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Clothing)[Cloth](http://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Cloth)Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, "Tear your clothes and gird on sackcloth and lament before Abner." And King David walked behind the bier,” **Esther 4:1-2, “**When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry. 2He went as far as the front of the king’s gate, for no one *might* enter the king’s gate clothed with sackcloth,”  **Psalm 30:11, “**You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;  
      You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,”  **and Matthew 11:21, “**Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”  **In their case, the people of Nineveh took off their normal clothes and put on sackcloth - a thick coarse cloth, normally made from goat’s hair. Wearing it displayed the rejection of earthly comforts and pleasures. Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth: They even repented on behalf of their animals, dressing them as if the animals were in mourning for the dead. But let man and beast . . . cry mightily to God: Repentance means cryingmightily to God. It means coming to God with passion and seriousness about your sin and your need for His mercy and forgiveness.http://pixel-geo.prfct.co/cs/?partnerId=fbxhttp://pixel-geo.prfct.co/seg/?add=4613587&source=js_tag&a_id=56686 Cloth made of black goats' hair, coarse, rough, and thick, used for sacks, and also worn by mourners and as a sign of repentance. It was put upon animals by the people of Nineveh (**[**Jonah 3:8**](http://www.biblestudytools.com/jonah/3-8.html) **). Sackcloth and ashes were used in Old Testament times as a symbol of debasement, mourning, and/or** [**repentance**](http://www.gotquestions.org/repentance.html)**. Someone wanting to show his repentant heart would often wear sackcloth, sit in ashes, and put ashes on top of his head. Sackcloth was a coarse material usually made of black goat’s hair, making it quite uncomfortable to wear. The ashes signified desolation and ruin**
3. **Who was the King of Nineveh at this time**? **Word came unto the king - This, some think, was Pul; others, Sardanapalus his son, king of Assyria, who flourished in the reign of Jeroboam the Second:** but it seems more probable that the monarch here alluded to was a king of Assyria contemporary with Joash, king of Judah. It was by the decree of the king that the fast was instituted, and became general. Repentance means to change your mind and turn from your previous sinful actions.
4. **Why did they cover the beasts? Let man and beast be covered -** This was done that every object which they beheld might deepen the impression already made, and cause them to mourn after a godly sort. **Virgil tells us that the mourning for the death of Julius Caesar was so general, that he neither ate nor drank.**
   1. **Reference I Chronicles 21:16, “**Then David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the Lord standing between earth and heaven, having in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. So David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces.” **GRIEVING IN THE BIBLE…..**
      1. **Ancient poetry spoke of animals grieving.** The swains forgot their sheep, nor near the brink. Of running waters brought their herds to drink. The thirsty cattle of themselves abstained. From water, and their grassy fare disdained." *Dryden, 1631.* **And that they sometimes changed: or reversed the harness and ornaments of cattle, as indicative of mourning, we have a proof in Virgil's description of the funeral procession in honor of Pallas, slain by Turnus, Aen. 11 ver. 89**. "Stripped of his trappings, and his head declined, Aethon, his generous warrior-horse, behind, Moves with a solemn, slow, majestic pace; and the big tears come rolling down his face”.
5. **What is the command in verse 8?** **Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.**
6. **Verse nine asks an interesting question,** “**Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?”** Repentance has hope in the mercy and love of God. It hopes that God will **relent** and that the repentant people will **not perish**.
   1. **Did being a repentant sinner disqualify Jonah’s message?** Jonah could more effectively preach the message of repentance because he knew his own need to repent. Being a repentant sinner didn’t disqualify Jonah from preaching repentance; **it made his preaching all the more effective.**

**Jonah 3:19, “Then 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.”**

1. **What is God’s response to the attitude of the Ninevites? God saw their works . . . and God relented**: God honored their repentance, even though their *past* sin was just reason enough for an outpouring of judgment. We do not *obligate* God to forgive us when we repent. Instead, repentance appeals to God’s mercy, not His justice.
   1. **KJV, “and God repented.” What does this mean? Hebrew, “nacham,” meaning to sigh, groan, lament, grieve and pity. GOD PITIED THEM!**
   2. **Why did God relent from the promised disaster? God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it**: Did Gods relenting make Jonah a false prophet, when he prophesied *yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown*? Not at all, for two good reasons.
   3. **Did God act in consistency with His Word? Use Jeremiah 18:7-8.** God acted in total consistency with His Word: “***The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.*”(**[**Jeremiah 18:7-8**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Jeremiah+18:7-8&t1=en_nas)**)** Jonah’s preaching was like all warnings of judgment: it was an invitation to repent and avert the promised judgment. His words had an implied if you do not repent in front of them. Remember that we are not told the sum total of Jonah’s preaching; though we should assume that the statement **in** [**Jonah 3:5**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Jonah+3:5&t1=en_nas) **is the central theme of what Jonah said, we should not assume it was *all* that he said.**
      1. **Re-visit Jonah 3:5’s central theme of what Jonah said.**
2. **How long did Nineveh’s repentance last?** Second, God did judge Nineveh (as recorded in the book of Nahum). Nevertheless, in light of their repentance He delayed it another 150 years. **See Nahum 1:14, “**The Lord has given a command concerning you:   
   “Your name shall be perpetuated no longer. Out of the house of your gods  
   I will cut off the carved image and the molded image. **I will dig your grave,** for you are vile.”
3. **Comment on Jonah 3’s message for us today.**
4. **Review the TEN MIRACLES IN JONAH: Storm, Cast lots for Jonah’s guilt, Sudden subsiding of the storm, Great fish, Preservation of Jonah, Ejection out of fish, REPENTANCE OF THE ENTIRE CITY OF NINEVEH, The Gourd, The Worm, and The East Wind. How is the “repentance” the most amazing of all of the miracles in this book?**
5. **Apply 2 Chronicles 7:14, “**i My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land, “to **this story and to ours; use also I John 1:9, “**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

***And, here are the promises:***

**Jonah 3:10, “Then 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.”**

**Colossians 3:17, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”**

**Isaiah 55:11, “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.”**

**Info on Dagon:**

Dagon ([Hebrew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language): דגון'‎, [Tib.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiberian_Hebrew) *Dāḡôn*) or Dagan ([Ugaritic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugaritic_language): *Dgn*, *Dagnu*, or *Daganu*; [Akkadian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akkadian_language): *Dagana*) was originally an [East Semitic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Semitic) [Mesopotamian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamian) ([Akkadian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akkadian), [Assyrian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyria), [Babylonian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonia)) fertility god who evolved into a major [Northwest Semitic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northwest_Semitic) god, reportedly of grain (as symbol of fertility) and fish and/or fishing (as symbol of multiplying). He was worshipped by the early [Amorites](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amorites) and by the inhabitants of the cities of [Ebla](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebla) (modern Tell Mardikh, Syria) and [Ugarit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugarit) (modern Ras Shamra, Syria). He was also a major member, or perhaps head, of the [pantheon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pantheon_(gods)) of the [Philistines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philistines).

In Ugaritic, the root *dgn* also means *grain*: in Hebrew דגן *dāgān*, Samaritan *dīgan*, is an archaic word for *grain*. The Phoenician author [Sanchuniathon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanchuniathon) also says *Dagon* means *siton*, that being the Greek word for *grain*. Sanchuniathon further explains: "And Dagon, after he discovered grain and the plough, was called [Zeus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zeus) Arotrios." The word *arotrios* means "ploughman", "pertaining to agriculture" (confer ἄροτρον "plow"). It is perhaps related to the Middle Hebrew and Jewish [Aramaic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aramaic_language) word *dgnʾ* 'be cut open' or to [Arabic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_language) *dagn* (دجن) 'rain-(cloud)'.

The theory relating the name to Hebrew *dāg*/*dâg*, 'fish', based solely upon a reading of 1 Samuel 5:2–7 is discussed in *Fish-god tradition* below. According to this etymology: Middle English *Dagon* < Late Latin ([Ec.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesiastical_Latin)) *Dagon* < Late Greek ([Ec.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patristic_Greek)) Δάγων < Heb דגן *Dagan*, "grain (hence the god of agriculture), corn."

The god Dagon first appears in extant records about 2500 BC in the [Mari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mari,_Syria) texts and in personal [Amorite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amorite) names in which the [Mesopotamian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamian) gods Ilu ([Ēl](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_(god))), Dagan, and [Adad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adad) are especially common.

At [Ebla](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebla) (Tell Mardikh), from at least 2300 BC, Dagan was the head of the city [pantheon](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pantheon) comprising some 200 deities and bore the titles *BE-*[*DINGIR*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DINGIR)*-*[*DINGIR*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DINGIR), "Lord of the gods" and *Bekalam*, "Lord of the land". His consort was known only as Belatu, "Lady". Both were worshipped in a large temple complex called E-Mul, "House of the Star". One entire quarter of Ebla and one of its gates were named after Dagan. Dagan is called *ti-lu ma-tim*, "dew of the land" and *Be-ka-na-na*, possibly "Lord of [Canaan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canaan)". He was called lord of many cities: of [Tuttul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuttul), Irim, Ma-Ne, Zarad, Uguash, Siwad, and Sipishu.

An interesting early reference to Dagan occurs in a letter to King [Zimri-Lim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zimri-Lim) of Mari, 18th century BC, written by Itur-Asduu an official in the court of Mari and governor of Nahur (the Biblical city of Nahor) (*ANET*, p. 623). It relates a dream of a "man from Shaka" in which Dagan appeared. In the dream, Dagan blamed Zimri-Lim's failure to subdue the King of the Yaminites upon Zimri-Lim's failure to bring a report of his deeds to Dagan in [Terqa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terqa). Dagan promises that when Zimri-Lim has done so: "I will have the kings of the Yaminites [*coo*]*ked* on a fisherman's *spit*, and I will lay them before you."

In [Ugarit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugarit) around 1300 BC, Dagon had a large temple and was listed third in the pantheon following a father-god and Ēl, and preceding [Baīl](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baal) Ṣapān (that is the god Haddu or [Hadad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadad)/Adad). [Joseph Fontenrose](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Fontenrose) first demonstrated that, whatever their deep origins, at Ugarit Dagon was sometime identified with El,[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dagon#cite_note-1) explaining why Dagan, who had an important temple at Ugarit is so neglected in the [Ras Shamra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ras_Shamra) mythological texts, where Dagon is mentioned solely in passing as the father of the god [Hadad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadad) (Ba'al), but [Anat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anat), El's daughter, is Ba'al's sister, and why no temple of El has appeared at Ugarit. It is suspected that Dagon was one of the "seventy sons of El and Athirat" that later sired [Hadad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadad) (Ba'al) who would eventually attempt to forcefully insert himself in the second-tier of the council of El (although he would ultimately fail in this attempt)

There are differences between the Ugaritic pantheon and that of Phoenicia centuries later: according to the third-hand Greek and Christian reports of Sanchuniathon, the Phoenician mythographer would have Dagon the brother of Ēl/[Cronus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cronus) and like him son of Sky/[Uranus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uranus_(god)) and Earth, but not truly Hadad's father. Hadadwas begotten by "Sky" on a concubine before Sky was castrated by his son Ēl, whereupon the pregnant concubine was given to Dagon. Accordingly, Dagon in this version is Hadad's half-brother and stepfather. The Byzantine [*Etymologicon Magnum*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etymologicon_Magnum) says that Dagon *was* Cronus in Phoenicia.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dagon#cite_note-3) Otherwise, with the disappearance of Phoenician literary texts, Dagon has practically no surviving mythology.

Dagan is mentioned occasionally in early [Sumerian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumerian_language) texts but becomes prominent only in later [Assyro-Babylonian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyro-Babylonian) inscriptions as a powerful and warlike protector, sometimes equated with [Enlil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enlil). Dagan's wife was in some sources the goddess [Shala](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shala) (also named as wife of [Adad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adad) and sometimes identified with [Ninlil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ninlil)). In other texts, his wife is [Ishara](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishara). In the preface to his famous [law code](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_of_Hammurabi), King [Hammurabi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hammurabi), the founder of the [Babylonian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonia) empire, calls himself "the subduer of the settlements along the [Euphrates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euphrates) with the help of Dagan, his creator". An inscription about an expedition of Naram-Sin to the Cedar Mountain relates (*ANET*, p. 268): "[Naram-Sin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naram-Sin_of_Akkad) slew Arman and Ibla with the 'weapon' of the god Dagan who aggrandizes his kingdom." The [stele](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stela) of the 9th century BC Assyrian emperor [Ashurnasirpal II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashurnasirpal_II) (*ANET*, p. 558) refers to Ashurnasirpal as the favorite of [Anu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/An_(mythology)) the dead. A late Babylonian text makes him the [underworld](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underworld) prison warder of the seven children of the god Emmesharra. The Phoenician inscription on the sarcophagus of King Eshmunʿazar of [Sidon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sidon) (5th century BC) relates (*ANET*, p. 662): "Furthermore, the Lord of Kings gave us Dor and [Joppa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaffa,_Israel), the mighty lands of Dagon, which are in the Plain of [Sharon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sharon,_Israel), in accordance with the important deeds which I did. *“Dagan* was sometimes used in Mesopotamian royal names. Two kings of the pre-Babylonian Dynasty of [Isin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isin) were [Iddin-Dagan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iddin-Dagan) (c. 1974–1954 BC) and [Ishme-Dagan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishme-Dagan) (c. 1953–1935 BC). The latter name was later used by two [Assyrian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyria) kings: [Ishme-Dagan I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishme-Dagan_I) (c. 1782–1742 BC) and [Ishme-Dagan II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishme-Dagan_II) (c. 1610–1594 BC). **In the** [**Hebrew Bible**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Bible)**, Dagon is particularly the god of the** [**Philistines**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philistine) **with temples at Beth-Dagon in the** [**tribe of Asher**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribe_of_Asher) **(**[**Joshua**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Joshua) **19.27), in** [**Gaza**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaza_City) **(**[**Judges**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Judges) **16.23, which tells soon after how the temple is destroyed by** [**Samson**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samson) **as his last act). Another temple, in** [**Ashdod**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashdod) **was mentioned in** [**1 Samuel**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Books_of_Samuel) **5.2–7 and again as late as** [**1 Maccabees**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1_Maccabees) **10.83; 11.4.** [**King Saul's**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saul) **head was displayed in a temple of Dagon.There was also a second place known as Beth-Dagon in** [**Judah**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribe_of_Judah) **(Joshua 15.41).** [**Josephus**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josephus) **(*Antiquities* 12.8.1; *War* 1.2.3) mentions a place named Dagon above** [**Jericho**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jericho)**.** [Jerome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerome) mentions Caferdago between [Diospolis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lod) and Jamnia. There is also a modern Beit Dejan south-east of [Nablus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nablus). Some of these toponyms may have to do with grain rather than the god.

The account in 1 Samuel 5.2–7 relates how the [Ark of the Covenant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ark_of_the_Covenant) was [captured by the Philistines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philistine_captivity_of_the_Ark) and taken to Dagon's temple in Ashdod. The following morning they found the image of Dagon lying prostrate before the ark. They set the image upright, but again on the morning of the following day they found it prostrate before the ark, but this time with head and hands severed, lying on the *miptān* translated as "threshold" or "podium". The account continues with the puzzling words *raq dāgôn nišʾar ʿālāyw*, which means literally "only Dagon was left to him." (The [Septuagint](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint), [Peshitta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peshitta), and [Targums](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Targum) render "Dagon" here as "trunk of Dagon" or "body of Dagon", presumably referring to the lower part of his image.) Thereafter we are told that neither the priests nor anyone ever steps on the *miptān* of Dagon in Ashdod "unto this day". This story is depicted on the frescoes of the [Dura-Europos synagogue](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dura-Europos_synagogue) as the opposite to a depiction of the High Priest [Aaron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aaron) and the [Temple of Solomon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_Solomon).

The [*vita*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hagiography) of [Porphyry of Gaza](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porphyry_of_Gaza), mentions the great god of Gaza, known as Marnas ([Aramaic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aramaic_language) *Marnā* the "Lord"), who was regarded as the god of rain and grain and invoked against famine. Marna of Gaza appears on coinage of the time of [Hadrian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadrian).[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dagon#cite_note-5) He was identified at Gaza with [Cretan Zeus, *Zeus Krētagenēs*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zeus). It is likely that Marnas was the Hellenistic expression of Dagon. His temple, the [Marneion](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Marneion&action=edit&redlink=1)—the last surviving great cult center of paganism—was [burned by order of the Roman emperor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porphyry_of_Gaza) in 402. Treading upon the sanctuary's paving-stones had been forbidden. Christians later used these same to pave the public marketplace. **In the 11th century, Jewish Bible commentator** [**Rashi**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rashi) **writes of a biblical tradition that the name *Dāgôn* is related to Hebrew *dāg*/*dâg* 'fish' and that Dagon was imagined in the shape of a fish: compare the Babylonian fish-god** [**Oannes**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oannes). In the 13th century [David Kimhi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Kimhi) interpreted the odd sentence in 1 Samuel 5.2–7 that "only Dagon was left to him" to mean "only the form of a fish was left", adding: "It is said that Dagon, from his navel down, had the form of a fish (whence his name, Dagon), and from his navel up, the form of a man, as it is said, his two hands were cut off." The [Septuagint](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint) text of 1 Samuel 5.2–7 says that both the hands *and the head* of the image of Dagon were broken off. H. Schmökel asserted in 1928[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dagon#cite_note-7) that Dagon was never originally a fish-god, but once he became an important god of those maritime Canaanites, the Phoenicians, the folk-etymological connection with *dâg* would have ineluctably affected his [iconography](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iconography).  **The fish form may be considered as a phallic symbol as seen in the story of the Egyptian grain god** [**Osiris**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osiris)**, whose penis was eaten by (conflated with) fish in the Nile after he was attacked by the** [**Typhonic beast Set**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Set_animal). Likewise, in the tale depicting the origin of the constellation [Capricornus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capricornus), the Greek god of nature [Pan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan_(mythology)) became a fish from the waist down when he jumped into the same river after being attacked by [Typhon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typhon). Various 19th-century scholars, such as [Julius Wellhausen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Wellhausen) and [William Robertson Smith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Robertson_Smith), believed the tradition to have been validated from the occasional occurrence of a [merman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merman) motif found in [Assyrian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyria) and [Phoenician](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenicia) art, including coins from [Ashdod](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashdod) and [Arvad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arvad).

[**John Milton**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Milton) **uses the tradition in his** [***Paradise Lost***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradise_Lost) **Book 1**:

... Next came one Who mourned in earnest, when the captive ark Maimed his brute image, head and hands lopt off, in his own temple, on the grunsel-edge, Where he fell flat and shamed his worshippers:  
Dagon his name, sea-monster, upward man  
And downward fish; yet had his temple high  
Reared in [Azotus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashdod), dreaded through the coast  
Of [Palestine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestine_(region)), in Gath and [Ascalon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashkelon), And [Accaron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ekron) and Gaza's frontier bounds.

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**Fish in the Bible: Fish called dag by the Hebrews, a word denoting great fecundity (**[**Genesis 9:2**](http://www.biblestudytools.com/genesis/9-2.html) **;** [**Numbers 11:22**](http://www.biblestudytools.com/numbers/11-22.html) **;** [**Jonah 2:1**](http://www.biblestudytools.com/jonah/2-1.html)[**Jonah 2:10**](http://www.biblestudytools.com/jonah/2-10.html) **). No fish is mentioned by name either in the Old or in the New Testament. Fish abounded in the Mediterranean and in the lakes of the Jordan, so that the Hebrews were no doubt acquainted with many species. Two of the villages on the shores of the Sea of Galilee derived their names from their fisheries, Bethsaida (the "house of fish") on the east and on the west. There is probably no other sheet of water in the world of equal dimensions that contains such a variety and profusion of fish. About thirty-seven different kinds have been found. Some of the fishes are of a European type, such as the roach, the barbel, and the blenny; others are markedly African and tropical, such as the eel-like silurus. There was a regular fish-market apparently in Jerusalem (** [**2 Chronicles 33:14**](http://www.biblestudytools.com/2-chronicles/33-14.html) **;** [**Nehemiah 3:3**](http://www.biblestudytools.com/nehemiah/3-3.html) **;** [**12:39**](http://www.biblestudytools.com/nehemiah/12-39.html) **;** [**Zephaniah 1:10**](http://www.biblestudytools.com/zephaniah/1-10.html) **), as there was a fish-gate which was probably contiguous to it.**

On July 28, 2014, the media reported that ISIS, the Islamist group that has established a “caliphate” in parts of Syria and Iraq, had destroyed the centuries-old Tomb of Jonah in Mosul, Iraq. Present-day Mosul encompasses the site of the ancient Assyrian capital of Nineveh, where, the Bible teaches, the Prophet Jonah preached. Although this is disputed, a tradition holds that Jonah was buried within the city, on Tell Nebi Yunus, or Hill of the Prophet Jonah.

An Assyrian church stood over the tomb for centuries. After the Muslim conquest, the church became a mosque; the structure that ISIS destroyed last week dated to the [14th century](http://cchag.org/html/09476/iraq05-050.html). In addition to the tomb, the mosque once held the supposed remains of the whale that had swallowed Jonah, including one of its teeth. At some point, the tooth disappeared. In 2008, [the U.S. Army](http://gatesofnineveh.wordpress.com/2014/07/11/what-is-the-tomb-of-the-prophet-jonah/) presented the mosque with a replica.

Last week, ISIS closed the mosque and prevented worshipers from entering. Then it wired the structure with explosives and reduced it to rubble. You can see a [video of the explosion](http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2014/07/25/335192229/video-shows-islamic-state-blowing-up-iraqs-tomb-of-jonah) here, taken by a Mosul resident, who mutters, in Arabic, “No, no, no. Prophet Jonah is gone. God, these scoundrels.”

Some commentators have explained the destruction of the tomb as part of ISIS’s anti-Christian campaign. Scholars [Joel Baden and Candida Moss](http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2014/07/25/jonahs-tomb-and-the-collapse-of-christianity-in-iraq/) point out that, in Christian interpretation, the Old Testament story of Jonah prefigures the death and resurrection of Christ. “The destruction of his tomb in Mosul is therefore a direct assault on Christian faith, and on one of the few physical traces of that faith remaining in Iraq.” Another scholar, [Sam Hardy](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/07/25/after-leveling-iraqs-tomb-of-jonah-the-islamic-state-could-destroy-anything-in-the-bible/?tid=hp_mm), told the Washington Post that the destruction of the tomb shows that ISIS is willing to destroy “pretty much anything in the Bible.”

On this analysis, ISIS destroyed the tomb because of its Christian associations. But that mistakes ISIS’s motives in this case. True, ISIS has no respect for Christians or their sites of worship and, in fact, has driven Mosul’s Christians from the city. The fact that the tomb was sacred for Christians as well as Muslims—and contained a present from the US Army—cannot have endeared it to ISIS. But something else is going on here. The shrine was, after all, a mosque, and Jonah figures in the Quran as well as the Bible. To understand why ISIS destroyed the tomb, one has to appreciate something about the version of Islam the group espouses.

ISIS is part of the Salafi movement, a branch of Sunni Islam that seeks to return to the practices of the earliest Muslims – the salaf— who lived at the time of the Prophet Mohammed and just after. The movement rejects the centuries of subsequent developments in Islam as unjustified innovations–pagan accretions that adulterated the faith. In particular, the movement opposes the veneration of the graves of Islamic prophets and holy men. Salafis see this practice, which is associated most frequently with Sufi Islam, as a kind of idolatry, or shirk, that detracts from the absolute transcendence of God.

Salafi Islam prevails in Saudi Arabia, where it enjoys the patronage of the royal family. On the Arabian Peninsula, as now in Iraq, Salafis have destroyed the tombs of Islamic holy men. Indeed, when the Saudi royal family captured the city of Medina in the 19th century, Salafis systematically destroyed the tombs of several of the Prophet Mohammed’s companions and family members, leaving only the Prophet’s tomb itself unmolested. There is some thought that the Saudi government plans on dismantling even that tomb, but hesitates to do so because of the uproar that would result in other Muslim communities.

In short, one should see ISIS’s destruction of the tomb of Jonah as an act principally directed at other Muslims, not Christians. That doesn’t make it any better, of course. Will the outside world do anything in response? Unlikely. Besides, as Professor Hardy told the Post, “If we didn’t intervene when they were killing people, it would be kind of grotesque to intervene over a building.”