

Lutheran Foundations: A Confirmation Curriculum[©]

It Starts Here! Stories of the Old Testament

The Tomorrow River Lutheran Parish

Year 1, Lesson 25:

Jonah

The last 17 books of our Old Testament are called the Prophetic Books. They tell the stories of – and record the prophecies of – the Prophets. Over the next 2 weeks, we will study 2 of these Prophets: Jonah and Daniel. Of course, that means that we will leave 15 of them to the side. If you are looking for a valuable use of your time over the coming summer, you could do a lot worse than reading those other prophets. As you read them you will learn over and over what God desires from God's people and which behaviors God condemns. As always, you can get very useful summaries of all of the Old Testament books from the <https://bibleproject.com>. These are the good guys and everything on the site is free. Then, armed and prepared with the summaries, you should start reading. You are preparing to be an adult voting member of a Christian church. There is a lot that you should know! But for tonight, let's focus on Jonah.

Jonah is an important book because it insists that God wishes us (and commands us) to love our enemies. Our Jewish neighbors read this book every year on Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement), and we Christians find a parallel between the 3 days that Jonah spent in the great fish and the 3 days that Jesus spent in the tomb.

The Book of Jonah is very carefully constructed.

The Bible Project points out that chapters 1 and 3 tell the story of Jonah's encounters with non-Israelites while chapters 2 and 4 contain prayers of Jonah. The introduction to the book of Jonah in the Oxford Annotated NRSV summarizes the structure as the working out of 2 subsequent calls:

- God's First Call to Jonah

 - Jonah's Commission and Attempt to Flee

 - The Moral: One cannot flee from God

 - Jonah, in the fish, prays and is saved

- God's Second Call to Jonah

 - Jonah's mission and its completion

 - The repentance of Nineveh and God's forgiveness

 - Jonah's prayer-complaint, and the moral God wishes

 - Jonah (and us!) to learn!

You need not choose between these authorities. Both are right! You just need to know this story in your bones!