

Better Than Karma

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[0 : 00] Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you, Father, that you could cause something written over 2,700 years ago and still use that, Father, to speak very deeply into our hearts.

And so, Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would bring your word deeply to us, that it might change our hearts, and that we might be more and more disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel, learning to live for your glory. And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So, I have lots of conversation, not as many as I'd like. I wish I had more opportunities to talk about Jesus with people who don't know him. I'm actually a very reluctant and shy guy about that, but I'm trying to get confidence as I go along in my Christian walk. But there's a phrase that people would say to me all the time after they maybe get a bit more comfortable with me, they get her, you know, figuring out that I'm a Christian. And it's only been very recently that I've actually been able to handle it very well. I just want to encourage you, don't wait until you can handle things well, to talk about Jesus. Like, it's not the end of the world if you can't handle something very well in the moment. But one of the things that people say to me very often is, George, is my mic working all right? Yeah. George, you, you know, we all know, the person will say to me, we all know that everything happens for a reason. That's what they'll say. We all know that everything happens for a reason. And then they go on to tell about something that's going on in their life. And they don't understand what the reason is. And I guess they hope that I'm going to be able to, I get nervous when I see sound people walking around. Is it all right? No? Okay. So they say, George, you know, everything happens for a reason. And this has happened to me. And I don't know why that's happened. And for a long time, I didn't really know how to handle it. And I'm only now beginning to realize a little bit about how to handle it. Because that idea sounds a little tiny bit similar to something that Christians might say. But it's just really struck me that it often really comes out of a very different worldview. Actually, it's a worldview, which is both common today, but also very common in the story of Jonah, which we're going to look at in a moment.

It's very, very common for many people in our world to think that, believe in some type of karma. I'm going to use the word karma to capture a range of ideas. What goes around, comes around. What you give, you're going to get. There's this very, very common belief that there's some type of moral structure to the universe so that when you do something which is bad, there's going to be some type of bad consequence that's going to happen to you. And that's just the way the world is. And it's out of that worldview, for instance, that people then wonder why bad things happen to good people, right? Because if you're a good person, you're doing good, you're giving good, then why on earth would a bad thing happen? Bad things happen to people who've done bad because karma is real. There's a moral universal structure of how things work. And when bad things seem to happen to a good person, it just doesn't make any sense. And so this very, very common, modern idea was, in fact, very common in the time that the story was written. And believe it or not, it actually has some very interesting and wise things to speak into this understanding that lots of people have, that what goes around comes around. You get what you give and all of that. So it'd be a great help if you turned in your Bibles to the book of Jonah. It might be hard for you to find it.

It's a wee tiny book. And it's sort of almost in the exact middle of your Bible. And my Bible, if you sort of go to the middle of the Bible and just start trying to go very slowly towards the right, you'll eventually come to it. And just before we start reading the story, just a few things.

[4 : 13] This Jonah, parts of the story of Jonah is one of those things that many, many people are familiar with. Jonah and the whale, very, very common type of idea, even amongst people who rarely go to church or maybe even never been to church. They've probably heard the story, at least their understanding of the story of Jonah and the whale. Jonah, we know from 2 Kings, prophesied during the time of Jeroboam the second. So let's just say roughly that he prophesied around 750

BC. Jeroboam was the king from 782 to 753. And let's say 755. If we said 755, we have a bit of an idea about it.

Lots of people don't think that they think that Jonah is just a bit of a parable. I'm going to treat it as if it actually happened. And part of that is because if you just look at verse 1, in most of your Bibles, they don't translate the original language fully. But the way that the book of Jonah begins is, and it came to pass, or now it came to pass. That's how it begins. And it came to pass, or now it came to pass, is the complete opposite of once upon a time. If you hear a story once upon a time, you know that it's just a made-up story. But in the Old Testament, when a book begins with now it came to pass, or and it came to pass, it means that the writer is claiming that this is a fundamentally historical story. It's how 1 and 2 Samuel begins. It's how Ruth begins. It's how Joshua begins. It's how Judges begins. And that's how the book of Jonah begins. And as well as that, in the New Testament, Jesus talks about Jonah as if he's real. So, you know, we can talk about it over coffee. But I'm going to be treating this as a historical story. It's a very simple story.

And the other way to think about it as we're reading it is, many of us like BBC series, where you have four, a story may be told over a variety of episodes. So the way to think of Jonah is four separate stories that make one big story. And without giving away the ending, I encourage you to read the whole book for yourself. In a sense, it's actually, it really literally could be like a BBC slash Netflix series, four separate stories that make one big story. Because the first story ends with a cliffhanger. Jonah being thrown into the ocean and being swallowed by a big fish.

The second story is what happens inside the fish. And it ends with another type of cliffhanger, Jonah being vomited onto the shore. The third episode, it'd be the very, very puzzling one, because the third episode shows spectacular success. The type of success somebody like me wishes that I could have, and I will never have it. But Jonah has spectacular success. But the problem is at the end of the third episode, if you were watching this on the BBC, it'd go, one moment, how come there's a fourth episode? Like there shouldn't be a fourth episode. It should end right now with the great spectacular success. And the fourth episode is the one that keeps, not confusing you, but all of a sudden it reveals a whole pile of stuff that's actually really going on in Jonah's heart to make you reconsider a lot of what you've seen and heard in the first episode. So that's sort of how the book of Jonah is structured. So we're going to look at the first story. The first episode, which as you all know, because you've already heard it read, ends with a cliffhanger. Jonah being thrown overboard, and rather than dying, a huge aquatic beast swallows him. So, but let's go to the beginning of the story, and we'll just sort of look through it. Verse 1 of chapter 1, now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, arise, go to Nineveh, that great city and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me. But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord. Now, just sort of pause here for a second. It's very interesting. I've had lots of people say to me over the years, I'd believe in God if he just showed up. Like, why doesn't God just appear to me and speak to me? Then I'd believe him. And interestingly enough, that's exactly what happens to Jonah. But his response isn't to fall down and worship the Lord. His response is to do the opposite of what the Lord wants to say. It's just sort of interesting that many of us think that if a certain thing like this happened, that would be all God has to do for us to believe in him. But when you have a story of it actually happening to somebody, the result isn't what they, like my friends would say is going to happen. It's the opposite. Jonah takes off. And Nineveh, it's very interesting.

[9 : 21] Nineveh has indirectly been in the news for quite a long time because Nineveh is across the river from Mosul. I don't know if I'm pronouncing that correctly. M-O-S-U-L, which was the center of ISIS.

This huge battle. Mosul is on the opposite side of the river from Nineveh. And that's the region that God sends Jonah to go to. It's 800 miles northeast of Israel, 300, sorry, 800 kilometers northeast of Israel, 355 kilometers directly north from Baghdad. And it was a cruel empire. It was a powerful empire. Israel at the time was a vassal state of Assyria. And God says, it's an evil place.

I want you to go and speak to them on my behalf. And Jonah's response is to go to Joppa. And Joppa is right beside what we now call Tel Aviv. It's in the city of Jaffa, which is right beside Tel Aviv.

And Jonah goes there and he goes and he gives approximately at least a year's worth of money to the ship. They don't know where Tarshish was exactly. Some people think it was Carthage.

Some people think it was Spain. But wherever it is, it was going to be as far away in the opposite direction as Jonah could go. So he obviously had some means. He sells up what he has. He's going to be gone one way, a year away, a year's worth of travel away from where God wants him to go. [10:55] And so that's what he does. So what's going to happen? I mean, that's the story. I mean, it's a bit of a surprise. Lots of people would say, if God just would show up, I'd believe in him.

We have a story where God does show up and the response is not to believe in him, but to do the opposite of what he says. So what's God going to do? Well, that begins to be seen in verse four. But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea. Jonah's in the boat. And there was a mighty tempest on the sea so that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid and each cried out to his God and they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. Just a little tiny thing. It doesn't make good English, but when it says here, then the mariners were afraid and each cried out to his God, the word God there is plural.

So these are pagans. They don't just believe in one God. They're in deep trouble. So they would call out to this God and that God and that God. They're trying to get through a little bit of a checklist, each of them, to see if by calling out to their God, that God is the one responsible for the problem and will stop it. And they call out to their gods. But Jonah is asleep. Now, what we're going to see in a moment here helps to bring this out. But there's, in a sense, what we need to understand here, there's two, it's the opposite. You know, there's that old thing about the Lord holding you in the hollow of his hand. It's part of that Irish blessing. You know, may the road rise up to meet you and the wind be at your back and may the Lord hold you in the hollow of his hand. And it's an image of a person being very secure and asleep in the Lord, the hollow of the Lord's hand.

[12:49] But that's not the image which is at work here. The image that is at work is that Jonah has descended into the sleep of denial and oblivion. It's the same type of an issue, not that Jonah is drunk.

It's the same type of thing that a person facing lots of trouble and their response is to go out and get hammered and get so hammered that they fall asleep. And it's that type of sleep, the sleep of denial, of not walking towards your problems, not dealing with your problems, not being at peace, but in fact being in denial and oblivion that Jonah's in. So what's going to happen? Well, verse six, so the captain came and said to Jonah, what do you mean you sleeper? Arise, call out to your God. Perhaps the God will give a thought to us that we may not perish. And in the original language, the way it's spoken by the captain, the pagan captain, is it can either be indignation? Like, how dare you choose oblivion when we're in this problem? Or it could also mean just they're shocked. How on earth could anybody sleep when the ship is banging around and storming around? The captain could mean either one of the two of them, or maybe he means both of them. He's both indignant and completely and utterly gobsmacked that anybody would be able to fall asleep in this.

But in a sense, within the logic of the book, once again, Jonah is not dealing with his life. He's fleeing from the presence of the Lord, and he's fleeing from the presence of the Lord. And when you flee from the presence of the Lord, you're going towards oblivion. You're going towards denial.

And you're just, it's like an ostrich sticking its head in the sand. I don't know if that really happens, but it's, you know, something which we're familiar to thinking about. So the captain confronts Jonah, says, you've got to get up. We've got to deal with this. The storm is going to kill us.

We're all going to die. So what happens? Well, verse 7 and 8, they said to one another, this is the crew, come let us cast lots that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you? And just sort of pause here for a second. So what the pagan sailors have done is they've gone through a very, very proper religious type of process. They begin by praying that to each of their different gods, as many gods as they can think of, praying, hoping that one of those gods will hear and stop the storm. So that's not working. So what are they going to do? Well, remember I said, I have people coming up to me in Starbucks, or they talk to me in Starbucks or other places, and they say, we all know that everything happens for a reason. That's exactly how they think. Sort of a bit of a shock to think that somebody in the year 755 BC thinks the exact same way as a hip, cool, postmodern barista in 2019 in Ottawa, but they think in exactly the same terms. Everything happens for a reason.

[16 : 15] But unlike hip, postmodern baristas in downtown Ottawa in 2019, they're not troubled with the problem of evil because they would just say in Jonah's time that the god is probably justifiably angry.

And what goes around comes around, and you get what you give. So somebody here has offended a god, and we got to figure out who has offended the god so we can do, help the god do to that person what that person deserves. That's just how they would understand what's going on. So they cast thoughts.

It's the ancient way. Today, of course, actually, I shouldn't say that. Many, many, many, many people, you go to chapters or indigo books, and you'll see all sorts of rows and rows and rows and rows and rows of books about how to cast spells and how to do those types of practices. You take a course in it, University of Ottawa. The more common secular thing, of course, is we would do some type of statistical analysis or some type of model. I'm going to be really naughty. But all of this whole claim on climate change is a variation on casting lots. They've done a statistical model to know the future. Now that I've stopped being, I'm going to stop being naughty. I've probably lost half of the room. Last time I made a comment about climate change, I got a very angry email by somebody that never came back to the church afterwards. So I hope you come back again. But in the ancient world, they didn't believe in using statistical models to know the future. They thought to know the future or to figure out what the gods were going to do or how do we know the gods will is they would cast something like lots. It would be like throwing dice today. And they'd have a process, usually with yes, no question, to try to figure out what's going on. And so they do that. They want to know what the gods are thinking so that the storm will stop. And it ends up that they figure out that it's Jonah.

Now, in the question that they have to Jonah, they don't actually think that Jonah's at fault at first. Because it could simply be that the gods controlled the lots so that Jonah could now say, ah, I know what the answer is to the problem. And I don't know if he'd been a really bad guy, he could say that guy over there, he cursed whatever some god and that's why the problem's happening. And then maybe they would have thrown that guy off the thing. But we don't know what Jonah's going to say yet. But the other thing they do is it's a diagnostic question because in the ancient world, very similar to today, in the ancient world, not only would there be a god connected to a little region, but there'd also be a god, at least one god connected to your country. And there'd probably be a god connected to your occupation. So they're talking to Jonah and say, okay, Jonah, we have to figure out why is this big storm happening that's going to kill us. So just, okay, let us, we're going to work with you, help you to try to figure out your primary god knowledge. So let's tell me about where you're from and your occupation and all of that so we can try to get a bit of a sense and you can communicate to us the god or gods that have been offended so we can deal with this.

So Jonah, if he'd been very unscrupulous, could have, in theory, said, that guy right there, I saw him do this and that's obviously anchored this god, which is why we have the problem. But how do you does Jonah answer? Well, we see that in verses 9 and 10. And he said to them, verse 9, I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven. By the way, in the original language, the way he says this indicates pride. You can't capture it in English, but in the original language, the word order shows that he's pretty proud. Basically, he's saying, you dumb people believe in lots of gods. I know that that's not true. I believe in the Lord. I'm a Hebrew. That's how they would have refused. Today, we would talk about people being Jewish. The word Hebrew is rarely used, but back then it was Hebrew.

[20 : 36] As an aside, a friend of mine that I've had lots and lots of conversations with, the way he'd been coming into the same Starbucks as I had for quite a long time. And one day, he saw me reading the Bible and I was reading the book of Hebrews. And he came up and to me, he said, you're reading a book called Hebrews? And I said, yes. And he said, I've seen you here reading the Bible many times. And I said, I read the Bible. Yes. He said, well, I thought I would introduce myself because you're reading a book about Hebrews and I am a Hebrew. That's what he said.

I am a Hebrew. And that's how I met my friend Tzvi. But we don't usually use that word, but he, we'll go back to verse nine. And he said to them, I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven. And when he says the God of heaven, he's now used pagan language because in the pagan world, there would have not only been gods, but there would have been a hierarchy of gods. It would have been as if there's gods that were privates and gods that were corporals and guards that were gods that were sergeants. And there's ultimately a general or a five-star general, if you're an American.

And he said, in a sense, the Lord is a five-star general or four-star general.

That's when he says the God of heaven. He's trying to say a five-star, a five-star God. And then the men, verse 10, sorry, I am the, I fear the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land. Verse nine, then verse 10, then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, what is this that you have done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord because he had told them. So the narrator, the writer tells us indirectly that Jonah takes responsibility for the storm. He's fleeing from the presence of the Lord. The pagan sailors are smarter than Jonah. They realize that, well, how, Jonah, how, if you know that the Lord is made all of the water and all of the land, how is it you think you can actually flee him? Like if you just have the God of King Edward Avenue, you can go to Bronson and flee the God of King Edward Avenue. But if you have the law of the God of all of Ottawa, it doesn't help you if you go from King Edward Avenue to Bronson, still Ottawa, that God's still in control. So they can't figure out why Jonah is so foolish to think he could flee from the presence of the Lord, but the Lord is also the Lord of the water.

Now, there's a thing here which isn't as obvious in the English, but it's more obvious in the original language. When I was in Eganville, a little tiny place, if you left here and there's no rush hour traffic and there's no marathon race weekend, if you leave here, you can be in Eganville in about two hours. But when I was in Eganville, I don't know if it's still the same way now, everybody in town could have told me the church they don't attend.

[23 : 32] Okay? Because, you see, most people in Eganville on a Sunday morning wouldn't go to church. But they wouldn't just say they didn't go to church because they were tribes. You see, there were all the Anglicans who didn't go to the Anglican church and there were the Baptists who didn't go to the Baptist church and there's the Catholics who didn't go to the Catholic church.

But you'd never find a Catholic going to a Baptist church unless it was a funeral or a wedding, you know, and vice versa. So most people didn't go to church, but they all knew who they were. You know, they'd all know, oh, I'm an Anglican. So in other words, it was my church that they didn't intend. Just a bit of an aside. Ask me about it at a coffee. I'm from Montreal and then I was in Ottawa. It took me six years of being in the church to discover that the most influential person in the church that would undermine council decisions was a person who only came to church about once every three years. Because I didn't understand how tribes worked in a place like Eganville. So she was a very, very, very, very, very, very powerful person in that tribe. Sort of irrelevant that she actually never went to church or gave any money. But she was very powerful. It took me six years. All of a sudden I had this good grief. I hope I didn't look shocked. Like, why do you care what she said? To which one old timer said, well, George, you'll move away. We have to live with her for the rest of her life and she had lots of power. Anyway, so what Jonah's saying here is, doesn't mean he actually fears the Lord. Doesn't mean he actually is believing or observant or anything. But he's very proud of the fact that the God that he doesn't worship or trust is this one. And that's what he says in the original language. Now, the pagan guys, they're familiar with the fact that you might not actually give lots of sacrifices or do things to the different gods. But they have a very practical problem in front of them, which is the storm is going on. And they now understand that they have a problem with this guy who's angered the Lord, a God that they'd never heard of. Now they have a new God that they've heard of and he's angered this God. And so they have to figure out what to do.

So verse 11, they ask him and then they said to him, what shall we do to you that the sea may quiet down for us? For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. He said to them, pick me up and hurl me into the sea. Then the sea will quiet down for you. For I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you. Now we don't think of it very much in our modern world, but what is it that we say?

What you give, you're going to get. What goes around, comes around. And we don't sort of really on one level think about it. We think about it happening to other people or occasionally about ourselves. But in this ancient world, they took that very literally, that the God of the land and the sea is mad at Jonah. And so there has to be some type of an action of giving of that person to God with a punishment that that God would say is deserved for that man's offense.

[26 : 54] And that's how Jonah answers. He answers like a person of the ancient Near East. He answers like a postmodern barista. Not quite, actually. We haven't quite figured that part out.

Well, how do the men in the boat react? Well, the men in the boat, they have to be very careful because they know that sometimes the lots don't work. And they don't want to do something that

angers another God. So they're going to have to try to be a bit practical about this. And so what they do is, well, you see that in verse 13. Jonah says, you ought to throw me in the water. But in 13, they say, nevertheless, the men rode hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore, they called out to the Lord, O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life and lay not on us innocent blood. For you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you. So they picked up Jonah, hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. So they want to cover their bases because maybe Jonah didn't tell them right, the lots didn't work right, but they know that if they kill an innocent man, they might anger some God and they could be in big trouble. The sea could just be as bad, maybe even be worse. But they try and they try and they try. There's no way around it. So they hurled Jonah into the sea and the sea stopped. So they know what? The Lord is God. The Lord is God. He probably is that high king of heaven, the God of the heavens. And so their response, well, that we see in verse 16.

And in the original language, there's an intensity which can't be captured in English. Then the men feared with fear the Lord exceedingly. And they sacrificed sacrifices.

[28 : 59] And they vowed vows. That's sort of what its language is. It's a language by using the same word twice in the original language. It's a matter of intensity. That they feared the Lord with fear.

That they sacrificed with sacrifices. That they vow with vows. Because they aren't going to die. They're going to live. And this Lord, the God of heaven, is obviously a real God. Because the storm miraculously stops. And what happens to Jonah? Jonah gets thrown overboard. And in verse 17, and the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. And now the episode ends. And you have to watch the next episode to see what happens next. And the word for fish isn't actually accurate. What really it means is aquatic beast.

A beast of the waters. So it's a large beast of the waters that swallows Jonah. So what's going on here in the story? A few minutes to sort of wrap it up. On one hand, we go through the story slowly. Because the reason I go through the story slowly with you is this.

It's far more important for you to hear the story than to hear my words. The story will have its own power. But if you, and here's this, it's a wonderful graphic from Amy, isn't it? This is the graphic for our sermon series. You can see Jonah falling. And the series is called No Other. If you could put up the first point. I'm not going to spend much time with it. But the reason that I've called the series No Other, the story of Jonah, is because the Lord is God, there is no other God. And because there is no other God, there is no other when it comes to people. That's going to be one of the big messages of the book of Jonah, is that all the way through the book of Jonah, it's going to be very obvious there is no other God than the Lord. You see that in this story. The Lord is the one who's able to stop the storm. It completely and utterly gobsmacks them. Whether it means they end up worshipping the Lord and renouncing paganism, we don't know. They fade from the story. But it gobsmacks them that obviously the Lord is the Lord. And that's the first thing. And the other thing about it is, as we all know, there's a very common problem that's talked about over the last 20 or 30 years in our languages. There's a problem of treating people as the other. And the other, if I treat somebody as the other, it means that I can be afraid of them. It means I can fight them. I can do things to them. I'm threatened by them. And in this story, part of what's going to be happening in all of Jonah is as the story develops, and it flows very, very clearly. If in fact there's only one God, and that one God is the creator of all things, then in a sense, every human being is equal. There is no other. And so Jonah is to see that these pagans can understand a little bit about the Lord. And we're going to see it with Nineveh. And all the way through the story, it's going to be developed to lose this fear of the other. And this fear of the other is connected with understanding that there is no other God except the Lord. But more significantly for us, just to try to connect it to our life, is the fact, it's amazing.

It really is amazing how many people that you talk to that basically do believe that what goes around comes around, that you give what you get. A book that sold millions and millions of copies, The Secret, was all about giving certain types of thoughts and practices so that the universe would reward you in particular ways. And of course, in Eastern religions, the idea of karma is, that's the religion of 1.3 billion Indians and, I don't know, 1.5 billion Chinese is that basic idea of karma, of there being these just desserts to your actions, that there's a reason for everything that happens.

And the reason comes not because there's some sense of God's providence, but the reason for everything happening is because you're always doing these things and you're going to have these consequences that come from them. And it sort of sounds like a Christian idea, but it's the opposite of a Christian idea. And it's a very, very common thing in our culture, this idea of just desserts. It's very interesting that at a time when lots of people would say they believe in moral relativism, at the same time they believe that there's a basic moral structure to the universe.

[33 : 42] In fact, I have never talked to anybody who really does believe, at a practical level, that there's no moral structure in the universe. Even people who want to emphasize that there's no right and no wrong, before you know it, they've added the word ought, or you need to. Or they have their own particular pet things that are like anchors about right and wrong. But there's several problems with this idea of the moral structure. And that's part of it comes when people come and ask me, well, George, everything happens for a reason. And then they say, but there's something going on in their own life that doesn't fit with that. Basically because they believe they've been a good person and something bad has happened to them. And they hope that I'm going to be able to explain to them, almost like the pagan sailors trying to figure out who we'll be able to be. Maybe they think I'm going to be like a Jonah. The lot goes to me and I'll be able to tell them, ah, well, you did this and this and this. And that's why this is happening. It's not maybe as conscious of that, but it's a very, very powerful idea. And so there's several problems. One of them is the whole question of why is this happening to me shows us that we know that in the real world, bad things don't always happen to bad people.

Idi Amin. Terrible, terrible, terrible man who did terrible things in Uganda died in his bed. I think he died in Saudi Arabia. We all know that it doesn't, just desserts don't always happen on this world. But there's another bit of a problem as well. And that is the very same people who believe that there's a moral structure to the universe, they tend to believe one of two types of understandings of the universe as well. One of the ways to understand the universe is what we learn in university about a naturalistic account of human origins.

And in that world, which is what science teaches, if Jim's not here today, his wife Helen is here today, she can tell you what happened when in the House of Commons it was suggested that there was an MP who actually didn't believe in evolution. Stockwell Day got crucified. As much as a person can be crucified in Canada after the year 2000 for publicly coming out that he doesn't believe in naturalistic evolution. It's the common belief in our culture. But you know what? At the heart of naturalistic evolution is this. Blind, irrational scientific laws with no purpose, no intention, just blind scientific laws combined with blind scientific chance to create a world where the strong eat the weak and the strong survive. Therefore love one another.

That makes no sense. It's completely and utterly irrational. If you have a world of blind, irrational scientific laws and blind, irrational chance that culminates in a world where the strong eat the weak, how on earth can there be a moral universe? Makes no sense.

If you have the eastern world view and in the eastern world view you have the idea that all is one. You picture the ocean. Go to Halifax. Go to Vancouver. You see the large oceans. Go on a cruise and you see how large the ocean is. And in those basic world views it's as if at one time there was just one. It would be like the ocean. And it was just the ocean. All was one. But there is some tragedy at some point in time in the past. And out of that tragedy difference emerges. And the difference that emerges ends up being you and me in rocks and trees. But the way to solve that is at some point in time through karma or through different spiritual disciplines or whatever is to get back to merge once again with the one. The fundamental image is as if you were a drop of water and finally that drop of water returns to the ocean.

[38 : 12] And in the ocean where all is one, the ocean is beyond good and evil. There is ultimately no good and no evil. There is just the one. In fact, a moral shaped universe is an inherent contradiction within their understanding of how things will be, how things came to be, and how things will come to an end. Yet for most people, including in countries like China and India and in coffee shops, we have this overwhelming sense that there is a moral order and a universe. But there's an even deeper problem.

Because if you just merely have a moral order and a universe, and you just have these blind laws of justice, well, every single one of us has a basic sense that we don't want justice to stop being just. But if there's just justice, that's always like a mechanical process. Where on earth can there be compassion or mercy? If you could put up the point, please, that would be very helpful.

Karma is pure justice without mercy and grace. With the Lord, there is pure justice at peace with pure mercy and grace.

You see, at the very heart of the Christian story is the Christian story that all things were originally one.

[39 : 50] It denies the idea that everything that comes to an existence has come to existence as a result of blind, irrational, purposeless laws connected with blind, purposeless chance, connected with the strong eating the weak, so the strong survives.

Christians believe that what caused all things to be isn't a what, but a who. God is the one who's created all things. And of course, he created things, and God isn't just God, it's the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, that the very nature of God is not just that he is God and that he is just and he is good, but that also that God is love, that for all eternity the Father has loved the Father.

And in some accounts, some Bible verses, it almost talks as if the Holy Spirit is that eternal love, which is going back and forward from the Father to the Son, but it is a person.

And it is out of this world of not only goodness and justice, but also of love that all things came to be and human beings fell. And that's why we have evil.

But that same basic sense that God has woven not only justice into the very fabric of the universe, but also love into the very fabric of the universe. And if you just have blind karma, just administering justice, what happens fundamentally to people is what people hate about religion.

[41 : 13] That somehow or another, in a world of karma, I get a pass. Why? Well, because I'm me, at the end of the day.

Like, aren't I charming? Aren't I smart? Aren't I nice? Aren't I good? Why shouldn't God give me a pass? But if God gives me a pass just because I'm me, then it's no longer justice.

And the fact of the matter is, is that I might say, because I'm me, but my wife and my kids will roll their eyes. Oh, yeah. It's easy for him to fool the congregation.

You don't have to live with them or something like that. You know, or the staff might say, well, it's all right for him to get up there. You don't have to work with them. You know, George, your poop smells just as bad as everybody else's.

But the Bible presents something very different, which is seen very powerfully in the story. In the story, you see these sailors believing everything happens for a reason. You have this moral order to the universe.

[42 : 18] But because the Lord exists, the Lord can intervene in justice in a way that doesn't stop justice from being justice, but is congruent with mercy and compassion.

It's a little bit of a mystery here in this particular story. The sailors offer sacrifices to the God. They understand that there's something has to die for the fact that they're able to live.

And Jesus, in the Gospel of Matthew, is going to connect Jonah's being in the deep, in the belly of the whale, as a way to start to understand this profound thing that God is going to do in the future.

In a sense, the story of Jonah presents as a riddle that we have to wait until the New Testament to see the answer. That at some point in time, God himself is going to deal with things in a way where perfect justice is maintained, but God's compassion and mercy is offered.

Because, you see, what's going to happen with Jesus is what the Gospel says is, in a sense, if God was to appear just before I gave my life to Jesus and I was to stand judgment, there would be this long list of all these things that I had done wrong, all the things that the structure of a moral universe would demand that there be some type of payment.

[43 : 41] And the list would go on and on and on and on and on. It would go into my thoughts and onto how I drive and how I look at people and how I think about people and the things I say and the things I say in secret.

It would go on and on and on and on. And if you were there witnessing it, you would say, George, there's no way that a man with that type of list should be able to be married. He shouldn't be able to be a preacher. He shouldn't even be allowed to do anything because you're a terrible person, George.

And as that long list is revealed and God's justice is revealed, and if I am to stand under it, I will be unmade. Jesus comes and stands in my place and says, that punishment George deserves can land on me.

That which will unmake George, I will take upon myself that death that he deserves. I will take upon myself that punishment.

I will take. And that's the heart of the gospel. That's why, you see, in the gospel, you have the justice of God is perfectly maintained, but his justice is at peace with mercy and with grace. [44 : 54] Without any type of contradiction. And so the book of Jonah is revealing to us that we understand that there has to be a basic moral structure of the universe, but the basic moral structure of the universe presents with us a riddle.

That on one hand, we don't want the moral structure of the universe to cease, and on the other hand, we have a basic longing and a yearning and a hope that mercy and compassion is possible, that grace is possible.

And only in the gospel is that revealed that that fundamental longing and yearning that we have actually took on flesh and happened in history and can be received by any one of us with true power.

of schwanger. Of all of us. Let's ■■■■ It's not a way to mature. We do ■ flick the truth of the world and see how to use and save. This is not the meaning of r6wnie■ poetry.

This is grace to be taken from the■ that is ■■■■■■ grasshop r and this is shallow So let's stop