

Sign from the fish's belly

The Urth list — 14 messages, 6 voices, 27 Jan 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3816>

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Andrew Bollen — 27 Jan 2003, 13:36

I asked this:

--- Marble prophesies for Horn regarding the community (at the beginning of OBW): "The city searches the sky for a sign, but no sign shall it have but the sign from the fish's belly." Anybody have an explanation for this?

I think the answer is:

[Matthew 16]

The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. 2 He replied, 'When evening comes, you say, `It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' 3 and in the morning, `Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. 4 A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.'

Or repeated:

[Matthew 12:38-40]

Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, 'Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.' 39 He answered, 'A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.'

So it seems clear that "sign from the fish's belly" = "sign of Jonah". (I take it that Marble is repeating a phrase from the Chras writings here.)

Googling reveals a whole bunch of varied ravings about the meaning of the sign of Jonah, but maybe this:

- Jonah's 3 days in the belly of the fish as a prefigurement of Jesus' death & resurrection. So should we think of Horn's time in the pit on the island, or should we scrap the 3 days & nights and think of this as a prophecy of SilkHorn's return to straighten things out in New Viron - Horn having "died" and been "reborn"?

- After he is disgorged by the whale, Jonah goes to preach repentance to the heathen city of Nineveh. Suprisingly, all 120,000 of them immediately do so, covering themselves with ashes &

sack-cloth etc. (Jonah is pissed, because he was hoping Yahweh would do some serious smiting, Nineveh being an enemy to Israel.) So the imagery is maybe the conversion of all a whole nation to righteousness, after the "death" and "resurrection" of the prophet.

Tami Whitehead — 27 Jan 2003, 18:29 · follows Andrew Bollen

Just a small aside, and perhaps not even relevant (I shouldn't even be reading these spoilers, since I have only now started with the Long Sun set...)

But the theological twist on Jonah is, as you alluded in your post, a resistance to God's will on Jonah's part. He heard the call to prophecy to his enemies, and like many prophets, did not want to go (prophets have their different reasons, but it is pretty constant that they do not want to be prophets when called, and pretty much try to get out of it when they can...counterpose this with the Christ, or rather, the reluctant Messiah outlined by Frazer in Golden Bough, and you have an interesting twist).

Jonah is called to Ninevah, to save the Ninevites from God's Destruction. He says, "God must be crazy, I am not going to help those louts," and boards a boat for farther Hispaniola or the like, intent on thwarting God's will, but God sends a storm, and Jonah's boat will be lost, and he knows why, so he urges his shipmates to throw him overboard to appease God, which they do, and the fish swallows him up, only later to vomit him on the shores of Ninevah...and he was a changed man so to speak, and preached (reluctantly) the salvation of the enemy, who repented (to his chagrin) and were saved.

Now, not knowing how this fits into the Horn question, the thing that has struck me deepest on Jonah's story is exactly the resistance to God's will, and how the whole thing is supposed to be a prefigurement of Christ...whose resistance is dimmed somewhat in the Passion in the Garden of Gethsemene, Lord if it be thy will let this cup pass from me...I wonder...what if Christ was more like Jonah, and really thought we louts deserved to burn, and was finally sacrificed while still resenting God's call, or the redemption of us sinners? Then there is the question of the 3 days and nites, which for Jonah served 2 purposes, to punish and humble him, and also to put him where he needed to be to accomplish the task given. For Christ, the 3 days and nites are purportedly to make him officially dead, and therefore officially risen, which is the operative here (the Resurrection supercedes the Sacrifice. Go figure.) If the parallel is followed, then Christ went to hell for a slightly different reason...besides just getting the keys to hell.

Anyhow, back to the fish thing, there are so many sacred and prophetic fishes in Levantine, Occidental and Western European myth, I might want another clue to be sure we had the right angle with Jonah...there is the old Jewish tradition that a fish eye represents God's Mercy, being lidless and therefor never closed to the suffering of man etc...or wise salmon who eat acorns of wisdom in sacred pools, or flounders who were bewitched bishops and so forth...the mitre worn by the Pope is also a fish symbol, but you knew that...

My, how I rambled...hehehe, just fishing folks!

razorkittee

--- Andrew Bollen <abollen at internode.on.net> wrote:
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Josh Geller — 27 Jan 2003, 18:41 · follows Tami Whitehead

On Mon, 27 Jan 2003, Tami Whitehead wrote:
But the theological twist on Jonah is, as you alluded
in your post, a resistance to God's will on Jonah's
part. He heard the call to prophecy to his enemies,
and like many prophets, did not want to go [...]

Mostly for health reasons.

A prophet is normally being instructed to inform people who are more powerful than he is of something that they don't want to hear.

.

Tami Whitehead — 27 Jan 2003, 18:51 · follows Josh Geller

Hi Josh,
Jonah pleaded ill health, but God saw through his flimsy excuse.(God would have healed his illness, had that really been the case). Re-read the book of Jonah...his hate and resentment of the Ninevites is very apparent as the reason for his rebellion, not his health, else why go even farther on a more arduous journey to evade the mission?

Yes, prophets are normally regular folks sent to say something to more powerful folks they don't want to hear...and that is often a reason for not wanting to prophesy...there is also to common complaint of prophets "Why me? Leave me alone, let me get on with my humble life...I never asked to be a mouthpiece for God." There is something to be said for not wanting to be sent on Divine Missions, or touched by God, etc. The books of the Prophets show more than the reaction of those prophesied to, but also how the Prophets themselves are brought into line. Check it out.

razorkittee

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Josh Geller — 27 Jan 2003, 19:05 · follows Tami Whitehead

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Jonah pleaded ill health[....]

This is not exactly what I was getting at.

If you, an ordinary person, go and stand in front of a King and tell him that he is forbidden from doing something he wants to do (for instance), or go to an enemy country and stand up in the public marketplace and stand up and tell all passersby what horrible people they are, your life is likely to end swiftly and painfully.

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Chris — 27 Jan 2003, 19:00 · follows Josh Geller

I think the quotations from Matthew nail down the reference pretty well, actually. I am convinced that it's a reference intended to relate Horn to Christ in a typically prophetic way; but, come to think of it what I hadn't considered was that it would seem to indicate that Marble has a much clearer idea of the "big picture" than I'd really considered.

There is room for debate, to me, as to what the significance of the 3 days in the belly of the fish- it seems open to interpretation. The way I've always looked at it, the purpose was to purify Jonah, making him a tool worthy of God... possibly by *means* of the punishment, and not just

concurrent with it. But what bothers me is that it's the Ninevites who are receiving the Sign of Jonah and not Jonah himself, so it seems like looking at the whole thing from Jonah's perspective is the wrong angle. As far as the Ninevites concerned, it's a matter of some guy who should have been dead popping out of an unlikely/impossible place and giving them a message of doom and repentance, and, well, that's about all I can think of.

Chris

"We have arrived at that point where in every civilization Caesar is killed, Alexander catches some complaint and dies; personality is exhausted... and the art schools are more intelligent every day."

-- W.B. Yeats

Anyway, back to the fish thing, there are so many sacred and prophetic fishes in Levantine, Occidental and Western European myth, I might want another clue to be sure we had the right angle with Jonah...there is the old Jewish tradition that a fish eye represents God's Mercy, being lidless and therefor never closed to the suffering of man etc...or wise salmon who eat acorns of wisdom in sacred pools, or flounders who were bewitched bishops and so forth...the mitre worn by the Pope is also a fish symbol, but you knew that...

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James Jordan — 27 Jan 2003, 20:26 · follows Chris

At 07:36 AM 1/27/2003, you wrote:

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- After he is disgorged by the whale, Jonah goes to preach repentance to the heathen city of Nineveh. Suprisingly, all 120,000 of them immediately do so, covering themselves with ashes & sack-cloth etc. (Jonah is pissed, because he was hoping Yahweh would do some serious smiting, Nineveh being an enemy to Israel.) So the imagery is maybe the conversion of all a whole nation to righteousness, after the "death" and "resurrection" of the prophet.

The question is how much of the Jonah//Jesus story does (a) Wolfe catch, and (b) Wolfe intend. Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh, because of the prophecy in Deuteronomy that if God's people provoke Him with "no-gods" (idols), He will provoke them by going over to another people ("no-people"). God announcement to Jonah was an announcement that He was fed up with Israel, and was going to go over to these gentiles. Jonah, as one who loved his own people, did not want to see this happen.

At this point in history, Assyria (Nineveh) was not a great power, and not much of a problem to Israel, whose major enemy was Syria (Damascus). After a century, Assyria would become the enemy. So careful expositors don't usually say that Jonah hated the Assyrians, but that he understood that his call to go there was a judgment on his own people. But Wolfe may not have studied all this out.

Jesus' "sign of Jonah" is of a piece with this history. Repeatedly He has indicated that His new kingdom will be received by more gentiles than Jews. Indeed, His new assistants are no longer shepherds but fishermen (in Biblical imagery, Gentiles are associated with the sea, across waters, while Israel is associated with land).

The death-resurrection business is, thus, in part a death to the old people and a resurrection to a new one. The old people don't want what the prophet brings, but the new people will hear it. I suspect Wolfe knows part of this at least. New Viron searches the sky for a sign (looks to Silk on the Whorl), but what they receive will be something they may well reject, and will be good news to others. To whom? Who actually takes the most interest in Silkhorn's "ministry"? New Viron or other places? Or even the inhum, so pathetically desperate to be fully human?

Perhaps closer to the actual events: Horn dies and is resurrected, and then goes not to anywhere on Blue but to Green. What does he do on Green, but clean out the city there (Nineveh, a gentile city - ?). Does this correspond in Lupine thought to evangelism of the city, cleansing it? Who benefits from it? (A good question: Who does? I'm not sure I know.)

Now, in the gospels, the sign of Jonah is a sign to the Jews. That is, that the reception of the resurrected Jesus by gentiles is a sign to the Jews that they'd better get on board. In what way is Horn's work on Green (Nineveh Gentiles) a sign to people on Blue (Jews)? Maybe that if they don't shape up, if they don't learn the wisdom that the double-resurrected Silkhorn brings them, they'll wind up like the city on Green? Or something else?

I don't know. But it looks as if this is a deepstructure in the narrative that would repay closer attention.

Someone asked about the "3 days/nights" in the gospels. Start the clock with the arrest of Jesus on Thursday night, after he has agreed to die, when everyone abandons him. "In the heart of the earth" is a broader concept than merely lying in a tomb; note the symbolic use of "heart" in the phrase. One has to read Biblical language in terms of the Biblical worldview, not in terms of ours. 3 days/nights under the "power" of death.

FWIW

Nutria

Tami Whitehead — 27 Jan 2003, 21:27 · follows James Jordan

--- Josh Geller <dclxvi at dclxvi.best.vwh.net> wrote:

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wants to do (for
instance), or go to an enemy country and stand up in
the public
marketplace and stand up and tell all passersby what
horrible people
they are, your life is likely to end swiftly and
painfully.

Yes, Josh, I got that, and I agree, it is a strong
deterrent. I merely point out the other reasons as
well. I merely point out that there is more than one
reason to rebel, as it were. Then there are those
prophets who dig it, and more power to them. God calls
us all in different ways, one could say, and we all
respond to that call differently, according to the
situation, both inwardly and outwardly. But yes,
certainly, fear of death or other reprisal is
definitely a valid concern.

rk

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Andrew Bollen — 28 Jan 2003, 01:38 · follows Tami Whitehead

Nutria writes:

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Deuteronomy that if God's people provoke Him with "no-gods" (idols), He
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announcement to Jonah was an announcement that He was fed up with Israel,
and was going to go over to these gentiles. Jonah, as one who loved his
own
people, did not want to see this happen.

[snippety]

So careful

expositors don't usually say that Jonah hated the Assyrians, but that he understood that his call to go there was a judgment on his own people.

Thanks, Nutria - I now understand Jonah's rather odd testiness over God sparing the Ninevites.

Perhaps closer to the actual events: Horn dies and is resurrected,

and then goes not to anywhere on Blue but to Green. What does he do on Green, but clean out the city there (Nineveh, a gentile city - ?). Does this correspond in Lupine thought to evangelism of the city, cleansing it? Who benefits from it? (A good question: Who does? I'm not sure I know.)

I think the whole of Green, and Blue also, benefit from cleansing the city on Green. Just as a practical matter, it's the inhumis's main center. From there, they launch their raids on human settlements, using human slaves bound by the hostage lives of their children etc (as was the case for Auk and Chenille.) I'd suspect, also, that it may contain technology useful to humans. (See SilkHorn's comments about the possible rewards from digging in places like Inclito's house etc.)

Perhaps more importantly, the cleansing is a demonstration of what can be achieved when humans work together, rather than remaining fragmented.

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That

is, that the reception of the resurrected Jesus by gentiles is a sign to the Jews that they'd better get on board. In what way is Horn's work on Green (Nineveh Gentiles) a sign to people on Blue (Jews)? Maybe that if they don't shape up, if they don't learn the wisdom that the double-resurrected Silkhorn brings them, they'll wind up like the city on Green? Or something else?

This may indeed be the case, but my reading is a little more general & positive. I think it speaks of a very fast, very comprehensive turn to righteousness, even by those not of the Vironese faith, all over Blue (and Green). SilkHorn does indeed achieve this in Gaon (if we believe the description of Gaon given to Inclito by an ex-mercenary of the Rajan's - nice place, nobody steals etc etc), in Blanko, in Dorp, and I believe in New Viron as well. As the conclusion of RTTW, BlazingStar, the best of the New Vironese oligarchy, is calde. Daisy looks at the departing Whorl through a telescope, which indicates either a growth in local manufacture (at the beginning of OBW, New Viron mines lead, but does not grind lenses) and/or trade (Dorp grinds lenses).

I don't think this last point should be dismissed lightly; I think in Wolfe's mind, righteousness is congruent with good order, which in turn is congruent with things like ease of trade & travel. Witness many comments to this effect throughout SS, and especially the practical significance of the Dorp "cleansing".

Of course, it would be impossible for a mere unaided human to achieve all this in a couple of years, and SilkHorn's success is surely due to divine aid & inspiration. So I would read the Marble's prophecy as foretelling success, and not so much as a warning. The divine intervention will be in the form to a hero/judge/prophet divinely inspired with the charisma, wisdom & efficacy to cause righteousness & inspire the people to its pursuit, and not in the form of Pas-ish epiphanies, or Mother magic.

James Wynn — 28 Jan 2003, 15:13 · follows Andrew Bollen

Tami Whitehead said:

Now, not knowing how this fits into the Horn question, the thing that has struck me deepest on

Jonah's story is exactly the resistance to God's will, and how the whole thing is supposed to be a prefigurement of Christ...

Crush offers

Since your speculation was not how this relates Horn, the answer to what this was all about (I think) was explained by Jesus...

Matthew 12:41 - The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas [is] here.

The point is that Nineveh repented, receiving no more "sign" than that a prophet "arose" from the deeps after having been three days in the belly of a fish. Jesus said that the aggregate of the current "generation" in Jerusalem and Galilee would not repent although they received a sign of the "greatest of prophets" rising from three days in the grave.

There IS a subtle application in this to the "Long Sun/Short Sun" in that "underwater" is so ubiquitously associated with the "underworld"; that is, the land of the dead and the source of prophecy.

BTW - Nutria gave a very interesting explanation of "3 days and nights" in the grave phrase. On the other hand, a more prosaic explanation is that the Hebrews and Romans did not have a zero at the time. Counting was conducted in terms of "first, second, third, etc." rather than "one, two, three, etc." Days were from sunrise to sundown, not 24-hour intervals. So when Herod slays infants two years and younger it means "infants in their second year" or "one year and younger." Jesus was in the tomb (late) Friday, Saturday, and (early) Sunday - "three days"

The phrase "three days and three nights" is an idiom; it doesn't make logical sense and doesn't have to. Matthew quotes it even though he later says that Jesus went into the tomb on Friday at dusk and came out on Sunday at sunrise. I remember the reaction of some Latino children to the phrase "when the alarm goes off." They thought it was very funny. "The alarm doesn't 'go off', it 'goes on'."

Crush

James Jordan — 28 Jan 2003, 15:45 · follows James Wynn

At 09:13 AM 1/28/2003, Crush wrote:

There IS a subtle application in this to the "Long Sun/Short Sun" in that "underwater" is so ubiquitously associated with the "underworld"; that is, the land of the dead and the source of prophecy.

Hmm, looking back at the actual statement:

"The city searches the sky for a sign, but no sign shall it have but the sign from the fish's belly."

Note the opposition of searching the sky and true sign from the sea. Maybe after all Wolfe is not pointing very much to Jonah and Jesus but to Seawrack. Is the Mother the fish? Is Seawrack's loyalty to Silkhorn the sign? And the fact that she can fall back into the sea if she is separated from this messiah?

Or, could this be another angle in a multi-layered prophecy?

Nutria

Tami Whitehead — 28 Jan 2003, 18:03 · follows James Jordan

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because of the prophecy in
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[snippety]

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expositors don't usually say that Jonah hated the
Assyrians, but that he
understood that his call to go there was a
judgment on his own people.

Thanks Nutria. In re-reading the Book of Jonah,
however, I am still of the mind that Jonah just had a
bad attitude, and wasn't so much concerned with the
prophecy of Deuteronomy. It is an interesting point
you make however, and indeed raises some very
important points concerning Gentile Christianity, and
the availability of redemption to non-Hebrews.
However, if the whole Jonah question is to be followed
through, and if this is indeed a semi-serious 'clue'
to some obscure goings on in a series I haven't read
yet(wink)I point out the following, as it may have a
bearing, and again, I leave it to those who more
qualified to discuss to the matter:

The Ninevites did not see Jonah come from the fish.
The fish spat him out, the Lord spoke to him again,
and he went to the city saying it would fall in 40
days, and *that* was why the King ordered the city to
fast and repent.

This (it says in the Book) really pissed Jonah off,
and he went to pout in a little booth outside the
city, to wait and watch for God to smite them after
all, and would rather die. God sent a gourd to cover
him, which made him glad, then God sent a worm to
smite the gourd, which made Jonah want to die again.
(Maybe Prozac would have helped, hehehe).

So, at this point, and it is a very short book, God
tells Jonah, Why be angry about the gourd, and Jonah
says he is right to be angry about it. God reminds
Jonah he didn't make the gourd, and it lived only a
short time, and compares it to the Ninevites "Should

not I spare the Ninevah, that great city, wherein
there are more than sixscore thousand who do not know
their right hand from their left, and also much
cattle?"

And so ends the book of Jonah, rather like a GW book,
abruptly, and not at all to our satisfaction, let
alone Jonah's.

I only point these things out because there seems to
be much hinging on the sign from the fish, but there
was no sign for the Ninevites of a fish, they never
saw it--Ninevah was still a 3 days journey from where
the fish spat him out. Also, the question of going
over to the Gentiles or pagans becomes more plain, not
being a result of Israel's sin in this case, but
merely...Mercy? If so, it is a rather 'left-handed'
mercy--God seems to say, they are stupid folk, but
have lots of cattle, so why not save them, or maybe,
they are as stupid as cattle...in any case, it doesn't
seem to be any skin off Israel's nose. He isn't
leaving them, merely 'not smiting' someone else.

Jonah never really says he hates anyone, or that he is
ill, or that he has something better to do, but his
attitude of resistance, rebellion and anger is
apparent. He argues with God. He resents God. He pouts
like Achilles in his tent. And God can't seem to melt
and pour it on him that hey, just do what I told you,
and don't worry who I smite and don't smite.

razorkittee

James Jordan — 28 Jan 2003, 19:22 · follows Tami Whitehead

Razorkittee:

Well, there is a lot more going on in Jonah than appears to modern readers, because we don't read as ancient writers wrote. The sea is the gentiles, and the fish is a gentile nation. Israel is in a few years going to be tossed into the gentile sea and swallowed by the big fish of Assyria. While there she will repent and then be cast back up on the land, returning from exile. Jonah's mission, actually, is to make Assyria into a place that will be more friendly to the Israelites they will conquer and capture in a few decades, for there will be some residual respect for Israel's God.

The gourd plant also signifies Assyria: springing up rapidly (under Jonah's preaching), temporarily providing protection for Israel in captivity, but destined to collapse, at which point protection for Israel also collapses. God shows the good things that can come to Israel when the Gentiles convert, and then rebukes him for his stingy attitude.

Other literary touches include chapter 1, which shows Jonah already down in the sea in the sense of being in "deep sleep" in the hold of the ship. When he awakens and comes up, the sailors listen to him and praise Yahweh. This narrative sequence duplicates by anticipation the conversion of Assyria after Jonah comes up from "deep sleep" in the sea. ("Deep sleep" is a specialized noun in Hebrew, used rarely. It means "comatose.")

Whether one views the book of Jonah as predictive prophecy or as allegory after the fact, the book is an almost incredible literary work. Not only are there all the parallels, a few of which I have just mentioned, but each chapter is a neat literary unit styled as a complete and very elaborate chiasm (ABCDEFGFEDCBA).

All of which is interesting, but not necessarily relevant at all to what Wolfe has done with his brief allusion. Since there are numerous aspects to the Jonah story, and what Jesus means by alluding to it, we have to try and discern which of these Wolfe intended.

Nutria

Tami Whitehead — 28 Jan 2003, 20:42 · follows James Jordan

Dear Nutria,

I bow to your learned opinions regarding the Old and New Testament (and I share your interest in gematria, btw, p'raps we can discuss such things another time and place). I agree that there is a lot more going on in Jonah, as you said.

I am not contesting your interpretation of the symbols therein, which I largely agree with. I only pointed out the things I pointed out, for the reasons I gave, namely, that some seemed to be under the impression the sign of the fish was 'seen' by the Ninevites...

rk