





# **Developing the Heart of God in a Hateful World**

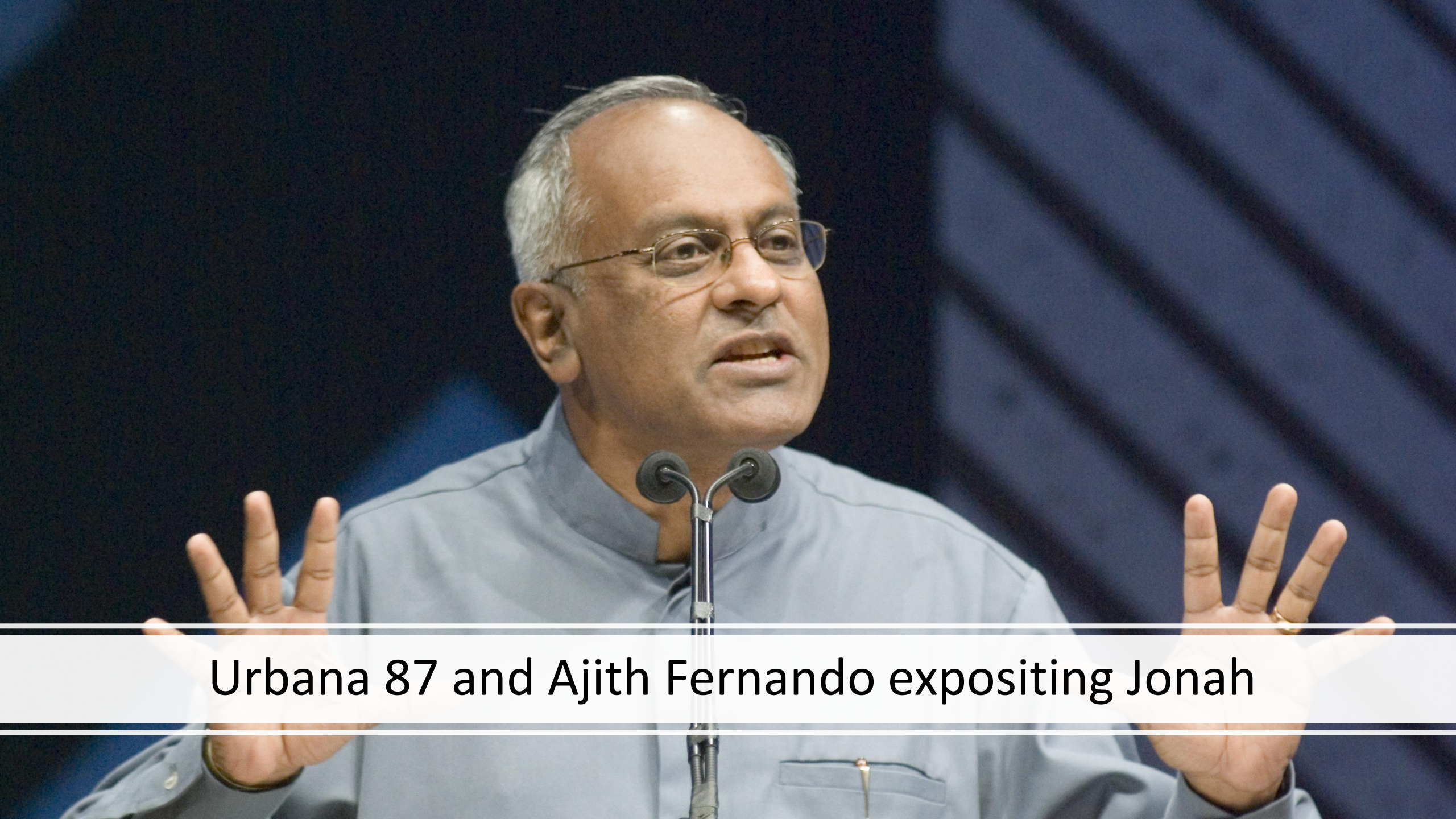
Reclaiming the Story of Jonah as Motivation for Modern Missions





My first experience with Jonah





Urbana 87 and Ajith Fernando expositing Jonah





Our Veggie Tales experience



## Jonah and the Whale - Beginners Bible

The Beginners Bible ✓ 1.6M views • 4 years ago

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Bible Pathway Adventures • 8.2K views • 1 year ago

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# Jonah and Our Christian Culture



## Testament - The Bible in Animation - Jonah

Stephen Barnett • 218K views • 3 years ago

The gentle humor of this wonderful tale of the had-tempered prophet is given full reign here. Jonah's flat





The North American church regularly teaches Jonah as a simplistic children's story with a very basic - and hard to defend – message about obedience. It does not fit into our regular practice of spirituality or faith.





**Jonah and Yom Kippur  
(art by Laya Crust)**





My sense of cross-cultural ministry calling





1.4 ...[Tolerance] means accepting the fact that human beings, naturally diverse in their appearance, situation, speech, behaviour and values, have the right to live in peace and to be as they are. It also means that one's views are not to be imposed on others.

UNESCO Principles on Tolerance, 1995





“At times, it can seem as if Americans have decided to reenact the American Civil War on the Internet, with the difference that in today’s culture war there are any number of sides and issues, rather than just two sides and one issue.”

- The Boston Globe, October 22, 2018





When groups feel threatened, they retreat into tribalism...they close ranks and become more insular, more defensive, more punitive, more us-versus-them.

In America today, every group feels this way to some extent. Whites and blacks, Latinos and Asians, men and women, Christians, Jews, and Muslims, straight people and gay people, liberals and conservatives – all feel their groups are being attacked, bullied, persecuted, discriminated against.

- The Guardian, March 1, 2018





The Story of Jonah





The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD. Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish." (Jon. 1:1-6 NIV)



Then the sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity." They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. So they asked him, "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?"

He answered, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." This terrified them and they asked, "What have you done?" (They knew he was running away from the LORD, because he had already told them so.)

The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?" "Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you."

Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. Then they cried out to the LORD, "Please, LORD, do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, LORD, have done as you pleased."

Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to him.



Now the LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God.

He said: "In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry.

You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.'

The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me;  
seaweed was wrapped around my head.

To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred  
me in forever. But you, LORD my God, brought my life up from the pit.

"When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my  
prayer rose to you, to your holy temple.

"Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for  
them.

But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have  
vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the LORD.'"

And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry  
land.



Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you." Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown."

The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.

This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.



But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the LORD, "Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." But the LORD replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?" Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city.

Then the LORD God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live."

But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" "It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead."



But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight.

And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left-- and also many animals?"





## The Literary Structure of the Story





## Repetition of Two Cycles:

### 1. Experience with Foreigners

1. Chapter 1: LORD sent His Word, Jonah went the opposite direction, in the midst of the storm he revealed the LORD to the sailors, and the LORD delivered them all from the storm
2. Chapter 3: the LORD sent His Word a second time, Jonah went to Nineveh, in the middle of the city he proclaimed the impending destruction of Nineveh, and the LORD relented from sending the calamity He had threatened

### 2. Reflection and Prayer

1. Chapter 2: in the belly of a fish, a perfect Psalm
2. Chapter 4: Prayer of the discontented

# Repetition of Words and Themes:

## 1. Repeated words:

1. "But Jonah" & "but the LORD"
2. Jonah going down: 1:2-2:
3. "The LORD provided/sent"

## 2. Developing a Theme of Who the LORD is:

1. 1:6 – "Take notice so we will not perish"
2. 2:2 – "I called for help and you listened to my cry" and 2:9
3. 3:9 – "Who knows? God may yet relent"
4. 4:2 – "I knew you are a gracious and compassionate God"

## 3. Contrasts:

1. Nature's perfect obedience: wind, waves, fish, plant, worm
2. The foreigners' perfect responses: justice & repentance
3. Jonah's reluctance to go and anger at God's mercy



# The Reader Associates with Jonah

1. The prophet-hero story – familiar to readers
2. The prophet is like the reader – fallible and repentant
3. The reader must interpret ambiguous actions
  1. Why did Jonah run away?
  2. Why was he sleeping below decks?
  3. Why was he not praying to his god?
  4. Why did he ask to be thrown overboard?
4. The reader must interject their own motivations to understand Jonah



The Message of the Story of Jonah



*"Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."*

*Jonah 4:1-3*

*“Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.” Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped...Then the LORD said: “I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the LORD, will do for you.*

*Exodus 34:5-8, 10*



*“But the LORD replied, “Is it right for you to be angry?”*”

*Jonah 4:4*

*“Then the LORD God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was happy about the plant. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah’s head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die and said, ‘It would be better for me to die than to live.’”*

*Jonah 4:6-8*

Jonah reduced the LORD to the god of his comfort. He recognized who the LORD is (1:9 - the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land; 2:9 - Salvation comes from the LORD; 4:2 - gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love), but considers his very character evil if it is expressed in mercy towards those outside the special covenantal relationship expressed in Exodus 34.



*“In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.*

*Micah 4:1-3 NIV, Isaiah 2:2-4*

*“Shout and be glad, Daughter Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you,” declares the LORD. “Many nations will be joined with the LORD in that day and will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you.”*

*Zech. 2:10-11*

*“My name will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to me, because my name will be great among the nations,” says the LORD Almighty.”*

*Malachi 1:11*

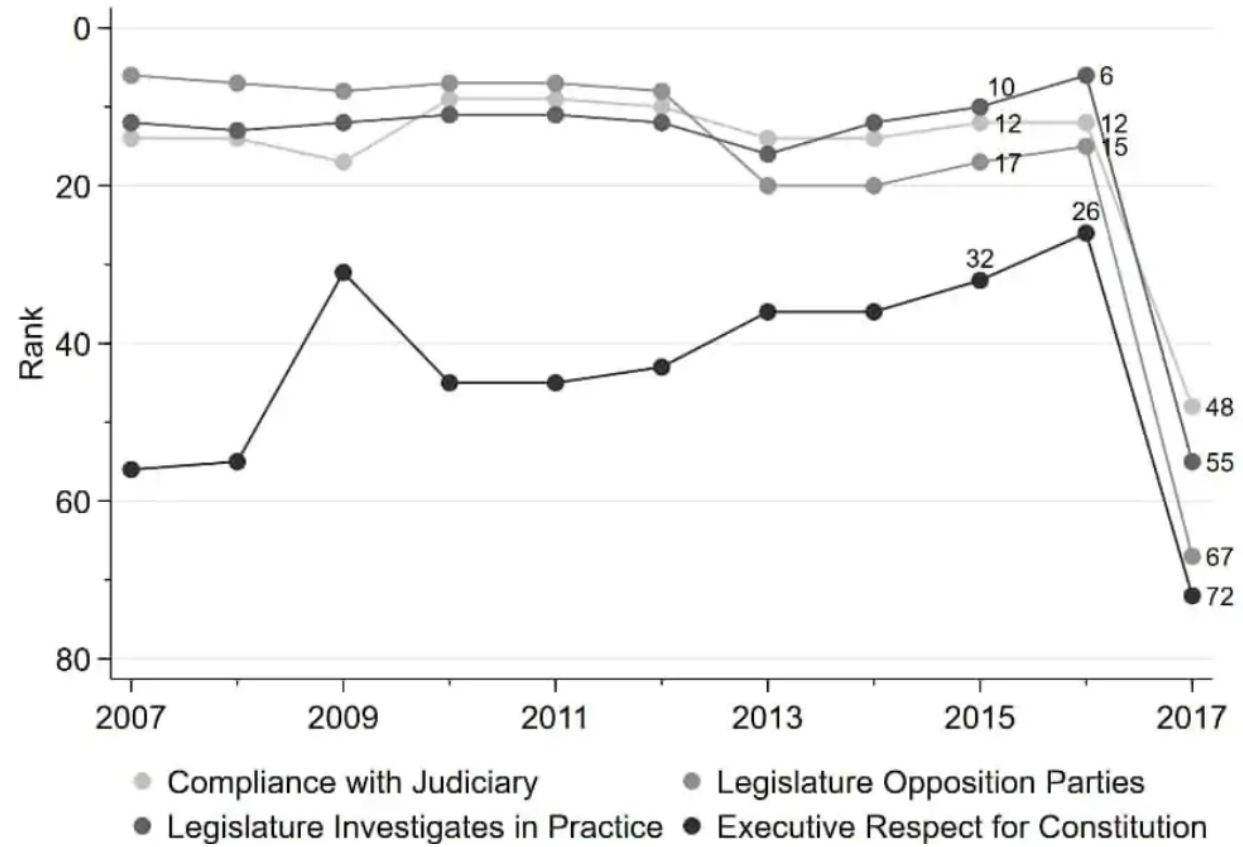


*“In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, ‘Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance.’”*

*Isaiah 19:23-25*

To realize their identity from Abraham through Moses to this very day, the people of the LORD needed to be those people ready to extend their borders and see the foreigners blessed and welcomed into the LORD's family – just as they had been on Mt. Sinai in Exodus 34.

# Declining Democracies





# Core Message of the Gospel

- God's love extends to all people
- Repentance is necessary to receive the free gift of forgiveness and restoration
- Someone must go and tell others the consequences if they do not repent

The LORD didn't only want Jonah's obedience, he wanted his understanding and agreement. He was teaching Jonah at each and every step, taking him from where he was – as a product of his times – to a place where he could understand the LORD and the world correctly.