

Message #5**Jonah 1:17-2:10**

The fish part of this story is not about judgment, it is about pure grace. Jonah was a Jewish prophet who was in total rebellion against God's Word and will. Truth is Jonah would rather go overboard and drown than go to Nineveh and preach. But getting away from God's sovereign plan is not all that easy.

EVEN WHEN GOD'S CHILD HAS BLATANTLY REBELLED AND DISOBEYED GOD, GOD CAN SOVEREIGNLY AND GRACIOUSLY TRACK HIM DOWN AND TURN HIM AROUND.

In verse 15, Jonah was thrown overboard to drown. The sailors believed this is what would happen (1:14) and so did Jonah. When Jonah hit the Mediterranean, every person involved thought "Jonah is dead." But Jonah did not die, he did not drown. Why? Because God still had a plan for him and He sovereignly stepped in and graciously saved Jonah.

PART #1 – God appoints a fish to swallow Jonah. **1:17a**

The Hebrew word "appointed" is one that shows up four times in this book—**1:17**; 4:6; 7, 8. The word is "Manah" and it means to assign, to prepare, to allot (Gesenius, pp. 485-486). It is a word that emphasizes God's sovereignty. Literally, God appointed, prepared, and assigned a fish to swallow Jonah. Instead of letting Jonah drown, God sovereignly decided to have a fish save Jonah.

The text simply identifies the fish as being a "great fish." Jonah does not give the biological classification of the fish. The text does not say it was a whale. The point is God appointed a great fish to save Jonah and Jonah was in the stomach for three days and three nights.

Now this point can immediately be connected to Scripture (Matt. 12:40; 27:63). This immediately enables us to make a Biblical analogy between the saving of Jonah and the saving of sinners.

PART #2 – Jonah prays to God from the fish . **2:1-9**

Observation #1 - Jonah was amazed God heard him. **2:2**

The repetition of the fact that "He answered me," "Thou didst hear my voice" indicates that Jonah was amazed God would listen to him.

When the text says Jonah cried from the "depth of Sheol" it means either Jonah was dead and in Sheol or it means he considered the fish to be his abode of the dead, commonly known as Sheol, the fish was his grave.

Jonah could have given up. He could have blamed God, but he prayed. This was the beginning of a wonderful new, restored relationship. When people are in rebellion, they stop praying. Distressful situations are situations ripe for prayer.

Observation #2 - Jonah believed the Sovereign God had judged him. **2:3**

Jonah was a little confused in his memory. God did not cast Jonah into the sea, Jonah asked some men to cast him into the sea because he didn't want to repent. Jonah did know the sea was controlled by God, including the currents and the waves, but he was confused about how he got into the sea.

The truth is God is the one who saved Jonah, not the one who judged Jonah. Had God really judged Jonah, He would have let him drown.

Observation #3 - Jonah believed he had been expelled from God's sight. **2:4a**

As we have already addressed, Jonah could not ever get away from the presence of God. He apparently initially believed that while he was in the fish, no one saw him, not even God. He believed he was banished from the sight of God in the belly of the fish.

Let us remind ourselves that this is what Jonah originally wanted. He wanted to be out from the presence of the Lord. He got on this boat because he wanted to flee from the presence of the Lord (1:3, 10). Now Jonah believed he was expelled from the sight of God. You would think he would be happy, but there is no happiness, no contentment when one is in rebellion against God. Jonah senses God is far removed and he is miserable.

Observation #4 - Jonah believed he could turn to God. **2:4b**

One way to understand this is to mean that Jonah was willing to go back to Palestine; he was willing to go back to Jerusalem, which was where the temple was located, and make atoning sacrifices for his sin.

Also there is the implication that Jonah was looking again toward God in His holy temple in heaven. Instead of running from God, Jonah was now looking toward God (**2:7**).

Observation #5 - Jonah believed he was going to drown. **2:5-6a**

Jonah truly thought he was dead.

When it comes time to die, no matter what our physical circumstances, I guarantee our thoughts will be toward God and that is exactly where our thoughts should be.

Observation #6 - Jonah knew God saved him. **2:6b-9**

It is interesting that initially Jonah thought God had abandoned him (**2:4**), but he came to realize that it was God who saved him.

Notice the theology of Jonah; it is finally right—"Salvation is from the Lord!"

One of the great lessons of dark trials and circumstances is that it causes us to stand helpless and hopeless, in and of ourselves, and rely totally upon the Lord.

As we pointed out in a previous study, this chapter is saturated with statements that come from the book of Psalms. What we learn is that it was Jonah's remembrance of Scriptures that gave him stability in the darkest hour of his life. God's Word is a comfort no matter how dark or depressing the hour.

PART #3 – God commands the fish to deliver Jonah. **2:10**

Unlike Jonah, when God gave the fish the command it immediately obeyed.

I don't know what trial or trouble you are in right now. I don't know what seems to be causing you to sink, but God can get you out of it. If your dilemma is due to your rebellion, why not come to your senses and confess it to God and cry for His help. He will deliver you just like He did a rebellious Jonah.

God desires to track down and turn around His rebellious children. Why not turn to Him tonight and the storm will stop!