



(For the entire commentary on the book of Jonah click [HERE](#). For other commentaries of Charlie's click [HERE](#))

# Jonah

## **JONAH 2:1-4 (OUT OF THE BELLY OF SHEOL I CRIED)**

God gives us free will, and he allows us to exercise that free will even to our own detriment, but one thing that will never happen is that we will somehow thwart His will, His plans, and His purposes – both for ourselves and for those we are destined to influence.

This may seem contradictory, but it is not. God uses our choices, which He knew we would make, to accomplish His will and also to bring glory to Himself. We can't use the "suicide" argument to say, see I'm going to beat God at His own game, because we're making the incorrect assumption that we're doing something that He didn't expect. In the end, the only one who loses is us.

Jonah tried to get around God's intent and purposes, but as we saw last week, God used nature and a group of Gentiles – men who didn't know the One true God – to show him the error of his ways. If Jonah ended with chapter 1, we might assume that God's plans hadn't been accomplished.

In the same way, if the Bible ended with the Old Testament, then we could very well assume that the devil had won because paradise wasn't restored and only the promise of a curse remained. But we know better. And so, when we're done today, make sure to anticipate the rest of Chapter 2, and the final two chapters to see how God is vindicated in His intent and purpose for the Ninevites.

Likewise, Jesus Christ defeated the devil and brought about a great salvation for the souls of the world. The promise made at the very fall of man occurred exactly as it should. And yet, it was a promise which came about in a wholly unexpected way for the people who awaited their Messiah.

**Text Verse:** The waters flowed over my head;  
I said, "I am cut off!"

<sup>55</sup> I called on Your name, O Lord,  
From the lowest pit.

<sup>56</sup> You have heard my voice:  
"Do not hide Your ear  
From my sighing, from my cry for help." Habakkuk 3:54-56

For Jonah, his deliverance was completely unexpected. It was not until he was in the belly of this fish that he realized things would work out as they should. I hope you'll enjoy today's sermon and that you'll benefit from the amazing words Jonah passes on to us concerning his move from rebellion to repentance and obedience.

His prayer, like several other prayers in the Bible, is so beautiful and so heartfelt that it needs to be thought on and considered, not just read quickly and forgotten. Other prayers like this one are spoken by Hannah, David, Daniel, Nehemiah, Solomon, Hezekiah, Mary, etc. Each is recorded to give us insights into repentant, grateful, or petitioning hearts, and how God responds to them.

He placed these prayers in here for our benefit and we skip, or merely skim over, them at our own loss. Understanding what God responds to and why is of such great value in our walk with the Lord. Such treasures like Jonah's prayer are to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. I Cried out to the Lord (verses 1 & 2)**

We will be looking at what occurs *before* Jonah's time in the belly of the fish, and yet the prayer is made from the fish's belly. As most people consider that this was the sign which Jesus is referring to concerning Himself before the people of Israel, it is now, before we start looking at the verses, to determine if that is correct.

What is, in fact, the sign of Jonah? Is it that he was in the belly of the fish for 3 days and nights, or is it something else which hinges on the safe delivery of Jonah which necessitated the Lord's intervention? The first thing to look at is that the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow him.

Secondly, there's no doubt the account is true. Nowhere is it indicated that the story is merely allegorical. Jesus himself referenced it when referring to His own death and burial. There's no reason why we should think He was citing this as allegory, or that He was merely accommodating His audience. He spoke as if it were a true account, because it is.

And because it says the Lord "prepared" a great fish, we know that it was appointed specifically for this moment in time to deliver him. Just as He appointed each step of David's life to lead to, and continue him in the kingship, He appointed a fish for Jonah's delivery. With God, all things are possible, and there is no problem with this account.

In the last sermon, we learned about the meaning of “three days and three nights” and how it can mean something less than 72 hours – indeed, it can mean much less. To demonstrate this from a different account in the gospels, we can go to that of the Transfiguration. First we’ll read the account from Matthew and then the same account from Luke –

“Now **after six days** Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; <sup>2</sup> and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.” Matthew 17:1, 2

“Now it came to pass, **about eight days after** these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe *became white and* glistening.” Luke 9:28, 29

In one account it says “after six days” and in the other it says “about eight days after” There’s no contradiction here. Matthew is speaking about a six day period followed by the day they went up the mountain. Luke is speaking about a seven day period from the previous account. This would have been “about eight days earlier.” In other words, a beginning and ending day with six in the middle.

We speak in exactly the same terms in English all the time based on who we’re talking to and the reference we’re using. We need not worry – the account of Jesus’ crucifixion and subsequent resurrection is clearly laid out in the Bible, and that information has been provided in the written notes of the last sermon.

Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and He was crucified on a Friday. After this, He rose on a Sunday. The account is easily followed when properly laid out. And as I noted, thirteen times in the New Testament it says He

rose *on* the third day. This is repeated in all four gospels, in Acts, and in 1 Corinthians.

Understanding this, the fourth point to determine is what is the *sign* Jesus is speaking about. On the surface, it appears that Matthew is saying that the sign of Jonah was that of him being in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. After saying this, He said that He would be likewise in the belly of the earth.

In other words, the sign *seems* to be is His death and resurrection. But Luke leaves out the timeframe and the entire account of the fish. When he does this, he clears up the context – that the sign of Jonah is his preaching, and what that preaching stated... that destruction was decreed in 40 days. Looking at these verses in their proper light clearly shows that the preaching to the Ninevites was the sign. Here's what Luke says –

“““And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, “This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. <sup>30</sup> For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation. <sup>31</sup> The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon *is* here. <sup>32</sup> The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah *is* here.””” Luke 11:29-32

The sign is the preaching, which if rejected, would lead to destruction after 40 days. If we go back to Matthew and re-read what he presented there, we can see that Jesus does tell of His coming death and burial, but the sign is, like in Luke, the *preaching* in Nineveh. The resurrection bears witness to the truth of His preaching, which was to an already unbelieving people:

““Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.”

<sup>39</sup> But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. <sup>40</sup> For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. <sup>41</sup> The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah *is* here. <sup>42</sup> The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon *is* here.””  
Matthew 12:39-41

Jesus’ words of the kingdom and of repentance to “this generation” are the ultimate sign of who He was. Other prophets spoke in the name of the Lord. On the other hand, Jesus spoke in His own name, under His own authority, and as the Son of the Father – “indeed a greater than Jonah is here.”

Can we substantiate this? Yes. He says at other times and under different contexts that He would be crucified and would rise on the third day as a confirmation of His words, such as in Matthew 26 –

“Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, *that* He said to His disciples, <sup>2</sup> ‘You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.’” Matthew 26:1, 2

His reference to Jonah in Matthew was only confirming that the time of His burial would be the same as Jonah’s time in the fish and that the resurrection would

validate His words to the people. In other words, it is the preaching which is the sign of His office. As I said, unlike the prophets of old who spoke under the authority of the Lord, it is under His own authority, confirming that He is the Lord. When we get to chapter 3 of Jonah, we will read –

“And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day’s walk. Then he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”” Jonah 3:4

Jonah spoke of destruction which was just 40 days away. This is the specific sign to Israel. This warning to repent or be overthrown turned out to be a day for a year, just as it was in the Old Testament. When Israel disobeyed in the wilderness, they were given a day for a year punishment for every day that the spies were gone. It was 40 days, and thus 40 years of punishment –

“According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, *namely* forty years, and you shall know My rejection. <sup>35</sup> I the Lord have spoken this. I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.” Numbers 14:34, 35

In Ezekiel chapter 4, he was told to lay on his right side for 40 days signifying a day for a year of punishment for Judah. He was told the same for his left side, but for 390 days. It was a day for a year for the house of Israel. Together, they form the basis for the return of Israel in 1948. Jonah will call out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” The preaching is the sign that Jesus then references.

In 40 years, a day for a year, Israel would be destroyed and carried away exile. Forty years after Christ spoke to Israel, the nation was destroyed by the Romans – just as He said it would be in Matthew –

“Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: *some* of them you will kill and crucify, and *some* of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, <sup>35</sup> that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.<sup>36</sup> Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.” Matthew 23:34-36

This may seem like a long introduction to verse 1, but it was necessary to dispel the incorrect assumption that the time in the belly of the fish was the sign to Nineveh, or that the time of Christ in the tomb was the sign to Israel. Rather, the word of God, spoken to Israel in fulfillment of Scripture, and under the full authority of the Lord, was the sign. The resurrection merely proved that.

Therefore, what we will look at today is confirmation of the truth that the word of the Lord is coming through Jonah. The word itself is the sign. Nothing is recorded that Nineveh even knew of Jonah’s time in the belly of the fish. But Jonah did, and so his word was full of the power of the Lord when he went to preach.

### **<sup>1</sup>Then Jonah prayed**

*va’yitpalel yonah* – “And prayed Jonah.” Jonah – again the name is given indicating that we are to think on its meaning, “Dove.” He has vacillated like the erratic flight of a dove between his calling to Nineveh and his flight to Tarshish. The reintroduction of his name is calling us to continue to consider the change in course which has occurred, and why it has come about.

God is moving Jonah through the drama, just as He is moving mankind through His plan of redemptive history. Jonah is merely used as a symbol of this. Right now, he is at the pivot point of his adventure, just as redemptive history was at its



pivot point when Christ went to His cross and then to the grave, pictured by the events in Jonah now. Of these words, Joseph Benson says –

“Those devout thoughts and feelings which he had at that time, he afterward digested into the following prayer...” Joseph Benson

I’m not sure if he even caught his own pun, but being where Jonah is, the word “digested” fits perfectly. It is correct though that this was penned after the ordeal. It is *not to be thought* that he carried along ink, a pen, and parchment in order to chronicle his time in the belly of the fish.

This then is a sort of psalm of thanksgiving like one of David’s. After David’s many ordeals, he would often take the time to contemplate what occurred, and then put his thoughts into a marvelous psalm which is still cherished and adored by God’s people, even to this day.

This particular opening parallels the opening words of Hannah’s song in 1 Samuel 2 where the same words are used, changing only the name from Hannah to Jonah. As far as the word “pray” here. It is *palal*, a different word than that stated in Chapter 1. This indicates a prayer to God. It can, and in this case does, include supplication as well as thanksgiving.

The words of supplication are hinted at throughout the prayer but are otherwise unrecorded, and the thanksgiving is explicit in response to the answering of the supplication. Further, the prayers of petition and supplication indicate the time *during* his time in the ocean. The prayer of thanksgiving is recorded as being *during* his time in the belly of the fish.

He came to understand that the fish was actually his deliverer. It was a pledge of delivery and life, not an instrument of final destruction. We know this because the construction of the Hebrew in verse 7 shows a delivery already accomplished

instead of the expectation of it. Verse 9 also speaks of the surety of events coming later, even though he was still in the fish. Only after these things will he be released from its belly.

Now while there, Jonah uses his time wisely and prays. Good job Jonah! At the bleakest time of his life, he sought the face of the Lord. This isn't unusual and it's the pattern that most people follow as they plod along through life.

How often do we try our very best to run from the Lord and His directives just like Jonah, but when things go south, the first thing we do is pray. What happens after the prayer is what's even more important though. When things stabilize, are we going to go back to our old habits or are we going to recognize God's hand in our deliverance and obey Him from that point on?

I have a friend who is, as he calls himself, "spiritual." However, the last thing he wants is a relationship with God. Some time ago, I got an email – "Charlie, I need prayer. I have something wrong and the doctors want to do a scan on me next week." The fear in his email was almost tangible. I told him I'd pray for him. A few days later, he got the "all clear" from the doctors and I'm sure that was the last God has heard from him since then.

I've seen the pattern many times in the past and have read a jillion accounts like it from people during war time or natural disaster. Think of 9/11!

In the end, the only thing that matters is if we're going to follow through with praise after the prayers or if we're going to be the dog who returns to his vomit. The Lord is there and He is not a dummy.

1 (con't) **to the Lord his God**

*el Yehovah elohav* – “...unto Yehovah his God.” It is of note that the term “his God” is used. In the previous chapter, he had said –

“I *am* a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry *land*.” (Jonah 1:9)

After that, it said in verse 16 –

“Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows.” (verse 1:16)

Despite having been thrown over, and even though the sailors had come to know Yehovah, Jonah was not abandoned by Him. He remained the God of Jonah. It is a continued picture of Israel. They may have been cast away from the Lord, but the Lord is still their God – He and no other.

And in picture, we also see Christ, who called out – “My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?” In His humanity He may have been forsaken while bearing the sin of man, but His God is still His God. A separation existed, but the relationship did not cease.

Just as the prodigal son had come to his senses and returned to his father, Jonah likewise now returns to his God. The pattern is given for us to learn from. Israel is Israel, and they are the people of the Lord, whether they are in exile or in a restored relationship.

1 (con't) **from the fish's belly.**

*mi'me-ah ha'dagah* – “from inward parts [of] the fish.” As I said, the prayer comes from the belly of the fish. He understood that the fish was, in fact, his deliverer. This is the second and last time that the *me-eh*, or internal inward parts, are mentioned in Jonah, and it is also the last time they are mentioned in the Bible.

The word, in fact, means “inward parts,” but it has two other uses as well. It is used as a metaphor for the heart, spirit, and emotions of a person, or even of God. And thirdly, it is used to speak of the reproductive organs of either a male or a female. In Ruth 1, it is used when speaking of the womb of Naomi.

This is the only time it is used of a creature, and so the use of the word is not without significance. The fish is the deliverer, and thus is a symbol of Christ. There is Jesus the Man, and there is Christ of God. And so each aspect of this word is seen. There are the literal inward parts; there is the emotion of what has occurred in the Lord through the work of Christ, and there is the new life which issues from the work of the Deliverer – there in the womb of life.

This is not a stretch. Jonah, typical of Jesus, will acknowledge that he was in the pit, meaning death, just as Jesus was. And so all of what is occurring to Jonah is given to us to understand the greater work of Christ. As he also is a picture of the Jewish people, the same three concepts can also be applied to them.

The emotions of their plight, the new birth they receive in Christ – all of it is tied up in what happens to Jonah. One word, carefully placed into the account, is given to show us so very much of what is going on in redemptive history.

As a curiosity for you, the word “fish” in verse 1:17 was *dag*, a male fish. Here in verse 2:1 it is *dagah*, a female fish. The speculation on the reason for this is almost endless. Some is so fanciful that it is absurd. One guy named Iz-khakis said that –

“Jonah was first swallowed by a male fish, and that because he did not pray in it, he was vomited up and swallowed by a female one, in which his situation was more confined, and that from this circumstance he was driven to prayer.” (from John Lange).

It may be stupid, but other people just count it up to a scribal error which is just as stupid. The Lord put this in the word for a reason, just as He did with gender discords elsewhere in the Bible. The book of Ruth has several. Therefore, there must be something which is being relayed to us about what has happened to Jonah.

In the Bible, wisdom is personified as a female. Instruction, or *torah*, is feminine as well. Therefore, the belly of the fish is being personified as a place of wisdom and instruction. And this is so. Jonah is said to have prayed “out of the fish’s belly” after his death in the sea. The fish is now equated to the place where knowledge is being conveyed concerning the process of redemption.

This seems logical, because the next time that the word “fish” is used, it will again be in the masculine. The fish that swallowed him is the same fish that will vomit him out – a male fish. But the belly of the fish here is being equated with knowledge concerning God’s redemptive workings.

Before we depart this verse, let us look at one final treasure. Jonah is said to have prayed out of the fish’s belly. It is in his true Deliverer – meaning the Lord – that he has found comfort. And it is to Him that he gives his words of prayer and thanksgiving.

What would seem like an odd place to praise God, becomes rather *the* place to praise God. And there is a lesson here which is confirmed by the actions of Paul and Silas after they were beaten by the magistrates in Philippi and then thrown into prison –

“But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” Acts 16:25

The place where one is, and the situation that one finds himself in, is *the* place to pray to and praise the Lord. There is every reason to believe the miraculous account of Jonah, even to the last detail. And there is no reason to assume that “out of the belly of the fish” meant that he praised him, not *after* being in the belly of the fish, but *while* being in the belly of the fish.

## **<sup>2</sup>And he said:**

*va’yomer* – “And said.” The words which are recorded in this prayer follow very closely after the words of portions of several psalms. Because of this, liberal scholars immediately dismiss the account as fiction, and they point to it as a later writing which was simply attributed to the prophet Jonah.

There is no more reason to assume that, than there is that the words of the psalms merely match the thoughts and expressions of Jonah. He was a prophet of Israel, and he would have been well aware of the words of the psalms which were already written. The psalms which came later then would have built upon his words now.

Concerning the already written psalms, his mind would be filled with them, just as ours are when we face trials or triumphs. How many countless people, while pondering their plight have uttered the words, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” And how many people, having seen the majesty of God’s handiwork, then proclaimed, “Great *is* the Lord, and greatly to be praised.”

When I left to go around the US in 2010, my father wrote me a letter. It was obviously a moving time in his life, and so in it, he made several references to Scripture – something I had never seen him do before. Why liberal scholars are so gross in their analysis of the Bible is beyond me, but the word “peanutheaditis” quickly comes to mind. Jonah’s state of mind called for the word of God which was already instilled in him. And so, in turn, his words utter forth that same precious word.

His words of the next verses follow a pattern which is divided into three separate parts. Each part has a danger followed by a deliverance, or a set need and its accompanying help. Each builds upon the next to a crescendo of spiritual emotion issuing forth in praise. And each goes from hope to deliverance to thanksgiving.

As we go through this prayer, we have to not make the fundamental mistake of almost every scholar and commentary available. They almost unanimously equate the following words with the time while in the belly of the fish. This is in-correct.

Verse 1 shows us that the prayer is made from the belly of the fish, and therefore it is the place of deliverance and safety, not the place of distress and affliction. In other words, the words from the fish’s belly reflect his condition *before* entering, not after. This is the place of wisdom and instruction which followed after the ordeal. The time in the sea equates to Jesus’ time on the cross.

<sup>2</sup> (con’t) **“I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction,**

*qarati mits-a-rah li el Yehovah* – “I cried out of the affliction to me unto Yehovah.” Jonah’s life was given up for dead. His affliction was so great that there was no option left but to call out to the Lord. His strength had failed and he could not save himself. In like manner, Christ cried out in His *tsarah*, or affliction –

“Be not far from Me,  
For trouble *is* near;  
For *there is* none to help.” Psalm 22:11

<sup>2</sup> (con’t) **And He answered me.**

*va’yaa-neni* – “And He answered me.” The same word is used by Jesus concerning God’s having answered the cry of His affliction –

“Save Me from the lion’s mouth  
And from the horns of the wild oxen!

You have answered Me.” Psalm 22:21

Each step, we are seeing insights into the trial of Christ, and the relief from that trial. For Jonah now, the words acknowledge that in his affliction, the Lord answered him. At the time of the cry, he didn’t know it, only later. Thus he reverts back to his plight once again with the words...

<sup>2</sup> (con’t) **“Out of the belly of Sheol I cried,**

*mi’beten sheol shivati* – “from womb [of] Sheol I cried.” These words explain what his affliction is. He wasn’t afflicted with boils, nor was he afflicted by enemies. Rather, he was afflicted with death itself. It says that he cried out from Sheol. Sheol is variously translated as “the pit,” “the grave,” and even “hell.” It is the place of the dead.

It is a moot point to speculate as to whether Jonah literally died, or if he is calling out as psalmists did, reflecting that their lives were otherwise ended without the Lord’s immediate intervention. If Jonah actually died in the sea, the fish swallowing him could have resuscitated him.



If so, he would make an exact picture of Christ. If not, and if he was only at the gates of death with no hope but death, it doesn't change the situation for him at all. I say this because it is quite fashionable to hear people dogmatically state and argue that Jonah died. It is silly to go to such extremes.

The word used in this clause for "cried" is not the same as at the beginning of the verse. This word is *shava*. It is not just a simple calling out, but a cry for help. It comes from a primitive root meaning to be free, but it is used only causatively and reflexively.

It is calling out for freedom from plight and thus for help. There was a need which could not be met in any other possible way, and so he cried out for help. This clause is prophetically fulfilled in Christ as is evidenced from the words of the 30<sup>th</sup> Psalm –

"O Lord, You brought my soul up from the grave;  
You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit." Psalm 30:3

The teaching which says that what occurred with Jonah was a literal death and resurrection as an advanced sign to Israel that the Messiah would die and then resurrect in fulfillment of the picture is false. The Jews of Jesus' time were *not expecting* the death and resurrection of their Messiah, and the Jews of today are not expecting it of the messiah they believe will deliver them. David's words of Psalm 86:13 say –

"For great *is* Your mercy toward me,  
And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol."

Nobody claims that David was actually dead and then came back to life. It was understood that the symbolism speaks of a person who has been delivered from a violent mob that otherwise would have sent him to Sheol. It is perfectly in line with what Jonah is saying in his prayer.

Other passages in the Old Testament make the same claim as well, Isaiah for example. So to try to link the “sign of Jonah” to a prior understanding of a resurrection is false. Only after Christ’s work do we come to realize that the symbolism in Jonah points to death and resurrection.

<sup>2</sup> (con’t) ***And You heard my voice.***

*shamata qoli* – “...heard my voice” There is no “and” at the beginning of this clause in the Hebrew. Thus, it sets it off with a striking tone of contrast. There was a cry from the belly of hell itself, and yet, even from there his voice was heard. Whatever Jonah thought about fleeing from the Lord, he found that the words of the psalm are literally true –

“Where can I go from Your Spirit?

Or where can I flee from Your presence?

<sup>8</sup> If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there;

If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there.*” Psalm 139:7, 8

Even in the pit of Sheol itself, the Lord is available. Even death cannot separate us from our Creator. Several psalms closely match the words of this verse. One is the 18<sup>th</sup> Psalm which was written by David, and which Jonah would have been aware of. They each point to a prophetic fulfillment in Christ –

“The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me;

The snares of death confronted me.

In my distress I called upon the Lord,  
And cried out to my God;  
He heard my voice from His temple,  
And my cry came before Him, *even* to His ears.” Psalm 18:5, 6

The 120<sup>th</sup> Psalm also closely matches Jonah’s words –

“In my distress I cried to the Lord,  
And He heard me.” Psalm 120:1

As we move on, verse 3, like verse 5 and part of verse 6, will provide us with a vivid description of the danger and distress which surrounded Jonah. It thus details the circumstances which lead up to the words of verse 2.

*Where can we find relief from the storm?*

*The waves rage and the breakers crash all around*

*Relieve us, O God, take away the harm*

*Lest the waters overwhelm and we are drowned*

*You are our hope, You – O Lord our God*

*There is no other; our eyes are on You*

*Save us from this ocean, so deep and so broad*

*This is our cry; grant us life anew*

*And we will bring You offerings of thanks and praise*

*We will come into Your temple; hearts of joy filling us*

*Grant us life anew; grant us eternal days*

*We call out for salvation; we call out for Jesus*

## **II. Hope in the Lord (verses 3 & 4)**

**<sup>3</sup> For You cast me into the deep,**

*va'tash-likeni metsulah* – “And You had cast me into the deep.” The word for “cast” here is not the same as that used several times in chapter 1 which was translated as “threw.” The sailors had thrown Jonah in the sea, but it is the Lord who had cast him into the deep. They were but the instrumental cause of Jonah’s sentence, the Lord was, however, the Principle cause.

Surprisingly, the word for “deep” here was first used concerning the Egyptians who were cast into the depths of the Red Sea –

“Pharaoh’s chariots and his army He has cast into the sea;

His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.

<sup>5</sup>The depths have covered them;

They sank to the bottom like a stone.” Exodus 15:4, 5

It is then something that Jonah must have considered. His fate was the same as those who came against Israel itself. Thus, his deliverance is one of mercy, not because it was deserved. We are learning from the account through the choice of the words, that all are under the same sentence because of sin, but the Lord demonstrates mercy upon whom He will show mercy.

The words of this clause reflect the same state which David faced, and thus which prophetically look forward to what Christ Himself faced –

“I sink in deep mire,  
Where *there is* no standing;  
I have come into deep waters,  
Where the floods overflow me.” Psalm 69:2

<sup>3</sup> (con’t) **Into the heart of the seas,**

*bilvav yammim* – “Into heart seas.” The heart, in this sense, is metaphorically the midst or center, just as we use it today. He was on a vessel in the open seas, and he was cast out into those seas. To him, there was no more hope of swimming to the west than there was to the east. And should he have gone south, it would have made no difference than if he had chosen north. In all directions, there was but water; only water.

To be left alone to die in such a state has got to be one of the most horrific deaths imaginable. The immensity of the open waters is beyond overwhelming. And possibly worse, there’s a greater uncertainty in the ocean. In the ocean, your legs simply dangle into the vast void...

“Tempting anything in sight,  
for a nibble or a bite.”

Jonah knew his time was up as he floundered in the great empty waste of the sea.

<sup>3</sup> (con’t) **And the floods surrounded me;**

*v’nahar yeso-veveni* – “And river compassed about me.” The river of the sea is its current. In the Mediterranean Sea, it sets from west to east. It then reaches the

coast of Syria and turns north. Even if he were to be carried back towards his beloved home, he would still most likely be swept north before reaching there. He was surrounded and without hope in the midst of the sea. The words of this clause and the previous one look to the work of Christ prevailing over both the seas and the rivers –

“But My faithfulness and My mercy *shall be* with him,  
And in My name his horn shall be exalted.

<sup>25</sup> Also I will set his hand over the sea,  
And his right hand over the rivers.

<sup>26</sup> He shall cry to Me, ‘You *are* my Father,  
My God, and the rock of my salvation.’” Psalm 89:24-26

<sup>3</sup> (con’t) **All Your billows and Your waves passed over me.**

*kal mish-barekha v’galekha alay abaru* – “...all your breakers and your waves over me passed.” As Jonah struggled to survive, the force of the ocean was too much. The *mishbar*, or breakers, are the waves which fold over themselves and descend in heavy billows of white foam. The force of them will easily push a swimmer under. The word comes from *shavar*, meaning “to break.”

The *gal*, or waves, comes from the word *galal*, meaning “to roll.” These would be the waves which would lift him on high and then drop him to their base, thus they are said, like the breakers, to pass over him. The same words are used in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Psalm –

“Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls;  
All Your waves and billows have gone over me.” Psalm 42:7

The swelling ocean of death which Christ faced was an overwhelming flood which carried Him down, and yet with it was carried the sin of man which is what brought Him to that calamitous state in the first place. He was willing to enter the sea of chaos and confusion in order to bring us safely to the shore of harmony, peace, and contentment. This was His confidence, just as the confident words of verse 4 were experienced by Jonah. In the next words, there is seen faith which triumphs over despondency...

**<sup>4</sup>Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight;**

*va'ani amari nigrashti mi-neged enekha* – “And I, I said I have been cast from before Your eyes.” The words here are remarkably similar to those in the 31<sup>st</sup> Psalm –

“For I said in my haste,  
'I am cut off from before Your eyes'” Psalm 31:22

To be cast out from before the eyes of the Lord is to be cast out of His favor. Jonah had been so cast to teach him a lesson. Christ had been so cast to save the souls of men. Jonah was cast into the sea of water, and Christ into the sea of chaos and death. Both acknowledged their plight, but they also knew that it was not to be the end. Jonah was given relief and a new chance at life in the form of a fish; Christ was raised by the power of God to eternal life...

**\*4 (fin) Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.'**

*akh osiph l'habit el hekal qad-shekha* – “Yet, again I will look toward temple Your holy.” The word he uses here, *akh*, is an adverb which means “surely.” It is a word intended to emphasize that which follows it, and is in contrast to that which precedes it. Understanding that, we can look at the two clauses again.

“And I said, I have been cast from before your eyes – SURELY – again I will look toward Your holy temple.”

Here in verse 4, between verses of doom, there is a glimmer of hope, even a certainty of it. He was a prophet and knew his commission. He also knew that God had a plan which he was to carry out. When he says, “Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple” there’s no reason to assume he was speaking of the resurrection or heaven.

Rather, he has made the logical deduction that because the Lord had sent the storm, and because the sailor’s lot pointed to him, God still intended to use him. There in the belly of the fish, clarity of the situation came through.

The same is true with Christ. He knew God’s plan, He faithfully carried it out, and He understood that He would again enter heaven’s holy temple upon completion of His mission. Jonah’s words are confident, and they are filled with a sense of anticipation. They are mirrored by the words of the 5<sup>th</sup> Psalm which ultimately point to the greater work of Christ –

“But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple.” Psalm 5:7

How often do we find ourselves in exactly the same position? When everything is chaos around us and it seems as if our heads are under water, we still have



moments of clarity where we remember that God really is in control and that He has a plan and a purpose that we haven't fully pieced together.

Just this week, the son of a girl I went to school with was murdered. And yet, she was able to write the following to all who see here Facebook page –

“I am devastated with the loss I am experiencing. I am numb! My faith in Jesus Christ is sustaining me and my Mom.”

Though she is surrounded by waves of anguish, she still retains clarity of thought because of the Lord. Christ has gone before us, and so we can be assured that what He has promised will come to pass. Let our hearts not be troubled in this world which is often filled with chaos and confusion.

**Closing Verse:** “In my distress I called upon the Lord,  
And cried out to my God;  
He heard my voice from His temple,  
And my cry came before Him, *even* to His ears.” Psalm 18:6

**Next Week:** Jonah 2:5-10 *There's only one way back to God, so climb aboard...*  
(Salvation is of the Lord) (6<sup>th</sup> Jonah Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean rages against you and is ready to swallow you up, He can send delivery to you in the most remarkable of ways. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

**Out of the Belly of Sheol**

Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God  
From the fish's belly; a place quite odd

And he said:

"I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction

And He answered me

"Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, hoping for fish-belly eviction

And You heard my voice, here in the depths of the sea

For You cast me into the deep

Into the heart of the seas where I was cast

And the floods surrounded me, as if me to keep

All Your billows and Your waves over me passed

Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight

Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple'

You shall relieve me from this plight

Lord God, we have all been caught in the sea of sin

The breakers and the waves have surrounded us

Surely, there seemed no hope; we were done in

And yet, Praise God! You sent Your Son Jesus

We thank You, O God for the ending of all strife

We thank You for Christ Jesus who has granted us new life

Hallelujah and Amen...