

Turn with me in your Bibles to Jonah chapter 2. As we come now to a transition point in the story of this prophet, it is helpful to remember what has happened just previous. At the end of chapter 1, as Jonah was going down into the depths of the sea, the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. Through all of chapter 2 up til this point we have Jonah's prayer in the bellow of the fish, his experience of what he had just gone through, and his hope of deliverance in the Lord. Finally, the time of the fulfillment of that hope has come. This is where we will pick up our reading this morning. So give your attention now to the reading of God's holy Word from chapter chapter 2 verse 10.

Read Jonah 2:10

Pray

As we come to the text this Lord's Day it is important to remember that each Lord's Day we are gathered together to remember the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That is the point of the Lord's Day. We don't observe man-made holidays like easter because we have the fullness, the substance, the greatest of what that holiday supposedly celebrates, and we are to celebrate it 52 times a year, each and every Lord's Day. You may be thinking to yourself, how can we be focusing on the resurrection of Christ when we are in this Old Testament book looking at the life of the prophet Jonah. It is because what we have here is not simply a story about Jonah, but is an example of the marvelous work of God in bringing about a miraculous resurrection. Yes, a resurrection of Jonah, but that resurrection is not particularly the focus of our time together this afternoon. No, that resurrection of Jonah points us to the greater than Jonah, to the resurrection of Christ Jesus our Lord. That is the focus of this one simple very short verse which we are looking at. That is the focus of the man Jonah himself. That is the focus of his life and ministry. And that is the focus of his resurrection. So often we can forget that the entirety of Scripture is about Christ, and not just the New Testament. In Luke 24, following His resurrection, we see Christ walking on the road to Emmaus with

two men who had been disciples of his. In verses 25-27 we read, "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Friends this is how we must approach the Bible, that everything written in it is concerning Christ. Here in the story of Jonah we know for certain that this is of Christ for He specifically says it is. And so it is with that in mind that we come to consider Jonah's resurrection. And we will do so by first, considering the miracle of Jonah's resurrection; and next, the divine interpretation of Jonah's resurrection.

First, let us consider the miracle of Jonah's resurrection. We see first of all the miraculous nature of it in the fact that after three days Jonah is still alive in the belly of this fish. It is nothing short of a miracle that this is the case. Think about it for a second. How is it that the stomach acid of this great fish has done absolutely no damage to the body of this prophet? How is it that though he be in the belly of the fish for three days he has not been deprived of air which is necessary for life? How is it that the great fish which surely would have swallowed water over those three days has not caused Jonah to drown while inside of its belly? Friends, there is no scientific explanation for any of this. There is no means of preservation which nature can give explanation for in this situation. It can only be the miraculous hand of the Lord causing these things to come about. And Jonah recognizes this. Remember what we saw last week in his prayer in verse 6, "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God." He recognizes that it is the lord who brings about this miraculous preservation of his life, both body and soul, which in the belly of this great fish.

We also see the miraculous nature of Jonah's resurrection in the actual account of what took place. We read "And the Lord spake

unto the fish...” It is an instance of God’s power over all the creatures. God spoke to the fish, gave it orders to return Jonah, as before He had given it orders to receive him. God speaks to other creatures, and it is done; they are all His ready obedient servants. But to man He speaks once, even twice, and man doesn’t listen, he gives no regard to it, he turns a deaf ear to what God says. It is the same word here that is used in Genesis chapter 1, “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” God is commanding, and creation is responding. It is the very same voice which commanded the fish to first swallow up Jonah, the very same voice which had called Jonah to this prophetic office and to the people of Nineveh, which now commands this great fish to release its prisoner and set him free. How crazy is it that the fish who cannot even understand actual speech obeys the Lord so readily when we are so often like Jonah and unwilling to heed the commands of the Lord. The wind and the waves hear the voice of their master and obey, as we saw in chapter 1 when Jonah was cast into the sea and the storm ceased. Here, the animals hearken to the word of God when He speaks to them. Friends, when God speaks the whole of creation stands at attention and listens and obeys. So ought we.

It’s also miraculous in that the great fish “vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.” It spewed the prophet forth as though it had no other option than to release him, because in reality it did have no other option. The sovereign hand of the Lord was what held Jonah within the confines of the belly of the fish, and it was the sovereign hand of the Lord which released Jonah from that cramped prison. And he was vomited out upon the dry land. This is so important to see here, but oftentimes we just breeze right past it. The command of God required this or else it would not have been a deliverance or a resurrection. Had Jonah been cast out of the fish’s belly any where else in the sea he had been drowned, but now that which was his danger becomes his safety, a ship designed to bring him to land, when before it had seemed to be his grave. This is incredible. And we don’t know exactly where it is that Jonah was vomited onto the dry land, but it would be an educated guess to assume it was likely

somewhere along the shore near to Nineveh, because we get no indication that following this event he would have had to travel a great distance to make it to that great city.

But you may be thinking how can this be a resurrection. I even said it myself that Jonah was kept alive in the belly of the fish. So how can this be a resurrection? It is because what we have here is a metaphorical resurrection. The language that is used to speak of this incident is that of death, burial, and resurrection. And so we are presented with this in order to read it as a resurrection account. “And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me... The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head... I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God... And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.” His death, seen in being cast into the sea with the billows and waves passing over him and the weeds wrapping about his head. His burial, seen in him going down to the bottoms of the mountains and the earth’s bars being about him, even being in the belly of hell, sheol, the grave. And his resurrection, seen in the Lord bringing up his life from corruption and causing the great fish to vomit him upon the dry land.

Here Calvin writes, “But as this deliverance of Jonah is an image of the resurrection, this is an extraordinary passage, and worthy of being especially noticed; for the Holy Spirit carries our minds to that power by which the world was formed and is still wonderfully preserved. That we may then, without hesitation and doubt, be convinced of the restoration which God promises to us, let us remember that the world was by him created out of nothing by his word and bidding, and is still thus sustained. But if this general

truth is not sufficient, let this history of Jonah come to our minds, – that God commanded a fish to cast forth Jonah: for how was it that Jonah escaped safe and was delivered? Even because it so pleased God, because the Lord commanded; and this word at this day retains the same efficacy. By that power then, by which he works all things, we also shall one day be raised up from the dead.” Friends, Jonah was, in the judgment, and by the hand of God, put to death and brought to life again. How could this be anything other than a resurrection story, one that is miraculous.

And Jonah’s resurrection is given a divine interpretation in Matthew 12:38-41, “Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 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.” Jonah came forth from the grave by the power of the living God, and so it was that Christ came forth from the grave by the power of the living God. You have Jonah on one hand and the Lord Jesus Christ on the other, the type and the antitype, for they were both dead, buried for three days and three nights, and risen forth from the grave. Matthew Henry says this is “a type and figure of Christ’s resurrection. He died and was buried, to lay in the grave, as Jonah did, three days and three nights, a prisoner for our debt; but the third day he came forth, as Jonah did, by his messengers to preach repentance, and remission of sins, even to the Gentiles. And thus was another scripture fulfilled, After two days he will receive us, and the third day he will raise us up, Hos. 6:2. The earth trembled as if full of her burden, as the fish was of Jonah.”

We see in both the clear theme, hell and corruption. These are the terms by which Jonah designates his penalty — his penalty of

three days and three nights in the fish's belly. And in what way does the Lord Jesus Christ of man speak in the Spirit concerning His endurance of three days and three nights in the heart of the earth? "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psalm 16:10). It is the language of burial and resurrection in both cases. From the vantage point of Scripture Jonah and Christ were in the same place, hell, sheol, hades, the grave. And we read in Acts 2:24 of Christ, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." It was not possible for Christ to be holden to death, to the grave. This is what we saw with Jonah and the fish, for it was not possible for the fish to keep Jonah within it's belly, the belly of hell, any longer than the determined amount of time the Lord had appointed. And just as the fish could not hold Jonah any longer, and so he was vomited upon the dry land, so too could the earth not hold Christ any longer, and so he was raised forth from the dead.

And so we see that the Lord Jesus chooses to speak of His own resurrection in the terms of Jonah. Matthew 12:40, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." You cannot deny this fact that Jonah prefigures and foreshadows the resurrection of Christ from the dead. So when we come to this text in Jonah 2:10 and we read, "And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land," what we have is a picture of the resurrection power of God brought to us by the Scriptures. This is not just a nice story that is given to us in the Bible. It's not just some bedtime story that we tell our children before we tuck them in at night. And most certainly it's not some Christian myth or fairytale that is just for our moral edification. Friends, this story is given to us in the Bible because it so plainly shows forth the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, it is in the shadows and types of Old Covenant figures; yet, it most definitely is plain when we consider it from the stance of illumination and divine

interpretation of the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament. We must understand that. This is why this story is here.

And when we are we are brought face to face with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ in the story of Jonah's resurrection, like Calvin said, we are brought face to face with our own resurrection. Friends, that is a wonderful thing. What is the hope of glory which we have in Christ? What is the hope with which we are willing and able to give up our very lives in the advancement of the Gospel, even in the face of our enemies? It is the resurrection that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Without it we have no hope. Hear the words of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Friends, this is our hope. This is our comfort. When we look at the story of Jonah being delivered from the belly of hell it ought to point us to Christ who Himself was raised from those depths. And if you are in Christ then you also will be resurrected with Him. I love what the late R.C. Sproul said, "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is useless and so is your faith. Don't give me this patronizing stuff about religion being good for the soul. If religion is based upon a false premise, if there's no corresponding reality to the hope that lies within us, then let's face it, our preaching's an exercise in futility, and the faith that we express is useless. It's useless if Christ isn't raised." But hear me now friends, Christ was raised, our preaching is not in vain, your faith is not in vain, and you too will be raised with Him in the last great day.

And if you are not in Christ, there is a resurrection reserved for you as well. You will not be raised with Christ incorruptible, but you will be raised corruptible and unto eternal damnation. Whereas Jonah was delivered from the belly of hell, and Christ proclaimed “thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption,” you will be left in the fiery pit being eternally punished for your sins against the Holy God. Your soul will be abandoned to hell if you die outside of Christ. So repent and believe the Gospel. Confess your sins for He is faithful and just to forgive you your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Commit yourself to Christ be united to Him. Only those who have been made partakers in His death and burial are made partakers in His resurrection. Come unto Christ. Be united to Him. Crucify yourself with Him, putting the old man of sin and corruption to death, and be raised in newness of life with Christ, and you too will get to experience the hope of that glorious resurrection which is to come.

Brothers and sisters, we cannot lose sight of the bigger story of all of Scripture. Yes, Jonah is given to us as an example for us to look to, to learn from, and in some instances to follow. But he is still an imperfect example. Yes, look at Jonah, but look past Jonah to that whom he points us to. Look to Christ, that perfect example. He is your God. He is your Savior. He is your resurrection and life. Fix your eyes on Christ, the greater than Jonah who is here.