

Jonah Chapter 2

Verses 1-9: Jonah's prayer is poetic in form and has three movements, each beginning with a rehearsal of the prophet's impossible situation, and each culminating in an expression of his faith in spite of his impossible circumstances. The first movement is (in verses 2-4). The second movement is (in verses 5-6) and the third movement is (in verses 7-9).

Jonah acknowledged God's sovereignty (verses 1-3), and submitted to it (verses 4-9).

Jonah 2:1 "Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,"

"Then Jonah prayed": When he was in the fish's belly.

It may be asked, "How could Jonah either pray or breathe in the stomach of the fish?" Very easily, if God so willed it. And let the reader keep this constantly in view; the whole is a miracle, from Jonah's having been swallowed by the fish till he was cast ashore.

It was God that had prepared the great fish. It was the Lord that spake to the fish, and caused it to vomit Jonah upon the dry land. All of this is a miracle.

It is such a shame that we like Jonah; wait until we are in dire circumstances, before we cry out to God. I am sure this is the most urgent prayer that Jonah has ever prayed. Notice, God is still Jonah's God, even while he is in this peril.

Jonah 2:2 "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."

"Out of the belly of hell": The phrase does not necessarily indicate that Jonah actually died. "Sheol" frequently has a hyperbolic meaning in contexts where it denotes a catastrophic condition near death (Psalm 30:3). Later Jonah expressed praise for his deliverance "from the pit" (verse 6), speaking of his escape from certain death.

I am sure that being in this fish's belly seemed like hell to Jonah. Jesus preached while He was in hell during the three days. I doubt seriously that Jonah felt so confident that he would return to the earth. God had to do this to get Jonah in a position to obey His request.

Notice, the word "cried". This means that the prayer was like a pleading with God to forgive him, and remove him from this fish. The best statement in the verse above is "and He heard me". We are never so far down that God will not hear our earnest prayer. "Hell" is the word "Sheol", which means hades, or the world of the dead. Jonah thought himself to be as good as dead.

Jonah 2:3 "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."

In describing his watery experience, Jonah acknowledged that his circumstances were judgment from the Lord.

Jonah describes what happened to him in the sea. In the natural, there would have been no way to be saved from the angry sea. Jonah does recognize that even the waves belong to God.

Jonah 2:4 "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple."

"I am cast out of thy sight": (In 1:3), Jonah ran from the Lord's presence. Here he realizes that the Lord has temporarily expelled him.

Jonah was very much like many of us. He had looked away from the temple, until he got into a problem that he could not fix. Then, he cries to God for His help. He was desperate at this point. When he first was cast into the sea, he thought God had killed him for his disobedience. Hope sprang up in Jonah, when he looked again to God.

Jonah 2:5 "The waters compassed me about, [even] to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head."

"Even to the soul": This describes Jonah's total person, both physically and spiritually (verse 7).

This reminds me of an old song that says, "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore". Jonah, too, was sinking in the sin of his own making. He was "tangled in weeds", which symbolize the cares of this world. He was a victim of his own making. There is no way to come out of this, or life's other entanglements, without God. He is the only hope.

Jonah 2:6 "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."

"I went down to the bottom of the mountains": Which are in the midst of the sea, whither the fish carried him, and where the waters are deep. Or the bottom of rocks and promontories on the shore of the sea. And such vast rocks hanging over the sea, whose bottoms were in it, it seems are on the shore of Joppa, near to which Jonah was cast into the sea, as Egesippus relates.

"The earth with her bars was about me for ever": That is, the earth with its cliffs and rocks on the seashore, which are as bars to the sea, that it cannot overflow it. These were such bars to Jonah, that could he have got clear of the fish's belly, and attempted to swim to shore, he could never get to it, or over these bars, the rocks and cliffs, which were so steep and high.

"Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God": Notwithstanding these difficulties, which were insuperable by human power, and these seeming impossibilities of deliverance. Yet the Lord brought him out of the fish's belly, as out of a grave.

The pit of corruption, and where he must otherwise have lain and rotted, and freed his soul from those terrors which would have destroyed him. And by this also we learn, that this form of words

was composed after he came to dry land. Herein likewise he was a type of Christ, who, though laid in the grave, was not left there so long as to see corruption (Psalm 16:10).

This was no small body of water. It appeared to Jonah, that he was locked in this watery grave with no way he could return to life, or to the earth. He was helpless and alone in the bottom of the sea. He felt that the fish that swallowed him would be his grave forever. He was in the stomach of this fish.

This would be corruption to the utmost. Perhaps, he is speaking of the corruption of his own life. Only God can reach down and bring any of us up from this type of corruption. He suddenly realizes the omnipotence of the LORD his God.

Jonah 2:7 "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple."

"When my soul fainted": When Jonah had given up all hope of life.

"My prayer came in unto thee": Here prayer is personified, and is represented as a messenger going from the distressed, and entering into the temple of God, and standing before him. This is a very fine and delicate image. This clause is one of those which I suppose the prophet to have added when he penned this prayer.

At the time this was written, the presence of God dwelled in the temple in Jerusalem over the mercy seat. When Jonah looked to the temple, he was looking to God. There was no hope in the natural for Jonah. He fainted from fear of death in the fish. God brought him hope. His remembering of the LORD caused God to hear his prayer.

Jonah 2:8 "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy."

"They that observe lying vanities": They that trust in idols, follow vain predictions, permit themselves to be influenced with foolish fears, so as to induce them to leave the path of obvious duty.

"Forsake their own mercy": In leaving the God who is the Fountain of mercy, they abandon that measure of mercy which he had treasured up for them.

This is no time for pride. He would humble himself before God at this point. To observe other gods or idols, will get you no help at all.

Psalms 146:5 "Happy [is he] that [hath] the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope [is] in the LORD his God:"

Psalms 33:18 "Behold, the eye of the LORD [is] upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy;"

Jonah 2:9 "But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay [that] that I have vowed. Salvation [is] of the LORD."

"I have vowed": Jonah found himself in the same position as the mariners: offering sacrifices and making vows (1:16). In light of 3:1-4, Jonah's vow could well have been to carry out God's ministry will for him by preaching in Nineveh (Psalms 50:14; 66:13-14).

We see in this a repentant heart. Jonah has nothing to sacrifice but his praise.

Hebrews 13:15 "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of [our] lips giving thanks to his name."

Salvation is of the LORD.

Acts 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Ephesians 2:8 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God:"

Jonah knows that his only hope is in God.

Jonah 2:10 "And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry [land]."

"The LORD spake": Just as God calls the stars by name (Isa. 40:26; Psalm 147:4), so He speaks to His creation in the animal world (Num. 22:28-30). Most likely, Jonah was vomited upon the shore near Joppa.

This is undoubtedly the most humbling experience you could have. God has saved his life, and in the process taught him obedience. He is saved, because the fish obeyed God and spit him up.

Jonah Chapter 2 Questions

1. Where was Jonah called to go?
2. Jonah prayed unto the LORD out of the _____ of the fish.
3. What is a shame about our prayer life?
4. The author believes this to be the most _____ prayer he had ever prayed.
5. Where did Jonah say he was in verse 2?
6. Why had God allowed this to happen to Jonah?

7. How do we know Jonah was pleading in his prayer?
8. What is the best statement in verse 2?
9. What does "hell", or "Sheol", in this verse, mean?
10. What is Jonah saying in verse 3?
11. What was meant by Jonah looking to the temple?
12. Jonah was sinking in the sin of his own _____.
13. What did the "tangled weeds" symbolize?
14. What determination did Jonah make, when he was in the depth of the sea?
15. What did he believe would be his grave forever?
16. When did he remember the LORD?
17. What sacrifice did he make to God?
18. Salvation is of the _____.
19. When the LORD spoke to the fish, what did it do?
20. God has saved his life, and in the process taught him _____.