

Jonah

Note that Chapter 1 ends with “. . . Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights.” This was “the sign of the prophet Jonah” referred to by the Lord Jesus. See Matthew 12, verses 39 – 41. This need not mean 72 hours, since any part of a day or night can be considered whole in Old Testament reckoning. 49 hours would be adequate to meet a literal interpretation of the expression. Jonah was kept by God to fulfil his appointed purpose.

Chapter 2 - “Praying” :-

There is no record of Jonah turning to prayer in Chapter 1 although the pagan sailors “each cried out to his own god”. It is not until the beginning of Chapter 2 that Jonah in his extremity calls to the Lord. Note that the prayer is in the first person singular and the past tense. Jonah recorded it after the event.

The cross references in my Bible link this prayer of Jonah with at least 24 quotes from the Book of Psalms. We know that some of the Psalms recognise King David as their author. Many others probably date from the worship in Solomon’s temple. Others may have been used even earlier in Tabernacle worship or at the Passover feast. It should be no surprise then that Jonah should know, and turn to the Psalms, for reassurance and hope in a desperate situation.

The Prayer :- Read Jonah chapter 2.

Verse 2 – Is an affirmation of the Lord’s goodness and response to prayer! Read John 14, verses 12 – 14.

Verses 3 – 6 are a description of the hopelessness Jonah felt as he went overboard!

As someone who does not travel well by sea I can sympathise. I have been on channel crossings when the ferry has been “taking it green” with seas coming right over the decks. I am like Jonah, in my bunk with my head down! I cannot imagine (and I do not want to) what it would be like to be thrown overboard in those conditions: verses 3 – 5 are a graphic description of what Jonah felt. It was the end of everything. No more Temple worship (verse 4) – The Temple at Jerusalem was regarded as “the House of God” for the worshippers of the one true God. Remember that after the reign of Solomon the kingdom divided into Judah in the south and Israel in the north. The Golden Calves set up by Jeroboam at the sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel in the northern kingdom (1 Kings 12, verses 25 – 31) were seen by the prophets as idols. Jonah was from Israel, the northern kingdom.

Jonah wanted to flee from the presence of the Lord – he got his wish (verse 4) and didn’t like it! These verses could be his prayer as he sank down into the depths. “*The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; the seaweed was wrapped around my head. To the roots of the mountains I sank down.*” He felt that he was sinking deep into the Pit, the place of the dead.

His cry came to the Lord God “*from the depths of the grave (Sheol)*” (verse 2). And the Lord God heard him!

Verse 7 comes as Jonah in his extremity remembers the Lord! Just as he was about to become unconscious he realised that the Lord was listening in His heavenly temple – not the Temple in Jerusalem. It does not matter where we are or what situation we are in, God our heavenly Father can and will hear our cry of distress.

Verses 8 -9 Even before his physical deliverance Jonah recognised that he owed everything, past present and future to God. “*What I have vowed, I will make good*”.

With his cry “*Salvation comes from the Lord!*” “*. . . the Lord commanded the fish and it vomited out Jonah on to dry land.*”

Further Study – a list of Psalms for cross reference:- see page 2.

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- Jonah 2, verse 1 – Psalm 130, verses 1-2
- Jonah 2, verse 2 – Psalm 18, verses 4 – 6: Psalm 22, verse 24: Psalm 120, verse 1: Psalm 61, verse 2: Psalm 86, verse 13: Psalm 88, verses 1 – 7.
- Jonah 2, verse 3 – Psalm 69, verses 1 – 2 and 14 – 15: Psalm 42, verse 7.
- Jonah 2, verse 4 – Psalm 31, verse 22: Psalm 5, verse 7.
- Jonah 2, verse 5 – Psalm 69, verses 1 – 2.
- Jonah 2, verse 6 – Psalm 18, verse 5: Psalm 116, verse 3: Psalm 16, verse 10: Psalm 30, verse 3.
- Jonah 2, verse 7 – Psalm 142, verse 3: Psalm 77, verses 8 – 11: Psalm 143, verse 5: Psalm 18, verse 6: Psalm 11, verse 4: Psalm 65, verse 4.
- Jonah 2, verse 8 – Psalm 31, verse 6.
- Jonah 2, verse 9 – Psalm 50 verses 14 and 23: Psalm 3, verse 8.

And one of my favourite Psalms – 107, verses 22 – 32!