



# Jonah

*A Verse-By-Verse Study*

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## JONAH 1:1-3 (FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD)

Most of us have either read the book of Jonah, or we're at least familiar with the remarkable aspects of the book. The first question we have to ask is, "Is this story literally true?" The answer is "Yes, we are to accept it as such." It is to be taken as a literal and historical account of what occurred.

There is no hint in the Bible that it is to be taken as an allegory or a myth, although parts of it can be applied allegorically to events later in redemptive history. Jesus makes this perfectly clear. The person Jonah is mentioned 19 times in the Old Testament, once in the book of 2 Kings, and 18 times in this book.

That he was mentioned in 2 Kings, establishes the fact that he was as real as any other figure mentioned in the Bible. There it records this, which occurred during the reign of Jeroboam, king of Israel –

"In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, became king in Samaria, *and reigned* forty-one years.<sup>24</sup> And he did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin.<sup>25</sup> He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amitai, the prophet who *was* from Gath Hepher." 2 Kings 14:23-25

In these three verses, six individuals are named, six locations are named, and a precise dating is given. Therefore, Jonah is to be considered a real person according to judicial law which states that

"Every document, apparently ancient, coming from the proper repository or custody, and bearing on its face no evident marks of forgery, the law presumes to be genuine, and devolves on the opposing party the burden of proving it to be otherwise." Simon Greenleaf

The record meets these requirements and it thus establishes Jonah as a true historical figure. Further, Jonah and his account, including the remarkable aspect of his time in the belly of the great fish, is referred to by Jesus nine times in seven verses of the books of Matthew and Luke.

Therefore, to question the account of Jonah in the Old Testament as literal and historical, is to then question the integrity of the Lord Jesus and the word of God itself. And so, with the exception of some flowery verses in his prayer which match those of the psalms and are therefore probably not literal, but rather applied to his mood at the time, there is no excuse that the account should not be taken as having actually occurred. The answer again is, "Yes, we are to accept the story of Jonah as literal, historical, and true."

As we have noted and will see again as the verses begin, Jonah was the son of Amitai. He was from Gath Hepher which was located within the tribe of Zebulun in Israel, and his prophetic office occurred during the reign of Jeroboam the son of Joash.

This means that he was a prophet just after Elisha and just before Amos and Hosea. He was called to preach repentance to the people of Nineveh. This was somewhere between 793-753 B.C.

Nineveh was a great city, taking three days to walk around, and it was the capitol of Assyria which is in current day Iraq. This was the same people who later conquered and took into exile the northern tribes of Israel. It's also the same people who later came against the southern tribe of Judah. When they surrounded Jerusalem, the Angel of the Lord killed 185,000 in a single night.

The book is written in the form of a third-person narrative and it's also written in a chronological order. Along with Ruth, several passages of Isaiah, and a few other examples interspersed throughout the Old Testament writings, Jonah tells us that God's love and purposes are not only for the Jewish people, but all the people of

the world who call on the name of the Lord. Within the book itself are an amazing number of chiasms. They can be reviewed at [HERE](#) (link to PDF)

There is more to this book than that though. What occurs in Nineveh will be used by the Lord as a valid excuse for judgment against His own people, showing that He is perfectly just and fair in what occurs to them for their willful disobedience towards Him.

The prophecies of the book only concern Nineveh. Israel is never mentioned in it in this regard. The other prophets mention either Israel the land, or Israel the people, in some way concerning their prophetic utterances, but Jonah does not. This then makes the book both unique and a tacit rebuke against them.

The actions of the pagan people of Nineveh, from the greatest to the least, are set in contrast to those of Israel. From the first call for them to repent, the people hurriedly and decidedly did so. On the other hand, the prophets' call for Israel to repent went on year after year and generation after generation.

The mouths of countless prophets, both those who are recorded in the Bible and many others who are not, called to the people to repent, and they failed to do so. Instead, they willfully and constantly turned their necks to the Lord, and they trampled His glory underfoot, even with relish as they did so.

They, the people of Israel, were the stewards of God's oracles and His law. They gloried in this fact, and they wore it as if it were a cloak of honor to them. But they could not see that the grace that they received under the law, which set them apart as a people, was also intended for the Gentile people of the world.

Instead, they stood opposed to this fact. The story of Jonah will be used as a testimony against them by the Lord Jesus, and it will find its fulfillment during the their second exile, which is the time of the Gentile-led church age. This is witnessed in the words of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2 –

"For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they *did* from the Judeans,<sup>15</sup> who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men,<sup>16</sup> forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up *the measure of* their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost." 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16

Israel was supposed to be a light to the nations, showing them the nature, character, and expectations of the true God. But instead, they turned inwards, treating the Lord in their midst as a badge of righteousness which was because of who they were in relation to Him, not who He was in relation to them. They failed to see the need for imputed righteousness. As John Darby says concerning the book of Jonah –

"Israel failed even in maintaining their own faithfulness, and consequently therefore in that which was the only means of making the world, as such, to understand the true character of God. Instead therefore of being made a blessing to others, they only involved them in the divine judgments that were to fall upon themselves." John Darby

Jonah the man will be used in a delightful number of ways to draw out the Lord's intent for Israel, for the Gentile nations, and for an understanding by all of the workings of God in the process of redemption. Jamieson-Fausset-Brown make the following observations about him –

"Jonah is himself a strange paradox: a prophet of God, and yet a runaway from God: a man drowned, and yet alive: a preacher of repentance, yet one that repines at repentance. Yet Jonah, saved from the jaws of death himself on repentance, was the fittest to give a hope to Nineveh, doomed though it was, of a merciful respite on its repentance. The patience and pity of God stand in striking contrast with the selfishness and hard-heartedness of man."

In addition to the literal and historical nature of the book, it is also a book of morals. These will be evidenced throughout the story. There are the fixed, firm, and eternal moral standards of God, and there are also the expected moral

standards of man in relation to God. These will be drawn out for us to see and consider.

And there is also the prophetic aspect of the book of Jonah. This is not merely realized in the immediate prophetic words of the Lord to and through Jonah, but also in the prophetic implications of the story itself. There is hidden in this story a marvelous prophecy which is realized in the later writings of the word of God.

Jonah proves himself to be a true prophet then, not only by the events which he participates in, but also in the greater prophecies which he and his actions point to.

Jonah is the 32<sup>nd</sup> book of the Bible, but chronologically, it comes before many of the earlier books in the Christian Canon. It is the 5th book of the 12 Minor Prophets and the 10<sup>th</sup> book of all 17 prophetic books. It is one of what are known as the “pre-exilic” books, because it occurs before the exiles of the people.

If Jonah wasn’t included in the Bible, we would have a much narrower Old Testament view of God’s intent for Gentiles. Ruth brings only one Gentile into the picture, and she became part of the Jewish people through marriage.

Isaiah refers to the Gentiles quite a few times, but these are interspersed throughout the book and could easily be dismissed by an unsympathetic audience. However, it’s very hard to imagine anyone seeing Jonah’s purpose in any other light than that God is merciful to the Gentile as well as the Jew. What else would be missing if Jonah wasn’t in the Bible? Well... a fairly fantastic and fun fish story!

**Text Verse:** “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*.

<sup>9</sup> If I take the wings of the morning,

And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

<sup>10</sup> Even there Your hand shall lead me,  
And Your right hand shall hold me.” Psalm 139:7-9

It is actually quite appropriate that we decided to come to this small book between our journey from Exodus to Leviticus. In it, we will see a contrast between the Pharaoh, king of Egypt and that of the king of Nineveh. Countless times in Exodus, we read the words, “Pharaoh’s heart grew hard,” or something very similar to that. Chapter 3 of Jonah will show us a complete contrast to this in the king of Nineveh.

One of the things we have to ask concerning this book is, “Why is Nineveh selected for this word from the Lord?” There were numerous countries around Israel that were wicked and which were to be destroyed for their wickedness. Why has the Lord selected this one nation to have a prophet go and proclaim repentance to them?

When looked at from this perspective, it is obvious that the Lord is going to use this account for moral purposes, prophetic purposes, and pictorial purposes of Christ to come. These, along with the historical account, will become an integral part of the word of God. They will help us to understand the redemptive process in a much greater way.

As far as an introduction, we could go on and on, almost endlessly, as to facts and figures, and dates and locations concerning the details of the book, but there are many resources which can be obtained to tell us those things. What we need to do now is to get into the word, because this is where the heart of God is to be found. Yes, it is there 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.

## The Word of the Lord

Now (Note: I will be reading each verse in Hebrew and giving my translation of it throughout the book) *vai'hi* – “and now.” In the Hebrew, the book opens with the words - *vai'hi debar Yehovah el yonah ben amittay lemor* – “And came the word of Yehovah unto Jonah son of Amittai saying...” A book beginning with the word “and” may seem out of place to us. It is as if we read the Bible and come to the book and find it is merely a continuation of the same story we have been reading.

And for all intents and purposes it is. God is revealing to us wonders, unfolding them in a logical sequence which may or may not be chronological, but they fit in a fashion as orderly as if they were chronological. It is like a string of precious pearls which are connected together. Each is separate, and yet they are united as one grand whole.

This same “And” begins the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Ezekiel, Esther, and Ezra. Beginning this way is certainly intended to show us an unraveling of a thought process which had already began elsewhere.

The beginning of the book with “And” shows that the writer is referencing in his own thoughts a set of national records, the oracles of God, which had begun before. He is willingly and consciously taking up this same thread of history and placing himself and his narrative into it. It is thus a claim to the divine inspiration which guides him, and which has guided all of the oracles of God to this point.

### <sup>1</sup> Now the word of the LORD came

*devar Yehovah* – “word Yehovah.” This same phrase is used 102 times in the Bible. All are in the Old Testament and it is used to indicate that the LORD is speaking something that was to be understood, often prophetically, and usually to be re-transmitted to others. The phrase is mentioned twice in the book of Jonah, once

now and once again after Jonah is taught a lesson about God's sovereignty and His purposeful will in His selected prophets.

Four of the other people who “the word of the Lord” came to are also key figures in other ways – Abraham, Samuel, David, and Solomon. Abraham is the father of the Hebrew nation. Samuel was the last Judge of Israel, and David and Solomon were both kings. Other than these four, the rest of them were common people called to be prophets, or those who were designated prophets from birth.

The “word of the Lord” coming to someone is an indication of the prophetic office. He has received either a revelation, an audible word, or an internal impulse which signifies the will of the Lord. As the Lord has come to him directly, it implies that he would then take the word of the Lord and act upon it.

#### **1 (con't) to Jonah**

*el yonah* – “unto Jonah.” Here, while still in this first verse, it says that “the word of the Lord came to Jonah.” From 2 Kings, we already know that he is a prophet, but if we didn’t know this, it is now made perfectly clear.

In order to understand the underlying thoughts which are being conveyed in the book, Jonah’s name needs a rather lengthy study. The name Jonah is agreed by all onomastic scholars to mean “Dove,” a symbol of peace. However, there is actually more to the name than simply “Dove.” To a Hebrew hearing the name and contemplating it, there would be the semblance of a pun to the name. It would mean “Dove,” but also a “Vexer.”

The root of the name Yonah is the word *yanah*. It is a word in the Bible which generally signifies doing wrong to someone. In Leviticus 19:33 we read this –

“And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not **mistreat** him.”

This then stands in opposition to the phrase “Love him as you love yourself” of the next verse of Leviticus. As you can see, the root is needed to understand Jonah’s actions as they unfold in the story. But there is still more. A word closely associated to *yonah* is *yayin*, or wine.

Without going into all of the amazing details of grapes to vineyards to wine, it will be enough to say that vineyards represent the cultural side of humanity. There are various vineyards which are various cultures. Vineyards produce grapes, or cultural expressions, and these are mixed together through a mashing process to produce wine.

In the Bible, wine then symbolizes the merging together of these expressions into a result. The thing that ought to happen can happen, symbolized by wine. It is as if an act of reasoning is occurring, and an intended result is realized. Solomon uses wine in Proverbs 9 as a result of the workings of Wisdom. It is as if we are “seeing wisdom as wine drawn from the grapes of observations and deductions” (Abarim). Wine then represents our reasoning and that which will change our mind. A perfect example of this is found in Jesus’ words of Matthew 9 –

“Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” Matthew 9:17

Jesus was speaking of the law and grace. The new wine is the new dispensation of grace to come. The old wine was the dispensation of the law. If one were to introduce the new concept into the old, it would not work because the two were incompatible. Only if one put the new wine in the new wineskin and received the new wine would the mind be changed.

Likewise, in His first miracle, Jesus changed water into wine. But he did it with water in jars used for purification. This was what was used to wash the feet. It wasn’t intended to be drunk. But in one stroke, He changed the water to wine, and the function of the jar and the applicability of its contents.

So what does all this have to do with the name Jonah? Well, the connection between the flight of the dove, and the effects of wine as taken from a biblical perspective, shows us. The dove flies erratically, but it flies with purpose and with an intended location.

So Jonah's coming trip will vacillate, but the final location will be realized. The minds of the people will be changed, and the redemptive process of God will be revealed. Jonah is being equated with what his name means, "Dove." But the root of his name, and the variations of it, are being drawn together by God to tell us a story.

In the ultimate example of these things, we read of vineyards, grapes, and wine directly in relation to Jesus and His words. He equates His people to a vineyard, and then He speaks of the vinedressers of that vineyard. He speaks of Himself as the true vine, and He speaks of the fruit of the vine.

As far as the dove, the greatest of the many uses of the dove in Scripture is found in the Holy Spirit descending upon Him as a Dove.

"The functions of the Holy Spirit are legion of course but possibly He chose the appearance of a dove to indicate that God brings people together by their weaknesses and not by their strengths, and the fabric of Truth is uncertainty, contrary to deterministic certainty. The mind of Christ is not about knowing all things down to the minutest facts, but being alive in a whole new way. Being able to waver is a quality of life; lifeless objects travel by straight, predictable lines."

Abarim

In the end, and taking all of the uses of the dove in Scripture together, its symbolism can be summed up with the words, "mourning love." When the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ, it was certainly with the thought of mourning in mind. He was about to begin His earthly ministry, one which would be fraught with sadness, pain, punishment, and death.

Jonah's mission will prefigure Him in this as the love of God, which mourns for the people of the world – the work of His hands, and the objects of His love – goes to a foreign land in order to bring them back to Himself, just as Jesus did.

Jonah himself will stubbornly fill this role in contrast to Christ who will willingly take on this same role some 700-800 years later. Yes, these things are all being pictured, believe it or not, in the simple name of Jonah, and how he conducts his affairs in the book which bears his name.

<sup>1</sup> (con't) **the son of Amitai, saying,**

*ben amittay lemor* – “son Amitai saying.” The name Amitai is a derivative of the word *emeth*, or truth, and so it means either “True,” “My Truth,” or “Truth of the Lord.” The final letter, *yod*, most likely is given to indicate “Truth of the Lord.” He is mentioned only twice in the Bible, and both times are in conjunction with his son Jonah.

As we have already seen, Jonah is from Gath Hepher. Although that is not recorded in the story, but only in 2 Kings 14, it is still significant enough to note again with its meaning. *Gath* means a winepress. The word *khepher* comes from a word which means “to dig,” but it is also connected to a word meaning “shame.”

And so *Gath-ha'khepher* literally means “Winepress of the Pit” or “Winepress of Shame.” Both meanings meet in intent. A pit is that which is dug out, and shame is something which when it is uncovered exposes that which is shameful.

And so a picture is formed. The Lord is using Jonah, picturing “mourning love” who is from the Winepress of Shame to effect a change in the minds of a Gentile nation, which in turn is intended to bring the same change about in His own people Israel.

If we were to look for a single passage from the Bible which this story will then picture, it is to be found in the book of Romans –

““But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “LORD, who has believed our report?”<sup>17</sup> So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

<sup>18</sup> But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed:

“Their sound has gone out to all the earth,  
And their words to the ends of the world.”

<sup>19</sup> But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says:

“I will provoke you to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation,  
I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.”

<sup>20</sup> But Isaiah is very bold and says:

“I was found by those who did not seek Me;  
I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.”

<sup>21</sup> But to Israel he says:

“All day long I have stretched out My hands  
To a disobedient and contrary people.”<sup>18</sup> Romans 10:17-21

Without understanding why names are given, and what those names mean, we miss so very much of what the Lord is telling us!

<sup>2</sup> **“Arise, go to Nineveh,**

*qum lek el nineveh* – “Arise, go to Nineveh. Nineveh, as a city, goes all the way back to the Table of Nations in Genesis 10. It was founded by Nimrod, a descendant of Noah’s youngest son Ham. It was located on the east bank of the Tigris River. In and shortly after the time of Jonah, it was at its zenith in power and glory.

The name Nineveh may be a word of foreign origin, but if connected to Hebrew its meaning is “Offspring’s Habitation.” As the Bible is written from a Hebrew perspective, the Hebrew name is what we are to consider.

Without getting too far ahead, they are a group of people who are being called to repentance by the Lord. Thus, they are to be considered His offspring, even in this habitation which is removed from Israel. And so we can go to the New Testament to find a parallel to Jonah's mission and to that of Paul. In Acts 17, Paul went on a mission to Athens, another great Gentile city, just as was Nineveh. There we read the following –

"And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,<sup>27</sup> so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;<sup>28</sup> for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'<sup>29</sup> Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.<sup>30</sup> Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,<sup>31</sup> because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." Acts 17:26-31

Like Jonah, another person got a similar call to "Arise" in the New Testament. A young girl, only 12 years old, was sick and had died. She was the daughter of Jairus the ruler of a synagogue. Jesus was called to heal her but as He was on His way, they told Him she had died. We read about it in Mark 5 –

"While He was still speaking, *some* came from the ruler of the synagogue's *house* who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe." Mark 5:35, 36

When he entered her room with the family, Peter, and John, He took her by the hand and made His tender call –

“Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, ‘Talitha, cumi,’ which is translated, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise.’” Mark 5:41

A dead girl responded to the same call of the Lord – *qum* – that was given to Jonah, but as we’ll see, Jonah wasn’t so ready to respond to His word. The power of the word of the Lord stands though and Jonah would eventually respond.

In the book of John, we read another account about the power of the word of the Jesus. In chapter 11, we learn about one of the signs which validated Him as the Messiah, calling the dead to life. However, unlike the prophets Elijah and Elisha who did the same thing in the name of the LORD, Jesus did these things under His own authority.

“He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!” And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Loose him, and let him go.” John 11:43-44

Jesus called to life that which was dead. Jonah was directed to do the same thing. He was to call the spiritually dead to life, and to bring them from that pit of darkness to the light of the Lord.

<sup>2 (con't)</sup> **that great city,**

*ha'ir ha'gedolah* – “the city, the whopping.” The greatness of Nineveh is highlighted twice more in the book of Jonah. Its large size is also mentioned. It was both large and a powerful city. It is so termed “the great city” in order to show Jonah the importance of the mission that he was being called to fulfill.

It was a city of great prominence in the known world, being the capital of the Assyrian empire. As I said earlier, this great force would eventually come against

the northern ten tribes of Israel and force them into exile. It would also make a challenge against the southern tribes in Judah in the future as well.

**2 (con't) and cry out against it;**

*u-qera aleha* – “and cry against it.” The term *qara*, or “cry” is a rather common word in Scripture which is intended to imply a proclamation by either a prophet or a herald. In English, this same terminology lingers on in the idea of a public crier, a form of communication which, although almost extinct, is still well known to us today.

Jonah is not told to just cry out *concerning* Nineveh as other prophets were known to do. He could have stayed in Israel and cried out concerning Nineveh like Nahum. He is also not told to cry out *to* Nineveh, as if he could make his proclamation from the top of a mountain outside of the city. Rather, he is told to cry out *al*, or against, the city. It is a cry of determination directed at them personally, and one which exposes their very secrets.

What will happen to Nineveh because of Jonah’s ministry will be used as an example by Jesus as a means of rebuking Israel. Likewise, Jonah’s mission was to do the same for Israel of his time. This modus operandi was explained to them at their very beginning, and yet they failed to heed –

“They have provoked Me to jealousy by *what* is not God;  
They have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols.  
But I will provoke them to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation;  
I will move them to anger by a foolish nation.” Deuteronomy 32:31

The specific message he is to cry was relayed to him, but we won’t actually be told what it is until verse 3:4. However, the reason for it is now revealed...

<sup>2 (con't)</sup> **for their wickedness has come up before Me."**

*ki aletha raatam lephanay* – "...for has arisen their wickedness to My face." Here wickedness is personified. It is as a living force which rises from earth to heaven where it stands before the Lord, the Supreme Judge. There he stands and bears witness against himself, and of those he has seduced to follow after him.

The idea of wickedness arising to the Lord is seen time and again in Scripture. In Genesis 4, the voice of Abel's blood was said to rise out of the ground, calling to the Lord. In Genesis 18, the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah came to the Lord because their sin was very grave.

This then isn't the standard sin which infects the whole human race. Instead, it is a working of evil against others in a vile and unrepentant way. In Nahum 3, these words are recorded against Nineveh some years later –

"Your injury *has* no healing,  
Your wound is severe.  
All who hear news of you  
Will clap *their* hands over you,  
For upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?" Nahum 3:19

Jonah has been called to inform them that their wickedness is at an end. It will either be in personal restraint or in divine judgment, but one way or another, it was at an end. Justice could no longer be deferred. But, there is more than a call to Nineveh being made.

I said earlier that Jonah's call is unique in that it is directed to Gentiles and Israel is never mentioned, but this is only explicitly so. Israel would be taught a lesson through Jonah which would point right back to themselves.

They trusted in their lineage and their heritage and ignored the very warnings directed to them in their own writings which established them and bound them to the Lord. They were living in a land of self-delusion, and the call to Nineveh to repent was also a call to them. Nineveh did not have the oracles of God, and yet a call was made to them. Israel did, and the call was long and vocal for their own turning –

“And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare *himself* or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. <sup>48</sup> But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.” Luke 12:47-48

This book is seen as a complete contrast to Israel who was given much, and who failed to heed the words of countless prophets, to that of Nineveh who had little and yet responded quickly and willingly. Why was Jonah selected for this call? The answer begins to be seen in the book of Hosea –

“Ephraim also is like a silly **dove**, without sense—  
They call to Egypt,  
They go to Assyria.  
<sup>12</sup> Wherever they go, I will spread My net on them;  
I will bring them down like birds of the air;  
I will chastise them  
According to what their congregation has heard.” Hosea 7:11

There in Hosea, Ephraim is shown to be like a silly *yonah*, a silly dove; one without sense. Jonah was selected because he and his mission are being used as an indictment against the very people who received and maintained the Lord’s prophetic utterances.

### <sup>3</sup> But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish

*va'yaqam yonah livroakh tarshishah* – “and rose up Jonah to flee to Tarshish.” The Lord told Jonah to arise, and arise he did – quickly and with determination. But it was not in obedience to the Lord, it was to renounce his position and his commission. Instead of Nineveh, he chose Tarshish.

The meaning of the name Tarshish is debated, but to a Hebrew audience, it might have appeared to indicate two words which together mean “white dove,” or “dove white.” If this is so, it is more than coincidence that a lesser used word for dove, a turtledove, is found in the story about a fleeing dove. It is as if he were flitting about to find a place to flee to and his eyes alighted on a place which bears the traits of who he is.

Tarshish also goes all the way back to the Table of Nations in Genesis 10. Tarshish is listed as a son of Javan, who is a son of Japheth the eldest of Noah. There it says of him and his brothers –

“From these the coastland *peoples* of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.” Genesis 10:5

And so, in this story, all three sons of Noah are involved: Shem/Israel; Ham/Nineveh; and Tarshish/Japheth. And this is in the order as listed in Scripture.

The location of Tarshish is generally thought to be where Spain or Cyprus is today, although that is widely debated. It was a trading city well known in Scripture. Jonah wasn’t willing to go to Nineveh to cry out to them about their wickedness, but he was willing to go to another Gentile land in order to keep from doing what he was called to do.

There is a moral lesson for us here. Jonah was directed to go to a location north and east of Israel. It is where the lands of his past were located, and of which his

forefathers had departed from in order to go to Canaan. Rather than go there, he goes in the opposite direction, heading to the land north and west of Israel.

With sin and rebellion, there is no middle ground. If one is disobedient to the Lord, they are as far removed from Him as they would have been near Him in obedience. One is either in His favor and near to His throne, or they are out of His favor and nearer to hell. Like the rich man who went sorrowfully away from the Lord, and like the disciples that turned and no longer walked with Him, Jonah also turned from Him in rebellion. The actual reason for his flight is given by himself in chapter 4 –

“Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You *are* a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.”  
Jonah 4:2

He knew that the turning of the Gentiles would lead them from enmity with the Lord to a position of favor with Him. He determined that he would not be a part of that, knowing that their favor would infringe upon the privileges which Israel had above them. He thought it would mean that they were no longer the elect, chosen nation of God. Is anyone seeing foreshadowing's of the church and Israel here? It is exactly what we should be seeing.

In what is an ironic twist, he was willing to cut himself off from the Lord in order to not allow someone else to participate in the Lord's favor. And this is exactly how history repeated itself in the Jews of Jesus' time. They were so unwilling to accept that Gentiles could share in His grace, that they willingly cut themselves off from His favor.

And this same pattern continues to this day with many Jews and Judaizing sects of Christianity. They willingly cut themselves off from the Lord's favor by inserting the law where the law does not belong. It is the main theme of the book of Galatians, and the poison that Paul warns against there still permeates the lives of

countless souls who would rather be cast into hell than simply accept that the grace of God has gone forth to the undeserving.

One theme of the book of Acts is that of getting the Jews to realize that Gentiles were to be considered just as much the people of the Lord as are the Jews. Many rejected this; many continue to do so.

**3 (con't) from the presence of the LORD.**

*mi-liphne Yehovah* – “from toward face Yehovah.” There are at least three main interpretations for these words. The first is an actual belief that one can hide from the presence of the Lord. It is what Adam and Eve did in the Garden. Such a belief would be wholly inconsistent with the general Hebrew view of the Lord, and contrary to the writings of the psalms and other historical authors. As today’s text verse said –

“Where can I go from Your Spirit?  
Or where can I flee from Your presence?” Psalm 139:7

The question is rhetorical and the psalm goes on to show that there is no such place. The author of Chronicles speaks along the same lines as well in 2 Chronicles 16:9 –

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose heart is loyal to Him.”

The second view is that to flee the face of the Lord is to renounce his calling as a prophet. The Levites were said to “stand before the Lord” as ministers to Him. And so if they rejected this duty, they would no longer stand before Him.

The third view is that of leaving the Land of Promise where the Lord dwelt. His special presence was there, and so to leave the land would mean fleeing from His presence.

The first seems wrong on the surface. With all of the history of who the Lord was to them, and with all of the oracles speaking against this notion, it appears that Jonah would know he could never flee from His face.

The second seems wrong as well. If he could not flee from the Lord, then he could not flee from his commission by the Lord. And the third seems obviously wrong as well. If he was instructed to go to the far land of Nineveh to cry out against it, then how could he expect to flee to another far land, which was maybe just a bit farther, in order to hide from his calling?

The fact is that he probably wasn't thinking rationally at all. The sin of rebellion had clouded his mind so that he thought that any and all three of the options were available to him and possible. When we sin, we push the word of God out of our mind, we sear our conscience to the obvious, and we deny that which is evident before our eyes.

We see this everyday among cosmologists, evolutionists, biologists, archaeologists, and even among Christians scholars, ministers, and lay people who strive against the literal reading of the Bible, which is God's word handed to us for our knowledge, wisdom, guidance, and acceptance. Jonah is simply us in narrative form to laugh at and wonder over as we pursue the same flight to Tarshish that he took. Apparently for Jonah, as we will find out, no place is far enough – either in distance, or in irrational thought, to thwart the will of the Lord.

**3 (con't) He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish;**

*va'yered yapho va'yimtsa aniyah baah tarshish* – “And went down to Joppa and found ship going to Tarshish.” The word “went down” is *yarad*. It means “to go

down” or “descend.” In this case it is from the place of his calling to the place of his disobedient flee. He had descended from a place of favor, to a place out of favor. In this case and for him, it is Joppa.

Joppa, or *Yapho*, means Beauty, or Beautiful. Today in English it is known as Jaffa. It is the nearest port to Jerusalem on the Mediterranean Sea. It is right next to Tel Aviv, and it is mentioned four times in the Old Testament and 10 times in the New – all in Acts. Interestingly, the accounts in Acts revolve around Peter, who is also known as Simon bar-Jonah, or Simon, Son of Jonah. This is not by chance. He, the apostle to the Jews, is used like Jonah to call the people of Israel to a right understanding of the Lord.

**3 (con't) so he paid the fare,**

*va'yitten sekarah*—“So paid fare.” These words help us understand that there was common sea-traffic between the two locations which included accepting passengers. As there was a fare, it implies that there was a set arrangement for people to make such a journey. The details come in an ordinary manner, as if it was just another passenger paying just another fare to make just another journey.

**3 (con't) and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish**

*va'yered bah lavow immahem tarshishah* – “...and went down in to go with them Tarshish.” From his low spot of Joppa, the Bible now repeats the word *va'yered*. He went down and he goes down further still. He is the addict who has first run himself out of a job, and now he has run himself out of a home. He is the adulteress who first lost her husband, and found that she next lost her lover.

Jonah went down, into the hold of the ship, in order to flee further from the presence of the Lord. If he could just hide under the bales of fig leaves leaving Israel and heading to Tarshish, the Lord would never find him. It was safe and secure down... down below where the Lord never could find him, far away...

\*3 (fin) from the presence of the LORD.

*milliphne Yehovah* – “...from toward face Yehovah.” The same phrase is repeated again from this same verse. And so the verse forms a chiasm which reveals to us the true cost of rebellion. It also reveals to us that it is a cost that we willingly pay.

Jonah 1:3 – Fleeing from the Face of the Lord

Rebellion carries a high cost (11/14/2016)

a. from the presence of the LORD

b. and he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish

x. so he paid the fare

b. and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish

a. from the presence of the LORD

When we rebel against the Lord, departing from His word, it is a trek downward for us. And with each place we move to in hopes of finding security from His frowning countenance, we pay another wage in our already long expense account. Israel has paid their wages for years seemingly without end.

And they are still paying them. They will next pay the wages of a return to temple worship, of which they will derive a payment in kind which is entering into the tribulation period and being blown about by the horrifying chaos of the stirred-up seas of humanity.

Their blind and senseless unbelief in the Redeemer of the world and His righteous judgment will swallow them up like the great fish that lies ahead of Jonah. And with them, the whole world will likewise be swallowed up.

However, God will intervene, just as He did for Jonah, and He will restore life to His disobedient child. Jonah will have to go through much trouble before he acknowledges his Lord's sovereignty, and Israel will suffer likewise.

For Jonah of Israel, and for each of you here today, I will leave you with the thoughts of John Darby concerning our responsibilities to God and towards others concerning the grace which has been bestowed upon us –

"If those to whom God in His grace has committed a testimony, do not employ this testimony in behalf of others according to the grace that bestowed it, they will soon become unfaithful in their own walk before God. If they truly acknowledged God, they would feel bound to make known His name, to impart this blessing to others. If they do not own His glory and His grace, they will assuredly be unable to maintain their own walk before Him." John Darby

If you are here, as yet unsaved by the Lord Jesus, or if you are saved and yet running from the Lord, the Bible tells us there is no place where we can hide from Him. It is our responsibility to honor Him through obedience to Him. For the unsaved, that is by calling on the name of Jesus and being cleansed by His shed blood. For the saved, it is by applying the precious, superior word of God to our walk in Him. Let us make every effort to be obedient to Him and to His call in our lives.

**Closing Verse:** So I said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove!

I would fly away and be at rest.

Indeed, I would wander far off,

And remain in the wilderness. Selah" Psalm 55:6, 7

**Next Week:** Jonah 1:4-7 *Wake up and don't be such a clod...* (Arise! Call on Your God) (2<sup>nd</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.

### **So He Paid the Fare**

Now the word of the LORD came, as I am now relaying  
To Jonah the son of Amitai, saying

“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city  
And cry out against it  
For their wickedness has come up before Me

But Jonah arose to Tarshish to flee  
From the presence of the LORD  
He went down to Joppa, yes Joppa by the sea  
And found a ship which was to Tarshish heading toward

So he paid the fare  
And went down into it, yes, he got on board  
To go with them to Tarshish  
From the presence of the LORD

Lord God, we are prone to run away from You  
When we don’t want to do the things you ask of us  
Even though it is always the right thing to do

Give us strength to comply, and to not put up a fuss  
Grant that we will not flee from You  
But that we would be willing to go when You call to us  
And to do what we ought to do  
To be obedient to Your will, just as did our Lord Jesus

Help us in this Lord God Almighty, surely this is right  
May our hearts be obedient to what You desire of us  
Help us to live for You, and be pleasing in Your sight  
May we glorify You as we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus

And may the lives we live give to You oodles of praise  
Now in this earthly walk, and in heaven's eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

## **JONAH 1:4-6 (ARISE! CALL ON YOUR GOD)**

One thing that is universal in people is the reaction to total disaster. It doesn't matter how completely someone says they don't believe in God, it doesn't matter how rebellious someone is, and titles like "atheist" or "agnostic" mean nothing when disaster hits. The first thing people do when facing true calamity is to cry out "O God."

The hardened sailors of Jonah's ship were no different. As soon as the real trouble started, they immediately called out to their gods, implying that they accept the premise of a higher power, whether they have the concept of Him right or not. And from the words spoken to Jonah by the captain of this voyage in today's verses, we know that he knows there is one God above all gods.

And so does everyone else. However, being people as we are, we usually don't give God the time of day unless we need something from Him. And the greater the need, the more accurately and precisely we tend to call on Him. David had a time in his life when he was in great distress. Actually he had lots of such times. In those moments, he knew exactly where to turn for relief...

**Text 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 *entered* His ears." 2 Samuel 22:7

Being merciful and gracious, He responded to David every time he called, but how much more pleased do you think the Lord was when David would come to Him without needing a thing. He did this also, and surely the Lord found great pleasure in it. So much so that David was known as a man after God's own heart.

We too tend to call on the Lord in times of distress, and He is there to respond. But we too should be willing to reach out to Him even when there is no distress. And further, we should be willing to be obedient to Him from the start and avoid the times of distress which will inevitably result from failing to do so.

Jonah is a great example for us to learn this. He didn't obey, and the times of distress came heavily upon him and those he was with. They had no light of God, and they had no ability to call on Him as He expects. It was up to Jonah alone to make things right. They seemed to figure this out quickly, and they went below the deck of the ship to get things corrected.

This is what is seen in today's verses. It is what we will take a peek at now. The Lord has given us where to go to figure these things out. It is 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. A Mighty Tempest on the Sea (verse 4)**

**<sup>4</sup> But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea,**

*va'Yehovah hetil ruakh gedolah el ha'yam* – “And Yehovah hurled wind whopping into the sea.” Verse 3 began with “And arose Jonah...” He had taken his action, and he had done his part to escape his duties. This verse now begins with, “And Yehovah hurled...” It is time for the Lord to accomplish His work, and to deal with the matter accordingly.

The word translated here as “sent” is *tul*. It means to cast or throw, as if one is hurling a spear. The word is used just fourteen times in the Bible, and four of them – more than any other book – are found in the little book of Jonah. It will be used in the next verse when the sailors throw the cargo overboard.

Such is the magnificence of this wind. It would have been cast upon the vessel suddenly and with great force. The 147<sup>th</sup> Psalm speaks of Yehovah's power over the elements in this manner –

"He causes His wind to blow, *and the waters flow.*" Psalm 147:18

In order to understand what is going on, one must understand what the sea represents in the Bible. It is a place of chaos and confusion. On numerous times, it is equated to restless masses of people- groups and societies. It is a place of lawlessness where people are without God and His order and harmony. This is reflected, for example, in the book of Isaiah –

"But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea,  
When it cannot rest,  
Whose waters cast up mire and dirt.  
<sup>21</sup> "There *is* no peace,"  
Says my God, "for the wicked."'" Isaiah 57:20, 21

In the work of the Lord, the people are brought out of this disorder and into the harmony provided by Him. Again, to Isaiah –

"Then you shall see and become radiant,  
And your heart shall swell with joy;  
Because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you..." Isaiah 60:5

In Revelation, the great whore is said to sit on "many waters," meaning the gathering of the waters into a sea. There, the symbolism is explicitly explained –

“The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.” Revelation 17:5

It is because the sea represents such chaos of the people, without God and without harmony, that we read what it will be like when all things are restored –

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.” Revelation 21:1

The word for “sea” here in Jonah is *yam*, and it is speaking specifically about the Mediterranean, or “great sea.” The word *yam*, though, is also used to indicate the direction “west.” This is seen, for example, in Genesis 13:14 which says –

“And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: “Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and **westward...**”

There the word for “westward” is *yammah*, and thus it is indicating towards the sea. And so we have a picture being developed. Man was cast east out of Eden. The tabernacle points west. The Most Holy Place where the Lord dwells is to the far west. And so the sea being westward, and also representing nations without God, shows man’s futile attempts at false religion in returning to God.

The Great Whore of Revelation sits upon this confusion and directs the masses according to her perverse agenda. It is into this sea that Jonah has gone in order to head away from the Lord, and so the Lord has hurled His wind upon the waters to redirect the situation.

Every detail is being selected by the Lord to show us an ongoing picture of the redemption of man. Jonah has left the land of Israel which is set apart by God. Instead of going to where he was supposed to go in order to bring restoration to those who are separate and apart from God, he heads west into the great sea. How can the people whom God is calling to repentance do so when Jonah has gone into the sea, picturing the world which is already in chaos, confusion, and rebellion against the Lord?

And that now brings in another need for us to meet. We are to understand what the wind pictures in the Bible. The word is *ruakh*, and it is the same word which is translated as “spirit” and “breath.” For example, in Genesis 1:2, the word *ruakh* is used when speaking of the Spirit of God –

“The earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

There was chaos and confusion, and the Spirit of God was there to bring it into order and harmony. Thus, the wind, or spirit, in the Bible symbolizes the presence and power of God, both positive and negative in how it is directed and used. For example, the wind can be negative in causing scattering and destruction, and it can also be positive in the changes it effects.

As the wind blows from an unseen source, in it there is a symbolic a type of relationship between the divine and the created. Jesus speaks of exactly this in John 3. As you listen, remember that to the Hebrew mind, the word “wind” and “spirit” were the same, and so they would carry a dual meaning to the ears of Nicodemus –

““Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is

flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.<sup>7</sup> Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’<sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” John 3:5-8

The different directions from which winds come can add to the meaning of the wind itself. Together they will combine to form a picture of what God is doing. This is seen, for example, in the east wind. It is a wind of destruction and calamity. The east wind is what blighted the crops in Pharaoh’s dreams in Genesis. It is also what brought the plague of locusts upon the land of Egypt, and the wind which in Exodus divided the waters of the Red Sea. In Jeremiah, and many other places, the east wind is one of power and destruction –

“I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy;  
I will show them the back and not the face  
In the day of their calamity” Jeremiah 18:17

In fact, the east wind itself will be used in this way in Chapter 4 of Jonah. Wind also symbolizes doctrine – both correct and false doctrine. The spirit of God directs proper doctrine, but man directs false doctrine. Paul speaks of this in Ephesians 4:14 –

“...that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting...”

In addition to this, wind symbolizes that which is temporary and vain. In the 78<sup>th</sup> Psalm, it is used to show that which is temporary –

“For He remembered that they *were but* flesh,  
A **breath** that passes away and does not come again.” Psalm 78:39

Isaiah shows that the wind symbolizes that which is vain –

“Indeed they *are* all worthless;  
Their works *are* nothing;  
Their molded images *are* **wind** and confusion.” Isaiah 41:29

The Lord is now sending His wind upon the sea of chaos in order to cause confusion which is then intended to restore order. It is a marvelous picture which is being developed for us to pay heed to and understand.

<sup>4 (con't)</sup> **and there was a mighty tempest on the sea,**

*vay'hi sa'ar gadowl b'yam* – “...and there was a tempest whopping on the sea.” The word “mighty” here is the same as that of the wind in the previous clause – *gadol*, meaning “great” or “mighty.” The mighty wind was the source of the mighty tempest. This word “tempest” is *sa'ar*. It is a tempest, even like a hurricane. It is the same type of storm that Paul was caught in towards the end of the book of Acts. In Acts 27, this is recorded –

“When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained *their* desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete.<sup>14</sup> But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon.<sup>15</sup> So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let *her* drive.” Acts 27:13-15

The Lord caused both of these men to endure such a great storm in order to effect His purposes. In the case of the wind, it is from the Lord, but in the case of the tempest, it indicates the presence of the Lord – for good or for ill.

The whirlwind which took Elijah to heaven was described by this same word. He was there, safe and secure in the presence of the Lord as he was raptured to heaven. The whirlwind from which the Lord spoke to Job is also this same word. The Lord was there in the whirlwind, speaking to Job about the glory He alone possesses. In Jeremiah, the same word is used several times to indicate the terrifying presence of the destructive power of the Lord –

“Behold, a **whirlwind** of the LORD has gone forth in fury—  
A violent **whirlwind**!

It will fall violently on the head of the wicked.

<sup>20</sup>The anger of the LORD will not turn back  
Until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart.  
In the latter days you will understand it perfectly.” Jeremiah 23:19

In the theophany of the Lord to Ezekiel, He is within the great tempest itself once again –

“Then I looked, and behold, a **whirlwind** was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness *was* all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. <sup>5</sup>Also from within it *came* the likeness of four living creatures. And this *was* their appearance: they had the likeness of a man. <sup>6</sup>Each one had four faces, and each one had four wings. <sup>7</sup>Their legs *were* straight, and the soles of their feet *were* like the soles of calves' feet. They sparkled like the color of burnished bronze. <sup>8</sup>The hands of a man *were* under their wings on their four sides; and each of the four had faces and wings. <sup>9</sup>Their wings touched one another. *The creatures* did not turn when they went, but each one went straight forward.” Ezekiel 1:4-9

Citing these many references is not a superfluous thing to do. Rather, by understanding a broader picture of such a tempest, we can grasp what is being relayed to us in the book of Jonah. The wind of the Lord has been directed towards Jonah. From it has come the tempest of the Lord. Jonah could not flee from Him at all, but instead, he was caught up in His awesome presence!

He was doggedly pursued and then surrounded by the presence of the Lord in order to bring harmony and order out of chaos and confusion. In the pages of this book, we are given front row seats into the very heart of God's redemptive plans for man.

Each aspect of this story is passing before our eyes to show us what God is up to and how it points to the greater work of Christ on behalf of the people of the world. The wind which has come is powerful and it has purpose. In the psalms, there is a beautiful parallel to what will be next mentioned in our on-going narrative...

"Fear took hold of them there,  
And pain, as of a woman in birth pangs,  
<sup>7</sup> As when You break the ships of Tarshish  
With an east wind." Psalm 48:6, 7

<sup>4 (con't)</sup> so that the ship was about to be broken up.

*v'ha'oniyah khishevah l'hishaver* – "...and the ship thought it should be broken." The language here is vivid. It is as if the ship senses its own danger as it rose and fell among the great waves, and as it was blown and shattered by the terrifying winds. This was so much so, that it thought it was breaking apart. The ship considers itself, and then it considers the power of God's tempest, and it sees in itself nothing but weakness in the comparison.

The margin notes of the Hebrew text indicates that the term “broken up” is also used in a graphic personification of the ship. It is as if the ship itself was a living thing which surrounded and protected the sailors – it has feelings, it has hopes, and it has fears. But these were all to end with its destruction. The same word is used of the people of Israel in Jeremiah 14:17 –

“Therefore you shall say this word to them:  
‘Let my eyes flow with tears night and day,  
And let them not cease;  
For the virgin daughter of my people  
**Has been broken** with a mighty stroke, with a very severe blow.”

The place of security within the sea of chaos was itself to be overwhelmed by the chaos which surrounded it. The sailors were certain to look beyond themselves for relief, or they were to look to their fate in resignation, but they could not look to their own efforts to save them.

This is what happened to Paul in Acts 27. The tempest was so powerful that they had to undergird the ship with cables so that it would not break at the seams. Eventually, the ship was grounded on a shoal and broken to pieces, but all on the ship survived.

Jonah is on a ship of Tarshish, and the wind has come against it, just as the winds described by the psalmist I quoted earlier noted that the winds came against the ships of Tarshish. The Bible is asking us to make these connections so that we can then understand the greater picture of what is occurring.

That psalm is specifically one which speaks of the glory of God in Zion. In the psalm it says that according to God’s name, so is His praise, even to the ends of the earth. How can God’s name be praised unto the ends of the earth unless His people proclaim it.

This is what Jonah has been asked to do, and this is what he has fled from. His actions have caused the wind and the tempest, and those things have brought the ship of Tarshish to the very edge of destruction. The souls of the men must have been terrified of the works of the Lord, though they don't yet know Him. It is, again, reflective of the words of the psalmist –

“Those who go down to the sea in ships,  
Who do business on great waters,  
<sup>24</sup> They see the works of the LORD,  
And His wonders in the deep.  
<sup>25</sup> For He commands and raises the stormy wind,  
Which lifts up the waves of the sea.  
<sup>26</sup> They mount up to the heavens,  
They go down again to the depths;  
Their soul melts because of trouble.” Psalm 107:23-25

As we consider Jonah's situation, we cannot overlook that in Matthew 8, something similar occurs. We are being shown in Jonah a taste of the greater ministry of the Lord. The account details what happened to the disciples as they accompanied Jesus –

Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. <sup>24</sup> And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. <sup>25</sup> Then His disciples came to *Him* and awoke Him, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!”  
<sup>26</sup> But He said to them, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. <sup>27</sup> So the men marveled, saying, “Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”  
Matthew 8:23-27

In the case of Jonah, the Lord was directing his movements back to where they should be. In the case of the disciples, He was directing their eyes to understand

the nature of the Person who had accompanied them in their trip across the Sea of Galilee.

We've all been directed by the elements at one time or another. When I lived in Japan, one summer I went swimming in the Mitake River. There's a slow moving pond toward the beginning of the river that's a well-known place for swimming.

However, if you aren't careful, you can get pulled into the faster moving area and taken down through very steep rapids before you even realize it. This happened to me and it's the closest I ever came to death.

It should have been a wakeup call to me, but it was another 10 years before I realized the gift I'd been given that day. Unfortunately, just a few weeks after my incident, another young person drowned. How the Lord works in our lives is, at times, rather mysterious.

We need to be attentive to these things and think on where the Lord is steering us. Will Jonah respond to the call? Will those with him also respond? And when the Lord sends the wind and the whirlwind into your life, will you turn back from the wayward journey you are on?

*A great wind upon the sea*

*Stirring up chaos and uncertainty*

*This is how it appeared it would always be*

*Life seemed to be no more than absurdity*

*The ship of life tossed about, no direction known*

*It appeared that all would be lost*

*We looked for help, but none to us was shown*

*What will it take, how high is the cost?*

*When all seemed hopeless, help finally came*

*There upon the hill a quieting of the sea*

*Upon the hill a cross, and on it One with no blame*

*The help has come, the waves are still; there is hope for you and me*

## **II. But Jonah (verse 5)**

<sup>5</sup> Then the mariners were afraid;

*va'yire-u ha'malakhim* – “And were afraid the mariners.” The term *malakhim*, or “sailors,” is a plural noun which is the same as the noun *melakh*, or “salt.” In other words, they are “the salts,” and thus “mariners.” We use the same terminology concerning our sailors today. The word is used just four times in the Bible, three times in Ezekiel, and the final time here.

These men of the sea, experienced and knowledgeable concerning its power and ways, understood that this was a dire situation that they were in. Their efforts to save the ship would be futile. The fear they felt is reflective of the fear of the mariners who conducted Paul to Rome. We know this, because Paul had to quell their fears with his words of encouragement –

“But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, “Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.<sup>22</sup> And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.<sup>23</sup> For there stood by me this

night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve,<sup>24</sup> saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.’<sup>25</sup> Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.<sup>26</sup> However, we must run aground on a certain island.” Acts 27:21-26

**5 (con't) and every man cried out to his god,**

*va'yizaqu ish elohav* – “...and cried every man unto his god.” The word *zaaq*, or “cry,” comes from a primitive root which means “to shriek” as if from anguish or danger. They perceived their danger, and so they cry out to their gods.

In Shakespeare’s The Tempest, when things got to this point, the play follows the same pattern as these men now – “All lost! to prayers! to prayers, all lost!” The sailors were probably from various locations, and so each had his own god whom he worshipped.

Each called on the god he believed in, hoping for relief from the plight. It was in a state of ignorance that they had received Jonah who had offended the true God. It is in this same state of ignorance of the true God that they now call out for help, calling on whatever god they had come to know.

As we will see, their gods were ineffectual. There is only one God who answers prayer, and He answers it according to His own wisdom and for His own purposes. In another exciting time in Israel’s history, the people were confused about where prayers should be directed. Elijah came to remove their confusion –

“So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, “O Baal, hear us!” But there

was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made.

<sup>27</sup> And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, “Cry aloud, for he *is* a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, *or* perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.” <sup>28</sup> So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. <sup>29</sup> And when midday was past, they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice. But *there was* no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention.” 1 Kings 18:25-29

After their failure, Elijah came forward and had his sacrifice prepared. After dousing it in water three times, we read the outcome of his prayer –

“And it came to pass, at the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, “LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You *are* God in Israel and I *am* Your servant, and *that* I have done all these things at Your word. <sup>37</sup> Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You *are* the LORD God, and *that* You have turned their hearts back to *You* again.”

<sup>38</sup> Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that *was* in the trench.

<sup>39</sup> Now when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The LORD, He *is* God! The LORD, He *is* God!” 1 Kings 18:36-39

Will these men of the sea come to the same realization that the wayward people of Israel did? Stay tuned for the exciting details as the book continues on.

**5 (con't) and threw the cargo that *was* in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load.**

*va'yatilu eth ha'kelim asher ba'oniyah el ha'yam l'haqel me-alehem* – “and hurled the wares that in the ship into the sea to lighten of.” Even after crying out to their gods, no one paid attention. The psalmist, so long ago, spoke about the nature of the true God in contrast to the gods of the nations. He is in control, but they have no power –

“But our God *is* in heaven;  
He does whatever He pleases.  
<sup>4</sup> Their idols *are* silver and gold,  
The work of men’s hands.  
<sup>5</sup> They have mouths, but they do not speak;  
Eyes they have, but they do not see;  
<sup>6</sup> They have ears, but they do not hear;  
Noses they have, but they do not smell;  
<sup>7</sup> They have hands, but they do not handle;  
Feet they have, but they do not walk;  
Nor do they mutter through their throat.  
<sup>8</sup> Those who make them are like them;  
*So is* everyone who trusts in them.” Psalm 115:3-8

I used to have Buddha’s all around my house. Some people practice Feng Shui hoping it will give them proper chi, other people look for enlightenment through yoga or transcendental meditation, or in some other crazy way. In the end these things move us further from God, they don’t bring Him near.

Back on the ship, because the sailor’s prayers were ineffective, they next take action once again by hurling their wares into the sea. It is the same word that was used in verse 4 when the Lord *hurled* the great wind into the sea. You can see the contrast – the Lord *hurls* a wind into the sea so that the ship was about to be broken up, and they *hurl* their precious cargo into that same sea in order to keep the ship from breaking up.

There is a marvelous parallelism between the two. The Lord sends from His hand a wind of correction, while the men attempt to save themselves by the work of their hands. Their gods had failed them, and so they believe they must work their way to salvation.

The word, *qalal*, which is translated as “lighten” is found three times in 2 Chronicles 10. The people of Israel had come to Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, and they had asked for relief from the heavy load that his father had imposed on them. He uses the same word in his answer –

“Then the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, “Thus you should speak to the people who have spoken to you, saying, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make *it lighter* on us’—thus you shall say to them: ‘My little *finger* shall be thicker than my father’s waist! <sup>11</sup> And now, whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I *will chastise you* with scourges!” 2 Chronicles 10:10, 11

The mariners are trying to lighten their load in order to ease the burden they bear in order to be saved. But they do not yet know the Lord who is the only One who can actually accomplish this –

“Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

The picture we are to see is that these men carry a burden they are not even aware of. Until they meet the Lord, the burden will remain and the whirlwind will continue to wreak its terrifying havoc upon them.

And again, as has happened, and as will continue to happen, parallels from this account in Jonah run deep in the New Testament. Just as they threw cargo over to lighten the load on the ship, the mariners on the ship that Paul was on did the same thing when they were caught in the storm –

"And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship. On the third day we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands." Acts 27:14-19

Later in the same account, they threw over the precious cargo of wheat which they had kept on board in order to further lighten the ship. There was great loss, but it was in hopes of gaining life. However, their actions were of faith in the promises of God as relayed to them by Paul. The actions of the men in this account in Jonah are that of works, not faith, in order to be saved.

<sup>5 (con't)</sup> **But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship,**

*v'yonah yarad el yarkete ha'sephinah* – "And Jonah was gone down into the recesses [of] the ship." The words show the complete contrast of Jonah to those who were working with all their might to save themselves. He knew that he could not save himself. He was out of favor with the Lord, and there was no reason to do anything but sleep.

And so he went down into the recesses of the ship. It is the furthest place he could go in order to hide from the anger of the Lord, and he simply, and uncaringly, fell asleep. Interestingly, the word *sephinah*, translated as "ship" here, is a different word than that mentioned above. It is found only this once in the entire Bible.

It comes from the word *saphan* which mean covered or paneled. That comes from a primitive root meaning to "hide by covering" such as roofing a house. In essence, the words are relaying, "But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the covered vessel."

He was *hiding* in the ship from the Lord, but the Lord had followed him. He felt he was safe and he reveled in uncaring self-security. He was living up to the dual meaning of his name. He was called to bring a message of repentance, and thus hoped-for peace to one group of people, but he had so far only vexed those he was with.

<sup>5 (con't)</sup> **had lain down, and was fast asleep.**

*va'yishkav va'yeradam* – “and lay and was fast asleep.” The Greek translation of the Old Testament says, “...was asleep and snoring.” The word in Hebrew is *radam*. It is a word used just 7 times in the Bible and it gives the idea of being in a dead sleep. It comes from a primitive root which indicates to stun, or stupefy. It is what happened to Daniel when he had exceedingly fearful visions.

In these words then is a contrast to the personified awakened state of the ship in verse 4. The ship was animated to fear through the terrifying rush of the storm upon it because of Jonah’s flight. At the same time, Jonah was fast asleep, even to a deadened state because of it.

When you’re on a ship, the lowest parts are the best place to sleep because they don’t bounce as much. That and towards the back of the boat. This is where the captain normally sleeps. Just as Jonah was fast asleep in the hold of the ship in the middle of the great storm, the words of Matthew tell us about Jesus during the storm on the Sea of Galilee. It says in Matthew 8:24 –

“And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep.” Matthew 8:24

He was able to sleep because He knew who He was, what His role was, and that there was no need to fear. Today, when we get anxious about things, we tend to

forget that He has it all under control, and instead, we toss and turn just like a ship on the ocean. But if we can really trust the Lord and His word, then the storms of life are nothing compared to the peace and calm He provides. They're His storms and it's His peace. We simply need to choose which we're going to think on and which to rest in.

*Here we are, sore afraid*

*As we cry out in our helpless state*

*Praying that the tempestuous winds will be stayed*

*Praying for a deliverance so great*

*The works of our hands cannot save us*

*Nothing we do can bring us to the place of safety*

*But up on the hill we see our Lord Jesus*

*As His body hangs lifeless, there upon the tree*

*Shine Your light on us O God*

*Let the light of Christ illuminate our souls*

*Hear our praises as to You we applaud*

*And as the sound of the heavenly music rolls.*

*Praise be to You, O matchless King!*

*Be honored, O Lord, as to You our voices sing!*

### **III. Arise, Call on Your God! (verse 6)**

**<sup>6</sup> So the captain came to him, and said to him,**

*va'yiqrav elav rav ha'khovel va'yomer lo* – “And came near unto, great the pilot and said to him”

The words translated as “captain” are *rav ha'khovel*, or “the great pilot.” The *khovel* is only mentioned five times in the Bible, four in Ezekiel and once here. It is an active participle which comes from a word that gives the sense of handling ropes, and thus it is a sailor. With the adjective *rav*, or “great” attached to it, the captain or chief pilot is indicated. He is the chief of those who work with ropes.

As the Hebrew society did not frequent the seas, their nautical terminology is rather obscure, but the intent can be drawn out. The *malakhim* or, “salts,” mentioned earlier would be a general term for seafaring men. The word now is used more specifically to define steersmen or top-men. It is the chief of this class that comes down into the recesses of the ship and addresses Jonah...

**<sup>6</sup> (con't) “What do you mean, sleeper?**

*mah lekha nirdam* – “What to, O sleeper?” In his address to Jonah, his words use the same term for sleep as before. In other words, “How can you be in such a dead sleep?” It is as if he is utterly befuddled by the situation. And so even more, it is asking what kind of affliction Jonah suffers from – “What is the matter with you that you’re in such a dead sleep?”

There is terror on every side, and Jonah is down below sleeping like a baby. He seems to wonder if he has any conscience or any fear at all. “Are you completely deadened to heaven’s mercies?”

Thus, the Hebrew prophet who was sent to the greatest Gentile nation on earth in order to rebuke them of their sin is, in turn, rebuked by a pagan shipmaster who has come to wake him up out of his spiritual lethargy, symbolized by his deep slumber in the flesh.

The contrasts are astounding, and the picture in relation to Israel as a people is astonishing. And so even more, the picture of the dead church of today is all the more relevant.

**6 (con't) Arise, call on your God;**

*Qum qera el elohekha* – “Arise call on your God.” What seems to be implied here is that they knew there was something particular about Jonah. Verse 10 will say, “For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.” It doesn’t say when he told them this, but it could be that it was before this time.

They had been unsuccessful in crying out to their gods, they had been unsuccessful in their attempts to save themselves through the work of their hands, and now they were left with but one option. If this person was fleeing his God, and if his God was so powerful that He could cause such a violent storm, then that God might still be near enough to save them from the storm, and willing to do so as well. It is with this thought in mind that we come to the final words of our verses today...

\*<sup>6</sup> (fin) perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish."

*Ulay yitashet ha'elohim lanu v'lo noved* – "...if so be will shine the God to us that not do we perish." It is a clause rich in its words. First, the Hebrew does not say simply "God" as in the KJV – "...if so be that God will think upon us." Nor does it say "your God" as is translated here by the NKJV. Instead it says, "the God."

As with all people, there is a fundamental understanding that there is one supreme God. They have called on their lesser "gods," and there has been no response. Jonah is now being asked to call on his God, in hopes that "the God" will respond to his call.

This is the intent of the captain, and it is clearly laid out by the term *ha'elohim*, or "the God." It is an unmistakable point which is being conveyed in the specific wording of the passage.

Next, the captain says the word *ashath*. It is a verb which means "to shine." It is translated here as "think." Other versions say "notice us," "pay attention to us," "be concerned about us," or "have compassion on us." This word, *ashath*, comes from a primitive root which means "to be sleek" and thus glossy and hence through the idea of polishing to shine.

It is used only one other time in the Bible, in Jeremiah 5:28, where it is translated as either sleek or shine. There is no reason to assume that it should be any differently here. In other words, the captain says, "Perhaps the God will shine on us." When God shines on someone, it means that He illuminates their thinking, shows them favor, and restores them to a propitious place of peace and harmony between Himself and that person.

By shining the light, everything is made manifest by the light. Despite being in a real storm in the sea of chaos, and despite being under physical harm, there is a spiritual connotation that is being drawn out, even by this pagan captain. There is disharmony between them and God which needs to be rectified.

Though they don't know *of* the gospel, they do know that there is a need *for* the gospel. The light of the gospel message is the only way to make things which are indecent appear as they really are. Once the truth of the gospel shines on the deeds of wickedness, they are exposed and can be compared to that which is right, holy, and proper.

From that knowledge, they can then do what is needed with that light to come to a right relationship with God. Paul says exactly this to us in the book of Ephesians. It very well could be that he was pondering this verse from Jonah at some point and came to this conclusion –

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*. <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. <sup>13</sup> But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. <sup>14</sup> Therefore He says:

"Awake, you who sleep,  
Arise from the dead,  
And Christ will give you light." Ephesians 5:11-14

The captain says to the one who is sleeping as if dead, "Arise from the dead O sleeper! Perhaps the God will shine on us, that we might not perish." It is the internal call of the lost human soul for the knowledge of God found in the face of Jesus Christ.

Just as the cock's crow began the recovery of Peter from his spiritual slumber, the call of this pagan shipmaster to Jonah is the beginning of his own spiritual

recovery. And once again, the symbolism from Jonah echoes through time and is found again in the voices of the apostles which cry out to Jesus...

Then His disciples came to *Him* and awoke Him, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” Matthew 8:25

At this point, they didn’t understand who Jesus was or the power He held in His grasp, but they knew enough to see that they were incapable of handling the situation, just like those on Jonah’s ship. In desperation, they called out to the last One who may be able to do something to keep them from drowning.

This is exactly what happens again and again in our own lives. We wait until things are so completely botched up that there is simply nowhere else to turn.

Whether in our own lives, or whether in the state of the nations, there is a time when it will be too late and the boards will rupture from the storms which press on every side. Let’s hope that like the ancient mariners of Jonah’s time, and of the time when the apostles were in the boat with Jesus, that each individual and each nation will make the best of the bad situation before it’s simply too late.

If you are still in a spiritually deadened sleep where the light of Christ has not yet shown through to call you into His marvelous kingdom, I would hope that today would be the day you get that fixed. All people know instinctively that there is a God, one true God, who is there above the storms of life. But we will go to the furthest recesses of the world to escape from Him.

Let us not be so hard hearted that we would hide ourselves from Him, but instead, Awake you who sleep. Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. Call on Him today and receive the radiance of God’s love and forgiveness for you, direct from the foot of the cross of Calvary.

**Closing Verse:** For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), <sup>10</sup> finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.” Ephesians 5:8-10

**Next Week:** Jonah 1:7-12 *What is Jonah nuts? He just said quite plainly... (Pick Me Up and Throw Me Into the Sea)* (3<sup>rd</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.

### **Arise! Call on Your God**

But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea  
And there was on the sea a tempest mighty  
So that the ship was about to be broken up thoroughly  
Such was the power of the wind from the Almighty

Then the mariners were afraid, even sorely  
And every man cried out to his god  
And threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea  
To lighten the load, the precious cargo gathered from abroad

But Jonah had gone down, without a peep  
Into the lowest parts of the ship

Had lain down, and was fast asleep

He was enjoying a nap while on this trip

So the captain came to him, and to him said

“What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God

Perhaps your God will consider us as we sail ahead

So that we may not perish on this ocean so broad

Lord, can we hide from Your presence?

Could we attempt to secret ourselves away from You?

Instead, we should draw near and enjoy the pleasance

We know it is what You would have us to do

Help us, Lord, to be faithful to Your call upon our lives

And to never attempt to run from doing what is right

When Your call comes, yes the moment it arrives

May we be found to answer, and be pleasing in Your sight

Surely in this You will be happy with us

As we follow obediently, in the steps of our Lord Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

## **JONAH 1:7-12 (PICK ME UP AND THROW ME IN THE SEA)**

The story of Jonah is working towards a good end, and yet it is filled with all kinds of twists and turns as it heads there. Jonah, a prophet of the Lord, was unwilling to go preach to the wicked city of Nineveh, the capital of a Gentile empire, and yet he was willing to run away from the Lord to another Gentile location.

When the Gentiles on the ship are in despair, they come to Jonah to see if he can help with the situation, but then they find out that he is the cause of their dire state. The Lord hurls a storm at the ship, and Jonah tells them to hurl him from the ship. Everything about the account so far seems ironic and confusing, but everything about the life we live also often seems ironic and confusing. And yet, the Lord is working it out for a good end.

For those who are willing to accept that there is one God, and that He is in control of all things, that knowledge is a comfort, because we can trust that He has a plan and it is working out for a good end. The key is to make sure that we have grasped that plan and have done what is necessary to be included in that good end.

This is why we are given stories like Jonah. They show us hints of Jesus who is the key to that plan, and the One to get us to that good end. If we learn nothing else in this life, if we can grasp and accept this one premise, then we too shall be a part of that good end.

**Text Verse:** “In His hand *are* the deep places of the earth;  
The heights of the hills *are* His also.

<sup>5</sup> The sea *is* His, for He made it;  
And His hands formed the dry *land*.

<sup>6</sup> Oh come, let us worship and bow down;  
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.” Psalm 95:4-6

This is what God asks of us – to come and worship and bow down before Him. He doesn't force us to do so, but we are often caught up in events, which He has brought about, in order to get us to do exactly that. The men of the ship which Jonah is on are caught up in a series of events which are beyond their control. Jonah is caught up in them too.

And every detail of what really happened to these people is being used to reveal to us a greater story of God's love for the people of the world – be they salty sailors on a ship at sea, or a mighty nation which crushes other nations. In the end, He desires that we turn our hearts to Him, bend our knees in humility, and proclaim with our mouths His glory. These truths 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 Am a Hebrew (verses 7-9)**

***7 And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us.”***

*va'yomeru ish el reehu leku v'nappiah goralot v'nedeah b'shelemi ha'raah hazzot lanu* – “And they said man unto neighbor, ‘Come and let us cast lots and we may know the evil this to us.’” In verse 6, which closed us out last week, the captain had gone to Jonah in order to get him to act –

“So the captain came to him, and said to him, ‘What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish.’”

Whether Jonah had arisen and called on his God, or whether he simply went up and pretended to do so, knowing that his prayers would only draw the Lord to him and confound his attempt to flee, there was obviously no letup in the storm.

With it furiously raging around them, and with their certainty that this was a sort of divine punishment for someone's wrongdoing, they are now determined to find out who that culprit is. In order to do so, they turn to the *goral*, or lot.

Though these are pagans who are calling for a lot, this practice is not unique to pagans. Many times in Scripture they are used in exactly the manner seen here.

The first time lots are mentioned in the Bible is in Leviticus 16 which concerns the Day of Atonement rituals – a passage which points directly to the crucifixion of Christ, as does believe it or not, this account now. The last time they're mentioned is in Acts chapter 1 when the apostles drew lots to replace Judas, whose actions had led directly to that crucifixion. It is an ironic set of verses, but it shows God's control over all things.

In total, the *goral*, or lot, is seen 77 times in the Old Testament, with three of them being in Jonah, all in this verse. The word comes from an unused root meaning to be rough, as stone, and so it indicates a pebble, and hence a lot because small stones are used for lots. In turn, it figuratively means "a portion" or "destiny."

Despite lots seeming to draw solely on chance, the Bible paints a different picture. Though appearing random, the Lord directs all things to effect His purposes in the stream of human existence. The problem with us is that we attribute these things to time and chance, but the Lord is the One who directs all things. This is seen in Proverbs 16 –

"The lot is cast into the lap,  
But its every decision *is* from the LORD." Proverbs 16:33

As far as lots being used to single out a guilty party, even this is not unheard of among the people of God as is recorded in Scripture. A similar account, one which attempts to determine one guilty person out of a crowd, is found in 1 Samuel 14:36-45 –

“Now Saul said, “Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and plunder them until the morning light; and let us not leave a man of them.”

And they said, “Do whatever seems good to you.”

Then the priest said, “Let us draw near to God here.”

<sup>37</sup> So Saul asked counsel of God, “Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will You deliver them into the hand of Israel?” But He did not answer him that day. <sup>38</sup> And Saul said, “Come over here, all you chiefs of the people, and know and see what this sin was today. <sup>39</sup> For as the LORD lives, who saves Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die.” But not a man among all the people answered him. <sup>40</sup> Then he said to all Israel, “You be on one side, and my son Jonathan and I will be on the other side.”

And the people said to Saul, “Do what seems good to you.”

<sup>41</sup> Therefore Saul said to the LORD God of Israel, “Give a perfect *lot*.” So Saul and Jonathan were taken, but the people escaped. <sup>42</sup> And Saul said, “Cast *lots* between my son Jonathan and me.” So Jonathan was taken. <sup>43</sup> Then Saul said to Jonathan, “Tell me what you have done.”

And Jonathan told him, and said, “I only tasted a little honey with the end of the rod that *was* in my hand. So now I must die!”

<sup>44</sup> Saul answered, “God do so and more also; for you shall surely die, Jonathan.”

<sup>45</sup> But the people said to Saul, “Shall Jonathan die, who has accomplished this great deliverance in Israel? Certainly not! As the LORD lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day.” So the people rescued Jonathan, and he did not die.””

Like king Saul and the Israelites of their time, the captain and these pagans now cast the lot in order to determine guilt...

<sup>7 (con't)</sup> **So they cast lots,**

*va'yappilu goralot* – “And they cast lots.” As this is a portion of Scripture which will show a positive result, and as other parts of Scripture detail acceptable uses of lots, it brings up an obvious question, “are lots still acceptable today?”

As I said, the last time the practice of casting lots is mentioned in the Bible is in Acts chapter 1. In Acts chapter 2, the Holy Spirit was poured out on believers. After that, lots are not used again. Though this itself isn’t surprising due to the infrequent use of lots in the Old Testament, they are not ever mentioned in the epistles as an acceptable part of determining doctrinal matters.

Instead, the apostles were present who were given special abilities to determine matters. And from their hands came the final books of the Bible which are given for doctrine, correction, and the like. Our judgments now are to be based on biblical standards, and then united with prayers and petitions to the Lord, not on casting lots. In other words, we are to rely on the Holy Spirit who gave us the pages of Scripture and who is present in our lives as believers. It is through this process that we are to come to our conclusions.

We have what Israel of Old did not have, and we are to use it accordingly. All of our decisions in life are to be in accord with the word, prayed upon for guidance, and trusted that the Lord and His good Spirit will properly direct our steps. This doesn’t mean we don’t act, but that our actions are first to be sanctified by prayer.

Using lots isn’t something to be taken lightly, especially after God has granted us both His completed word and His Spirit. By testing the Lord like this, unsatisfactory results in matters that we should know by study and prayer alone may result. In his book, Divine Guidance by B.A. Ramsbottom, we read this about John Wesley –

"Perhaps the person most renowned for casting lots to discern God's will was John Wesley. He even had an apparatus to use which he carried around with him. But what a sorry position it brought him into! When George Whitefield nobly stood in defense of the doctrines of grace, and especially election, John Wesley cast lots whether to take up his pen and oppose him. The lot said, 'Yes.'

And so for these many years, the doctrine of the Methodist church and its offshoots, such as the Church of God, have held to the unsound principles of Arminianism. Instead of trusting God's Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit, Wesley's use of lots has brought about a great deal of confusion in the modern church."

Rather than study to show himself approved, John Wesley copped out and cast lots in order to make his biblical and life decisions. He even did this to determine if he should marry a particular woman. There is a giant flaw in his method of biblical interpretation, and this giant flaw has affected countless thousands who have followed him in his often unsound theology.

**7 (con't) and the lot fell on Jonah.**

*va'yippol ha'goral al yonah* – "...and fell the lot against Jonah." When the lots were thrown on the ship, the Lord directed them to Jonah. Once again, the naming of him in the account is intended to get us to think on the meaning of his name. Yonah means "Dove," but the root of the name Yonah is the word *yanah*, a word which generally signifies doing wrong to someone. The lot has been cast and the significance of his name is again brought forth in the story.

He is the vexer who has brought trouble on those he was with. However, as we saw, the Lord is using him, his name, and its closely associated meanings, to bring

to the world a story of redemption and hope. Where he has brought wrong to those around him, good will be what ultimately occurs.

**<sup>8</sup> Then they said to him, “Please tell us! For whose cause *is* this trouble upon us?**

*va'yomeru elav haggidah na lanu baasher l'mi ha'raah* – “And they said unto him, ‘Tell us we pray, to us on account of which to whom the evil this to us?’” This same type of question occurs elsewhere in the Bible, “Why is this trouble upon us?” One such example is found in the account of the calling of Gideon –

““Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which *was* in Ophrah, which *belonged* to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide *it* from the Midianites. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, “The LORD *is* with you, you mighty man of valor!” Gideon said to Him, “O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?””” Judges 6:11-13

As for those of Israel at Gideon’s time, it was for disobedience to the will of the Lord. In the same manner, Jonah’s disobedience led to the calamity of the mariners. And here we are in the world today, facing calamity after calamity because we fail to wake up and turn to the Lord.

In the end, calamity is normally self-inflicted. The final calamity, that of hell, will come simply because of rejecting Jesus. Reconciliation is available, but it is not forced. In Psalm 10, the writer wanted to know about his own suffering –

“Why do You stand afar off, O LORD?  
Why do You hide in times of trouble?” Psalm 10:1

The answer is always the same – the Lord is waiting for His people to wake up. Several Hebrew scholars have noted the exceptional, and peculiar use of the language by the sailors. The words translated as, “For whose cause” are not the same as the preceding verse, even though both are translated the same.

Verse 7 describes what the sailors said to one another. Now they ask someone who is not of their own trade, and so they ask in a more elegant form than when they spoke to each other. Rather than being out of place, it displays an exceptional artistic skill is being employed in the narrative, even to the level of perfection of detail.

Now, with the lot having singled out Jonah, which under many circumstances would have been sufficient for a group of anxious, desperate men, they patiently begin a short trial. Instead of trusting in the roll of the dice, they now enter into a series of questions which are intended to definitively determine innocence or guilt.

How unlike anything Jonah would have expected from pagans! It is true that his own Hebrew tradition would have been this thorough, but he probably could not have imagined this from heathens. In Joshua 7, something similar occurred among the people of Israel. Their treatment of the matter was in accord with the law, and it was carried out in a thorough and fair way –

““So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken.<sup>17</sup> He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zarhites; and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man, and Zabdi was taken.<sup>18</sup> Then he brought his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.  
<sup>19</sup> Now Joshua said to Achan, “My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide *it* from me.”

<sup>20</sup> And Achan answered Joshua and said, “Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done: <sup>21</sup> When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it.”

<sup>22</sup> So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. <sup>23</sup> And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD. <sup>24</sup> Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley of Achor. <sup>25</sup> And Joshua said, “Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day.” So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones.””” Joshua 7:16-25

Like the account of Joshua and Achan, the men here went beyond the casting of lots and into a detailed search for the reason behind the lots. They were unwilling to convict and punish someone who may be either innocent or who may have extenuating circumstances which necessitated leniency.

The sense of what is right, and the notion of the sanctity of human life is carefully highlighted, and is intended to bring out a striking contrast between their actions and those of Jonah. Who is in the right, and who is in the wrong?

It is apparent that God wants us to see the events here from His perspective, not a traditionally Jewish one. Evil has befallen them and they were diligent to search out the matter and determine the source of the evil that they were experiencing. As a result, the question of who acts more righteously in this account is made completely evident.

**8 (con't) What is your occupation?**

*mah melaktekha* – “What is your work?” He, a prophet of God as we have already been told, was unknown to them concerning this most vital role among the people of God. Should such a thing be hidden? Should the position we hold which is preeminent above all others, that of being a follower of Christ, be hidden from others until we are under interrogation?

The Hebrew people were to be a light unto the nations. Of all of them, the prophets and priests should have been at the head of this calling. But these men had no idea of what Jonah did. As a kingdom of priests to the Lord, every person we meet should see something different about us, leading them to know that we are followers of Christ.

For Jonah, they were now asking because he may have been engaged in a work which was dishonest, or he may have been dishonest in his work. And for him, the latter was certainly the case. Knowing this would help them to make a right decision concerning his fate.

**8 (con't) And where do you come from?**

*u-me-ayin tavo* – “And from where come?” We already know the answer. He was a prophet of the Lord in the Land of Promise. They had no idea of this because he was unwilling to proclaim the very word which can save the lost soul. Being seafarers, they would stop in many locations, and the character of the people would be well known to them. Their question is to determine what company he kept. In finding this out, they may know if he was an associate of brawlers, or of hard working and ethical people.

**8 (con't) What is your country?**

*mah artsekha* – “What land to you?” Jonah was from the center of the nations, and the land upon which the eye of the Lord was cast continually. It is the land of promise – both to his fathers and to those who would come after him. And it was the land which he had forsaken in His flight from the Lord. The question is asked of Jonah in order to determine if he had committed some offense against the country he came from. With his response, they could then pry more deeply later if need be.

**8 (con't) And of what people are you?”**

*v'eh mizzeh am attah* – “And of what this people you?” It seems like a repetition of the same question just asked, but the people to whom one belongs are not always known as the people of the land in which they reside. Within Israel, there were several distinct people groups, just as there were and are in many countries. If they could determine the land, and then the people group within the land, they could then determine if he was guilty of some crime against either or both.

The multiple, direct, but non-accusatory questions have been asked with the intent of Jonah bringing any charge back to himself. They are broad enough in scope to give him the greatest latitude in presenting the best case possible for himself.

In other words, he is being treated extremely fairly by these heathens. They are giving him a treatment which he has already refused to give to others. In this, we see shadows of the questioning of Jesus by Pontius Pilate.

<sup>9</sup> So he said to them, “I am a Hebrew;

*va'yomer alehem ivri anoki* – “And said to them, Hebrew I” It is a very important proclamation. The term “Hebrew” is one of distinction. It is how foreigners spoke of the people of Israel, or when the people of Israel spoke of themselves to foreigners, or when the people are contrasted to foreigners.

Despite being the official designation of the people of God who descended from Abraham, the term “Hebrew” is actually quite rare in the Old Testament. It was first used in Genesis 14:13 to describe Abram before he was renamed Abraham.

In total, it is used only 34 times. The most times are in the book of Exodus (14) and then 1 Samuel (8). This is now the last time it will be used in the Old Testament. The word is derived from the name Eber who descends from Noah’s son, Shem. He is an ancestor of Abraham, and his name essentially means, “yonder side” or as a verb: to pass or cross, and thus, “He who crossed over.”

Eber was alive at the time of the division of languages and he was then certainly the father of the family line that maintained the original language of the earth which we call Hebrew today.

Because Eber means, “He who crossed over” and it is recorded that his descendants lived in Ur which is on the opposite side of the Euphrates from Babylon, it is probable that he and several generations of his descendants moved away from Babylon to Ur. This was at some point after the time of the Tower of Babel.

Abraham was first known as a Hebrew, or one who “crossed over” the Euphrates and away from the area of Babel. It’s likely that Eber was with him because Abraham was born 179 years before Eber died. So this group of people, with this

special language, the Hebrew language, crossed over the Euphrates as directed by God's divine hand, heading west once again.

This title, "Hebrew," coming from the name Eber, points to a celebration of passing over the great waters of the world. They passed over the Euphrates, they passed through the Red Sea, and they passed over the Jordan and into the Land of Promise. The name and title are directly connected with both a physical and a spiritual crossing over.

In the case of Jonah, he had forsaken the spiritual aspect of the name and was holding onto the physical aspect only. If he thought that he could remain a Hebrew while running from the Lord and passing over a great body of water, he was mistaken. In the New Testament, Paul said that being a Hebrew was a point on which he could boast if by the standards of the world –

"If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." Philippians 3:4-6

However, Paul goes on in the same passage to say that in the end, genealogy, clan, position, or obedience to the law falls short of the greatness of Jesus Christ. What matters isn't culture, race, creed, status, or wealth. In the end, what matters is the Lord and our relationship with Him. Jonah wanted the title, but not the relationship. This was so much the case that his next words actually form an oxymoron, at least up until this moment...

<sup>9 (con't)</sup> **and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven,**

*v'eth Yehovah elohe ha'shemayim ani yare* – “and Yehovah God of the heavens I fear.” Of these words, Jamieson-Faucett-Brown state, “His practice belied his profession: his profession aggravated his guilt.” However, the guilt of his own conscience has now redirected him.

It is as if the storm raging around them acted as a preacher, carrying the Lord’s message for the wayward prophet. He first acknowledged himself as a Hebrew, and then – as if awoken from a slumber – he now says that he fears Yehovah. But even more, he says that He is *Yehovah elohe ha'shemayim* – Yehovah, the God of the heavens.

The local deities which the sailors encountered everywhere they went were all subordinated to the God Jonah now claims to serve. In fact, the very heavens which raged around the sailors was ruled by the God he feared. Jonah’s mind is now fully awakened to the reality around him, and he is willing to stand on what he had learned from the time of his childhood on. There is one God, and the God he served is that one God.

The storm itself had one effect, the casting of the lots had another. If the storm was a sermon, the specially directed casting of the lots was the call to repentance. He had been targeted by the dice, a call to his heart was made, and he now willingly responds to that call. From this point on, there will be a change in the conduct of Jonah which will carry him through a great ordeal and onto the execution of his prophetic commission. Here he moves from being a picture of disobedient Israel to a picture of obedient Christ.

<sup>9</sup> (con't) **who made the sea and the dry *land*."**

*asher asah eth ha'ym v'eth ha'yabbashah* – "...that made the sea and the dry land." Not only is this the God of the heavens, but it is He who made the sea and the dry land. The implication is that He is the Creator of all things. There was once no sea and no dry ground, and then these things existed.

A world with no sea or dry ground is no world at all. But through the wisdom, power, and skill of Yehovah, these things were made, and thus He is the Creator, the Force behind, and the Sustainer of them. It is an all-encompassing and exclusive claim. Jonah is now fully awake from his slumber, and he has thoroughly thought through the significance of what the name Yehovah means.

*Where are You, O God? Help us on this raging sea*

*Quiet the waves and bring back the peace*

*The ocean is far too broad, the waves too mighty*

*Calm the storm, O Lord; cause the waves to cease*

*We put our trust in You, surely You will preserve us alive*

*Cease the tempest and bring to us a time of rest*

*This please do; to that distant shore we shall arrive*

*To be with You there, is our hope-filled quest*

*Guide us safely to that marvelous shore*

*And may the journey there be one of blissful peace*

*Calm the storms of life, may they arise no more*

*Until we are at last with You, may these storms of life cease*

## **II. Hurl Me in the Sea (verses 10-12)**

**<sup>10</sup> Then the men were exceedingly afraid,**

*va'yireū ha'anashim yirah gedolah* – “And feared the men, afraid whoppingly.” With great danger comes a desire to heed the word. For those at ease in the world, there is no need of heeding the word, but when the danger of the tribulation period falls on them, many will be more willing to accept what the Lord has spoken. In the case of the sailors, their eyes have seen the evidences of the truth of Jonah’s claims.

There has been a violent, raging storm which came upon them as if purposefully directed. And then to see if there was guilt by any on board, they cast the lots. These were again purposefully targeted to one soul. And then the words of that targeted person only confirm what they knew must be true. As it says in Isaiah 28 –

“The understanding of this message  
will bring sheer terror.” Isaiah 28:19 (NIV)

Jonah has preached a message to the sailors as clearly as the storm has preached to him. The Lord is God, and He is sovereign. Nothing He does can be thwarted, and so man is to fear Him. And so fear they do.

The verse tells us they were “exceedingly afraid.” Because they traveled to Joppa, they must have been aware of the claims made by the Hebrew people. They may have dismissed them in the past, but now they realize that the claim is true. The Creator is upset with Jonah and they’re participating in the results of His anger.

**<sup>10 (con't)</sup> and said to him, “Why have you done this?”**

*va'yomeru elav mah zot asita* – “...and said unto him, “What this have you done.” This is a rhetorical, horror-filled question which is not looking for an answer. Rather it is as if they think he has gone over the deep end – “Are you completely out of your mind?”

They can easily put two and two together. “Let’s see, the God you serve has created all things. You are attempting to flee from the Creator of all things. And you have brought us along on your little escapade. How could anything be more ridiculous!”

And today, reading the story of Jonah, we can pat the sailors on the back for figuring this out. We may also point our fingers at Jonah and giggle out loud. However, we are just as guilty as Jonah each time we try to hide from the Lord whatever sin we engage in. If He is God, and He is, then whatever we do is fully known by Him. As noted by Moses to the people of Israel, when you sin against the Lord, be sure your sin will find you out.

<sup>10 (con't)</sup> **For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.**

*ki yade-u ha'anashim miliphne Yehovah hu boreakh ki higgid lahem* – “For knew the men that from the face Yehovah he fled because he had told them.” The peculiar thing about these words is that it does not tell when he told them this. Most scholars assume that it was in verse 9, and that this is just a fuller explanation than what is recorded there.

But that seems unlikely for a couple reasons. First, it then makes the narrative awkward. Why wait one verse to restate what had just been said? Secondly, it doesn’t sync with what we saw at the end of the last sermon from verse 6. There, the captain said “Arise! Call on **your** God; it may be that **the** God will shine on us so that we do not perish.” They had made the assumption that the God he was fleeing from was just “a” God who could then petition “the” God.

They thought nothing more of it until they received the full revelation of who Jonah’s God was from Jonah himself. This appears to be the case here. In ancient times, the gods of the people were assumed to be localized to specific areas. If a person fled *from* their god, it simply meant that they were fleeing *to* another god. This was customary and not something that concerned people.

When sailors would travel from port to port, they might even take up the worship of whatever god was the god of that land, assuming it had control of them while in that land. This is something one sees many, many times in the Bible as people

followed the gods of whatever land they were in, or of the people groups of other lands. Now, these sailors had a completely different perspective of *the God* they were already somewhat aware of.

It is for this reason that it is probable that they knew he was fleeing from Yehovah, even from the time he got on the ship. While taking his fare and talking about the journey, they may have asked him where he was heading, and he may have said something like, "Somewhere away from Yehovah, the God of Israel."

**<sup>11</sup> Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?"**

*va'yomeru elav mah naaseh lak v'yistoq ha'yam me-alenu* – "And said unto, 'What shall we do to you, and may be calm the sea for us?'" What is astonishing is that they have come to fear the Lord enough in this short time to know that they can't arbitrarily take action. The natural assumption is normally, "Get rid of the instigator and the problem will disappear with him."

This is what the Jews of Jesus' time assumed, and they were wrong. For the sailors, they are wise enough to think the matter through. By now understanding the greatness of the Lord, they see that such an expediency may not actually resolve the situation.

They knew Jonah had the answers, and so they asked, "What should we do?" When a family member is sick, we ask the doctor, "What should we do?" When the car is broken, we ask the mechanic, "What should we do?" When our life is spinning out of control, even when we've never acknowledged God a single time, the very first thing we do is cry out, "O God, what should I do?"

When John the Baptist was preaching repentance before the coming wrath, the people of Israel asked the same thing –

““Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup>Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as *our* father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham

from these stones.<sup>9</sup> And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

<sup>10</sup> So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?"

<sup>11</sup> He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise."

<sup>12</sup> Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"

<sup>13</sup> And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you."

<sup>14</sup> Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?"

So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages." Luke 3:9-14

The problem with "what shall we do?" is that when we ask it, we're already in a pickle – the child is sick, the car is broken, the wrath is coming. What we need to do before our life is unmanageable is to take Solomon's advice... "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth." Get to know God before the days of evil come. How few of us are actually willing to do this?

For the sailors with Jonah, we are told that the storm was only growing worse. Their question is one which is especially direct, "What shall we do to you...?" They know that whatever they do, it is to involve Jonah specifically. They desire a calm sea, but they desire it out of a newfound fear of the Lord. Therefore, they ask the only person who knows what that fully entails. And there was a sense of urgency to the matter...

**11 (con't) —for the sea was growing more tempestuous.**

*ki ha'ym holek v'soer* – "For the sea worked and was whirling." It is a Hebrew idiom which indicates something which is growing more and more. It was as if the sea itself was alive and writhing out from under its covers, coming at them by the command of the voice of the Master who directed it.

Each new swell that lifted them, was a warning that they should not delay in taking action, lest all would be lost. Again, the account here takes us to Mark 4 and the dire situation which the disciples felt while Jesus lay sleeping. They woke Him and begged with the pitiful words, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”

There was a time to awaken the Lord who was sure to have a remedy to their plight, and there was a time to petition the Lord for the sailors with Jonah to also remedy their plight.

The word translated as “tempestuous” is the verb form of the word “tempest” from verse 4. As a verb, it is used only 7 times, twice in Jonah, more than any other book. It is from a root which means “to rush upon.” It is used in Zechariah 7 to indicate the Lord’s rage against Israel where He scatters them among the nations –

“Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from the LORD of hosts.<sup>13</sup> Therefore it happened, *that just as He proclaimed and they would not hear, so they called out and I would not listen,*” says the LORD of hosts.<sup>14</sup> **“But I scattered them with a whirlwind** among all the nations which they had not known. Thus the land became desolate after them, so that no one passed through or returned; for they made the pleasant land desolate.” Zechariah 7:12-14

The fear of the Lord by the sailors was going in two directions at once. First, it was in fear of what He *was doing*, and secondly it was in fear of *what He may do* if what they did was wrong. They needed an answer, and so they awaited the words of the prophet himself...

**<sup>12</sup> And he said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea;**

*va'yomer alehem sauni va'hatiluni el ha'yam* – “And said to them, ‘Take me up and hurl me forth into the sea.’” Again, the word *tul*, or “hurl” is used to show us the contrast between what has been and what is now expected. In verse 4, the Lord “hurled” a great wind onto the sea. After this in verse 5, the sailors attempted to lighten the ship by “hurling” the cargo over the sides.

Now, Jonah again uses the word to indicate that in order to stop what the Lord had hurled at them because of what he had chosen to do, they needed to in turn hurl him into the sea and to the fate of the Lord. The word is used in a striking manner for us to consider. Because of the disobedience of Judah, the Lord promised to hurl them out of the land which they dwelt in, using the same word now used in Jonah –

**“Therefore I will cast you out of this land into a land that you do not know, neither you nor your fathers; and there you shall serve other gods day and night, where I will not show you favor.” Jeremiah 16:13**

As a prophet of the Lord, it is with the same resigned attitude which Jeremiah the prophet announced to the people of Judah, and which Jonah now relays his own sentence. It is to be taken as a divine prophecy, and with its fulfillment will come the hope-filled promise of deliverance for those who were so close to perishing...

**<sup>12 (con't)</sup> then the sea will become calm for you.**

*v'yishtoq ha'yam me-alekem* – “...and be calm the sea for you.” The word for “calm” here is *shathaq*. It is found only four times in the Bible, two are here in Jonah 1:11 & 12. This is the last time it will be seen. The other two times it is used

is in Psalm 107:30 and Proverbs 26:20. In the psalm it indicates the calm after a storm, and in Proverbs it metaphorically speaks of peace after strife.

In this case, it carries both meanings. There will be actual calm upon the seas after the terrifying storm, and there will also be peace after the strife between the Lord and Jonah.

Concerning Jonah, his actions are given as a type of the coming Messiah. He has offered to die in order to allay the terrifying flood of God's wrath. Should he not be cast into the waters, the flood of God's wrath will engulf them. And should Jesus not have been cast into the ocean of chaos and death, God's wrath would likewise remain on us. This is why John records this in his gospel –

"And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all,<sup>50</sup> nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish."<sup>51</sup> Now this he did not say on his own *authority*; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation,<sup>52</sup> and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad." John 11:49-52

Jonah spoke the word of the Lord to the men on the ship, forming the type and picture of Messiah to come. In fulfillment of that, Caiaphas spoke under the spirit of prophecy concerning what would occur concerning Christ Jesus.

\*<sup>12 (fin)</sup> **For I know that this great tempest *is* because of me."**

*ki yodea ani ki besheli ha'saar ha'gadol hazeh alekem* – "For know I that because of me the tempest, the whopping, this on you." Jonah understands the consequences of his actions against the Lord, and thus he has arrived at the

acceptance of the penalty he deserves because of them. In this realization, he has grown to be more outraged at his own sin, than fearful of the expected suffering which the punishment for that sin demands.

The punishment for his actions must be carried out, or there will be no turning of the Lord from His anger. Again, this is like the account of Achan at the time of Joshua. Until the violator was removed, there would be no relief from the Lord's anger. Jonah knew that just as Achan brought trouble to Israel, he had brought about trouble for innocent men, and that his life was now forfeit.

This is the message of the Bible. Man has transgressed the law of God and punishment is due for that transgression. But like Jonah who is willing to give himself up for the men on the ship, Jesus was willing to give Himself up for the people of the world.

There is an immense difference between the two as well though. Jonah was guilty and was to be punished for his guilt. Jesus was without guilt, but accepted punishment for those who are guilty. The lesson here is that God cannot simply pass over sin. Instead, it must be judged. But God has also fashioned a means for the punishment to be executed in a Substitute.

In the verses so far, we have seen the Lord's anger at disobedience. This is the sin of Adam. We have seen the sailor's attempts to save themselves. This is works-based salvation. We have seen Israel's failure to meet the law both in their own works and in sharing the light with the Gentiles.

And we have seen God's determined purpose in the lots. This is the destruction of sin through the fulfillment of the law. A law which now requires a substitute to be sacrificed in order for salvation to be realized. In this act, *shathaq*, or peace after the strife is the promised and expected result. It is the gospel.

Thank God for Jesus Christ who was both capable and willing to do this for us! It is evident that God loves the people of the world enough to demonstrate that love in the most marvelous of ways. Let us refine our doctrine on salvation to the point where we can clearly and precisely convey it to others. It is the message which desperately needs to be shared with the world.

**Closing Verse:** “They mount up to the heavens,  
They go down again to the depths;  
Their soul melts because of trouble.

<sup>27</sup> They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,  
And are at their wits’ end.

<sup>28</sup> Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble,  
And He brings them out of their distresses.

<sup>29</sup> He calms the storm,  
So that its waves are still.

<sup>30</sup> Then they are glad because they are **quiet**; (*shathaq*)  
So He guides them to their desired haven.” Psalm 107:26-30

**Next Week:** Jonah 1:13-17 *Surely from what happens, Jonah will show signs of aging... (The Sea Ceased from its Raging) (4<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.

### **Pick Me Up and Throw Me in the Sea**

And they said to one another, in a somewhat heated fuss

“Come, let us cast lots, that we may know

For whose cause this trouble has come upon us  
So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah; to Jonah it did go

Then they said to him, "Please tell us!  
For whose cause is this trouble upon us? So asked the crew  
What is your occupation? And where do you come from?  
What is your country? And of what people are you?

So he said to them, "I am a Hebrew  
And I fear the LORD, the God of heaven  
Who made the sea and the dry land  
If you want to know more, stay tuned for News at Eleven

Then the men were exceedingly afraid and to him said  
"Why have you done this?" Words forbidding and bold  
For the men knew that he fled  
From the presence of the LORD, because them he had told

Then they said to him  
Asking about their situation so grim

"What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?"  
—for the sea was growing more tempestuous

And he said to them, in words stern but true  
“Pick me up and throw me into the sea  
Then the sea will become calm for you  
For I know that this great tempest is because of me

Lord, how amazing it is for us to see  
How Another was willing to die for us  
There! There upon the cross of Calvary  
Hangs the sinless Son of God, our Lord Jesus

And for us He was cast into death's terrible sea  
His life was taken so that we could live  
And yet, over death He gained the victory  
And to us, that victory He now does freely give

Praises to You, O God, for these things you have done  
For the marvelous works, accomplished for us  
Our highest praises for the gift of Your Son  
Our precious, glorious Savior – our Lord Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

## **JONAH 1:13-17 (THE SEA CEASED FROM ITS RAGING)**

The verses in Jonah today will show us, once again, a truth which permeates the Bible. It is that God is pleased with obedience to His word, and that such obedience is displayed in acts of faith. Jonah is being used to make several pictures simultaneously. He is being used to picture Israel, obstinate and contrary to the will of God until the point that all hope is lost.

He is also being used to picture the Person and work of Christ. As with all pictures, there will be things that don't perfectly match, and so the underlying truths need to be looked for, rather than an obvious one-to-one comparison. If everything were exact comparisons, then we would simply be reading the story of Jesus.

But as in all such passages of the Bible, there is the type and then there is the Anti-type. The types are used to make pictures which lead us to the greater Anti-type. Such was the case with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, and a great host of others. And such is the case with Jonah.

Today's verses are somewhat similar to what happened to Joseph when he was cast into the pit by his brothers. That account pictured Christ in a particular way. In a like manner, Jonah will be cast into the sea. From that act, there will be a resulting action. And connected to that is the premise that man is saved by faith. This is seen in our text verse for today –

**Text Verse:** "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,<sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe." Romans 3:21-22

Who is it that goes away from today's passage in safety and gratitude to God? Who is it that God responded to because of their act of faith? The answer is obvious, but there is more than just the surface story. Rather, there is a lot of depth and marvelous detail in these five verses.

How can it be that the death of one can be the salvation of many? It is a theme which permeates the Bible and which is seen once again in these verses, and so let's jump right into them. It's all 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. You, O Lord, Have Done as it Pleased You (verses 13-16)**

<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land,

*va'yakhteru ha'anashim l'hashiv el ha'yabashah* – “and dug down the men to return unto the dry land.” The verse begins with “And” in the Hebrew, but English translations normally choose contrasting words such as “however,” “nevertheless,” “even so,” “but,” or “instead.”

There is a reason for this. The word translated as “rowed hard,” *khatar*, is a word which indicates “to dig.” This is the last of just 8 times that it is seen in Scripture. It comes from a primitive root which indicates “to force a passage, as by burglary.”

This is the only time in the Bible that it is used in this sense. All seven other times, it is translated as to dig, such as through a wall in order to break through it, or even to dig into the pit of hell itself (Amos 9:2). From this, we can see that these men literally dug deep into the water, in order to make headway.

Their sails were of no use to them, and so they resorted to brute force in order to find safe harbor. The choice of the word provides us with the mental image of these men literally trying to dig through the walls of the waves, as if trying to break out of the tempestuous prison they are in, and into safety.

It gives the sense of really working hard on their part. The Hebrew is active and alive. It is for this reason that many translations begin the verse with a contrasting word like “But” in order to set off the words of Jonah from the last verse which said –

“Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest *is* because of me.”

What we are viewing then is a group of people to whom have been explained the means by which they can be saved from the raging tempest, and yet who are

adamant to save their wayward passenger, even at the possible expense of their own lives.

In other words, a complete contrast is being shown us between Jonah who has fled from the Lord in order to not bring a saving message to the entire city of Nineveh, and to these pagans who are willing to risk their own lives for the sake of a single, guilty, man. The contrast is stark and it is striking.

<sup>13 (con't)</sup> **but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them.**

*v'lo yakolu ki ha'yam holek v'soer alehem* – "...and no do they could, for the sea worked and was whirling against them." The same term that was used in verse 11 is again used here as the sea continued to work and whirl into an even more tempestuous rage. It grew more and more, and no matter what they did, it was a futile effort for them.

Quite often in our own lives, the seas work against us, and it seems that the harder we fight against them, the more the waves mount up against us. In such cases, it could be that we are not living in accord with the word. These men have been told what will save them, but they have a conflict between their moral stand and what the spoken word has revealed.

In Israel, the Lord mandated the death penalty for certain infractions of the law. The people were not given the choice as to whether they could carry out the penalty or not. For example, in Exodus 22 we read these words –

"You shall not permit a sorceress to live.

<sup>19</sup> "Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death.

<sup>20</sup> "He who sacrifices to *any* god, except to the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed." Exodus 22:18-20

If those laws stood today, would we follow through with the punishment? Obviously not. Nor did Israel. They found that extenuating circumstances, degrading morality, and outright rebellion against the Lord was more suitable to their tastes than obedience to His word.

Israel faced their own storms of trials and judgment for not adhering to the word of the Lord, and these men – despite doing what is noble – will continue to face the waves until they obey the Lord’s word.

On the other hand, this also doesn’t necessarily mean that when such trials come, that we’re being disobedient towards the Lord. We can, in fact, have storms while being completely obedient to Him. Instead of trying to make it to a safe harbor on our own, we need to evaluate our lives and align them with the word. If that is already the case, then we need to come to the Lord with our burden and ask Him to carry us through it.

**<sup>14</sup> Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said,**

*va’yiqreu el Yehovah va’yomeru* – “And cried out to Yehovah and said.” The words make it apparent that they honestly believe Jonah’s words, and that it is Yehovah who has sent the storm against them. As Jonah previously explained to them, He is the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.

They have come to accept this as it was spoken to them, and thus they possess the knowledge that because He is the Creator, He is also the One who controls the creation. And so they no longer cry out, every man to his own god, as in verse 5. Rather, they collectively cry out to the true God.

The raging of the winds and the billowing of the waves are caused by Him, and therefore Jonah’s other words must then also be true. Jonah has brought this plight upon them. In order for it to end, he must be cast over the side of the ship...

**<sup>14</sup> (con’t) “We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man’s life,**

*annah Yehovah al na novedah b’nephesh ha’ish hazzeh* – “We beg of you, Yehovah, no we pray perish for soul the man this.” If we step back for a second and look at Jonah as a type of Israel as a whole, compared to the pagans here and elsewhere in the story, we can see the strong and obvious contrast between them. There is the stubbornness of Israel, but the complete willingness of the Gentiles to accept the word of the Lord, to do what is right, and to acknowledge the sovereignty of God.

These Gentiles have been given only a small insight into the nature of the Lord, and yet now, they call out to Him by name, yielding themselves completely and wholly to Him.

In their cry, they use a word which is rather rare in Scripture, *annah*, it being seen just 13 times. It is a contraction of two other words, *ahava*, meaning “love,” and *na*, meaning “please.” In essence, “I beg of you.” It is a begging which would come from the soul of the man in a deep and heartfelt petition.

The word is directed to Yehovah, understanding that He alone can grant the petition which has been made. This is the only time that it is used by someone outside of the covenant line of the people of Israel. Despite being pagans, their cry to Yehovah is heartfelt and it is sincere.

The petition is for the sake of their own lives being granted to them for complying with the spoken word against Jonah which will result in the taking his life. What is known to them is that in the taking of another’s life, their lives would thus, under normal circumstances, be forfeit. Though pagans, and outside of the covenant line who lived under the Law of Moses, the memory of what was spoken to their ancestor Noah remained with them –

“Whoever sheds man’s blood,  
By man his blood shall be shed;  
For in the image of God  
He made man. “ Genesis 9:6

Understanding the consequences of this they beg now for mercy...

**<sup>14</sup> (con't) and do not charge us with innocent blood;**

*v’al titen alenu dam naqiy* – “and not lay on us blood innocent.” The adjective *naqiy*, or innocent, was first used in Genesis 24:41. This is the last time it will be used in the Bible. It indicates being blameless, exempted, or free from guilt. Here we see a foreshadowing of the work of Christ. Pilate washed his hands and declared Christ innocent as is seen in Matthew 27:24 –

"When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather *that* a tumult was rising, he took water and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see *to it*.'"

They see Jonah's blood as innocent, and yet they understand that he must die in order for them to live. The passage looks back to Genesis, indicating that they still intuitively understood the words of the Lord to Noah. Guilt is reckoned to anyone who would shed man's blood. However, the circumstances of their situation called out that they not be charged in this case. And so it also looks forward to Christ who takes away the guilt through His death. Albert Barnes precisely states the situation of these men –

"And lay not upon us innocent blood - innocent as to them, although, as to this thing, guilty before God, and yet, as to God also, more innocent, they would think, than they. For, strange as this was, one disobedience, their whole life, they now knew, was disobedience to God; His life was but one act in a life of obedience. If God so punishes one sin of the holy (1 Peter 4:18), 'where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?' Terrible to the awakened conscience are God's chastenings on some (as it seems) single offence of those whom He loves." Albert Barnes

Though Christ Jesus never sinned, it was reckoned to Him as if He did. To these men, they saw Jonah as innocent towards them, even if counted guilty before God. In the imputation of our guilt to Christ, and His righteousness imputed to us, we see how the perfect Christ corresponds directly to the guilty Jonah. This is how the Lord saw it in both instances, and therefore, His will must be yielded to. This is next explicitly stated...

<sup>14 (con't)</sup> **for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You."**

*ki attah Yehovah kaasher khaphats-ta asita* – "For You, Yehovah, as pleasing to You, You have done." The words are robust and impressive. They acknowledge that everything has been according to the will of the Lord. The storm arising, the casting of the lots, the words of Jonah concerning what had to happen to him... all of it is as has been directed by the Lord. This word, *khaphets*, is the same word found in Isaiah 53:10 – "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." We are seeing the work of Christ in type and picture.

In the Hebrew, the actions are described with three simple words, and yet they form a profession of faith as great as any found anywhere else, “As is pleasing to You, so You have done.” Their words are reflective of the words of the psalmist who was certainly, like each of them had become, a man of faith –

“For I know that the Lord *is* great,  
And our Lord *is* above all gods.  
<sup>6</sup>Whatever the Lord pleases He does,  
In heaven and in earth,  
In the seas and in all deep places.” Psalm 135:5, 6

Because the Lord is sovereign, we have but two choices, yield to His will, or buck against it to our own harm and shame. The sailors having become men of faith, conformed their actions according to His will. Again, the words of Jonah are given to show us the stark contrast between Israel and the Gentile people of the world. Contrast their actions to those of Manasseh the King of Judah who would live only a short time later –

“Moreover Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides his sin by which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of the Lord.” 2 Kings 21:16

In the account of Jonah, pagans had concern over a single life, but Manasseh, shed innocent blood without a second thought. In the New Testament, we continue to see a contrast. Not only was Jonah innocent in their eyes, even more, he was a prophet of the Lord.

They risked their lives to save him, and when they finally had no remedy, they begged for pardon from the guilt of his blood. Jesus speaks out the contrast between their actions towards the Lord’s prophet and those of the people of Jerusalem –

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen *gathers* her brood under *her* wings, but you were not willing! <sup>35</sup> See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me

until *the time* comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’” Luke 13:34, 35

While we’re talking about the guilt of innocent blood, I might as well bring up our own guilt. For 44 years, we have been swimming in a pool of blood, to the tune of almost 60 million lives murdered through abortion. The guilt of this nation, and especially the democrat party of the United States, reeks to heaven.

May God help us to open our eyes to see and to turn from what we are doing. I pray that the new leaders of our nation will do everything they can to end all funding to these devils, and to overturn the horrifying and ungodly law which has made us ripe for God’s judgment.

<sup>15</sup> **So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea,**

*Va'yisū eth yonah v'tilu-hu el ha'ym* – “And they lifted up Jonah and cast him forth into the sea.” For the fourth and last time in the book of Jonah, and also for the last time in the Bible, the word *tul* or “hurl” is used. It was used in verse 4 when the Lord *hurled* the great wind upon them. It was again used when the sailors *hurled* their cargo overboard, and then it was used by Jonah to tell those same sailors what they were to do with him – *hurl* him over. Now all the hurling at sea is over. The reluctant sailors took the necessary action and the matter was resolved.

We must ask why it is so specific concerning lifting Jonah up. In verse 12, Jonah specifically told the sailors to lift him up and cast him into the sea. Why didn’t he just say “Cast me into the sea.”? In verse 5, it doesn’t say they lifted up the cargo and cast it into the sea. It just says they cast it into the sea. It is because a picture is being made for us. In fulfillment of verse 12 Jesus said in the following in John 12 –

“And I, if I am **lifted up** from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself.” John 12:32

And in fulfillment of this verse, we read this in Isaiah 52, using the same word, *nasah*, as is found here in Jonah –

"See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and **lifted up** and highly exalted." Isaiah 52:13

We are being given a prophecy and a fulfillment of the prophecy, right before our eyes.

Each word is revealing the work of Christ. In 1831, someone noticed for the first time that Jupiter had a big red spot on it. Eventually they figured out that it was a giant storm, like a hurricane. No one knows how long it's been there or how long it will continue... it just keeps raging on. Anyone who has been in a storm on the sea knows every minute is like an eternity.

Eventually though, all storms do end. Some lose steam as they come onto land. Some storms fade out from cross winds. Some storms die out from temperature drops. And some storms end because the Lord's wrath is appeased. The men *nasah*, or lifted up Jonah. In Isaiah 52, it says the Lord Jesus would likewise be *nasah*, or lifted, up...

<sup>15 (con't)</sup> **and the sea ceased from its raging.**

*va'yaamod ha'yam mizapo* – "and stood the sea from her anger."

The word *amad* means "to stand." It is used here in the same manner as we use the word in English. The storm "stood" still or ceased. And so you get the mental impression of activity. The storm was as if crouched down, raging and blowing all around the sailors, but as the word of the Lord was obeyed, the storm stood, as if at attention, and the raging ended.

Again, in the sudden cessation of the storm, we have a parallel to the crucifixion of Christ. Although it was darkness and not a storm which the writers describe, it lasted during the ordeal, and ended when the life ended, pictured by Jonah's being cast into the sea –

“Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.<sup>45</sup> Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two.<sup>46</sup> And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’” Having said this, He breathed His last.””  
Luke 23:44-46

In Jonah's being cast from among the living, the storm ceased, and that anger of the storm was over. In the casting of the life of Christ from among the living, the pall of darkness likewise ceased, and the anger of God at the sin of man was quieted and appeased.

The raging sea of God's wrath had ended, and peace was restored. The prediction of Jonah was realized among these sailors of faith, and the promises of Scripture, even from the time of the fall of man itself, are likewise realized among those who, by faith, cast their sins at the foot of Calvary's cross.

God's wrath is on the opposite side of the coin of God's mercy. When, by faith, the sailors threw Jonah in, His mercy could finally be realized. In the same way, when Jesus woke up and exercised His power, the storm on the Sea of Galilee ended. A mere rebuke from His breath and all was calm –

"But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. <sup>27</sup> So the men marveled, saying, 'Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?'"  
Matthew 8:26-27

And then going back to the account from Acts, the ship Paul was on wasn't saved. It was destroyed on a shoal as the waves beat it to pieces, but all of the people on board were saved. Because of Paul's faithful witness, the Bible says God graciously granted the lives of all who were aboard. Again and again the Bible demonstrates the power of faith.

How we conduct ourselves now affects everyone we come in contact with – even if we only cross their paths for a moment. A good question to ask as we drive and lose our temper, as we shop and don't find what we want, as we impatiently wait on hold for the technician is, "How will what I do affect my Christian testimony in their lives?" If we remember His presence in all we do, we should have no fear, frustration, or fret. He is in control and is tending to our every need. As we live our lives, we can repeat the proverb...

"When you lie down, you will not be afraid;  
Yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet." Proverbs 3:24

<sup>16</sup> Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly,

*va'yire-ū ha'anashim yirah gedolah eth Yehovah* – “And feared the men, afraid whoppingly, Yehovah.” What may be the stupidest commentary ever penned on this verse, the Geneva Bible says, “They were touched with a certain repentance of their past life, and began to worship the true God by whom they saw themselves as wonderfully delivered. But this was done for fear, and not from a pure heart and affection, neither according to God's word.”

The fear referred to here, is given as a contrast to the fear that they previously held. This exact same phrase, word for word, was used in verse 10 with but a slight difference. In verse 10, they had just heard Jonah’s words that he was a Hebrew who feared Yehovah, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.

Now, their fear is still directed to Yehovah, but instead of it being vague and uncertain – a fear which leads to death, it is a fear whose object is Yehovah, the God of Jonah; the Creator – it is a fear that leads to life. Further it was wholly in accord with God’s word as given to them by Jonah. The Geneva commentary could not be more wrong. The Bible is giving us this contrast for a specific reason, and it’s not to assume that there was no change in these Gentiles, but rather a complete and total change.

The fear of Yehovah, we are told, is the beginning of wisdom. They have started on their journey through the fear of Yehovah, with a pure heart and a directed affection.

This brings us back to the word *yayin* or “wine” which is related to the name Yonah, or Jonah, which we evaluated at the start of this adventure. As we saw, vineyards represent the cultural side of humanity. There are various vineyards which are various cultures. Vineyards produce grapes, or cultural expressions, and these are mixed together through a mashing process to produce wine.

In the Bible, wine then symbolizes the merging together of these expressions into a result. The thing that ought to happen can happen, symbolized by wine. It is as if an act of reasoning is occurring, and an intended result is realized. It is as if we are

"seeing wisdom as wine drawn from the grapes of observations and deductions" (Abarim).

Like a dove, Jonah's adventure so far has vacillated, but in the course of events, the minds of the people are changed, and the redemptive process of God is revealed. Jonah is being equated with what his name means, "Dove." But the root of his name, and the variations of it, are being drawn together by God to tell us a story.

Just as Jonah was the means by which these Gentiles have come to know and fear Yehovah, so Jesus as the fulfillment of the picture, is the means by which the Gentile world, once on the raging sea of chaos, is brought to the peaceful waters of rest in the knowledge of the true God.

The sailors had seen the marvelous power of the Lord as it worked in relation to Jonah. The disciples with Jesus, and the men aboard the ship with Paul, had seen the marvelous power of the Lord as it worked in relation to Christ and the message of Christ. In each circumstance, the words of the psalmist are fulfilled –

Fire and hail, snow and clouds;  
Stormy wind, fulfilling His word; Psalm 148:8

In order to effect His word in the lives of others, He even uses the elements to do His bidding and to fulfill His word.

**16 (con't) and offered a sacrifice to the LORD**

*v'yizbekhu zebakh l'Yehovah* – "...and they sacrificed (a) sacrifice to Yehovah," What the sacrifice was is not said, and thus it is not important what it was. Scholars argue over this as if they were standing there and watching the events unfold. Some argue that they had live animals on board and used them as sacrifices. Some argue that they had already thrown their cargo over and so this wouldn't be possible.

It is all vain and useless conjecture. In the Bible, the *zebakh*, or "sacrifice" is not limited to animals. They very well may have sacrificed animals, but it could be a meal offering, a sacrifice of joy, a sacrifice of a contrite and broken heart, a

sacrifice of righteousness, or a sacrifice of thanksgiving. The word *zebakh* is used to describe all of these in Scripture.

Whatever they chose to sacrifice, it was to the Lord and not to the false gods they once prayed to. They had, in essence, come to the foot of the cross, there to worship the true Lord of all.

**16 (con't) and took vows.**

*va'yider-ū nedarim* – “and vowed vows.” The sacrifices were made as “right now” offerings to Yehovah. They were directed to him with hearts of contrition, in joy, with thanksgiving, and as a righteous oblation to Him. The vows were made as future conduct towards Him.

They were intended to bind them to the Lord from that point on, and to live for Him as much as could be expected from men apart from the law, but who lived under His grace. The man in the foxhole facing death will inevitably make vows to God. How many will he later act on?

I once listened to a man who was in WWII. He saw another man ordered to move forward and take out a machine gun nest. The guy charged forward and was shot almost immediately. As he lay there dying, he recited the words of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.

The man in the foxhole asked the Lord to give him the same type of faith, and he made a promise to God that if he survived, he would dedicate his life to the Lord. When he arrived back in Texas, he planted numerous churches. But even after tirelessly working throughout his remaining years, he felt he had not done enough in repayment to the Lord. He made a vow and he kept it.

It's an important lesson for each of us. We need to remember to fulfill our vows when we make them. This theme is repeated throughout the Bible and is something God expects of us –

“Make vows to the LORD your God, and pay *them*;” Psalm 76:11

Were the book to end with at this point, we could look at the story in one of two ways – that God’s plans were thwarted towards the Ninevites because Jonah was cast over and died. Or we could look at it as God’s plans were actually directed all along at those who sailed with Jonah; bringing them to salvation in the Lord.

However, we need not speculate because this is not the end of the story. Instead, God’s plan wasn’t only for the men on the ship, but for those in Nineveh as well. In the Hebrew text, Jonah Chapter 1 ends with verse 16. Verse 17 actually starts Chapter 2.

*How the oceans rage, and the winds blow so strong  
There is no way for us to safely reach the shore  
When will come relief? This tempest will last how long?  
When will the waves die down, to threaten us no more?*

*It is as if God’s wrath rests upon us, as we sail on  
Is there no way for the sea to be calm and still once again  
Has God abandoned us, is all hope gone  
Is this our sad destiny, and the fate of all men?*

*No! For in one mighty act the seas have quieted and are still  
When the Lord was cast into the turbulent sea  
In His death, Christ Jesus has fulfilled God’s will  
And brought us once again to a place of peace and tranquility*

## II. The Deliverer (verse 17)

<sup>17</sup> Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah.

*vay-man Yehovah dag gadol livloa eth yonah* – “And had appointed Yehovah fish whopping to swallow Jonah.” There is a lot about this verse which is misunderstood, or often mistranslated. First, the word here translated as “had prepared” is *manah*. It means “to count.” Thus the fish has been “appointed,” not “prepared.”

Using “prepared” is misleading and gives the sense of an act of creation. Rather, God has created, and he has appointed his creation to act at certain counts, or

times, in order to meet His needs. He employs His created agents to do His bidding at His will.

Secondly, the “great fish” here is incorrectly translated in the New Testament by some versions as “whale.” This is unjustifiable and it is incorrect. The Hebrew word is *dag*. It indicates a prolific beast; one that greatly multiplies, as is seen in fish, not in mammals.

Great studies have been done on this, which, if you want to learn more just go browse the internet. This was probably a sea-dog or a type of shark which is found in the Mediterranean Sea. In fact, the scholar Keil notes the following –

“...in the year 1758 a sailor fell overboard from a frigate, in very stormy weather, into the Mediterranean Sea, and was immediately taken into the jaws of a sea-dog (*carcharias*), and disappeared. The captain, however, ordered a gun, which was standing on the deck, to be discharged at the shark, and the cannon-ball struck it, so that it vomited up again the sailor that it had swallowed, who was then taken up alive, and very little hurt, into the boat that had been lowered for his rescue.”

Jonah really was cast over the side, and a great fish really did swallow him whole. There is no reason to assume that in order to arrive at the Anti-type, Christ, that the Lord would merely use an allegory to make his point. Rather, he used a real person, with real circumstances, to point us to the true fulfillment of what is now only pictured.

The casting of Jonah over the side was symbolic of his death, and thus a picture of the death of the Lord. The calming of the sea was then a picture of the calming of the wrath against man which was realized in Christ’s death.

The swallowing of Jonah by the great fish, is not as most scholars claim a picture of his death, but of his deliverer from his state of death. Just as Christ died on the cross and was then entombed, Jonah was swallowed by the fish after what could be considered his death. This will be seen in the coming chapter.

\*<sup>17</sup> (fin) **And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.**

*vay'hi yonah bime ha'dag sheloshah yamim u-sheloshah lelowt* – “And was Jonah in the belly the fish three days and three nights.” What is the greatest tragedy of all, and which has led to innumerable and incorrect rabbit trails concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the words here are reflective of the Hebrew way of reckoning time. This in no way signifies complete days and nights of 24-hour duration, or thus a period of 72 hours. For example, in Esther 4:16, we read –

“Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which *is* against the law; and if I perish, I perish!” Esther 4:16

In Esther 5:1, we then read this –

“Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on *her* royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king’s palace, across from the king’s house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house.”  
Esther 5:1

It was the third day from the proclamation, not the fourth or even the fifth day from it. From the first page of the Bible onward, Hebrew has no single word to express what we would consider a natural day. The time here can express one whole day and a part of the other two. We do this in our own language as well.

I might say that I will be out of town for three days, when I leave on Monday afternoon and return on Wednesday morning. I was, in fact, gone for three days, just not for three full days. I also might say, “I have worked for ten days, day and night, in order to finish this project.” This does not mean that I worked the entire time, but that the entire time was consumed with my work.

This is how Hebrew time is reckoned in the Bible. It is no different than how the Bible records such things and the Jewish audience of Matthew would understand this. The same account in Luke concerning Christ’s time in the tomb reads differently from Matthew because it’s given to a different audience. This becomes

important in correctly identifying the time and day that Christ was crucified, and the time and day that He arose.

Thirteen times in the New Testament it says that He rose “on the third day.” As He rose on a Sunday, the simplest way to resolve this is to count back from the third day. Sunday (1); Saturday (2); Friday (3). However, though more complicated, this timeline is confirmed through a proper study of the gospel records and which I will include at the end of the written sermon which is available on-line. At no charge too. \*PREPARATION DAY\*

Understanding this, Jonah’s time in the belly of the fish could have been less than 72 hours, and yet still fulfilling the required sense of the Hebrew reckoning of time. What is important, again, is the type and the Anti-type. All of which points to Christ.

Everything about the narrative is giving us clues of other things – the work of Christ, the bringing in of Gentiles to the Lord by mercy, grace, and faith, the stubbornness of Israel against the Lord and the willingness of the Gentiles to receive Him. Redemptive history is being revealed to us in a marvelous snapshot.

It is as if a tribunal has been held. The ship becomes the courtroom, the sailors become the jury, the raging winds and the storm are the accusers, the Lord’s prophet is the accused, the sea is the instrument and pit of death, the fish is the deliverer from death and the womb of life, and behind it all is the hand of the Lord, directing the story.

If you’re a Jew or a Gentile, a male or a female – if you’re a businessman or a drug addict, a prostitute or a housewife – no matter what your race, creed, or culture, you will also face a trial as an accused. You can face it alone, or you can face it with one who has already stood in your place, willing to take your sentence upon Himself. The sailors found this out. They were given the word of the Lord – “Pick me up and throw me into the sea.”

For a time, they strived to save themselves, digging hard into the waves in order to return to the shore. It is works-based salvation, and it only will lead to a greater rage from God. But they finally yielded to His word, and they came to the cross where the Innocent was to die for the guilty. They called out, “O Lord, please do

not let us perish for this Man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood." All men will be charged, but the question is, "Will it be in our own guilt, or in Christ's righteousness?" Only He is innocent.

Their final words were, "For You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You." Only in the death of Christ is God pleased. Only He satisfied the works of the law perfectly, and only His death could cease the raging of the sea of disobedience and death which has worked and whirled against man for countless ages. Only He; only He.

Now the choice is Yours. The sea has ceased from its raging for all who call out to Him. But you must call, and you must receive. Call on Christ today, and be reconciled to Your heavenly Father through His shed blood. God loves you and wants to have a relationship with you. He sent a fish to save Jonah; He sent the completed work of Christ Jesus to save you!

**Closing Verse:** "He sent from above, He took me;  
He drew me out of many waters." Psalm 18:16

**Next Week:** Jonah 2:1-4 *Yes, from out of the place where after he had died...* (Out of the Belly of Sheol I Cried) (5<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.

### **Peace from the Storm**

Nevertheless, hard the men rowed  
To return to land; their efforts almost furious  
But they could not, as the events clearly showed  
For the sea continued to grow against them more tempestuous

Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said  
"O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man's life, we pray  
And do not charge us with innocent blood when he is dead  
For You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You here today

So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea  
And the sea ceased from its raging completely

Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly  
Surely they quivered and shook  
And offered a sacrifice to the LORD  
And also vows they took

Now the LORD had prepared a great fish, Jonah to swallow  
And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights  
There in the great fish's belly he did wallow

Lord God, it is we who have strayed from You  
We have gone about our own way, without a care  
And yet, ever faithful and true  
You sent Jesus, in order that us You might spare

He was cast in to the pit of death so that we might live  
What kind of love have You shown towards us!  
What a marvelous Gift to us You did give  
When You sent Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus

Now by our faith in Him, we are reconciled to You  
And we are spared from being sent to the very pit of hell  
And so we give You all of our praise, yes all that is due  
For, our Lord Jesus has done everything so well

Hear our praise, and our voices full of thanksgiving  
We have passed from the grip of death to the land of the living

Hallelujah and Amen...

## WHAT DAY WAS CHRIST CRUCIFIED?

What day of the week Christ was crucified? We know for certain that he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey on Sunday, 6 April 0032. This is based on dating from the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 and the exemplary work of Sir Robert Anderson.

However, people will still try to find a reason why the crucifixion wasn't on Friday, 11 April 0032. There are a couple reasons why this is disputed, each which certainly results from misunderstanding of biblical terminology. The first is a fear that what's stated in Matthew 12:40 would mean an error in what Jesus said. The second results from a perceived conflict between the gospel accounts in Matthew, Mark, and Luke and that of John.

In the first disputed reason, Jesus is quoted by Matthew as saying, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Matthew 12:40

The resurrection certainly occurred on a Sunday and only the most extreme cases dispute this – and they do it without justification. Some folks fear that because He rose on a Sunday and it was "3 days and 3 nights" that Jesus was in the tomb then it was either Wednesday or Thursday that He must have gone to the cross. It's important to note that this verse is from Matthew and is directed to the Jewish people – Jesus as King. Hebrew idioms would have been understood and not needed any clarification or verbal amending. To the audience Matthew was writing to any part of a day is considered to be inclusive of the whole day. It's no different than terminology we use today. If I arrive in Florida on a plane at 11:30 pm on 11 April, during a later conversation I would still say I was in Florida on that day. The biblical pattern of "evening and morning" being a day goes back to the first chapter of the Bible and includes an entire day – regardless of what part of a day one is referring to.

The same verse, as recorded in Luke says, "As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation." Luke 11:29, 30 In this instance, Luke was not writing to only Jewish people, but predominately to non-Jewish people – Jesus as the Son of Man. Therefore, the terminology is amended to avoid confusion. This

occurs many times in the gospels and therefore the addressees (or the background of the writers themselves) need to be identified to understand proper terminology.

The second issue to be resolved is that some scholars claim that John “appears” to place the crucifixion on a different date than the other writers. Because of this, an attempt to insert some second type of Passover meal is made. This supposedly helps the Bible out of an apparent problem. However, no such meal is identified in the Bible – at any time. Nor is it necessary to make something erroneous like this up. The Bible identifies the timing of the entire Passion Week, dispelling the problem. The terminology for “Preparation Day” used in all four gospel accounts absolutely clears this up and will be noted below.

Here's what you need to know:

Paul plainly states that the Feast of Firstfruits is a picture of the resurrection:

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” 1 Corinthians 15:20

The feast of Firstfruits was a Sunday according to Leviticus 23:15 – “From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks.” Note: the Sabbath is a Saturday. We don't need to go any further there to know this is correct and that Christ rose on a Sunday.

Here is the math from the gospel accounts. It's all there in black and white and very easy to look up –

\*\*\*“Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.” John 12:1 This would have been a Sabbath day (Saturday.)

\*\*\*“The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem.” John 12:12 This would have been 5 days before the Passover, meaning Sunday (Palm Sunday) as the Passover would have started Thursday night at sundown and run until Friday night at sundown (remember biblical days start at sundown).

The account couldn't be clearer that the next day after the Passover was a Sabbath. This is indicated several times. Some people have attempted to use the terminology in John (it was a "high day" or a "special Sabbath") to indicate that it could have been a day other than a Saturday. Special Sabbaths are specified in Leviticus and don't necessarily fall on Saturdays. However, the term "Sabbath" as used in the other gospel accounts is indicating a Saturday. There is no indication, anywhere, that there were two Sabbaths in a row on this particular week. In fact, such an analysis does an injustice to the reading of the text. Therefore, the special Sabbath occurred on a regular Sabbath day (Saturday).

From this we can give the entire week's schedule (refer to the cited verses in your own Bible to familiarize yourself with what's being said) –

Sabbath 6 before // John 12:1 – ...six days before the Passover. Bethany/Lazarus.  
Sunday 5 before // John 12:12 & Mark 11:10 – The next day... Palm Sunday/Riding the donkey.

Monday 4 before // Mark 11:12 Now on the next day... Jesus cursed the fig tree.

Tuesday 3 before // Mark 11:20 Now in the morning... The withered fig is identified.

Wednesday 2 before // The gospels are silent on what occurred on this day.

Thursday 1 before – Passover starts at Sundown //Mark 14:1 After two days it was the Passover... (this is the first timing mentioned since Mark 11:20 which was Tuesday).

-  
Note: Pay special attention to the fact that in the following accounts Mark is using Jewish time (sunset to sunset and John is using Roman time) -

Mark 14:12 – "Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread when they killed the Passover Lamb."

John 13:1 - "Now before the Feast of the Passover...." Meal, Washing of Feet, Gethsemane.

\*\*\*Christ crucified this same 24 hour period, but it was obviously after the final night at Gethsemane and then the illegal trial. Mark is speaking of this event from sundown, John is speaking of it on Roman time (this is obvious because they use different terminology for the same meal where Judas left to betray the Lord... can't miss this point and get it right.)

6 days before – Saturday  
5 days before – Sunday  
4 days before – Monday  
3 days before – Tuesday  
2 days before – Wednesday  
1 day before – Thursday  
The Day – Friday

The problem with people believing that John was speaking of a different day (as mentioned above) is that they miss the fact that the terminology for the day is different based on the author. To clear up any misunderstanding between the synoptic gospels and the Gospel of John, one needs only to compare the uses for the term “Preparation Day.” Once one does this, there are no discrepancies in the accounts –

Matthew 27:62 – “The next day, the one after the **Preparation Day**, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate.” This was the day after the crucifixion. Matthew says it is the day “after Preparation Day.”

Mark 15:42 – “It was **Preparation Day** (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached...” This is the day of the crucifixion. Mark says “It was Preparation Day.”

Luke 23:5 – “It was **Preparation Day**, and the Sabbath was about to begin.” This is the day of the crucifixion. Luke says “It was Preparation Day.”

John 19:14 – “Now it was **Preparation Day of the Passover**.” This is the day of the crucifixion. John says “It was Preparation Day.”

Based on the biblical evidence, there is

- 1) No discrepancy between any of the accounts.
- 2) Jesus was crucified on a Friday.
- 3) Jesus rose on a Sunday.

As a final note, the Bible says 13 times that He was raised “on” the third day. This is mentioned by Jesus himself as well as the apostles. Therefore, it must have been Friday that Christ was crucified.

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Please don't believe (as some have claimed) that Christ rode the donkey into Jerusalem on a Saturday instead of a Sunday. This would have been the Sabbath. If He did, He would have violated the law –

"Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you." Deuteronomy 5:12-14

There is no need to make the assertion it was a Saturday unless you simply wanted to finagle the dating. There is also no biblical provision for an exemption to the commandment prohibiting working a donkey. As stated above, the work of Sir Robert Anderson in the 1800s clearly demonstrates that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on 6 April 0032. This can be validated in other ways and is the correct year and month for the Lord's crucifixion.

The biblical evidence is quite clear and without ambiguity or total uncertainty...Jesus Christ was crucified as the Passover Lamb on Friday, 11 April 0032 and was resurrected to eternal life on Sunday 13 April 0032.

He now offers eternal life to all who call on Him by faith. Have you accepted His offer of peace?

## 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 *pala*, 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.

**<sup>1</sup> (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-cor-rect.

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 (con't)</sup> **"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 (con't)</sup> **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 (con't)</sup> "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.

2 (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 (con't)</sup> **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 (con't)</sup> **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

3 (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...

\*<sup>4</sup> (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...

## **JONAH 2:5-10 (SALVATION IS OF THE LORD)**

**Q.** Why should we be encouraged by the story of Jonah and the great fish?

**A.** Because Jonah was down in the mouth, but came out all right.

We'll finish chapter 2 in our sermon today. When looking back on all that has happened, and what is coming today, we can see a pattern repeated many times since. Jonah was called, he fled, he was punished, and he was restored.

If we take a careful look at our own Christian lives, we can probably find many times where this same pattern has been played out in us, and so let's not be too hard on either Jonah or ourselves as we read his story. We generally follow a course on whatever motivates us.

I didn't really pursue an education until I was 36. And the reason I did so was because I was motivated towards a desire. I wanted to become a preacher, and the pastor of the church I was at would not ordain me until I got a degree. That is what motivated me. Since then, I've followed that course because I am still motivated by it.

Jonah previously followed one course because he was motivated in a certain direction. He, like a dove, will change his course and follow another direction because he is properly motivated to make that change. And so we should, even before looking at today's verses, think on what motivates the Lord.

Really, think about it. He set out on a course of action because He was motivated to do so. God was under no obligation to save anyone. However, if He was to save anyone, His perfect attributes necessitated that He follow a certain course of action in order to accomplish this task.

That course of action could only end in one way, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Believe it or not, He chose this path because he was motivated to do so. God willingly chose to create man, and then to pursue a path which led to uniting with his creation and dying on a cross in order to redeem the man He had created. That is true motivation! And that is what is pictured in all the rest of the verses of Jonah today.

If that doesn't humble you... I mean if you are unmoved by the fact that God did what He did because of His love for you, then I can't imagine what else could ever stir your soul. Jesus Christ is called the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world because God was motivated to redeem the man who He knew... He knew would rebel from Him.

And the entire process of this redemption is centered on one thing and one thing alone, that precious Lamb. Jesus Christ was waiting in the wings from the first utterance of creation to accomplish His mission. Fallen man must be saved, and only a Man who is not fallen could do the saving. Thank God for Jesus Christ.

**Text Verse:** “The Lord *is* my strength and song,  
And He has become my salvation.” Psalm 118:14

The psalmist said that the Lord is his strength and his song. That is fantabulous. He rejoices in the Lord which is a great thing to do. But he also says that the Lord has become his salvation. It's a play on words because the word “salvation” is a variant of the name of Jesus, which means “salvation.” We were being given a clue as to what God would do. He would become our Jesus, our salvation.

Jonah will tell us the same thing today as well. He was a goner and the Lord rescued him. When there was no hope at all, the Lord stepped in and saved the

day. If you think that somehow you merit God's favor, or that He is under some type of an obligation to save you, think again.

The Lord did not need to send a fish to save Jonah, but once He did, nothing could prevent Him from safely reaching the shore. The symbolism of the fish is an integral part of the plan of the Lord, and the motivation of the Lord is what made it possible.

Personally, I can't wait to see what it all means. Just what is being pictured in these final six verses of Jonah chapter 2? Well we won't find out unless we get started. It is all 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. Death and Resurrection (verses 5-8)**

<sup>5</sup> **The waters surrounded me, even to my soul;**

*aphaphuni mayim ad nephesh* – “Compassed about me waters to soul.” Jonah 2:5 and a portion of 2:6 provide us with more vivid descriptions of the danger and distress which He faced. These will then be followed again by a note of deliverance.

The word translated here as “surrounded” is a completely different one than that used in verse 3. There it was *savav*, a much more common word. Here it is *aphaph*. This is the last of five times that the word *aphaph* is used in the Bible. It means to surround or encompass. Whereas the waves of verse 3 surrounded Jonah, swirling about him, the intensity of his situation has now increased greatly. The waters themselves have hold of him and fully surround him, to his very soul.

He is, as the old saying relays, “going down for the third time.” His end is at hand. To draw in a breath would have meant his final end because the waters had fully encompassed him. The precious air which sustains life was no longer to be found, and just one inhale would mean the termination of his life.

Being confined to such a torture is the most terrifying sensation. If an animal is caught, it will chew off its own leg to get free. In 2003, Aron Ralston was climbing the canyons of Utah and got so stuck that he couldn’t free himself. After five days of trying every other possible solution, he carved his epitaph into the sandstone.

But then... in desperation he cut off his own arm in order to free himself. Eventually, he was rescued and taken for medical care. But Jonah didn’t have a knife and there was no helicopter flying overhead. At this point, he was probably considering his own obituary.

Interestingly, the first time the word *aphaph* was used was in 2 Samuel where David used the word metaphorically, but in a parallel way to Jonah’s words of this chapter. In David’s words, *aphaph* and *savav* are reversed to show the plight of his situation, which, though similar to Jonah, was not identical –

“When the waves of death **surrounded** me, (**aphaph**)  
The floods of ungodliness made me afraid.  
<sup>6</sup> The sorrows of Sheol **surrounded** me; (**savav**)  
The snares of death confronted me.  
<sup>7</sup> In my distress I called upon the Lord,  
And cried out to my God;  
He heard my voice from His temple,  
And my cry *entered* His ears.” 2 Samuel 22:5-7

These words of David are then used again in the 18<sup>th</sup> Psalm. It is with certainty that Jonah used the words of the psalm to describe his own pitiful plight which literally came to pass, and which was similar to that which David had faced.

Along with that plight of David, he records another time where he faced such troubles, and which he metaphorically uses to describe his plight. Jonah certainly referred to these words as well –

“Save me, O God!  
For the waters have come up to *my* neck.  
<sup>2</sup> I sink in deep mire,  
Where *there is* no standing;  
I have come into deep waters,  
Where the floods overflow me.” Psalm 69:1, 2

Because these words were written by David, they can thus be attributed to the work of Christ. The waters which surround are typical of the world of chaos, hemming Him in. That they came even to His soul is reflective of the very termination of His life as it ebbed away on the cross.

<sup>5 (con't)</sup> **The deep closed around me;**

*tehom yesoveveni* – “Abyss closed around me.” The *tehom* is the great deep, or abyss. It was first seen in Genesis 1:2 –

“The earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* on the face of the **deep**. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

Jonah's words are an indication that he was no longer going down for the third time, but that he had gone down and was not coming up again. He had succumbed to the inevitable and had given up any chance of rising to the surface for another breath.

The words here are not intended to say that he sank to the bottom of the great deep. Such a depth would have crushed him. Rather, he began the descent and the waters of the abyss simply closed around him. There was no longer any connection to the surface. If we were watching a movie, this would be where the stretched-out hand quietly slipped under the waters... and disappeared.

**5 (con't) Weeds were wrapped around my head.**

*suf khabush l'roshi* – “End is bound to my head.” To be daring, I am going to be at variance with every single translation of Scripture available, and all scholar’s commentaries as well.

According to Charlie’s Literal Translation of the Bible, which is being compiled and which will be on sale at a marked up prices someday, the verse does.not.say that weeds wrapped around Jonah’s head. It says that his “end is bound to his head,” meaning that he has met his end. It is a phrase that any Hebrew speaking person would understand.

First, the word translated as “weeds” is *suf*. It is the same word used in Exodus when speaking of *yam suf*, or the Red Sea. The word *suf* is translated as “reed,” because so many scholars call it the Sea of Reeds, implying that it was a fresh water lake, and not the Red Sea.

However, the word *suf* also carries the meaning of “end.” And so, this verse is not speaking of “reed,” but “end.” The Red Sea is the ending of the land of Israel, and

so it is the Sea of the Ending, or the Red Sea, not the Sea of Reeds. The New Testament bears out the name, Red Sea.

Therefore, the term “reed” being retranslated here as “weeds,” meaning “sea weeds,” is an unnecessary stretch of the Hebrew, especially because there are no reeds in the Mediterranean Sea.

Secondly, *khabash*, or “wrapped,” comes from a primitive root which means “to wrap firmly, especially as a turban, a compress, or a saddle.” Thus, a Hebrew phrase is being given to us. The end, meaning death, has wrapped tightly to the head. Jonah had expired. This clause then further defines the previous clause. Taken together, they confirm that Jonah claims he had died.

As I said, this is at variance with all translations and scholarly comments, but when I proposed it to my Hebrew-speaking friend Sergio, without a hesitation he said that any native speaker would immediately understand the symbolism and the phrase. Death had bound itself to the man. Score one point in a growing bottle of points for Charlie’s Literal Translation.

Even the Greek translation of this verse clearly shows that it is not speaking of sea weeds. It says, “went down my head.” If taken symbolically of the cross, as it is intended to be, this would be the moment where Christ uttered his final words and then exhaled, thus confirming my translation –

“So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.” Luke 23:46

<sup>6</sup> I went down to the moorings of the mountains;

*I'qitsve harim yarad-ti* – “To the cuttings [of the] mountains I descended.” The word translated as “moorings” is *qetsev*. This is the third and last time that it will be seen in Scripture. It indicates something cut or shaped and so Jonah is saying that he descended to the place where the mountains are shaped.

His words here indicate that his lifeless body slipped down into the depths. However, this has to be taken metaphorically. He has already acknowledged that he was dead. A dead person doesn't know where his body has descended to. And so, he has made the poetic note that he had descended as far as a body could descend, even to where the mountains were cut out. His words then translate directly to the tomb of Christ which was cut from the rock and into which His body was laid.

<sup>6 (con't)</sup> **The earth with its bars closed behind me forever;**

*ha'arets b'rikheyha vaadi l'olam* – “The earth her bars behind me to the vanishing point.” Here Jonah speaks of himself as a prisoner in a dungeon. He is closed in with no chance of releasing himself from his predicament. His death could now not be undone and only the prospect of corruption lay ahead. This then translates into the burial of Jesus as is reflected in the words of Matthew 27:59, 60 –

“When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,<sup>60</sup> and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed.”

For Jonah, it seemed that all hope was lost. For the world who did not understand who Jesus truly was, the same is true. But the passage of time reveals the glory of the Lord's handiwork...

<sup>6 (con't)</sup> **Yet You have brought up my life from the pit,**

*Va'taal mishakhat khayay* – “And yet brought up from corruption my life.” Jonah’s cry of deliverance now resounds through the cavernous belly of the great fish. As we saw in the last sermon, most, if not all, scholars attribute the words we have been looking at as *occurring* during the time in the belly of the fish. This is wholly inaccurate.

The words are those prayed from the belly of the fish afterwards, and are referring to his time in the sea before the fish swallowed him. The fish is not his place of death, but rather his mode of delivery *from* death. Jonah died in the midst of the sea of chaos.

In the midst of the sea of chaotic humanity is where Christ died. We are being asked to look for and find Christ, not a fish tale. Now that the sea has claimed his life; now that the chaos of humanity has taken Christ’s life... only now are the words to be attributed to those from within the fish’s belly.

Jonah, upon being swallowed by the fish, realized that he had been brought up from the inevitable corruption which would follow his death in the sea. The fish was ordained by God to save him, and likewise, the power of God was used to restore Christ Jesus to life. These words of Jonah are reflective of the words of David –

“I will extol You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up,  
And have not let my foes rejoice over me.  
<sup>2</sup> O Lord my God, I cried out to You,  
And You healed me.  
<sup>3</sup> 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 30:1-3

The words of this psalm were cited by Peter in Acts 2 to prove that the resurrected Christ was who David was referring to. Word by word, and in complete and exacting detail, Jonah is being used as a type of Christ.

<sup>6 (con't)</sup> **O Lord, my God.**

*Yehovah elohai* – “Yehovah my God.” In the introduction to Jonah’s prayer in verse 1, it says that he prayed to Yehovah. His words reflect what occurred, and the triumph which resulted. His words now reflect the confidence he possessed in Yehovah, the self-existent and all-powerful Creator.

He is the One Jonah had called out to, and He is the One who responded and saved Him. Therefore, Jonah acknowledges that He is “my God.” Likewise, the messianic psalms say the same thing as they relate to Christ. He called out to His God, the eternal God from whom He issued, and His God responded. As the Man Jesus, the Lord is His God.

<sup>7</sup> **“When my soul fainted within me,**

*b’hitateph alay napshi* – “Had covered itself within, my soul.” Jonah’s prayer now returns to the period outside of the fish once again. Though he is praying from within the fish, he is yet again recalling his ordeal *before* being rescued.

This is the 16<sup>th</sup> and last time that the word *ataph* is found in Scripture. It comes from a primitive root meaning “to shroud,” as in “to clothe.” From this comes the idea of darkness, and thus to faint or be overwhelmed.” In the case of Jonah, he is remembering the very moment his soul was dying away in him. He was covered in darkness and there he had met his end.

His words are again a look into the future work of Christ. From the 16<sup>th</sup> Psalm, and speaking of Jesus, we read the parallel thought of what occurred in His burial –

“Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;  
My flesh also will rest in hope.  
<sup>10</sup> For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,  
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.  
<sup>11</sup> You will show me the path of life;  
In Your presence *is* fullness of joy;  
At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.” Psalm 16:9-11

Christ’s soul was shrouded in death, but like Jonah, there was relief from that place of darkness. At that very moment of His death...

<sup>7 (con't)</sup> **I remembered the Lord;**

*eth Yehovah zakarti* – “Yehovah I remembered.” It is a marvelous inversion in the Hebrew. “Had covered itself within, my soul; Yehovah I remembered.” As his life ebbed away, his dying thoughts were those of the Lord.

It is, in essence, the triumph of the spirit over the flesh, and the place where faith reaches beyond reason. Though the words cannot be condensed into a shorter thought without destroying the integrity of the passage, Jonah’s words here are reflective Psalm 22:1-21. The words point to Jesus’ time on the cross.

From the first words, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”, to His words of victory in verse 21, “You have answered Me,” Jonah’s words briefly sum up that torturous time Jesus faced, and yet which ended with His remembering His God, even while His life ebbed away.

<sup>7 (con't)</sup> **And my prayer went up to You,**

*va'tavo elekha tephil-ati* – “And came in unto You my prayer.” Again, though these words are being prayed from the fish’s belly, they are words which reflect Jonah’s state while still in the open waters. There in his dying gasps, he remembered the Lord and his final breaths issued forth a prayer which rose to the Lord, even to the place where He dwells. It is almost as if the prayer itself is personified. It leaves his mind, takes flight on a path to its intended destination, and there it stands before its Recipient...

**7 (con't) Into Your holy temple.**

*el hekal qadshekha* – “into temple Your holy.” As a prophet of the Lord, and one who had come to realize that there was no place that he could flee from the presence of the Lord, Jonah is certainly not speaking of the temple in Jerusalem. Rather, he is referring to the heavenly place where the Lord dwells in all His splendor.

Jonah’s prayers rose through the waters, and through the realms of matter, even into the spiritual dwelling place of the Lord. In the foxhole of battle, when our finances are lost, when a loved-one is in a hospital bed clinging to life...then – it is then that we remember the Lord.

As Jonah’s descent continued and his life ebbed away, he remembered the Lord and said his prayer and it was *then* that the Lord received his words, even in His holy temple.

Why? Why do we wait so long to call on Him? How much more pleased will the Lord be with us when we send prayers and praises when things are going well? In both testaments of the Bible, we see that God actually treats this as a sacrifice and accepts those prayers as a sweet savor. As it says in Hebrews –

"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name." Hebrews 13:15

<sup>8</sup> **"Those who regard worthless idols**

*meshamerim havle shav* – "Those who observe vanities lying." The translation of the word *hevel* as "idols" is a bit unfortunate. It is true that all idols are vanities, but not all vanities are idols. The word *hevel* signifies vapor, or breath. Thus, it is that without value, or which is meaningless.

To pursue breath is futile, and to chase the wind is a foolish venture. Jonah is reflecting on himself and on his own previous condition. He was not bowing down to idols. Rather, he was running from the true God.

He is thinking of his own actions, but after contemplating them, his words then indicate anything which is vain. It could be predictions, absurd fears, rejecting the fear of the Lord, or refusing to adhere to the word of the Lord. This is what Moses had in mind when He spoke to Israel the words of the Song of Moses at Horeb –

"They have moved me to jealousy with that which is no God;  
They have exasperated me with their **vanities**;  
And I will move them to jealousy with that which is not a people;  
With a foolish nation will I provoke them to anger." Deuteronomy 32:32 (Darby)

Jonah now realizes that his actions were vain, but he had come to his senses. He now warns those who follow him that there are consequences for vain pursuits. Such people who regard vanities...

**8 (con't) Forsake their own Mercy.**

*khasdam yaasovu* – “Benefactor they forsake.” The word *khesed* means “lovingkindness,” “favor,” “mercy,” and the like. In Psalm 144:2, David calls the Lord, “my lovingkindness.” In other words, the Lord is the Source and Fountain of mercy. Therefore, the NKJV did a good job in this verse of capitalizing the word “Mercy.” They have directed the words not to what is bestowed, but to the One who bestows.

Jonah’s words look to what happens when a person follows after vanities. In such pursuit, they forsake He who provides from the fountain. This is exactly what Jonah had done, and now his words call out for others to follow the wisdom he has attained.

Pursuing that which is vain sets up a wall between us and God because we forsake the One who created the thing we are pursuing. Whether gold, silver, sex, drugs, fame, or fortune, our attention is caught up in vanity and the Lord leaves our hearts and minds. The Westminster Shorter Catechism begins with this precept –

What is the chief end of man?  
Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

We cannot glorify God if we chase after, or grant glory to, something less than God. And we cannot enjoy Him, if we spend our time pursuing idols. The Apostle John closes his first epistle with these words –

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” 1 John 5:21

Let us follow this advice and not forsake our Source of mercy.

*My heart is glad, and my glory rejoices, O my soul!*

*My flesh also will rest in hope with no interruption*

*For You will not leave my soul in Sheol*

*Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption*

*You will show me the path of life, of this I am sure*

*In Your presence is fullness of joy, a wondrous path I will trod*

*At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore*

*And so I put my trust in You, O my God*

*You have brought me up from the pit and set me in a broad place*

*You have set me on high and my soul has found rest*

*Here in Your presence and in the light of Your face*

*Here in the land where your saints are eternally blessed*

## II. A Simple Truth (verses 9 & 10)

**<sup>9</sup> But I will sacrifice to You**

**With the voice of thanksgiving;**

*va'ani b'qol todah ezbekhah lakh* – “And I, with the voice thanksgiving will sacrifice to You.” This is the last time that *todah*, or “thanksgiving,” is seen in the Old Testament. It essentially means “an extension of the hand.” Thus, it is as if an offering is being sent out. However, it is said to be “with the **voice** of thanksgiving.” Therefore, the voice of thanksgiving is considered as an acceptable offering to God, and so it is further explained as “a sacrifice.”

As I said earlier, in the Bible, praise is called a sacrifice and that is what Jonah was referring to here. It is something we can all do and it costs us nothing. But God accepts it as a sacrifice because it is something most people will never do. Even believers fail to take time to simply glorify Him.

We have all kinds of time for cell phones, TV, movies, family, and friends, but we just don't take a few moments a day to stop, contemplate the goodness of the Lord, and then give Him praise. In the future, let's make a commitment to praise Him in all we do. Let our every breath and action be of praise and worship to Him.

**<sup>9</sup> (con't) I will pay what I have vowed.**

*asher nadarti ashalemah* – “that I have vowed will pay.” These words come as a promise to what he just said, and they include any vows not recorded here as well. He has offered to make a sacrifice with the voice of thanksgiving, and now he confirms that he will follow through with that promise. In Deuteronomy, the people were told quite directly –

“When you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the Lord your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you.”  
Deuteronomy 23:21

This sentiment is repeated quite a few other times in various ways. But Jonah’s words are not just for us to see a man who has come to his senses. They reflect the sentiment of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm as well –

“I will declare Your name to My brethren;  
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.” Psalm 22:22

The author of Hebrews then uses that same verse and ties it directly into the oath of the Lord to God the Father. The Lord had promised that after His ordeal on the cross, He would follow through with the vow He had made.

Like Jonah who is a type of Christ, and like the Lord who we are to emulate, if we are going to commit to something, we need to remember to follow through with it – “I will pay what I have vowed.” This is what the Bible expects. When we promise, we are to live by our promises. In the 15th Psalm, the Bible says that a person who swears to his own hurt will never be moved. Surely God will reward such faithfulness.

**9 (con't) *Salvation is of the Lord.***

*yeshuatah l'Yehovah* - “Salvation to Yehovah.” Jonah’s words are a realization, a confession, and a praise all tied up into one. He was dead, but now alive. He thought there was no hope, and yet he was saved. And where his lips were seemingly silenced forever, they were now able to sing out to Yehovah with a resounding voice.

But more than just words of acknowledgment from Jonah, they sum up the entire theme of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation – Salvation is of the Lord. Man is condemned; the Lord has fixed the problem. The process is wholly His, and we are merely the recipients of what He offers.

In considering the words, they tell us that He is the Source of salvation; he is the Bestower of it; and He provides the means by which it will occur. The noun *yeshuah* is used 77 times in the Old Testament. It specifically means, “salvation,” and the form used by Jonah is intensive – *yeshuatah*. In essence, “mighty salvation.”

When converted into a proper noun, it is Yeshua, the Hebrew name of Jesus. Thus, we are given an insight into the work of the Lord here in Jonah 2:9. Yehovah the Father is the Source of salvation – the plan and the form to come. Yehovah the Son is the one who came to execute the plan. Yehovah the Holy Spirit is the one who applies that salvation to those who are to be saved.

The Lord, Yehovah is the Source, Means, and Bestower of man's salvation. Yeshua, or Jesus is the key to it coming about. Acts 4:12 sums up the thought quite well –

"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

What is veiled in the Old is now revealed in the New. What was concealed is now open for us to see. It is Jesus from whom comes all salvation.

\*<sup>(fin)</sup><sup>10</sup> **So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.**

*va'yomer Yehovah la'dag va'yaqe eth yonah el ha'yabashah* – "And spoke Yehovah to fish and vomited Jonah onto the dry." The account is to be taken literally. The Lord gave the command and the fish followed through with the orders as given. He was spewed out of the belly and onto the dry land. It is the last use of the word *qo*, or vomit, in the Old Testament, **but** it is not the last time that vomit will be referred to. It is also probably the least offensive, and even most glorious use of the word vomit in recorded history.

The symbolism though is what is important. First, there was a command from the Lord. This was followed by an action. The fish symbolizes the means of delivery, not the state of death. Jonah had died in the waters and was caught up into the belly of the fish where he then made his prayer.

Christ was cast among the great sea of sinful people, symbolized by the chaos of the ocean. There he died for the sins of the world. However, His delivery was already prepared based on His sinless life, pictured by the fish. His sinless state is what delivered Him from the ordeal. It is what rescued Him from inevitable corruption. Peter mentioned this in Acts 2 –

“I foresaw the Lord always before my face,  
For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.  
<sup>26</sup> Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad;  
Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope.  
<sup>27</sup> For You will not leave my soul in Hades,  
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.  
<sup>28</sup> You have made known to me the ways of life;  
You will make me full of joy in Your presence.” Acts 2:25-28

As the fish is the means of Jonah’s delivery, and as Christ is the means of salvation, a picture is formed in the words “it vomited Jonah on to the dry.” Christ was, can we say, spewed out of the grave. It simply could not stomach Him. The grave is the devourer of that which is unclean from sin. He was spewed out of the fish, but the fish lives in the sea. Therefore, he was spewed out of the sea – the place of sin, chaos, and death – and onto dry land. The fish for Jonah, Christ for the sinless Man Jesus, both merely provided safety from the sea.

This passage was anticipating the symbol of Christianity, ICHTHUS, or “The Sign of the Fish.” It is an acrostic – ISEOUS CHRISTOS THEO YIOS SOTER – JESUS CHRIST SON OF GOD, SAVIOR. His sinless perfection is what is seen in the fish. The vomiting of Jonah onto the dry land pictures His triumph over the sea of chaos. Again, it is explained by Peter in Acts 2 –

“...whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.” Acts 2:24

And so, from the place of chaos and death, He was restored to a place of stability, harmony, and assurance – the dry land. Right on the first page of the Bible, a distinction was made between the waters and the dry land. When God made the *yabbashah*, or dry land by separating it from the waters, it was proclaimed *good*.

In the New Testament, the disciples were told that they would be fishers of men. Christ was the first to be delivered from the chaos of the seas to the dry land, meaning the place of safety. Now, those who follow Him are fished out of the sea and brought to that same place of safety.

The entire episode was orchestrated by God, based on Jonah's rebellion, to show us a picture of the world of fallen man being rescued by the perfect Man, Christ Jesus. The difference between Jonah and Christ is that Jonah died on account of his own sin, something common to himself and his people. He was delivered from that death by the Lord.

On the other hand, Christ died for the sin of His people, which He willingly took upon Himself. But He died as a member of His people, the nation of Israel, and under the law which was given to them. In His death, He died *for* sin, and was delivered by God in order to save people from all nations. This is more than a simple fish tale, but a grand, epic story of the workings of God in Christ.

**Closing Verse:** "Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Revelation 7:10

**Next Week:** Jonah 3:1-4 *He is heading to Nineveh, not to Arizona...* (The Sign of Jonah) (7<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.

### **Salvation is of the Lord**

The waters surrounded me, even to my soul  
The deep around me closed  
Weeds were wrapped around my head; I had no control  
My end was near, I supposed

I went down to the moorings of the mountains  
The earth with its bars closed behind me forever  
Yet You have brought up my life from the pit  
O Lord, my God – I shall praise you, ceasing never

“When my soul fainted within me; away it flew  
I remembered the Lord  
And my prayer went up to You  
Into Your holy temple; there you received my word  
“Those who regard worthless idols, much is at stake  
Surely their own Mercy they forsake  
But I will sacrifice to You, this I convey  
With the voice of thanksgiving: with my spoken word

What I have vowed, I will pay

Salvation is of the Lord

So the Lord spoke to the fish; He did command

And it vomited Jonah onto dry land

God has shown us in His precious word

That being obstinate toward Him can only harm us

Instead, we need to bow to our glorious Lord

Giving honor and respect to Christ Jesus

Help us in this Lord, this we implore

Our hearts are so easily turned away

Give us of Your Spirit to overflowing and even more

So that we will bring honor to you each and every day

And to You we give all of our highest praise

And to You we shall look for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

## **JONAH 3:1-4 (THE SIGN OF JONAH)**

Q: Why did Jonah decide it was better to just go to Nineveh?

A: He learned that he couldn't trust the ocean. There was just something fishy about it.

I'm sure you've heard the term, "God is a God of second chances." Although it sounds a bit cliché, it really is the truth. I know I've been given second, third, and fourth chances in my life, and I'll bet that in eternity I'll see where the Lord intervened in my on-going trek in a million ways I never realized. Surely we all will see it the same way.

Things surround us that we don't even know are there, and which would otherwise be where we meet our end. This kind of thing is seen in movies all the time. In the movie *Next* with Nicolas Cage, he plays the part of a Las Vegas magician, and he has a secret which others are unaware of.

He can see a few minutes into the future. By seeing what is coming, he can make adjustments in the surrounding events so that what would have happened would then be prevented and a new course in time would occur.

Although well into the realm of science fiction, it is not at all improbable that events in our lives are also affected by those who know what an outcome would otherwise be. They then work to ensure that the plan God has laid out is what will ultimately happen. Does that sound improbable?

Well, it may sound fantastic, but it is in accord with the word of God. We read in Hebrews 13:2 "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels." What is that verse speaking of?

Well, as a sort of pun, I gave an idea to a Christian artist who used to do a daily comic on things in the Bible. My suggestion was to draw a guy named Harold who is so clumsy that the angels would follow him around. They would laugh at him always tripping, or flubbing up, and thus they would be entertained by him. Poor Harold.

However, that is not what is being spoken of here. Instead, it is speaking of us, our conduct, and how it is being monitored by angels. It may be as tests of our faith and character, not in the sense that God needed to know about that. Rather, it is in the sense of building up our faith and in strengthening us in our spiritual lives.

It may also be in the sense of redirecting our very actions in order to effect a change in what would otherwise have occurred. If we unwittingly entertain angels, it means that they have entered our presence for a reason which we were otherwise unaware of, and this entry has now redirected the fabric of what our lives would have been.

We're not alone, and God is actively working to save many people alive. He works through nature, He works through angels, and He's worked personally in other ways for each of us – whether we acknowledge it or not.

In my case, at least as far as salvation is concerned, He sent a couple of Jehovah's Witnesses to me in the store I owned. Regardless of the source – they were certainly not angels – He was able to use people not even in His own fold to bring me to the point where I determined to read the Bible and find out whether its claims were true or not.

They are, and I was graciously not only granted salvation, but also relief from the clutches of those who would keep me from it, meaning the very people who came to tell me of their twisted version of His word. Surely angels were there in that store, directing me unwittingly toward the Lord and away from the deception of the JW's. I was given a second chance at life that day. In the case of Jonah, he was given a second chance too. In his opening commentary to Jonah chapter 3, Matthew Henry says –

"See here the nature of repentance; it is the change of our mind and way, and a return to our work and duty. Also, the benefit of affliction; it brings those back to their place who had deserted it. See the power of Divine grace, for affliction of itself would rather drive men from God, than draw them to him. God's servants must go where he sends them, come when he calls them, and do what he bids them; we must do whatever the word of the Lord commands." Matthew Henry

We will get a bit of repetition from a previous sermon today concerning what is, in fact, the sign of Jonah. I'll explain a couple of reasons for repeating this at that time, but if for no other reason, repetition helps solidify things in our memory bank. Also, repetition helps solidify things in our memory bank. I hope you will remember that ☺.

**Text Verse:** Take words with you, And return to the LORD. Say to Him, “Take away all iniquity; Receive *us* graciously, For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips. Assyria shall not save us,

We will not ride on horses, Nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, ‘*You are our gods.*’ For in You the fatherless finds mercy.” Hosea 14:2, 3

Whether a fatherless child, a disobedient nation of covenant people, or a great city filled with pagans who have filled their lives with wickedness and idolatry, the Lord can and will be merciful to those who turn away from their wickedness. This is the lesson to be found in the 10 verses of Chapter 3, and it is a lesson which permeates all of Scripture. Yes, it's all 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. According to the Word of the Lord (verses 1-3)**

**<sup>1</sup> Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying,**

*vay'hi devar Yehovah el yonah shneit lemor* – “And came word Yehovah unto Jonah second saying.” The words are practically identical to Jonah 1:1. Only the words “son of Amitai” are replaced with the word “second.”

We know now which Jonah is being referred to, and so the relationship to his father is unnecessary. And we have been with him on his wayward journey, and so the word “second” reminds us that he could have avoided all of the misery of the previous chapters if he had simply been obedient at the first.

There would be no stink of fish guts on him, there would be no need for fresh clothes, and the guilt of the memory of having been first disobedient to the Lord and to his calling would not haunt his memory in the years to come.

But these things were necessary in order to give us the pictures of Christ which we have so far seen. They were also necessary to bring about the salvation of those pagan salty sailors who had now found the one true God and had received His grace.

It should not be without note that a later apostle had also been out of the Lord's favor and was eventually restored. Peter, or Simon son of Jonah, had followed a wayward path, but he too was reinstated into a right relationship with Christ. In both cases, the name Jonah has been introduced to show this, and to teach us a lesson concerning God's sovereignty and His mercy.

Whether Jonah himself, or Simon bar Jonah, meaning the Apostle Peter, the vacillating of the dove's flight was seen in both, and yet, they both met the end which was determined by the Lord. What marvelous pictures of Gentile redemption are seen in Jonah of the Old Testament, and what marvelous truths of Israel's final redemption are seen in Simon bar Jonah's of the New Testament!

Between the writings which surround these two men, both Jew and Gentile are shown a great and enduring hope which is realized in the Messiah of the Jews, and who is also the Christ of the Gentiles. In Him, there is hope enough for all.

Concerning this verse now, some scholars go into great detail, speculating that Jonah went down to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord and pay his vows in order to be restored before going to Nineveh. Such commentary is completely unnecessary and is without any merit. The record is left simple and direct.

The narrative goes directly from the end of chapter 2 with the vomiting of him onto the dry land right into the second call of the Lord for him to get about his business in Nineveh. Jonah had been given a commission, he was disobedient to it, he suffered because of it, and he has now been given the commission again. The insertion of such comments only detracts from the simple and beautiful narrative which we have been presented.

**<sup>2</sup> “Arise, go to Nineveh,**

*qum lek el Nineveh*—“Arise go unto Nineveh.” It is the exact same words as Jonah 1:2. As we saw, Nineveh was founded by Nimrod and was located on the east bank

of the Tigris River. In and shortly after the time of Jonah, it was at its zenith in power and glory.

The name Nineveh, to a Hebrew, would mean “Offspring’s Habitation.” It is to this city, filled with Gentiles, that Jonah is directed once again to go to. If you remember, on his first call, he opted instead to go to Tarshish which means something like “White Dove,” or “Dove White.”

The characteristics of Nineveh, or “Offspring’s Habitation,” seemed unsuitable to his tastes, whereas Tarshish had at least a semblance of familiarity to him. Why would this be? Aren’t they both just Gentile nations who are equally unworthy of his presence as a Jew? Well, not exactly. Tarshish was a descendant of Japheth, the oldest son of Noah, and the one who was given a like-blessing to Shem with the words –

“May God enlarge Japheth,  
And may he dwell in the tents of Shem;  
And may Canaan be his servant.” Genesis 9:27

On the other hand, Nineveh was a city built by Nimrod, a descendant of Ham, Noah’s youngest. He received no such blessing. He had done something perverted to his father, and so his father withheld any blessing upon him, and instead cursed Ham’s own youngest son, Canaan.

Jonah saw it better to flee to one who would dwell in the tents of Shem, than to preach the Lord’s repentance to a line of such disgraceful people as those in Nineveh. Surely the Lord had forgotten such a simple thing!

Jonah had been confident that it was better to go to Tarshish than to Nineveh. Tarshish, being a son of Japheth, was far more tolerable to him than was a descendant of Ham. Like the Jews decisions about meals even today – anything but Ham. However, he is now, once again, directed to be on his way, even if it means dining with Ham – perish the thought!

<sup>2 (con't)</sup> **that great city,**

*ha'ir ha'gedolah* – “the city, the whopping.” Again, these are the exact same words as Jonah 1:2. It may appear superfluous that such a descriptor would be used a second time, but it is not. One might think the Lord would simply say, “Arise, go to Nineveh” and leave it at that. However, the repetition is given to highlight several things.

First, it is intended to accentuate the superlative greatness of the city. In so doing, and in the message that is being sent to it, the surpassing greatness of the Lord is then actually highlighted. If this city is so great, and the Lord is calling it to repentance or destruction, then the greatness of the Lord is actually what is on display.

Secondly, it is a reminder to Jonah of the importance of his message. Within a city are people. If the city is to be destroyed, the people will, likewise, be destroyed. The care of the Lord for these Gentiles then is being highlighted by the greatness of the city itself.

Thirdly, highlighting the city’s greatness is intended to bolster Jonah’s resolve in what lies ahead. The magnitude of the commission he has been given could be a source of fear within him, but because the Lord has highlighted it in advance, Jonah is given the assurance that the way has already been paved for him. It is the Lord and His word which will break open that which should be broken open.

And fourthly, if such a great city is to be called to repentance and it does not respond and is destroyed, why would the lesser cities of Israel be spared for their similar waywardness? And if such a great city is to be called to repentance, and if it then responds and is not destroyed, then how much greater should the judgement upon the cities of Israel be when they fail to likewise respond? Remember these questions, because they bear directly on Chapter 4.

Israel had been given the law, and with that law came greater, not lesser, responsibility towards the Lord. The law which they possessed was not a buffer from destruction, but it rather highlighted that destruction was due if they ignored it. As Jesus said in Luke 12:47, 48 –

"And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare *himself* or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. <sup>48</sup> But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

Repeating the term, "that great city" is not superfluous at all. Instead it is key to understanding much of what is going on elsewhere in Scripture. And in connection with that key is the fact that all of this story actually centers on Israel, even though they are never once mentioned in the entire book. Israel is the focus.

How marvelously evident that will be when we come to the final chapter, the final paragraph, and yes – even the final sentence of the book of Jonah. Israel was, is, and will be the overall focus of God's attention in redemptive history, and yet due to their actions, all highlighted by disobedient Jonah, the Gentiles are graciously given the chance at repentance and entry into the commonwealth of Israel. Marvelous! Marvelous indeed!

<sup>2 (con't)</sup> **and preach to it the message that I tell you."**

*vigra eleha eth ha'qeriah asher anokhi dober elekha* – "And cry to the crying that I am about to speak unto you." There is a change in the words here from Jonah 1:2. There it said, *u-qera aleha*. Now it says *vigra eleha*. The first cry, *aleha*, is against Nineveh, this now is a cry, *elehah*, or unto Nineveh. Why has the Lord done this?

The reason for the change is not stated, and commentators, if they comment at all, give no valid reason. The Greek translation of the Old Testament translates them both the same. Either way, the words of the Greek Old Testament use close parallel words to those of the Hebrew which are then given their full weight and understanding in the New Testament.

The word *qeriah*, or "cry of proclamation," is used only this once in the entire Bible. However, its root, *qara*, meaning to call or proclaim, is a commonly used word. Jonah, was to be a herald with a specific message, one of repentance. I would suggest that the new and unique terminology is based on what has already occurred.

He is to cry *unto*, rather than crying *against* Nineveh, and he is given this special type of crying *unto* them because of the sudden and complete change in the sailors of chapter 1. Unlike the covenant people of Israel, who were given a continuous crying from countless prophets, and yet they continuously rejected the word, the Gentiles had been given a short and succinct message... and they had accepted it.

If they were so quick to respond, the pattern might surely be expected for other Gentiles as well. Could it not? And so instead of crying out *against* Nineveh, Jonah is now instructed to cry out *unto* Nineveh. And the cry will be one of expectation in a positive change in the people.

John the Baptist was such a crier, as was Jesus Himself. And Jesus, while instructing the people, brought up the very cry that He had given to Jonah to proclaim many generations before. In Luke 11, we read His words –

“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

Jonah’s *qeriah* here in the Hebrew, or *kerygma*, as it is called in the Greek, was a “cry of proclamation” *for* repentance. The response to his cry, is set in stark contrast to that of Jesus’ greater cry to the people of Israel.

In both instances, it is the word of the Lord which is proclaimed. In the case of Jonah, he is to call out the words which the Lord would put into his mouth. In the case of Jesus, they are of the same Source. The words He spoke are the words of the Lord, because He is one and the same Lord who first sent Jonah to speak by putting His words into the prophet’s mouth.

Again, we are seeing this remarkable contrast between Israel and the Gentiles being highlighted in these subtle nuances which one would never see unless we really took the time to evaluate every word and every detail.

**<sup>3</sup> So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh,**

*va'yaqam yonah va'yelek el Nineveh* – “So arose Jonah and went unto Nineveh.” The words are in direct contrast to Jonah 1:3. “So Jonah arose to flee,” is now, “So Jonah went.” The Lord told him to arise, and he arose.

He was instructed to go to Nineveh, and he had fled to Tarshish. Now he is instructed to go to Nineveh, and to Nineveh he goes. The smell of the inside of the great fish was probably still clinging to him, and he wanted no more of that.

What the Lord wills is what will be. Jonah had learned a lesson that many of us still stubbornly refuse to learn. We can buck against the word of the Lord, but it is we who will ultimately pay the price for doing so. In the end, His will is what will be realized. Jonah’s willingness to disobey is turned into a willingness to obey.

**<sup>3 (con't)</sup> according to the word of the Lord.**

*kidbar Yehovah* – “according to word Yehovah.” This is the last of 33 times this phrase is used in the Bible. It is usually associated with obedience, but it is occasionally used in conjunction with the fulfillment of a prophecy based on the consequences of disobedience. Sometimes it’s used in conjunction with the necessity to obey difficult issues, such as destroying life.

Again, the words are directly contrasted to Jonah 1:3. There it said, “from the face of the Lord.” Now it says, “according to the word of the Lord.” The words of these opening verses in each chapter are precisely stated to show us the contrast between futile disobedience, and resolute obedience.

Yehovah has spoken, and Jonah understands that His word is to be accepted and acted upon. Though Jonah is a prophet of God, receiving the word of the Lord directly, he is no different than Israel who was directly given the word of the Lord. Like Jonah, they bucked against the word, and they were exiled in order to bring them into conformity with that word.

Here Jonah is Israel being called from disobedience to obedience. And so, astonishingly, his rebellion and time in the fish is not only a picture of Jesus and His cross as we saw in the past two sermons, but it is also a picture of Israel while under punishment for rejecting the word of the Lord.

They were cast among the sea of chaos, meaning the stirred up Gentile nations and they were counted as dead to the world. And yet, they were sovereignly protected as a people during that time, keeping them alive despite their disobedience, just as Jonah was protected in the fish's belly.

They were kept safe for two days, or two thousand years, and they were restored to the dry land, meaning Israel, at the dawning of the third day, or at the beginning of the third millennium. This is seen pictured in the words of Hosea where a day is reckoned a thousand years –

"Come, and let us return to the Lord;  
For He has torn, but He will heal us;  
He has stricken, but He will bind us up.  
<sup>2</sup> After two days He will revive us;  
On the third day He will raise us up,  
That we may live in His sight." Hosea 6:1, 2

And yet now, Jonah is also a type of Christ who had to do the calling of the Gentiles Himself, because Israel refused to do it as was their duty. Only the true Israel, Christ, performed according to the word of the Lord without wavering.

As far as obedience to the word, can we expect any less from the Lord today? We have the entire body of Scripture speaking out to us, asking us to be obedient to it. It is the same word, having come from the same Source. Such directed actions as exile or being swallowed by a fish may not happen to us, but consequences for failure to heed are no less sure to come in their due time.

<sup>3 (con't)</sup> **Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city,**

*v'nineveh hayetah ir gedolah l'elohim* – "And Nineveh existed as city whopping to God." Most translations follow the Hebrew as indicating this in the past tense –

"Nineveh was an exceedingly great city." This is not incorrect, but it leads to the impression that the account may have been written after the time of Jonah when it has already declined in power, or even after it was destroyed.

However, the past tense in Hebrew is not expected to be taken in that way. The word used simply means "to become" or "come to pass." It was a great city, not because it once was, but because it had come to pass that it was so. The past tense expresses the reality of the city's nature from the time that it became great.

The meaning of the term the Bible uses to describe the city, *gedolah l'elohim*, or "whopping to God," is debated, but it is not really difficult to determine. Greatness before God, as the Bible states it, can be divided into two categories.

Terms like, "the mountains of God," or "the cedars of God" give the idea of the greatness of what God has created. Such mountains or trees are examples of the handiwork of God which demonstrate His immense ability to create.

And then there is that which is under the eye and attention of God. Even today, we hear terms like, "He is a great man of God." We understand that such a person bears the scrutiny of God, and excels before Him. Nineveh was this way as a city. It wasn't just a great city in the eyes of men, but it was a great city in the eyes of God.

In Revelation, Jerusalem is called a great city – both the earthly and the heavenly Jerusalem. Likewise, Babylon is termed a great city numerous times. Both are great before God, because they bear His scrutiny. Nineveh is not merely a great city before men, but it is also such before God. Its size and its status brought it to His eyes...

<sup>3 (con't)</sup> **a three-day journey *in extent*.**

*mahalakh sheloshet yamim* – "Journey three days." The word *mahalakh*, or journey, is used but four times in the Bible. Two of them are in Jonah 3:3 and 3:4. It indicates a passage or a distance. In the case of Nineveh, Matthew Poole states that it was...

“...the greatest city of the known world at that day; it was then in its flourishing state greater than Babylon, whose compass was three hundred and sixty-five or three hundred and eighty-five furlongs, but Nineveh was in compass four hundred and eighty, her walls a hundred feet in height, and broad enough for three coaches to meet and safely pass by each other; it had fifteen hundred towers on its walls, and these towers two hundred feet high; and one million and four hundred thousand men employed continually for eight years to build it, if our author be not mistaken.”

If it was 480 furlongs, or about 60 miles in circumference, and a day was about a 20 mile walk, then the Bible is saying that it would take three days to walk around it. The city is known for its size in this manner, not in regards to what will be said in the next verse.

*Yet forty days and you shall see your last  
I have stated that your wickedness is at an end  
On you, my fiery coals I will cast  
Upon you my fury and wrath I will send*

*Your wickedness has come up before me  
It stands and confesses against what you have done  
You will be destroyed for this; so shall it be  
You have exalted yourself, but you are the lowly one*

*Be prepared, for it comes soon enough  
Unless you repent; yes I will grant you reprieve  
But your heart is hard, your stubborn will is tough  
Turn now and repent; turn now and believe*

*I long to have compassion upon you  
If you repent, so I shall do*

## **II. A Word to Nineveh; A Sign to Israel (verse 4)**

<sup>4</sup> And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk.

*Va'yakhel yonah lavow ba'ir mahalakh yom ekhad* – “And entered Jonah into the city, journey day one.” If the city’s walls were a three-day walk, one could walk its diameter in a day. But it would make no sense to enter the city and walk right to the other side. Instead, his walk *within* the city would be according to the size of the city, walking around it and proclaiming his message.

The words then basically mean, “Jonah entered the city, walking through it for a day.” Wherever he was, that was where his proclamation was made. The word “journey” mentioned in verse 3 is simply given to explain the great size of the city. The journey of verse 4 is not expected to be tied into the size of the city, but into the time of Jonah’s proclamation.

**\*4 (fin) Then he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”**

*va'yiqra va'yomar owd abirim yom v'nineveh neh-paket* – “And cried and said, ‘Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.’” Just five words; words of terror... but also words of grace. There is no reason to think that Jonah said anything more than these five words. He simply called it out as a statement of fact. And what could have more of an effect than this?

A Hebrew had come all the way from a foreign land to walk around the city and make a single proclamation to the people. If he wanted to die, it would have been a lot easier to just jump off a mountain. If he wanted security, he could have simply stayed in Israel. If he was a Jew, then he wasn’t an Assyrian, and therefore he had no reason to proclaim a lie to the people.

If he had stopped to debate, they would have had a reason to harden their hearts. If he had said more, the message would have become confused. The chosen person is the perfect person to carry the message, and the chosen words are exactly what was needed to effect the change in the hearts of the people. The call itself was all that was needed to prompt them to consider the truth of the message. It is a lesson for us to keep the gospel simple.

The word he uses is the same as that which was recorded for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is a story that permeated Hebrew culture as the epitome

of what it represented. If any in Assyria knew the culture, they would then also know the meaning of the word.

As far as the allotted time-frame, forty days is given as a time of probation. If the message took hold, then there would be a turning to God and, hopefully, no destruction. If the message failed to stir the people, only destruction could result.

This then *is* the sign of Jonah. I explained this in an earlier sermon. The sign is *not* Jonah's time in the belly of the fish. There is nothing in Scripture to even hint that they knew of what happened to Jonah, and what Scripture says is all that matters. Rather, as Jesus clearly states in the Gospel of Luke, the preaching of Jonah is the sign, just as Jesus' preaching to the people was the sign.

Jonah preached and promised destruction in 40 days. Jesus preached and promised destruction as well. It was realized in a year-for-day based on Jonah's words, of which Jesus alluded to. This also happened in Moses' time with the spies who returned with a bad report. They rejected the word of the Lord, and they were sentenced a day for a year of punishment.

As I said in the earlier sermon, 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. And all along, almost all scholars have passed this along as being the case. This is because after saying this, He said He would be likewise in the belly of the earth.

In other words, with a cursory look at the narrative, the sign seems to be His death and resurrection. But Luke leaves out both 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. We saw that in Luke 11 which I cited earlier.

The sign of Jonah is the preaching, which if rejected, would lead to destruction after 40 days. The resurrection simply bears witness to the truth of Jesus' preaching, which was to an already unbelieving people.

Jesus' words of the kingdom and of repentance to "this generation" are the ultimate sign to them. Other prophets spoke in the name of the Lord, but Jesus spoke in His own name, and under His own authority as the Son, and so – "indeed a greater than Jonah is here."

The 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.

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 to do 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.

In forty years after Jesus' words, a day for a year, Israel was destroyed and carried away exile. The Romans came in and did what Nineveh will be spared of. God's judgment would fall heavy upon them for failing to repent, receive their long-awaited Messiah, and conform to the will of God which is found in the finished work of Jesus Christ. For this reason, Jesus said to the people –

"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

The word of God, spoken to Israel in fulfillment of Scripture, and under the full authority of the Messiah who had been promised since the very beginning of man's time on the planet, was the sign. The resurrection simply proved it.

Now with having heard this explanation for the second time, hopefully it has sunk into your mind in several ways. First, we are to know what the sign of Jonah is – in a predictive sense, in a literal sense, and in a fulfilled sense.

Secondly, if the sign of Jonah which Christ Jesus spoke of occurred more than 400 years before His coming, and it was then fulfilled 40 years after His warning, exactly as He had stated – and as recorded history, both biblical and extra-biblical – has borne out, then shouldn't we be confident in all of the other words which the Lord has spoken?

Shouldn't we be willing to accept the full counsel of Scripture as literal and true? The Lord promised destruction and exile for Israel, yes – it is true, but He also promised return and restoration for them as well. Is it too hard to accept that just as undeserving Nineveh was given a warning leading to repentance, that Israel could likewise be restored to God's favor?

Should we so adamantly speak against the rebellious Jewish people simply because they are rebellious? Or should we look to God's longsuffering nature as an amazing testimony that He is willing to go to even the greatest lengths of all to restore those He has called and placed His name upon?

While we stand, pointing our fingers at Israel and railing against them, can't we look back on our own time before Christ and realize that we too were His enemies – cut off and condemned? We too were without hope, and we weren't even of His promised people. How much more then should we be willing to praise God for His mercy upon us, and upon Israel – both equally undeserving before His eyes!

For the undeserving, there are just two avenues that can be taken. The first is to accept God's provision as He determines, or to face God's wrath as He has proclaimed. In the end, it is the wrath that all deserve. Nobody deserves mercy, and grace is out of reach except as offered by the one who bestows it.

How unfair God is that He would dare to judge the world! But no! How undeserved is not being a part of that judgment! And that time of judgment is at hand. First, it is at hand for every person who is but one heartbeat away from their end. Not one of us knows our pre-appointed hour, but it is on its way.

Secondly, it is at hand for the world as a whole. I am sorry to tell those who mock at God's right to judge, but the book is written, the word stands firm, and the great Day of His wrath is at hand. The prophecies of restoration to Israel have begun.

Their arrival in the long desolate land is the key to both the destruction and the restoration, and by God! – they are back in the land, setting the stage for each to come about. And so be warned, whether through death of natural cause, or through an explosion of God’s wrath on humanity not seen since the flood of Noah, we are all going to meet our Maker.

Before our day arrives, we have been offered... grace – unmerited favor – just as Nineveh has been offered. Destruction is prophesied, but peace and restoration is available. And it is found in the righteous Judge of all mankind, Jesus Christ. Let us not be found with a verdict of “guilty” on that day. But rather, let us accept the grace and be pardoned of every misdeed through the blood He shed, which alone can purify and restore the guilty soul.

**Closing Verse:** “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:8, 9

**Next Week:** Jonah 3:5-10 *This coming sermon will be a wonderful feast...* (From the Greatest to the Least) (8<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.

### **The Repentance of Nineveh**

Now the word of the Lord came  
To Jonah the second time, saying  
“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city  
And preach to it the message that I tell you; one I am relaying

So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh  
According to the word of the Lord  
Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city

A three-day journey in extent for it to be explored

And Jonah began to enter the city  
On the first day's walk, the Lord's word he made known  
Then he cried out and said  
“Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

God has shown us in His precious word  
That being obstinate towards Him can only harm us  
Instead, we need to bow to our glorious Lord  
Giving honor and respect to Christ Jesus

Help us in this Lord, this we implore  
Our hearts are so easily turned away  
Give us of Your Spirit to overflowing and even more  
So that we will bring honor to you always, yes every day

And to You we give all of our highest praise  
And to You we shall look for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

## JONAH 3:5-10 (FROM THE GREATEST TO THE LEAST)

Proclamation Appointing a National Fast Day

Washington, D.C.  
March 30, 1863

By the President of the United States of America.

A Proclamation.

Whereas, the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the Supreme Authority and just Government of Almighty God, in all the affairs of men and of nations, has, by a resolution, requested the President to designate and set apart a day for National prayer and humiliation.

And whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.

And, insomuch as we know that, by His divine law, nations like individuals are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war, which now desolates the land, may be but a punishment, inflicted upon us, for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole People? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!

It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

Now, therefore, in compliance with the request, and fully concurring in the views of the Senate, I do, by this my proclamation, designate and set apart Thursday, the 30th. day of April, 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting and prayer. And I do hereby request all the People to abstain, on that day, from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite, at their several places of public worship and their respective homes, in keeping the day holy to the Lord, and devoted to the humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion.

All this being done, in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the Divine teachings, that the united cry of the Nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings, no less than the pardon of our national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering Country, to its former happy condition of unity and peace.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this thirtieth day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States the eighty seventh.

By the President: Abraham Lincoln  
William H. Seward, Secretary of State.

**Text Verse:** "So shall He sprinkle many nations.  
Kings shall shut their mouths at Him;  
For what had not been told them they shall see,  
And what they had not heard they shall consider." Isaiah 52:15

When I first read this proclamation, I wept openly. To imagine that a people would humble themselves in this manner, or in the manner of ancient Nineveh, is truly stirring to the soul. But such is the state of a nation when it realizes it has offended the Power which ultimately directs it.

Time and time again, the people of Israel went through cycles of turning to the Lord, and then turning away from Him once again. Until times of great distress were upon them, they went about their merry way, ignoring Him, and even actively mocking Him through their actions.

During all such times, the Lord sent prophets to call them back to Himself. But their words fell on deaf ears, and often the dead bodies of the prophets witnessed to the rejection of the Lord's message to His disobedient nation.

What does a nation need repentance for when they already believe they are God's chosen, and who are also deemed as righteous because of who they are? Such a smug attitude negates any such need for repentance.

America of 1863 had come to such a point, but the leader of the nation, Abraham Lincoln, realized that their many blessings had become their curse, and so he called on the people to repent, to turn from their arrogance, and to humble themselves before the God of the Bible; the God who had established them.

Such a call is needed once again, and we should hope it won't be long before it comes. If it does, will we respond? Only time will tell. One thing is for sure, Nineveh was given their warning, and even before it had been fully proclaimed throughout the land, the people were receiving it and acting upon it.

And when the leader of the great city heard it, he sent forth the word to repent, just as Lincoln did. The city as a whole responded, and the great destruction which was anticipated, was held back from happening. Humility before the Lord is of great value in His eyes. Let us pray that we as a people will demonstrate this most admirable quality, once again, before it is too late.

Such lessons as this 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. So the People Believed (verses 5-6)**

**<sup>5</sup> So the people of Nineveh believed God,**

*v'yaaminu anshe Nineveh b'elohim* – “And believed men Nineveh in God.” These words are based on the proclamation of Jonah which was given in the previous verse, that which ended our journey last week, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” It is of note that the same term for “believed” is given here that was given of Abraham in Genesis 15 –

“And behold, the word of the Lord *came* to him, saying, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.”<sup>5</sup> Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”

<sup>6</sup> And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.”

Genesis 15:4-6

There is, however, a difference between the two. In Genesis 15, Abraham is said to have believed Yehovah, the covenant-keeping Lord. So it was also with the salty sailors of Chapter 1. In this account, it says the people believed, *Elohim*, or “God.”

Therefore this is a clue that it is probably not to be considered justifying faith as it was for Abraham or the sailors. It does, in fact, picture this though. The turning of the Gentiles in Nineveh is a picture of the greater turning of the Gentiles to Christ the Lord in the dispensation of grace. Having said that, Jesus’ words of Luke 11 must be considered -

“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 11:32

He does say that they will “rise up in the judgment.” Whether this means they were saved, or whether they will simply be able to highlight Israel’s faithlessness at the same judgment must be left to God’s eternal counsel in matters of final judgment.

Here, there is no promise or covenant established with the Ninevites as there was with Abraham, or as in Christ’s New Covenant. Rather, there was simply a proclamation that destruction lay ahead. Instead of justifying faith, it is probably a

faith grounded in the mercy of God in this earthly existence. There is an expectation that if they act, He will relent from His designs against them.

The entire account is showing a contrast between the Ninevites and the Jews. The Ninevites believed in God and were quick to respond to His word; the Jews had an intimate covenant relationship with the Lord, and they were slow to believe, slow to respond, and slow to repent.

The story of Jonah is a prophetic look to the future when God would do something new through Jesus Christ. For the Gentiles, there would be a massive turning to the Lord; for the Jews, there would be a pathetically small group who faithfully turned to Him; a mere remnant.

**5 (con't) proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth,**

*Va'yiqre-u som va'yilbeshu saqim* – “and called out for a fast and put on sacks.” It is unknown if this verse really follows in thought to that of verse 6, or if it actually occurred before it. The writer seems to indicate that as the word spread, the people responded to it immediately, humbling themselves and fearing what they heard. Each was intent on proclaiming a fast and putting on sackcloth, both of which were external signs of an inward repentance.

Fasting was intended to deny oneself food in order to be reminded of a devotion to God. If one is hungry, they will be continually reminded of their hunger. If this is voluntary, it will then remind one of why they were hungering.

Likewise, sackcloth was poor quality cloth, it would be itchy and unsightly. The garments would be both a physical reminder to the body and to the eyes of their on-going repentance. Both actions speak of a state of humility, not arrogance, before God.

**5 (con't) from the greatest to the least of them.**

*mi'gedolam v'ad qetanam* – “From the most whopping and unto the least.” From the throne of the king, to the smallest child of the least servant, all participated in the fast and in the humble adornment of clothes. None felt excepted for none was

above the word of the Lord. And this was either because, or it was followed by, the actions of the king himself...

**<sup>6</sup> Then word came to the king of Nineveh;**

*va'yiga ha'davar el melek nineveh* – “And reached the word to king (of) Nineveh.” This may explain the “why” of what occurred in the previous verse, and so the words would then be in the past-perfect – “For the word had come to the king of Nineveh.”

Or the words may show an elevation of the message of Jonah which finally reached the ears of the king, who felt he was not above the actions of the people over whom he ruled. Either is possible, but the order of the verses seems to argue for the latter. The entire city had cumulatively humbled themselves which was then followed by even the king himself.

**<sup>6 (con't)</sup> and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe,**

*va'yaqam mi'kiso va'yaaver addarto me'alav* – “and arose from his throne and laid his robe from him.” The throne is the place of power, and the robe is a symbol of authority. By leaving his throne and laying the robe aside, the king is essentially acknowledging that in comparison to the call of the prophet, he has no authority and no power.

It would be comparable to the surrendering of the sword by the defeated general. The king so firmly believed the word that he stepped aside from his own place of nobility, and demonstrated what one would think was the greatest act of submission that he could possibly perform. But he went even further...

**<sup>6 (con't)</sup> covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes.**

*vay'kas saq va'yshev al ha'epher* – “and covered sackcloth and sat upon the ashes.” The garment of the king would have been resplendent and beautiful, and it would have been extremely comfortable. He would have stood out from all others, both in physical appearance and in physical comfort.

And yet, he put on the same lowly garments as all of the people had done, placing himself on their level, even to the point where none could tell if he were king or pauper. And even more, we are told that he sat upon ashes. It was a sign that he understood that the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah was due.

When one sits on a throne, it is because they have a right to that throne. To sit in ashes then implies that being reduced to ashes was his just due. In assuming this position, it was then a petition for mercy. “I understand what I deserve, the fiery judgment of God, and I acknowledge that. Thine will be done.” The actions of the king are the greatest acts of humility that he could perform.

In the Bible, we read about another such occasion. Jesus laid aside His own garments in the most incredible demonstration of humility ever performed in the stream of time... time that He created. In the first, He set aside His glorious garments of divinity which He bore from eternity past, coming in the appearance of a Man. His divine splendor was hidden from sight. But He went further. At the last supper, He set aside His earthly garments to serve in the lowest manner of all...

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded.” John 13:3-5

The symbolism of the King of Nineveh setting aside his robes was prophetically realized and yet outmatched by the King of kings setting aside his own robes to humble Himself. In the first instance, an earthly king set aside a beautiful robe before the King of the universe. In the second instance, the King of the universe set aside His divine robes, and then even His common garments in submission before the beings He created.

*Garments so rich and beautiful; those of a King  
Radiant in splendor and in majesty  
To this One, all hearts should joyfully sing  
Robed in glory and of divine pageantry*

*And yet, they were set aside by this marvelous God*

*The robes common to all men, He did don*

*And among the sons of men, this One did trod*

*Yes, in the garments of flesh which he put on*

*And in those garments, He came to serve*

*The lowest position of all He took upon Himself for us*

*From His duties assigned by the Father, never did He swerve*

*And so all understanding souls hail the Name of Jesus*

## **II. The King's Decree (verses 7-9)**

**<sup>7</sup> And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh**

*va'yazeq va'yomer b'nineveh* – “And cried and spoke in Nineveh.” These words are in response to Jonah’s cry. Jonah cried out, and the king responds with his own cry. It would be in the form of proclamation and an edict in writing. The proclamation would be for all ears to hear, and the published edict, for all eyes to see. It was to be done so throughout all of Nineveh so that no person could be exempt from the word.

Despite having humbled himself before God and having stepped away from his throne and his robe for humility’s sake, he still bore the authority of the kingship over the people. And so it was with Christ. Despite having humbled Himself and having stepped away from both His throne and His divine appearance, He still bore the authority of His kingship. It makes His actions all the more remarkable when this is properly considered.

**<sup>7</sup> (con't) by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying,**

*mi'taam ha'melek u-gedolav lemor* – “by the taste (of) the king, and the whopping ones, saying...” The word *taam* indicates a taste, and thus it extends to what is tasteful to a person. And so it can indicate a mandate, a decree, and the like. The use of the word in Hebrew to mean a “decree” is unique to this verse. However, the cognate word in Aramaic is found in both Ezra and Daniel with this same meaning.

Therefore, it shows that the author was acquainted with this personally. It is a beautiful touch of confirmation that Jonah was indeed the person who was called to Nineveh, and the person who recorded the account for us. This is also the last use of it in the noun form in the Old Testament.

Another confirmation of sorts concerning the truth of the account is that the decree is sent out, not merely by the king, but also by his nobles. This corresponds to how the functioning of these eastern governments issued edicts, unlike those in Israel which were issued solely under the king's authority. Again, it is a nice touch of the reliability of the story.

<sup>7 (con't)</sup> **Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything;**

*ha'adam v'ha'behemah ha'baqar v'ha'tson al yitamu me-umah* – “the man and the beast, the herd and the flock, no taste anything.” The noun *taam* used above to indicate the taste, or decree, of the king is a variant of the verb *taam*, or taste, for man and beast here. His *taam* forbids their *taam*. The tasting of food and water, for both man and beast is forbidden.

This verse has been called ridiculous, extreme, and even comical by liberal scholars. They tear apart the story of Jonah over verse after verse, but they really tear it apart with certain verses. This is one of them. Here is a portion of the less than insightful commentary in the preface to Jonah in the liberally biased translation, The New Oxford Annotated Bible –

“The book of Jonah is also uncharacteristic, when compared to other writings in the prophetic tradition, in its use of humor to make its points. Humorous qualities, such as exaggerated behavior (running away from God); **never mind that the apostles did this** – “inappropriate actions (sleeping through a violent storm); – **never mind that Jesus did that too** – outlandish situations (offering a prayer of thanksgiving from inside a fish’s belly); **what better place to pray?** ludicrous commands (animals must fast and wear sackcloth); and emotions either contrary to expectation (anger at mercy) or out of proportion (being angry enough to die because a plant has withered) appear throughout the story.” (Crummy scholars at Oxford).

However, even those who accept the Bible for what it is, and not just a ludicrous story, have trouble understanding the words of this verse. But what seems extreme to us, doesn't really seem extreme if we just pay attention to our own habits.

When a president or former president dies, or when any great dignitary or wealthy person dies, family and friends are not the only ones covered in mourning cloth. Instead even the animals are. The presidential horse, Sergeant York, is adorned in black, and the shoes of the dead president are hung backwards over it.

What brute beasts cannot learn of God's judgment through reason, they are still expected to learn at the hand of the master through the wearing of the sackcloth and the withholding of their food. And the words are all-encompassing. The animals mentioned include every animal possessed by the people. None were to be exempt. The king understood the people's customs always included their animals, And so how much more should their repentance include them.

<sup>7</sup> (con't) **do not let them eat, or drink water.**

*al yiru u-mayim al yishtu* – “no do feed and water, no drink.” It is clear from the Bible that the beasts of the earth share in the sins of man, and they thus share in the mercies that God shows towards man. If a city is to be destroyed, the beasts were not exempt. If the city was to be saved, the beasts would share in that salvation.

<sup>8</sup> **But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God;**

*Va'yitkasu saqim ha'adam v'ha'behemah v'yiqre-u el elohim b'khazeqah* – “And be covered sacks the man and the beast and cry unto God with might.” The verse is clear that both man and beast were to cry unto God. This is the last of six uses of the word *khozqah* in the Bible. It indicates with strength or force. Their cries were to be sharp and strong, even so that the city would resound with the wails.

It is also the last time that sackcloth will be mentioned in the Old Testament. There is a call to repentance which is being answered by a pagan king which is being remarkably used by the Lord to show His erring people, Israel, how they too

should act, or to relay to them that the consequences of their own failure to act lie solely with them.

The words of this verse are directly contrasted to what Isaiah records concerning the people of Jerusalem during the time when destruction lay ahead. Nineveh is donning sackcloth, and is in a state of complete repentance, even to the covering of their animals in sackcloth. Isaiah records exactly the opposite in Jerusalem –

““And in that day the Lord God of hosts  
Called for weeping and for mourning,  
For baldness and for girding with sackcloth.

13 But instead, joy and gladness,  
Slaying oxen and killing sheep,  
Eating meat and drinking wine:

“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!”

14 Then it was revealed in my hearing by the Lord of hosts,  
“Surely for this iniquity there will be no atonement for you,  
Even to your death,” says the Lord God of hosts.”” Isaiah 22:12-14

They not only failed to mourn and repent, they held a party and feasted on the animals that were left to them. Nineveh, instead of feasting on their beasts, covered them and had them cry out to God. On the surface, though, this doesn't seem to make sense. How can beasts be trained to cry unto God? However, it naturally follows from the deprivation of food and water. The Bible will explain itself on this. In the book of Joel, for example, it says –

“The beasts of the field also cry out to You,  
For the water brooks are dried up,  
And fire has devoured the open pastures.” Joel 1:20

The fasting was to continue until the beasts themselves raised their voices and cried out to God. The king understood that the beasts would either cry along with the humans in involuntary restrained feeding and directed humility, or they would cry along with man in destruction imposed upon them by the judgment of God.  
8 (con't) yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.

*v'yashuvu ish mi'darko ha'raah u-min he-khamas asher b'kapehem* – “and let turn man from way the evil, and from the violence that in their hands.” Again, these words are given in direct contrast to the words of Isaiah concerning Israel. He uses the exact same term to describe them as the king of Nineveh uses –

“Their webs will not become garments,  
Nor will they cover themselves with their works;  
Their works *are* works of iniquity,  
And the act of violence *is* in their hands.” Isaiah 59:6

Where the king of Nineveh was concerned about the violence in the hands of the people, the hands of those in Israel were filled with it and yet they were unconcerned over it.

In this verse, it specifies the evil ways and violence of the people rather than the animals. But this doesn’t mean that the animals were not involved in those acts of wickedness. In at least two ways, they were probably implicated, and the king knowing this, would have been all the more desirous of their being brought into the same state of humility as the people.

First, they were used in sacrifices to the false gods of the people. The king, hearing the proclamation from Jonah, would have come to understand that the true God was calling them to account.

Secondly, what is contrary to nature itself, and that which is ingrained in the human psyche, is the wickedness of bestiality. At least five times in the Law of Moses we read about this crime –

“Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It *is* perversion.” Leviticus 18:23

Mandating that the animals wear sackcloth makes total sense when one realizes that Nineveh’s wickedness surely included this crime along with the crime of sacrificing their animals to false gods. In order to show complete humility at their actions, even the animals, which participated in the people’s wickedness, were clothed in sackcloth. Such perversions, along with all other acts of violence and wickedness, were to be mourned over and repented of.

<sup>9</sup> Who can tell if God will turn and relent,

*mi yodea yashuv v'nikham ha'elohim* – “Who can know will turn and sigh the God.” The king of Nineveh saw that there would be nothing to lose in abasing himself and his kingdom in order to be saved. The simplicity of the message, the Hebrew foreigner who cried it out, and the weight of the conscience in his mind all spoke to the fact that there was no other option than turning away from the course they had followed.

In this verse, we have the second use of the term *ha'elohim*, or “the God” in the book of Jonah. In this chapter, in verse 5 and verse 8, it simply said “God.” However now the king specifically states, “the God.” It is an acknowledgment that even if there are lesser gods, there is One true God. This supreme God has called for destruction on Nineveh, and so it is to Him, that his words are directed. This is in the proclamation which has been sent to all the people of the kingdom.

It is astonishing to me that no Bible translation properly translates this article when it is used. It is showing us a fundamental truth that is found in every culture on earth. Man may not have a right understanding of who God is, but man understands enough to know that there is “the God” above all other gods.

Although the Ninevites didn’t have the prophetic word other than five words uttered from the mouth of Jonah, God’s general revelation of Himself is still written on the hearts of men. We can deduce things about Him without ever having His full revelation.

And so, with just these five words to convict them and to speak to their hearts, the people have – as a whole, and as directed by their highest leader – demonstrated that they understand enough about this One God to know that He is not only a God of wrath.

They had rain for their crops, they had flowers with countless colors and smells to delight their senses. They had the familiarity of the sun passing over their heads to warm them and illuminate their way during each day. They also had the twinkling of the stars above their heads at night, and the cool breezes to ease the trials of the work day which was behind them.

From these, and ten thousand other hints of His divine grace, they knew that He must be loving and that He must then also be merciful. Each undeserved blessing of creation spoke to them of these things, and so the five terrifying words of this prophet were expected not to be their end, but rather their turning point. And in their turning, hope for another such turning was laid forth...

**9 (con't) and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?**

*v'shav me'kharon apo v'lo noved* – “and turn from burning away, and no perish.” It is no small thing that the words of this pagan king are almost identical to the words of the Lord Himself as directed to the people of Israel.

“Now, therefore,” says the Lord,  
“Turn to Me with all your heart,  
With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.”  
<sup>13</sup> So rend your heart, and not your garments;  
Return to the Lord your God,  
For He *is* gracious and merciful,  
Slow to anger, and of great kindness;  
And He relents from doing harm.  
<sup>14</sup> Who knows *if* He will turn and relent,  
And leave a blessing behind Him—  
A grain offering and a drink offering  
For the Lord your God?” Joel 2:12-14

The Lord, demonstrating his nature in the words of Joel, was confirming that same nature to Israel as His words were passed on to them. Even though Nineveh only received words of assured judgment, the very fact that the words were uttered showed that mercy could be found.

Thus, He is a hoped-for God of mercy to the pagan world, and He is an avowed God of mercy to His people. If we can know that we are violating His standards and are worthy of condemnation, just as the book of Romans tells us, then we can also know that He is capable of forgiving those transgressions and showing mercy. The people of Nineveh figured this out and called on the true God to turn and relent.

*Gracious and merciful is the unseen God  
How surely this is evident to all people if they will but look  
Radiant flowers adorn the paths that we trod  
And tender grass is to be found by the brook*

*The summer brings crops in abundance from the earth  
And the fall brings relief from the summer's heat  
Even winter is never a time grace is in famine or dearth  
The winter to every youthful heart is a wonderful treat*

*Each meal we have comes from His gracious hand  
In abundance or lack, can we then complain?  
Why is it so hard for the sons of man to understand?  
That God has ordained it all – both joy and pain*

*He does this so that we will seek Him while He may be found  
In all ways, if we but look, we see His goodness does abound*

### **III. Then God Saw Their Works (verse 10)**

**<sup>10</sup> Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way;**

*vayar ha'elohim eth maasehem ki shavu mi'darkam ha'raah* – “And saw the God the works of them that they turned from the way the evil.” The king had pondered if “the God” would relent of his destructive intent. They had set forth their works of repentance, and they had turned from the evil path which they had trod for far too long.

Their path was evil, but their turn was more than just to another wayward path. Instead, it was a full turn to one which was directed to God and to His throne of mercy. How unlike Israel whose necks continuously remained, and which to this day still remain, stiff-necked toward this same God.

The contrast of what is placed before us is as clear as the finest crystal. The wine in the cup which was mixed for Nineveh on this day was one which was intended for salvation, not destruction. The cup of which Israel would drink after hearing of

the sign of the prophet Jonah, on the other hand, would be just the opposite. They would reject the good and receive the bad.

The name of Jonah, being intimately connected to the word *yayin*, or wine, is showing us exactly what wine signifies in Scripture. It is the merging together of grapes which is intended to result in the thing that ought to happen, symbolized by wine. Jonah spoke, and that which ought to happen has come about. Jesus spoke, and the thing that He prophesied would occur likewise came about.

The final words of the chapter confirm that “the God” did, in fact, relent towards Nineveh. They acted; He responded. Salvation, even if just temporal in nature, came to Nineveh.

**\*<sup>10</sup> (fin) and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.**

*va'yinakhem ha'elohim al ha'raah asher dibber la'asot la'hem v'lo asah* – “And sighed the God of the evil that he had said to do to them, and no did.” Again, the term “the God” is used in this verse. This is speaking of the true God, and the wording is anthropomorphic. The Bible, at times, ascribes human traits to God so that we can understand what has occurred.

God did not relent from the destruction that He had purposed to carry out. Rather, He did not do what He had threatened to do. The threatening was conditional based on the actions of the people. He knew what their actions would be and therefore, there was no change in Him, except from our perspective.

Finally, it is to be noted that the term “God” alone has been used in relation to the Ninevites in this chapter. Unlike chapter 1 where the sailors did call on the Lord, Yehovah, these people have only been placed under the mercy of God. They have not come to understand the covenant name of Yehovah as the sailors did.

This repentance then, even if it was temporary, showed a willingness by the Gentile peoples to accept the Word of God as it was minimally revealed to them. Through that word, they turned from their wicked ways, thus allowing God to demonstrate mercy towards them.

It is an anticipatory picture of the time when Israel would wholly turn from the true God as He revealed Himself in the Person of Jesus, and that this covenant of grace would be directed away from Israel and towards the Gentile people of the world.

He is proving, here and now, that He is the God of both Jew and Gentile. Any who will accept His word, and His revelation of Himself, can be called into a covenant relationship with Him. And this is exactly what occurred in Christ. A New Covenant was established through His shed blood. It is a covenant based on grace alone.

Even with a minimal understanding of the work of Jesus Christ, one can be saved. The gospel is for the neurosurgeon and for the numbskull alike. Whatever level of education, or lack of it, that we possess, we are all welcome by a mere act of faith. So don't muddy the waters when witnessing. Keep the gospel message simple, and keep it understandable.

The Word of God has come. He has walked among us, and He asks us to believe that He is capable of saving us, not because we deserve it, but because He is the God of grace and mercy. If nothing else demonstrates this to us, surely the cross of Christ must.

God was willing to turn from the destruction of Nineveh because they turned from their evil ways. How much more will God save us from His wrath when we accept the punishment which He has already carried out in His own Son for those who believe? Let us not fail in calling out to Him and receiving the greater salvation which comes from the shed blood of Calvary's cross.

**Closing Verse:** "Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.<sup>9</sup> For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,<sup>10</sup> and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10

**Next Week:** Jonah 4:1-4 *Never think that His goodness is odd. He is... (A Gracious and Merciful God)* (9<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.

### **The Repentance of Nineveh**

So the people of Nineveh believed God  
Proclaimed a fast; sackcloth they put on  
From the greatest to the least of them  
These garments of humility they did don

Then word came to the king of Nineveh  
And he arose from his throne  
And laid aside his robe  
Covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes  
His humility was openly shown

And he caused it to be proclaimed  
And published throughout Nineveh  
By the decree of the king and his nobles, saying  
Yes, these are the words he did say

Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything  
Do not let them eat, or drink water  
Nothing to your lips you shall bring

But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth  
And cry mightily to God; we know He understands  
Yes, let everyone turn from his evil way  
And from the violence that is in his hands

Who can tell if God will turn and relent  
And turn away from His fierce anger  
So that we may not perish; so that mercy can be sent  
Then God saw their works  
That they turned from their evil way

And God relented from the disaster that He had said  
He would bring upon them, and He did not do it that day

Lord God, how gracious You are to save those who will but turn  
If we abandon the reckless path which we are on  
Help us to think on this, and then to learn  
Before the number of our days is expired and gone

Now, yes now is the time of salvation  
And to You with hearts grateful and full we turn  
Praises to You, O God, from the grateful nation  
Of people from all lands, whose hearts for You burn

Thank You for Christ Jesus our Lord  
And for the gospel message found in Your superior word

Hallelujah and Amen...

## **JONAH 4:1-4 (A GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL GOD)**

A story is told about when George Bush senior was in office. His wife Barbara and George W. were talking about religion. George W. held the view that Jesus is the only way to heaven and that apart from Him, no one can be saved.

Barbara, not understanding the nature of God, or the fallen state of man, remarked that surely God in his grace would have a plan for the sincere followers of other religions. Eventually she said to one of the White House staff, "Get me Billy Graham."

The operators got hold of him and Barbara told him what they were discussing. Billy's answer was that as a believer in the New Testament, he had to agree that Jesus is the only way to heaven and that is through personal faith in Him.

The amazing part of this to me isn't Billy's response – it ought to be obvious to anyone who's ever even skimmed the New Testament. What I find hard to believe is that Barbara Bush was unaware of this – and for several reasons

First, she was supposedly raised in a Christian setting. That means that for her entire life, no one properly explained to her either the message of Jesus, or the doom of those who fail to accept Him. And secondly, having consulted with Billy Graham, she must have been familiar with his sermons. Her disagreement with George W. shows that despite hearing him, she never listened to his words.

Let there be no mistake, here at the Superior Word, we boldly and unapologetically proclaim that the Bible is true, and it says that there is one way and one way only to be reconciled to God, and that is through Jesus Christ. The Bible is abundantly clear on this.

One needs to dismiss the entire premise of the Bible to come to any other conclusion. If you're struggling with this, or if you're unsure that this is what the Bible teaches, please meet with me, and we'll go through the verses which clearly and unambiguously state this.

So far in chapters 1 thru 3, we've seen Jonah called to preach, he fled, he was punished, and he was restored. After this he got about the business which he should have done when God first called him to preach to the Ninevites.

Today we'll see a typical troubled human being – filled with self-pitying, animosity, and selfishness. But by using a person like Jonah, we can better and more clearly see the contrast between man and God. He is patient, giving, and abundantly merciful.

**Text Verse:** "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to you, O Baruch: 'You said, "Woe is me now! For the LORD has added grief to my sorrow. I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest."'" Jeremiah 45:2, 3

Baruch's self-pitying is similar to that of Jonah, but God responded firmly and yet tenderly to both Baruch and Jonah. Baruch was Jeremiah's scribe and is one of the people in the Bible whom archaeology has actually substantiated as being a real, historical person. In 1975, a clay bulla containing his seal and name was excavated at the "burnt house" – a site of archaeological research. In 1996, a second bulla was found with the same seal, but it also had a fingerprint, possibly of Baruch himself, just imagine that...

In our text verse today, Baruch was completely despondent over the tragedies occurring around him as Jerusalem was being destroyed by her enemies. So much so, that he cried out in misery. The Lord responded that because the nation was being punished collectively, he couldn't expect that he would lie in roses while everything else was falling apart around him.

The Lord said to him, "And do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek *them*; for behold, I will bring adversity on all flesh," says the LORD. "But I will give your life to you as a prize in all places, wherever you go." Jeremiah 45:5

I bring this up because whether it was Baruch, or Jonah, or you, or me – we are all subject to weakness and despair and we are also all subject to whatever ill comes upon our land. When the ball drops, and eventually it will, we need to not seek great things for ourselves. It very well may be that the rapture won't happen until some point long after a complete economic collapse. And so we need to be prepared to keep our eyes on the Lord through good times and bad.

This is one of the constant messages that we find in the pages of the Bible. It is a book of hope, but also a book of warning – always to be prepared. Such are the lessons which are 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.

There is no way I could fit all eleven verses of Chapter 4 into one sermon, and so I had to divide them up. And so today's sermon is a few pages shorter than normal, and verses 1-4 comprise our only section today.

**<sup>1</sup> But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry.**

*va'yerah el yownah raah gedowlah va'yihar lo* – “And it was evil to Jonah, displeased whoppingly, and he was kindled with anger.” The timing of the entire fourth chapter is argued over by scholars almost ad nauseum. What appears to be the case is that Jonah preached his message throughout the forty-day period and then left the city only to see that his words of pending destruction did not come about. Verse 1 follows after that thought, and so Chapter 4 is a description of what occurred between the Lord and Jonah after the fortieth day. Of this first verse, many scholars cite John Calvin who erringly states –

“He connected his own ministry with the glory of God, and rightly, because it depended on His authority. Jonah, when he entered Nineveh, did not utter his cry as a private individual, but professed himself to be sent by God. Now, if the proclamation of Jonah is found to be false, the disgrace will fall upon the author of the call himself, namely on God. There is no doubt, therefore, that Jonah took it ill that the name of God was exposed to the revilings of the heathen, as though He terrified without cause.”

Calvin is wrong. Jonah cared far less about the glory of God at this point than in his own personal condition. This is perfectly evident from the context of the story. From his run upon his original calling by the Lord, to the coming words of this chapter, he has demonstrated that it is he himself, and not God, who is the center of his thoughts. Remember how we ended last week –

"Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it" Jonah 3:10

Some years ago, one of my friends posted on her Facebook wall "It's OK to get angry with God, he can take it." Is it ok? It depends on how you translate "with." If it indicates being angry "at" God, then the answer is, "No." If you mean, "along with," then the answer is, "Yes." What angers God should anger us. As long as our anger is not vented so much *at* Him as it is *to* Him or *along with* Him, then we do not err.

If you've ever seen the movie "The Apostle" with Robert Duvall, then you might remember a scene where he was up late in the night venting at the top of his voice, "Lord, I'm angry. I don't understand why this is happening. I've been your servant since I was a little boy and I'm angry, Lord."

His mother, played by June Carter Cash, just lay in bed enjoying his rant. When a neighbor called to complain about the yelling, she just smiled and said that her boy was venting to the Lord and then she hung up. Venting, as long as it does not call into question the Lord's right to conduct His affairs as He sees fit, is perfectly fine.

Jonah was angry at the Lord because he felt foolish that he'd been called to preach that Nineveh would be destroyed. But if the people repented, he'd know he'd look like he was a false prophet and a buffoon.

Questioning God's wisdom isn't unique to the Old Testament. In Acts we read about a skeptic of the Lord's decision named Ananias. He had a vision of the Lord and was told to go to a certain place and put his hands on Paul to heal him. Instead, he responds as if the Lord didn't know what he was doing –

""Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." Acts 9:10-16

God has no idea what He's doing... we're right and He must be wrong. When we get the urge to question His decisions, we need to remember what He said to Isaiah...

"For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts,  
Nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD.  
"For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways,  
And My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8, 9

God is infinitely wiser than we are. No matter how much we know or ever can know, it is infinitely less than what He knows. When the Bible instructs us, it's because He knows what is best for His little creatures.

To Jonah now, what has transpired appears to him to be the highest form of disgrace. At this point, like when he first ran from the Lord, he is completely self-consumed. He has forgotten who commissioned him, and even who it is that created him.

He has become so enraged that he sits there in his own mental pity party. His reputation! Oh, he will look like a fool when nothing happens. Poor Jonah. He must bear that burden. His commission as a prophet! "Oh my! Prophets of Israel will be mocked and scorned by the heathen nations!" Poor Jonah. He must bear that disgrace.

Nineveh gets away with murder while Israel is bound to the minutest details of the law! My great country (oooh, and thus me!) carry such a torch. We have to be the shining example, but it is all for naught apparently. Poor Jonah.

And worst of all... "I am a Hebrew! I carry with me the fathers, the oracles, the traditions, and the name. These are just unworthy Gentiles who need to be eradicated as vermin, not spared like wayward children." Poor Jonah.

In his attitude, he is treating the Lord's mercy, not as a divine attribute, but a divine failing. What should radiate out in perfection, is seen to him to radiate out in fault. How could the Lord, who had given such noble and strict guidelines to Israel, forgive such terrible and weighty transgressions?

He is looking at a very small part of the picture, and he is failing to see Israel, the law, and the office of prophet in their proper context. And above all, his attitude, in essence, places his personal emotions and feelings above the sovereignty of God who alone decides the direction of His will towards His creatures.

In fairness to Jonah, we all do this to some extent. Any time we question God's good intent because of displeasing events which surround us, we assume that we know more, or at least better, than He does. This we cannot do.

The pattern of Jonah's anger and jealousy is repeated in the book of Acts. The Jews saw the efforts of the apostles in converting the Gentiles to Christ, and they stewed over it, fought against it, and went to the point of physical attacks in order to quench it. They threw a national pity party at the goodness of the Lord in calling the detestable enemy to share in the favor that they alone believed they had earned, and which they alone deserved.

What is surprising about the words here are that Jonah, if he is the true author of the book, does not attempt to hide his state in the writing. If it was some unknown Jew who wrote the book, it still doesn't change the openness of recording Jonah's self-consumed state. He, a Hebrew and a prophet of God, is being fully exposed for the attitude he bore at this time.

The desire of Jonah, for the destruction of Nineveh, is not unjust in and of itself. Destruction of sin, and thus the sinner, is what will happen when it is not repented of. Jonah's sin is disputing with the Lord who intended for Nineveh to repent and be saved. And what an amazing sin considering the magnitude of mercy which has already been monumentally manifested in him. He is a miserable man mired in mourning at the ministry meant to magnify his Master and not merely him.

**<sup>2</sup> So he prayed to the Lord,**

*va'yitpalel el Yehovah* – “And he prayed unto Yehovah.” The word “pray” here is *pala*. It is the same word which was used in Jonah 2:1 when he was in the fish’s belly, and it is the last time it will be used in Scripture. At the time that he realized he was delivered from death, he made his prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord, even from the belly of the fish.

Now, he prays again, but this time, instead of thanksgiving, he is in a state of vexed rage. The vexer is himself now vexed. In the belly of the fish, his words were orderly, calm, and well thought out. Here, his words will be almost the opposite. Instead of thankfulness to the Lord for his deliverance from death, they will petition him for it. John Gill rightly states that –

“...prayer should be fervent indeed, but not like that of a man in a fever; there should be a warmth and ardour of affection in it, but it should be without wrath, as well as without doubting.”

<sup>2 (con't)</sup> **and said, “Ah, Lord,**

*va'yomar annah Yehovah* – “...and said, I pray, Yehovah,” This is the last of thirteen times that the word *annah*, or I beseech You, is found in Scripture. It is a contraction of two other words, *ahava*, meaning “love,” and *na*, meaning “please.” In essence, “I beg of you.” It is a begging which would come from the soul of the man in a deep and heartfelt petition.

It was used by the sailors in Jonah 1:14 when begging for the Lord to not hold them guilty for Jonah’s blood when they cast him off the boat. Now, it is used by Jonah in exactly the opposite manner. They had asked for life in exchange for taking life. He is asking for death because of the granting of life.

The level of mental confusion because of his perception of the world around him is astonishing, and yet not uncommon. To this day, the Jews in general cannot perceive of the Lord granting His mercy to the Gentiles through a mere act of faith, while at the same time holding them accountable for their own infractions against His law.

<sup>2 (con't)</sup> **was not this what I said when I was still in my country?**

*ha-lo zeh debarti ad heyoti al admati* – “the not this I said while I when I was in my ground?” Exactly what he said is not recorded, but it can be inferred from the story. He had spoken to the Lord exactly that which came about. He understood that the word of the Lord he was asked to speak would result in the repentance of the people.

This shows quite clearly that John Calvin's assessment which I cited above is wholly incorrect. Jonah was not concerned about the glory of God, except possibly in its display through divine judgment. It was certainly not in whether His word might fail. The call was one expecting repentance, not expressing assured judgment.

In what seems a curious choice of words, Jonah uses the term *adamah*, or ground, instead of *eretz*, or land, here. *Adamah* is generally used to indicate the soil, coming from the word *adom*, or red. It is the same word from which *adam*, or "man" is derived. It is the word used in the early Genesis account to indicate the *adamah*, or ground, from which *adam*, or man, was taken when he was created.

The word is deeply intertwined with man, creation, and redemption. It is used by Ezekiel almost exclusively in his book. He speaks to a people who are in exile and out of favor with the Lord, but the Lord time and time again promises a restoration to them, to the *adamah*.

On the other hand, when Cain was punished for killing Abel, he was cursed in the *adamah* which received his brother's blood so that the *adamah* would no longer yield its strength to him, and he was driven from the face of the *adamah*. What was originally intended to bring forth life, would not.

It is in Genesis, as in Ezekiel, as in Jonah, all pointing to the Adam, or Man, who would come from Adam, the first man, who came from the *adamah* or red ground; it is referring to the Messiah. Jonah's choice of words is purposeful.

He is conveying an understanding that while he was in his *adamah* that life would be the result of his cry unto Nineveh. But how could they be given life when they were not of the *adamah* that he was derived from. He could not understand the spiritual connection that these Gentiles could have to the Lord. The Messiah was of and for the Jews, was He not?

Surely he knew better than God about His plans and intentions for the people of the world, and these Gentiles were NOT a part of that plan. Duh! They, like Cain, were not destined for Eden, but for banishment and exile from the Lord's presence. Had the Lord forgotten such a simple thing!

<sup>2 (con't)</sup> **Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish;**

*al ken qidamti livroakh tarshishah* – “Because so I hastened to flee (to) Tarshish.” As we saw in Chapter 1, the meaning of the name Tarshish is debated, but to a Hebrew audience, it might have appeared to indicate two words which together mean “white dove,” or “dove white.” Jonah flitted about to find a place to flee to and his eyes alighted on a place which bears the traits of who he is.

As I explained then, Tarshish was a descendant of Japheth, the second son of Noah, and the one who was given a like-blessing to Shem with the words –

“May God enlarge Japheth,  
And may he dwell in the tents of Shem;  
And may Canaan be his servant.” Genesis 9:27

In contrast to this, Nineveh was a city built by their ancestor Nimrod, a descendant of Ham, Noah’s youngest. He received no such blessing. He had done something perverted to his father, and so his father withheld any blessing upon him, and instead cursed Ham’s own youngest son, Canaan.

Jonah saw it better to flee to one who would dwell in the tents of Shem, than to preach repentance to a line of such disgraceful people as those in Nineveh. Surely the Lord had forgotten such a simple thing!

<sup>2 (con't)</sup> **for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness,**

*ki yadati ki attah el khannun v'rakhum erek apayim v'rav khesed* – “For I know for You God gracious and merciful slow of nostril and great covenant loyalty.” These words, though not a quote, are closely reflective of the words of the Lord Himself to Moses in Exodus 34:6 –

“And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,<sup>7</sup> keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...’” Exodus 34:6

Jonah acknowledges that Yehovah is *el*, or God; the mighty One. From that, he then says that He is gracious. The word is *khannun*. It is an adjective used for the last of 13 times. In all instances, it is only used when speaking of the Lord. When it is used, it gives the sense of hearing the cries of those who are vexed and cry out to Him. It is as if He is unable to hear such cries without responding to their need.

Next he says, *v'rakhum*, “and merciful.” It is an adjective which is also seen for the last of 13 times. And again, it is only used when speaking of the Lord. It is from the same root as *rekhem*, meaning “womb.” One can see how just as a mother cares for the child in her womb, so the Lord is compassionate, and thus merciful.

He next states that He is *erek apayim*. It is at times translated as “longsuffering,” or as here “slow to anger.” He is willing to put up with the grief His people give Him without immediately destroying them. The word *arek* is almost always used of the Lord’s slowness at being aroused to anger.

The word *apayim* means “nostrils.” This gives a more vivid description for us to understand. He is slow to getting in an angry huff where the nostrils flare and snort. It is His nature to retain a calm composure even when anger is what should be anticipated. Jonah himself was the recipient of this divine favor. Instead of a raging Lord, he was shown great compassion and mercy.

After this, He proclaims *v'rav khesed*, “and abounding in goodness.” The word *khesed* is deep and rich. It is a word often translated as “lovingkindness.” It indicates favor, merciful kindness, and even pity. Jonah notes that He doesn’t just possess this, but He possess it in abundance.

<sup>2 (con't)</sup> **One who relents from doing harm.**

*v'nikham al ha'raah* – “...and comforting concerning the evil.” The word *nakham* means to conform or to console. It comes from a primitive root and it properly means, “to sigh.” When one is angry at someone else and they apologize, if the apology is accepted, the one forgiving will sigh. “Ahhh, ok, I forgive you.”

Jonah says that the Lord bears this quality and will sigh concerning *the* evil when repented of. There is an article in front of evil which almost personifies it. The

people are infected with it, but when the infection is cast off, the Lord sighs and stands back from destruction.

In Exodus 32, the Lord waxed hot against Israel for the sin of the golden calf, but through Moses' mediation, He was said to relent, or sigh, concerning their destruction. Jonah knew the story as did all Israelites, and he understood this amazing quality of the Lord.

**<sup>3</sup>Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me,**

*v'attah Yehovah qakh na et naphshi* – “And now Yehovah take, I pray, my soul.” This particular verse shows the perverse nature of us when we’re despondent, but not suicidal. Think this through – “Please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

Jonah asks the Lord to take his life. Here he is practically blaming the Lord for his calamity and so in maybe a spiteful revenge, he asks Him to take his life. If things were really bad, he’d simply just jump off a cliff, but because he’s unhappy with what the Lord has done, he puts the onus on Him to end his life... as if that would make everything alright.

In being honest, how many of us do this almost constantly, say two or three thousand times a week. We tell the Lord how nice it would be if the rapture were today, as if what He’s given us here is so bad that we deserve – out of the billions of people on earth, to be granted a fate-sealing relief from our woes.

What I mean is, if the Lord comes today, millions and even billions of people will enter the tribulation period without ever knowing God’s wonderful gift. For me, I won’t have to spend the many hours it takes to type up another sermon. For any of us, we won’t have to worry about what we’re going to do to make a living in the years ahead.

How many of you feel the same way? “Oh, I wish you’d come today Lord Jesus.” In essence we’re doing exactly what Jonah did – please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live. In our case, it may be true, but it shows that our priorities are not geared towards where we are right now, and this is where the Lord has us... right now.

<sup>3 (con't)</sup> **for it is better for me to die than to live!"**

*mimeni ki tov mo-ti me'khaiai* – “To me than me for good my death than my life.” Jonah’s message has brought about the sparing of an entire city of people, but that means less to him than saving face in the eyes of the very people who have been spared. He was given a commission, and he carried it out grudgingly.

Instead of rejoicing that he had performed his task obediently and successfully, he moans over the very success the Lord had determined to come about.

The words of Jonah now cannot be left without seeing in them a contrasting comparison to those of Elijah. In 1 Kings 18, the great victory of Elijah, the prophet of the Lord, over the 450 prophets of Baal had come about. With no more than a quiet call upon the Lord, fire was sent down from heaven to consume the offering he had laid upon the altar.

With that, the hearts of the people were turned back to the Lord with the mighty cry, “The Lord, He *is* God! The Lord, He *is* God!” After that, the prophets of Baal were seized and executed, and the rains returned to Israel after a three and one half year drought.

But no sooner had the victory been won, than Jezebel had threatened to take his life. Upon hearing her words, he fled for his life into the wilderness where he sat down under a broom tree, praying that he might die –

“It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I *am* no better than my fathers!” 1 Kings 19:4

Elijah’s prayer for the Lord to take his life was because he perceived that he had failed in his task. The wicked queen who directed the prophets of Baal still lived and had not repented of her wicked ways.

In contrast to this, the king of Nineveh had stepped down from his throne in humility before the true God. Jonah’s warnings had turned the wicked from their wicked ways, but this was of less moment to him than his own perceived superiority over these heathen people.

Martin Luther in his words concerning Jonah's flight states, "...he was hostile to the city of Nineveh, and still held a Jewish and carnal view of God." This is exactly what the story is telling us. It is a picture of the larger world where the Jews do not look for repentance from sin and salvation for the Gentile world as something the Lord would offer.

Nor do they consider repentance from sin as necessary for themselves. As the people of God, they believe that sin sticks to the Gentiles and cannot be cleansed off, but sin does not affect their righteousness in His eyes because of His selection of them as His people. Like a Teflon coating, sin supposedly slips right off of them.

The story of Jonah tells us exactly the opposite is true. God's mercy can cleanse the vilest sinner, but God's law can make none perfect apart from One who is already perfect under God's law.

**\*<sup>4</sup> Then the Lord said, "Is it right for you to be angry?"**

*va'yomer Yehovah ha'hetev kharah lakh* – "And said Yehovah, the good, burning anger you?" These words are variously translated, but almost all of them give the sense of the NKJV – "Is it right for you to be angry." However, only Young's gives a completely different view by asking, "Is doing good displeasing to thee?"

There is a mile of difference between the two translations, and it would be tempting to ignore the one rebel-translated version, but it is haunting to do so for a multitude of reasons. The coming seven verses finish the book of Jonah, and they have some interesting things going on in them which tell us that there is more to the story than meets the eye.

After struggling with my own limited translation which leaned towards Young's and away from the majority, I spent an hour with Sergio going over these few words. In the end, translating *hetev* as "doing good" is correct, and so the words are to be translated as "Then the Lord said, 'Is the doing (of) good a reason for you to be furious?'"

That is the question the Lord asked Jonah, and it is the question I leave you with today. "Is doing good a reason for you to be furious?" Ask yourself this as if the

Lord Himself is asking you. The reason why, is because He has shown you what is good, O man. And He asks you to be obedient in it.

For Jonah, he was asked the question, and his response is, at this time, left unsaid. When we return for our final verses next week, we will enter into one of the most enigmatic passages in the entire Bible. Far too often, we are left asking, “Why does the story end as it does?” The answers are in the words, and the words give us a picture of Christ and His work. We’ll hope you will join in for one last taste of this masterpiece of literature and wonder.

And as I do each week, I’d like to take a moment to explain to you the overall message of Scripture, a portion of which is found in the sparing of Nineveh. It is God’s grace to the undeserving souls which have risen up and offended Him in a countless number of ways. That grace is found in the giving of His Son for our transgressions. It is found in Jesus Christ.

**Closing Verse:** “If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? <sup>24</sup> Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” John 7:23, 24

**Next Week:** Jonah 4:5-11 *The enigma will keep you guessin’...* (The Law and Grace – An Object Lesson) (Our 10<sup>th</sup> and final 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.

### A Gracious and Merciful God

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly  
And he became angry  
So he prayed to the Lord, and said  
“Ah, Lord, was not this what I said  
When I was still in my country?  
Therefore I previously to Tarshish fled

For I know that You are a gracious and merciful God  
Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness  
One who relents from doing harm  
Instead, You would turn and bless  
Therefore now, O Lord  
Please take my life from me  
For it is better for me to die than to live!"  
This I feel assuredly  
Then the Lord said  
"Is it right for you to be angry instead?"

How is it Lord, that our hearts are bent on evil and away from You  
We turn to the left rather than to the right  
We follow after wickedness, searching out what's new  
We pursue it rising early, and late into the night  
But when grace is found, we rejoice on that day  
We raise our hands in victory and sing our song to You  
Through the cross of Calvary, our sins are washed away  
And upon us comes true life, wonderful and new  
But when we see others, caught in their sin  
We turn away as if it was never true with us  
We smile upon the day when they will be done in  
Forgetting that we once were cleansed by the blood of Jesus

Help us Lord to learn the lesson of Jonah as well  
That we should have pity on the lost and wayward soul  
Better to share the love of Christ than see them cast into hell  
Better to see that sinner added to heaven's roll  
Grant us a heart to remember where we once were  
Help us to remember this throughout all of our days  
So that by our words many, many souls will be safe and secure  
And together we can all sing to You songs of joy and praise

May it be so, may we speak openly about Jesus  
Who came to die not for some, but for every one of us

Hallelujah and Amen...

## JONAH 4:5-11 (THE LAW AND GRACE – AN OBJECT LESSON)

Last week, as we closed out the sermon in verse 4, I noted that out of more than twenty translations which I check for each sermon, one read differently in that verse from all the others. Most versions are exceedingly similar to that of the NKJV which said, “Is it right for you to be angry?” Only Young’s correctly translated it as, “Is doing good displeasing to thee?” The verb is active, not passive.

The same sentiment is found in verse 9 which is tied directly into the death of the plant that was made by the Lord. While discussing this verse with Sergio, he said, “It doesn’t seem to make sense. How could it be good to destroy something the Lord had just made?” His question immediately resolved the enigma of Jonah 4 for me, and thus the intent of the whole book.

I spent that entire night laying on the couch and thinking through chapter 4, verse by verse and word by word. The next day, I called Sergio back, we talked, and I asked him to read verses 5 and 6 and see what problem might be perceived in them. He read them out loud as I listened, and then he said, “I never noticed that before.” He had made the realization that there is a seemingly contradictory thought in them. I needed to tell him nothing.

From there, I simply asked a few questions, not intending to reveal the mystery, but to see if he could figure it out on his own. If he could, then my thoughts would be confirmed. He did, and they are. His face lit up, and he said, “This is amaaaazing” the way that only Sergio can. Today, you are going to hear a completely different translation of several key verses than you have probably read before, but they are in line with the Hebrew. Why is this so?

**Text Verse:** A wise *man* will hear and increase learning,  
And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,  
<sup>6</sup>To understand a proverb and an enigma,  
The words of the wise and their riddles.  
<sup>7</sup>The fear of the Lord *is* the beginning of knowledge,  
*But* fools despise wisdom and instruction. Proverbs 1:5-7

A man of understanding will attain wise counsel, to understand a proverb and an enigma, I often seek Sergio's wise counsel. He understands Hebrew far better than I, and he has valuable insights into many things.

But the question for us today is, "Why has this passage not been evaluated before as we will evaluate it today?" Well, there are a few reasons. First, translators translate passages with the intent of them making sense. A translation that makes no sense... well, it makes no sense. Translators are not always commentary scholars.

Scholars on the other hand look for facts, figures, and details, and will often override translators through a process of explanation, but not normally through a process of translation. What they say may take pages to explain a single verse that translators are limited to. However, what they say must make sense or it is just vain rambling. And there is a lot of that among scholars.

In the case of Robert Young, his translation is correct, but it makes no sense, and so it has been overlooked. It doesn't explain anything, and it doesn't even clear up anything. It complicates things. Despite his accurate translation, he does nothing with the rest of the passage, and so the enigma remained.

And finally, there are presuppositions as to what is being said. Concerning verse 11, the final verse of the chapter and the book, there are biases by Jewish commentators which have to be overlooked, and then there are presuppositions about what is being said that have to be ignored.

And so, unlike a translator who is looking to make quick, clear sense out of something maybe cumbersome, and unlike a scholar who is trying to give facts, figures, and historically relevant commentary, and unlike those with biases or presuppositions, there is a fourth group. It is those who use translations as far as they can be used, and who ponder the words of scholars for background information, and then they add in a final element.

This element is the key to all of Scripture; it is "How does this point to Jesus and what He is doing in redemptive history?" Jesus told us that He is what Scripture speaks of, and therefore Jonah chapter 4 is included in that.

And so in order to understand what this chapter is saying, we have to step out of a comfortable translation, and go beyond the logic of scholars. Biases and presuppositions also need to be quashed. We have to look for the key; we must look for Christ. This is how to understand an enigma.

Chapter 4 of Jonah has been so misunderstood, because people have inserted their presuppositions into the text. Because of this, it is a book which ends in a seemingly odd way. Many people say it ends anticlimactically. The Lord goes into great detail preparing object lessons for Jonah, and these object lessons have been misunderstood, leaving the chapter ending with one impression when a completely different one is intended.

I am thankful to Robert Young for having the integrity to translate several verses without presuppositions. And, I am grateful to Sergio for being Sergio. I am blessed that there is someone who also likes to think outside the box. He has helped confirm the intent of many other passages we have looked at together over these past six years. Wonderful things are to be searched out in the Lord's 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. Jonah's Object Lesson (verses 5-11)**

#### **<sup>5</sup> So Jonah went out of the city**

*va'yetse yonah min ha'ir* – “And went Jonah from the city.” With his prayer complete, with his petition made, and with the question from the Lord now asked, Jonah departs from the city. He has accomplished his mission, even if it was unwillingly. And he went out of the city to see how the Lord would act upon the prophetic utterance he made. The Lord’s question to Jonah was, “Is doing good a reason for you to be furious?”

This leaves just one possibility – Nineveh will be spared. But he does not leave the area and head back to Israel. His hope is that Nineveh will not be spared, and that only he, a picture of the people of Israel, will alone share in the blessings of Yehovah.

<sup>5 (con't)</sup> **and sat on the east side of the city.**

*va'yeshev mi'qedem la'ir* – “...and sat on east to city.” There is an importance in identifying the east side of the city. If there wasn’t, it would simply say, “...and sat outside the city.” North, south, east, or west – what difference does it make? However, the east is specified. Jonah willingly goes to the east side.

The word is *qedem*. It is the place of exile, as in the exile from Eden. It is the place of wandering and the place of disobedience to God, as in the time of Cain and in the building of the Tower of Babel. It is the place where destruction comes from, as in the east wind which brought in the withering drought upon Egypt during Joseph’s time, and the plague of locusts during Moses’ time.

It is also the front, or absolute forepart of a place, as in the entrance to the tabernacle. And, it is the time before, the past times, the ancient times as known to the Lord, such as in the prophecy to the King of Assyria in 2 Kings 19. In Habakkuk 1, the prophet asks –

“Are You not **from everlasting (*mi'qedem*),**  
O Lord my God, my Holy One?” Habakkuk 1:12

The richness of the word *qedem*, or “east” in Scripture concerns a study of no minor significance, and the word calls out for thought concerning Jonah’s place of sitting.

<sup>5 (con't)</sup> **There he made himself a shelter**

*va'yaas lo sham sukkah* – “...and made to there tabernacle.” The people of Israel are famous builders of tabernacles, because they were instructed to build them annually during their feast of Sukkoth, or “Tabernacles.” The *sukkah* is a place of shelter and protection. It can be for livestock, people, or even metaphorically of the *sukkah* of the Lord in the heavens. Jonah built one for himself there, outside of Nineveh.

**5 (con't) and sat under it in the shade,**

*v'yeshev takh-teiha ba'tsel* – “...and sat under its protection.” Sitting implies abiding and being set. There in his *sukkah*, he abides, and the purpose of Jonah building the *sukkah* is confirmed now in that it provides *tsel*, or shade. The word comes from *tsalal* which indicates “shadowing” as in hovering over. Thus, he is covered and shaded. However, shade in Scripture is used metaphorically to indicate protection. This is seen in Psalm 91 –

“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High  
Shall abide under the *shadow* of the Almighty.  
<sup>2</sup> I will say of the Lord, “*He is* my refuge and my fortress;  
My God, in Him I will trust.” Psalm 91:1, 2

**5 (con't) till he might see what would become of the city.**

*ad asher yireh mah yiyeh ba'ir* – “...until which might see what will come to pass in city.” There, protected by the covering of his *sukkah*, Jonah watches and awaits what will come to pass. He is safe, but what will happen to the city? Because what happens to the city is what will happen to its inhabitants.

**<sup>6</sup> And the Lord God prepared a plant**

*Vay-man Yehovah Elohim qiqayon* – “And appointed Yehovah Elohim *qiqayon*. So far, Yehovah, or the Lord, has been referred to in verses 2, 3, & 4. Elohim, or God, has been referred to in verse 2. Now Yehovah Elohim or, the Lord God, is referred to. It is He who does the preparing. Why the change? And what indeed has He prepared? A *qiqayon*?

It is a word which is referred to for the first of five times, but all will be in this passage. It is found nowhere else, but rather it is unique to this passage of Scripture alone.

It is variously translated as “plant,” “leafy plant,” “vine plant,” “gourd,” “little plant,” “vine,” “pumpkin,” and “ivy.” It is even footnoted as a castor oil plant. I asked Hideko to see what the Japanese version said. It said *togoma*, and she had

no idea what that meant even in Japanese. So she read the margin note and then said, “Aaaaahhhh, I know what it is... it’s the gourd.”

Which is correct? The answer is, “Any of them and none of them.” Nobody knows what a *qiqayon* is. Every translation is speculation. However, translators need to put something, and so they make a best guess. And so, the proper translation would be to simply say *qiqayon*. It is a name, and therefore a transliteration is all that is needed. However, *qiqayon* comes from the word *qayah*, or “to vomit.” In fact, when I asked Sergio to read it in Hebrew, the first thing he thought was, “Why is this speaking of vomit?”

The word *qi* means “to vomit” (the action). The word *qa* means “vomit” (the thing), and *yon* is a suffix which signifies a process, or denoting action or a condition. It is where our suffix –ion comes from. Lexicographers say that –ion goes back to the Latin, but they missed that it goes back further... to Hebrew. An example of this suffix is found in Amos 4:6 –

“Also I gave you **cleanness** of teeth in all your cities,  
And lack of bread in all your places;  
Yet you have not returned to Me,’  
Says the Lord.” Amos 4:6

The word “cleanness” comes from *naqah*, clean. Adding –yon to it causes it to become *niqayon*, the state of being cleaned, or “cleanliness.” As Sergio noted, “A great example where you add “ion” and it transforms the verb into a noun that describes the result of that verb!” And so with *qiqayon*, you have a word which, in essence, says “This is the condition of vomiting vomit.” What on earth is this referring to?

<sup>6 (con't)</sup> **and made it come up over Jonah,**

*va'yaal me-al l'yonah* – “and caused to ascend over to Jonah.” This process of something undesirable now covers over Jonah. How do we know it is undesirable? Because every instance of vomiting in Scripture is taken in a negative sense, with the exception of the result of Jonah being vomited onto shore in Chapter 2. However, for the fish, it was certainly undesirable. After Jonah’s shower, he was probably OK with it though.

**6 (con't) that it might be shade for his head**

*lih-yot tsel al rosho* – “...that it might be protection for his head.” When I asked Sergio to read verses 5 & 6, it was with an understanding that it seemed there is a contradictory thought in them. Without explaining that to him, when he read these words he said, “I never noticed that before.”

He had clued into what was otherwise skimmed over by him in the past. Why does Jonah need shade for his head when he just built a *sukkah* for the purpose of, and which was realized in the last verse, giving him shade. Verses 5 & 6 are last two uses of *tsel* in the Old Testament. What is being relayed to us with this repetition of *tsel*?

**6 (con't) to deliver him from his misery.**

*I'hatsil lo me-raato* – “...to deliver from his wickedness.” The word *ra* here is variously translated as grief, discomfort, misery, evil, fatigue, evil case, etc. Translators choose based on what they believe the intent of the passage is expressing. The correct word for Jonah may be “misery,” but for us, it is “wickedness.” This is an object lesson for Jonah in which he is miserable, and yet an allegory for us to consider and understand concerning that which is evil. The *qiqayon* is given to deliver him from his wickedness.

**6 (con't) So Jonah was very grateful for the plant.**

*Yonah al ha'qiqayon simkhah gedolah* – “Jonah of the *qiqayon* joyful whoppingly.” Despite having built a *sukkah* which was for the purpose of shading himself, he is whoppingly elated at having the *qiqayon* which is providing protection. What about this vomiting of vomit makes him so happy?

Can it merely be coincidence that in verse 2:10 there was the fish which vomited Jonah out onto dry ground and then there is this descriptive word being used in an object lesson for him to see and understand? The Lord has used him in this story to teach himself, and thus Israel, a lesson. Will he learn? Will they learn?

**<sup>7</sup> But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm,**

*vay'man ha'elohim tolaat baalot ha'shahar la'makhorat* – “And appointed the God a worm as arose the dawn to next day.” Now another thing is prepared. But this time it is not by *Elohim* or *Yehovah Elohim*. Instead it is by *ha'elohim*, or “the God.” As not one of the 21 translations I referred to includes this, I assume neither does yours. Therefore, please place the word “the” in front of “God” in your Bible. We are being told something.

“The God” appointed a *tola*, or a crimson grub worm, at the *shakhar* or dawning, of the *mokhorath*, or “next day,” to do something. This is, as Albert Barnes notes, “...in the earliest dawn, before the actual sunrise.” Three words are used for the last time here. It is the last of 25 times for the *shakhar*, the last of 43 times for the *tola*, and the last of 32 times for the *mokhorath*.

Why is it so specific about the time of the day? It could have just said, the next day, couldn’t it have? But a specific type of worm is named, and a specific time of day is too. These are specific for a reason. This is some object lesson!

**<sup>7 (con't)</sup> and it so damaged the plant that it withered.**

*va'tak eth ha'qiqayon va'yibash* – “...and struck the *qiqayon* and withered away.” This was indeed some *tola*! That worm didn’t just damage the vomiting vomit, it completely destroyed it until it was dry. What on earth is **the** God telling Jonah here?

**<sup>8</sup> And it happened, when the sun arose,**

*vay-hi kizroakh ha'shemesh* – “And happened as rose the sun.” The word “rise” is *zarakh*, which indicates to shoot forth beams, appear, and thus to rise. At this moment something new occurs...

**<sup>8 (con't)</sup> that God prepared a vehement east wind;**

*vay'man Elohim ruakh qadim kharishit* – “...and appointed God wind east deafening.” Now we return to the word *Elohim* without the article. He appoints an east wind, but it is an east wind which is described by a word, *kharishi*, used only

here in the entire Bible. It is so obscure that the great Hebrew lexicographers, Brown-Driver-Briggs denounce the meanings provided by other scholars as unacceptable, and then they say, "...meaning wholly dubious. We make no attempt to explain."

I, however, have translated it, as did James Strong, from the word *kharash*, a word bearing several meanings. He chose "scorching" to which I disagree. It means "deafening." This is connected to the word *kheresh*, or "deaf." And this is exactly what is being pictured, as you will see. In the Middle East, the east wind is known as the *khamsin*. It is an extremely hot wind that is described in the book River God by Wilbur Smith as follows –

"The king's voice was frantic, but I paid it no heed, for there was a mighty roaring in my ears, like the sound of the khamsin wind..."

Concerning the word *manah*, translated here as "prepared." This is the last time it is used in the Old Testament. It means "appointed." It was used four times in Jonah – 1:17, 4:6, 4:7, and 4:8. He appointed the *dag gadol* or "fish whopping" to swallow Jonah. He appointed the *qiqayon*, or "state of vomiting vomit" plant. He appointed the *tola*, or "crimson grub worm." And He appointed the *ruakh qadim kharishit*, or "deafening east wind."

<sup>8 (con't)</sup> **and the sun beat on Jonah's head,**

*va'tak ha'shemesh al rosh yonah* – "And struck the sun on head Jonah." Without the protection of the *qiqayon*, Jonah is now struck on his head by the direct beating of the sun. It is an extremely sad state of affairs for Jonah, who has received pain and anguish while waiting for what he thought would be the destruction of the Gentiles there before him.

<sup>8 (con't)</sup> **so that he grew faint.**

*va'yitalaph* – "so that he veiled himself." Every single translation of this verse except Young's says "fainted," "grew faint," etc. But, Young's says, "...and he wrappeth himself up." He did this because the same word, *alaph*, is used in Genesis 38:14 this way –

"So she took off her widow's garments, covered *herself* with a veil and **wrapped herself**, and sat in an open place which *was* on the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given to him as a wife."

The word *alaph* is used here for the last of only five times in the Bible. It comes from a primitive root which means to veil, or cover." Jonah did not faint; he veiled himself as an Arab would in the oppressive *khamsin*.

<sup>8 (con't)</sup> **Then he wished death for himself, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."**

*va'yishal eth naphsho la'mut va'yomer tov mo-ti me'khaiai* – "...and begged with his soul to die, and said, 'Good my death than my life.'" Jonah came to the point where his misery had overcome him. Life had become so miserable, that death was preferred over life itself. It is a repetition from verse 3 even before the object lesson was presented.

<sup>9</sup> **Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"**

*va'yomer Elohim el yonah ha'hetev kharah lekha al ha'qiqayon* – "And said Elohim unto Jonah, 'The correct, burning anger to you for the *qiqayon*?" As we saw in verse 4, all translations except Young's say something like, "Is it right for you to be angry." But this is incorrect. Young's translates this verse "Is doing good displeasing to thee, because of the gourd?"

However, this seems to make no sense. "Why would the destruction of the *qiqayon* be good, and why would it seem evil to Jonah?" This is what Sergio asked. Unless one understands the object lesson, it seems mistranslated, but it is not.

Notice here that in contrast to verse 4, which this verse parallels, it says Elohim instead of Yehovah; God instead of the Lord. Why would this be? The answer lies in who God is in relation to the people of the world, and who the Lord is in relation to Israel. The destruction of the *qiqayon* is what is right, and it is even necessary. Jonah, however, disagrees...

<sup>9</sup> (con't) **And he said, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!"**

*va'yomer hetev kharah li ad mavet* – “And said, ‘good, burning anger to me, unto death.’” He stubbornly confirms that in the case of the good of what he is being presented, he is furious about it. He would rather die than see this good come to pass. It is a sentiment seen to this day with the people of Israel – 2000 years later.

This verse contains the last time Jonah’s name is mentioned in the Old Testament. He was the son of Amittai from Gath Hepher. In picture, he is Dove, the son of Truth of the Lord, from the Winepress of Shame. The dove, the symbol of “mourning love,” is perfectly realized in Jonah here. With the death of the *qiqayon*, the object lesson is ended. Now the Lord speaks again...

**<sup>10</sup> But the Lord said, “You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night.**

*va'yomer Yehovah atah khasta al ha'qiqayon asher lo amalta bow v'lo gidalto sebin laylah hayah u-bin laylah abad* – “And said Yehovah, “You pitied on the *qiqayon* that no did perform, and no magnified, which a son of a night was, and a son of a night perished.”” Only Young’s gives a literal translation of this verse. It says “son of a night,” to indicate lasting only one night.

The *qiqayon*, the state of vomiting vomit, came up and Jonah did not perform or fulfill in that process. Instead, it came as a son of the night and it was destroyed as a son of the night. This is the last of 11 uses of the word *amal*, or “labor,” in the Bible. It is used only by Solomon except this one time. Each time he uses it, it is in relation to futile labor, except when it is in relation to what God has done.

**<sup>11</sup> And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city,**

*va'ani lo akhus al Nineveh ha'ir ha'gedolah* – “And I, no pity over Nineveh, the city the whopping.” Jonah is worried about the *qiqayon*, even to pity. But the Lord contrasts that pity to His pity over something of true value. The great city whose name means “Offspring’s Habitation,” has human inhabitants; people whom He created who He feels are far more worthy of His pity. Verses 10 and 11 have the last two of 23 times that *khus*, or pity, is used in Scripture. And what a marvelous use of them to show the contrast between man’s priorities and that of the Lord!

<sup>11 (con't)</sup> in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons

*asher yesh bah harbeh mishtem esreh ribo adam* – “which exists in greater from twelve myriads man.” The translation as 120,000 is to be rejected. The term here is “12 myriads.” In 1 Chronicles 12:37, 120,000 people are noted as *meah v'esrim aleph*. Here the number is *mishtem esreh ribo*. Obviously they don’t sound the same because they are not the same. Instead of 120,000, it says “12 myriads.” The word *ribo* indicates an indefinitely large number. Again, *only* Robert Young rightly translated these words.

What I will propose to you now is, as far as I know, without precedent. No scholar that I am aware of has come to this conclusion, and yet it is exactly what is being relayed. One has to presuppose that this is speaking of the people in the city. It is not. Scholars have struggled over the number, knowing it is not correct. The size of the city does not justify this amount of people.

And so they back-interpret the words to mean “innocent people” meaning children who have not participated in the sins of the city. That is without basis, and it is not supported by Scripture which teaches inherited sin in all people. When the Lord destroys a city, he makes no distinction between young and old. But how else to explain the obviously incorrect number and translation?

Rather than referring to those in Nineveh, it is speaking of the twelve tribes of Israel. As soon as Sergio said, “This doesn’t say 120,000, but 12 with a descriptor attached to it, the entire passage fell into place. The phrase is comparative, not descriptive. In other words, the city of Nineveh, capital of, and thus emblematic of the great Assyrian Empire, is greater than the 12 tribes of Israel. This comparison continues in the final words of the book of Jonah...

**\*<sup>11 (fin)</sup> who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?”**

*Asher lo yada ben yemino lishmolo u-behemah rabbah* – “...which no discern between their right hand and their left; and many ignorant fools.” This verse is set in contrast to Jonah 3:7. It is speaking of the people of Israel, not those in the city. In the giving of the law, the term “to the right hand or to the left” was spoken to Israel, indicating that they were to know what is right and to do it –

“Therefore you shall be careful to do as the Lord your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.” Deuteronomy 5:32

This is repeated again in Deuteronomy 17 –

“According to the sentence of the law in which they instruct you, according to the judgment which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside *to the right hand* or *to the left* from the sentence which they pronounce upon you.”

Deuteronomy 17:11

And it was repeated to them in the chapter of promised blessings and curses as well in Deuteronomy 28:14 –

So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, *to the right* or *the left*, to go after other gods to serve them.”

The people in the city were given the word of the Lord, and they discerned what was right immediately. Israel had been given the word of the Lord for hundreds and hundreds of years, and the record shows their continual failing to discern right from left.

And the record also shows one more thing about them which is realized in the words *u-behemah rabbah*, or “and beasts abundant.” This is speaking of the foolish people of Israel, not the animals of Nineveh. The entire passage is speaking metaphorically. The animals in Nineveh were adorned in repentance along with the people of the city. However, time and again, in the psalms, Ecclesiastes, and the prophets, the ignorant and foolish of humanity are compared to beasts –

“I *was* so foolish and ignorant;  
I was *like* a beast before You.” Psalm 73:22

The passage in Isaiah 30 concerning the “beasts of the South” is speaking of the foolish people of Israel, and Peter uses the same term, “beasts,” in 2 Peter 2 when speaking of the foolish and perverse. Paul and Jude likewise use this terminology. Again, this is speaking of those in Israel who were ignorant fools.

The seemingly anticlimactic finish of the book of Jonah is, instead, a strong and resounding rebuke to the people of Israel. Correctly translated, it says, “And should I not pity Nineveh that great city, in which exists more than twelve myriads of man, who cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and many ignorant fools.” Israel failed to heed; Nineveh repented. It is a picture of Israel and the church. One rejected the Lord and His salvation, one quickly and decidedly turned to both.

Now, before we have these verses explained to us, I’d like you to note that in the story, God specially prepared four different things to guide or control Jonah. It says that He “appointed” a fish, a plant, a worm, and an east wind.

Each of these is a different agent of God’s creation – one a sea creature, one a plant, one a land creature, and one form of natural phenomena. In other words, the Bible is recognizing that God is sovereign over each of these aspects of creation. In essence, all of creation is at His bidding in order to accomplish His plans in the process of redemption. With that in mind we are ready to evaluate the meaning of the rather difficult verses found here in Chapter 4.

*A fish to swallow a man at sea  
A qiaqyon to cover that same man for some shade  
A worm to destroy the qiqayon, it withered completely  
Thus You destroyed what You once had made*

*And then a deafening east wind, it rages aplenty  
While the sun beat down on the man's head  
There he sat in complete misery  
There the man said he was better off dead*

*But is it right that he should be so upset?  
Is it right to be so angry about the qiqayon?  
The man says, “Yes!” “Certainly!” And, “You bet!”  
But maybe he wouldn't if he knew what was being shown*

*And so now we will look into what these things mean  
Yes, now we will be shown was is meant to be seen*

## **II. The Object Lesson Explained**

Jonah has pictured both Christ and His work and Israel, here he is a picture of Israel, the people. Their history is being depicted in the object lesson given to him. In verses 1-3, Jonah was angry at the repentance of the Gentiles, wishing their destruction. In verse 4, he was asked, “Is doing good a reason for you to be furious?”

In order to wake him up, He is next given a snapshot of their entire history. Jonah, picturing Israel, went out to the east of the city. As I said, it is the place of exile. It is the place of wandering and the place of disobedience to God. It is the place where destruction comes from. Israel stems from Adam as do all people. All are in exile and are separated from God, Israel and Gentile alike.

There Jonah built a *sukkah*, a tabernacle. It is a dwelling place. Abraham was brought into Canaan by the Lord and lived as pilgrim, as did Isaac, and Israel. They established themselves as a people. Canaan the land, and Israel the people, became their own dwelling place and place of protection.

While there in the land, and even in Egypt, they dwelt as a people separate from the Gentiles. They simply lived and watched what would happen to the world living around them, just as Jonah did from his *sukkah*. But the Lord had more for them than a dwelling which they established.

In verse 6, Yehovah Elohim, the Lord God, prepared a *qiqayon*. It is the Law of Moses, prepared by the Lord God. This is why the full term Yehovah Elohim is used there. It is the covenant Lord who is the Creator God who established and oversaw it for them. He formed it as a protection over them. The Ten Commandments were given from Yehovah Elohim, the Lord God.

However, the name applied to this symbol tells all we need to know. The *qiqayon*, or state of vomiting vomit, was intended as a means of being restored to God, where life would result from death, if the law could be but fulfilled. The Lord said in Leviticus –

“You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord.” Leviticus 18:5

Paul cites this verse in Romans 10. But nobody could fulfill the law. And so God's law was only given as a temporary measure, not as a permanent fixture. It was only a protection, a guardian, for Israel. Paul explains this in Galatians 3:23-25 (NIV) –

"Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed.<sup>24</sup> So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.<sup>25</sup> Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian."

The *qiqayon* was Jonah's guardian; the law was Israel's. This is why the term *tsel*, or shade, was used in both verses 5 and 6. Israel has built its own protection, but the Lord built a further one for them, there in the east, or in the place of exile and judgment.

However, the law was never meant to last. It was temporary and found an end in the *tola*. The question is, "Which is greater – the great shading *qiqayon*, or the worm?" Well, what does the *tola* picture. I asked Sergio that, and without batting an eye, he said, "Christ." He had paid attention to the Exodus sermons. In the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm, a messianic psalm written by David which speaks of the work of the Lord, including His cross, we read this –

"But I am a **worm**, and no man; (**tola**)  
A reproach of men, and despised by the people.  
<sup>7</sup> All those who see Me ridicule Me;  
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*,  
<sup>8</sup> "He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him;  
Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!" Psalm 22:6-8

Concerning the *tola*, Henry Morris writes the following –

"When the female of the scarlet worm species was ready to give birth to her young, she would attach her body to the trunk of a tree, fixing herself so firmly and permanently that she would never leave again. The eggs deposited beneath her body were thus protected until the larvae were hatched and able to enter their own life cycle. As the mother died, the crimson fluid stained her body and the surrounding wood. From the dead bodies of such female scarlet worms, the

commercial scarlet dyes of antiquity were extracted. What a picture this gives of Christ, dying on the tree, shedding his precious blood that he might ‘bring many sons unto glory.’ He died for us, that we might live through him!” Henry Morris

This is why the term *ha’elohim*, or “the God” was used to describe the preparation for the *tola*. The God, the personal God, personally attended to the preparation of the body for Christ to dwell in and accomplish His work. This is seen in Hebrews 10

—

“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,  
But a body You have prepared for Me.  
<sup>6</sup> In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin  
You had no pleasure.  
<sup>7</sup> Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—  
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—  
To do Your will, O God.’” Hebrews 10:5-7

The *tola* came forth to do its work with specificity. It said, “as morning dawned.” It was “in the earliest dawn, before the actual sunrise.” That is the resurrection of Christ as seen in the gospels. Matthew says the women went to the tomb as the day began to dawn. John says that it was still dark when they saw the stone rolled away. Christ’s work was finished in His work on the cross, but it was proven so in the resurrection. The law was struck and died in that glorious moment.

From that time on, only judgment can result from remaining attached to the law. This is why vomit is always negative in the Bible with one exception, vomiting Jonah onto the dry ground. Jonah pictured Christ in death and resurrection. The grave could not hold Him and it literally had to spew Him out of its grasp.

However, the law, the state of vomiting vomit, still holds sway over those who rely on it. Peter, speaking of false teachers, including those who would set aside the grace of Christ and return to the law, are like dogs who return to their vomit. When they do so, only judgment can be the result.

This is seen next in the lesson with the east wind. This was prepared, not by *ha’elohim*, or “the God,” but rather simply by *elohim*. The personal connection to

Israel's God is lost. Now, they are under God's judgment, and thus the definite article is dropped from the narrative.

This east wind is described with that exceedingly rare word which nobody has been able to adequately describe, but of which I correctly translate as "deafening." I chose this because the root implies it, and because the symbolism is realized in Paul's words to the Jews who rejected Christ. At the end of Acts, he cites Isaiah, saying –

"Go to this people and say:  
'Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand;  
And seeing you will see, and not perceive;  
<sup>27</sup> For the hearts of this people have grown dull.  
*Their* ears are hard of hearing,  
And their eyes they have closed,  
Lest they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears,  
Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn,  
So that I should heal them.'" Acts 28:26, 27

And again, Isaiah, in a passage speaking of the coming Messiah, says this –

"Hear, you **deaf**;  
And look, you blind, that you may see.  
<sup>19</sup> Who *is* blind but My servant,  
Or deaf as My messenger *whom* I send?  
Who *is* blind as *he who is* perfect,  
And blind as the Lord's servant?  
<sup>20</sup> Seeing many things, but you do not observe;  
Opening the ears, but he does not hear." Isaiah 4:18-20

Further, wind also symbolizes doctrine – both correct and false doctrine. The spirit of God directs proper doctrine, but man directs false doctrine. Paul speaks of this in Ephesians 4:14 –

"...that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting..."

In addition, wind symbolizes that which is temporary and vain. In the 78<sup>th</sup> Psalm, it is used to show that which is temporary –

“For He remembered that they *were but* flesh,  
A breath that passes away and does not come again.” Psalm 78:39

Isaiah shows that the wind symbolizes that which is vain –

“Indeed they *are* all worthless;  
Their works *are* nothing;  
Their molded images *are* wind and confusion.” Isaiah 41:29

The Lord sent His east wind, the wind of judgment upon Israel. It is the time of their being cursed for rejecting Christ. It is the Gentile-led church age, symbolized by Nineveh’s repentance and turning to God. They are the offspring of God through the work of Christ, just as the name Nineveh means. It is a marvelous picture which is being developed for us to pay heed to and to understand.

The word for the east wind, *kheresh*, is tied directly to the *kharishi*, or “deafening” wind which Jonah experienced. The people had grown deaf to the Lord’s call because they clung to the law. The judgment of God’s raging and deafening east wind was a self-inflicted wound. And the next judgment follows along with that, the beating of the sun on Jonah’s head.

In the law, the Lord promised Israel to be the head, not the tail if they were obedient to Him. As they rejected Christ, they brought the curse down upon themselves. The Sun of Righteousness, Christ, instead of favoring them, beat down on their head. In response, what did Jonah do? He veiled himself even further. He wrapped himself in the law and added in the Talmud. Paul describes the veil –

“Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—<sup>13</sup> unlike Moses, *who* put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.<sup>14</sup> But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ.<sup>15</sup> But even to this day, when Moses is

read, a veil lies on their heart.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” 2 Corinthians 3:12-16

After the east wind, Jonah cried out that death was more preferable than life. He had clung to the law, a law which Paul describes as bringing death, because through it sin is made manifest. And when sin enters, death is the result. He explains this throughout his letters, but sums it up with these words –

“And we have such trust through Christ toward God.<sup>5</sup> Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God,<sup>6</sup> who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” 2 Corinthians 3:4-6

Jonah, typical of Israel, testifies that he would rather die under the law than live under the grace of Jesus Christ. This is why in verse 9 God, not the Lord of verse 4, asked, “Is doing good a reason for you to be furious because of the *qiqayon*?” The question is not asked from the covenant Lord Yehovah whom they have rejected. It is asked from God the Creator.

They are outside of the covenant and are being asked directly, “Do you find the ending of the law, which was accomplished by My Son, a reason to be furious?” Their answer, to this day, is Jonah’s response, “Yes, doing good is reason to be furious because of the state of vomiting vomit.” They believe they can fulfill the law and reenter God’s presence on their own.

Christ is rejected by them, and they are out of His favor because of this. This was seen in the contrast between Jonah and the sailors before he had his epiphany. The Gentile sailors had said –

“We pray, O Lord, please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You.” Jonah 1:14

However, the Jews said this at Jesus’ crucifixion –

“His blood be on us and on our children.” Matthew 27:25

The Gentiles had come to fear the Lord because of Jesus; the Jews had rejected Him because of Jesus. And so, they will have to endure many troubles before they are brought, once again, into covenant relationship through the New Covenant. Thus the object lesson ends and the Lord speaks his final words.

Yes, it is Yehovah, the covenant Lord, who completes the words of the chapter. He signifies that His pity has gone out to the Gentiles, represented by Nineveh, or “Offspring’s Habitation.” The Gentile world has become the Lord’s offspring through faith in Christ.

In His last words to Jonah, and thus to Israel, He notes Israel’s pity on the *qiqayon*, the law, which he says they have been unable to even perform. The word He spoke, *amal*, is used only by Solomon, and always to indicate the vain labor of man apart from God. His words concerning the *qiqayon* were that Jonah, representing Israel, was unable to perform, or fulfill. This is why that word was chosen. None could fulfill the law; none but Christ.

He next said that the *qiqayon*, the law, came up as a son of the night and it was destroyed as a son of the night. This is referring to its effects. It can bring nothing to light. But Christ can. This is why Paul says this in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-5 –

“But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. <sup>2</sup> For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. <sup>4</sup> But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. <sup>5</sup> You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.”

Only Christ, not the law, can make one a son of the day. The object lesson of the *qiqayon*, (the law) the *tola*, (the crucified Christ) and the *ruakh qadim kharishit*, (the deafening east wind) there outside of Nineveh, indicates that there are far more souls to whom His pity extends than just the 12 tribes of Israel who have been unable to tell their right hand from their left, and among whom are many ignorant and foolish beasts who willingly reject the grace which He has offered through His completed work on Calvary’s cross.

This is the lesson of the book of Jonah. This is what is revealed in the obscure, and wholly misunderstood, words of this precious, marvelous book. For us, it is either the law which kills, or the grace of Christ which makes alive. God showed grace to the Gentiles, the Jews wanted the law which Christ ended. They were angry at the ending of the law, but God's grace has been extended to any and all who will receive it. If you do, you also will be vomited out of the grave some wonderful day, all because of the work of Christ Jesus.

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But it was evil to [the] Dove (meaning Israel) exceedingly, and he was kindled with anger.

<sup>2</sup> So he prayed unto Yehovah, and said, "I pray Yehovah, was not this what I said when I was still in my ground? Because it was so, I hastened to flee to the White Dove (Tarshish); for I know that You, God, are gracious and merciful, slow to get into a huff and abounding in covenant loyalty, and comforting concerning the evil.

<sup>3</sup> And now Yehovah take, I pray, my soul. To me, it is for good my death [rather] than my life!"

<sup>4</sup> And said Yehovah, "Is doing good a reason for you to be furious?"

#### AN OBJECT LESSON IN ALLEGORY AND METAPHOR

<sup>5</sup> And [the] Dove (meaning Israel) went from the city and sat in the place of wandering and disobedience. And there he made a *sukkah* and sat under its protection, until he might see what would come to pass concerning the city.

<sup>6</sup> And appointed Yehovah Elohim a *qiqayon* (meaning the law), and caused [it] to ascend over [the] Dove (meaning Israel), that it might be protection for his head, to deliver from his wickedness. [The] Dove (meaning Israel) concerning the *qiqayon* (meaning the law) was joyful whoppingly.

<sup>7</sup> And appointed THE GOD a *tola* (meaning the crucified Christ) at the dawning of the next morning, and it struck the *qiqayon* (meaning the law), and it withered.

<sup>8</sup> And happened as rose the sun (meaning the dawning of God's new economy, the age of grace), and God appointed wind east deafening (meaning Israel could no longer hear). And struck the sun on the head of [the] Dove (meaning Israel), so that he veiled himself (meaning Israel had wrapped itself in the law). And begged with his soul to die. And said, "Good [is] my death than my life."

<sup>9</sup> And said God unto [the] Dove (meaning Israel), "Is doing good a reason for you to be furious concerning the *qiqayon* (meaning the law)?"

And [he] said, "Doing good is a reason for me to be furious, even to death."

<sup>10</sup> And said Yehovah, “You pitied the *qiqayon* (meaning the law) that you were unable to fulfill, and did not magnify; which a son of a night was, and a son of a night perished” (meaning the law brought nothing to light).

<sup>11</sup> And I? No pity over the Offspring’s Habitation? The city, the whopping? (referring to the Gentile world). Which exists more than 12 myriads of man (meaning the twelve tribes of Israel), which cannot discern between their right hand and their left (meaning transgressors of the law); and many ignorant fools (meaning the willfully disobedient)."

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The book of Jonah, the Dove typifies the “mourning love” which God feels for the people of the world. So much so, that He was willing to step out of His heavenly abode and come walk among us. Let us cling to the grace of God which is found in Jesus Christ our Lord, and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

**Closing Verse:** “For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, <sup>19</sup> for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” Hebrews 7:18, 19

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.

### **The Law and Grace – An Object Lesson**

So Jonah went out of the city and sat  
On the city’s east side  
There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade  
Till he might see what would become of the city  
What would the Lord decide?

And the Lord God prepared a plant  
And made it come up over Jonah assuredly  
That it might be shade for his head  
To deliver him from his misery

So Jonah was very grateful for the plant  
But as morning dawned the next day  
God prepared a worm  
And it so damaged the plant that it withered away

And it happened, when the sun arose  
That God, a vehement east wind prepared  
And the sun beat on Jonah's head  
So that he grew faint; thus he fared

Then he wished death for himself, and said  
"It is better for me to die than to live; I'm better off dead!"

Then God said to Jonah  
"Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"  
And he said, "It is right for me to be angry!  
Even to death! So, Jonah continued his rant

But the Lord said  
"You have had pity on the plant, an insignificant plight  
For which you have not labored, nor made it grow  
Which came up in a night and perished in a night

And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city  
In which are more than a giant herd or flock  
One hundred and twenty thousand persons  
Who cannot discern between their right hand and their left  
And much livestock?"

Lord God, thank You for grace; glorious grace  
Thank You for fulfilling what stood opposed to us  
Thank You for turning towards us Your marvelous face  
As we behold our Savior, our precious Jesus  
And Lord, we pray for those who still choose  
To cling to the law which is dead; withered away  
Open the eyes of Israel, all of the Jews  
Call them back to Yourself, this we pray

And for any others who have left Your grace  
Clinging to the law in a hope it will **please**  
Turn them away from that terrible place  
And to reconciliation through Christ  
Who alone can Your wrath **appease?**

Lord God, thank you for this wonderful book  
Jonah! What a marvel to have studied it  
Into every detail possible we took a look  
And to You our thanks and praise we now submit!

Hallelujah to Christ our Lord!  
Hallelujah for Jonah, a marvelous part of Your superior word!

Hallelujah and Amen...