

Jonah's Prayer From The Stomach Of The Fish

JON 2:1 Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the stomach of the fish,

1. This reveals that Jonah was conscious in "the stomach of the fish."
2. He must have been terrified and gave thanks to God from Whom he had been seeking to flee. (Jon. 1:3).
3. He had learned the hard way that one cannot flee from the Omnipresent God. (Psa. 139:7-10).

PSA 139:7 Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence?

PSA 139:8 If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there.

PSA 139:9 If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,

PSA 139:10 Even there Thy hand will lead me, And Thy right hand will lay hold of me.

4. The Omniscient God is fully aware of our every thought and action. (Prov. 15:3; Heb. 4:13).

PRO 15:3 The eyes of the Lord are in every place, Watching the evil and the good.

HEB 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Remembers His Drowning Experience

JON 2:2 and he said, "I called out of my distress to the Lord, And He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; Thou didst hear my voice.

1. Jonah makes mention of his "distress."
 - a. This refers to his drowning experience.
 - b. Death was certain if God had not intervened.
2. He cried "for help from the depth of Sheol."
 - a. "Sheol" denotes "depth, a cavity, the grave, state of death, abode of the wicked spirits."
 - b. The Greek equivalent for the Hebrew "Sheol" was the word "Hades."
 - c. It is clear from the text he is referring to his descent into the depths of the sea as "Sheol."
 - d. Jonah 2:3 affirms he had gone "into the deep," and "into the heart of the seas."

JON 2:3 "For Thou hadst cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the current engulfed me. All Thy breakers and billows passed over me.

3. He clearly affirmed "Thou didst hear my voice."

- a. God manifested mercy by keeping Jonah alive and hearing his prayer.
- b. Jonah certainly did not deserve God's merciful preservation and the hearing of his petition.
- c. Jonah did not deserve God's mercy, but God manifested mercy to him for his sake and for the sake of the Ninevites that God knew would repent.
- d. How the Ninevites would respond to the message of Jonah was no surprise to God.

Thanksgiving Song

2:3-10

- Jonah praises God for saving him from drowning.
- God used "a great fish" to save Jonah from drowning in the Mediterranean Sea.
- He uttered this song of thanksgiving while in the stomach of the fish.
- The language of this prayer or song is a description of his drowning experience before God spared him by "the great fish" He had appointed. (Jon. 1:17).

Drowning Experience

JON 2:3 "For Thou hadst cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the current engulfed me. All Thy breakers and billows passed over me.

1. It was actually the sailors who did the casting into the sea (Jon. 1:15), but Jonah recognized God was behind it all.
2. God had determined Jonah's guilt to the sailors when the lots had been cast. (Jon. 1:7).
3. It was not chance "the lot fell on Jonah." (Jon. 1:7; Prov. 16:33).
4. It was not chance the lot later fell on Matthias. (Acts 1:23-26).

ACT 1:23 And they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias.

ACT 1:24 And they prayed, and said, "Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two Thou hast chosen

ACT 1:25 to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place. "

ACT 1:26 And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

JON 2:4 "So I said, 'I have been expelled from Thy sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward Thy holy temple.'

1. Jonah was wrong about being out of God's sight - no one is.
2. He was in the stomach of the fish, but he was not out of the sight of the all-seeing God. (Prov. 15:3).
3. "Thy holy temple" is a reference to heaven. See notes Jonah 2:7.

JON 2:5 "Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, Weeds were wrapped around my head.

1. This appears to be a description of his descent into the depths of the Mediterranean.
2. He had seaweed swirling around his head.

JON 2:6 "I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, But Thou hast brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God.

1. This appears to be a continued description of his decent into the depths of the sea.
2. Jonah used the word “forever.”

“Forever”

3. His time in the fish likely seemed like it was “forever,” but it was far from it.
4. This shows that “forever” can be used in a limited way.
 - a. Jonah was in the fish “three days and three nights.” (Jon. 1:17; Matt. 12:40).
 - b. Paul told Philemon that Onesimus who was being sent back to him would be his slave “forever.”
 - c. “Forever” meant the rest of his life assuming Philemon never decided to set Onesimus free. (Phile. 1:15).
 - 1) “Forever” is from “aionios” [i oh nee ahs] meaning in this passage “forever, eternally.”
 - 2) It has the meaning to the rest of Onesimus’s life or to the time Philemon might set him free.
 - d. It must not be assumed that “forever” has a limited meaning without evidence.
 - e. The context of Jonah and the book of Philemon clearly set forth it has a limited meaning in these instances. (Jon. 1:17).
5. “Forever and ever” in Hebrews 1:8 means until Christ comes and gives the kingdom back to His Father. (1 Cor. 15:23-28). Lit. “unto the age of the age.”
6. “Forever and ever” in Revelation 22:5 is used in the sense of “eternal.”
 - a. Lit. “unto the ages of the ages”
 - b. It has the meaning of “eternal.” (Matt. 25:41, 46; 2 Thess. 1:8,9).

JON 2:7 "While I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord; And my prayer came to Thee, Into Thy holy temple.

1. “Holy temple” seems to refer to heaven where God abides in a special way. (Psa. 11:4).

PSA 11:4 The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.

2. Even in this stressful time he was giving God thanks for sparing him.
3. Jonah knew full well that his deliverance was not an accident.

JON 2:8 "Those who regard vain idols Forsake their faithfulness,

1. He was unlike those who pursued “vain idols” who turned from God to serve these false gods.
2. Those who worshiped such (in his circumstances in the fish) had no hope of being rescued because of their unfaithfulness, but Jonah was confident there was hope for him because he was calling upon the living, all-powerful, caring God of heaven.
3. He evidently had been faithful before His attempt to flee God, and would be faithful again if spared.

What Jonah Planned To Do If Delivered From The Great Fish

JON 2:9 But I will sacrifice to Thee With the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the Lord. "

1. Jonah planned to sacrifice to God with thanksgiving if delivered from the fish.
2. Whatever he had vowed he would pay.
3. He is convinced that “salvation is from the Lord,” and he was earnestly praying God would save him from death.

God Answers Jonah’s Prayer Jonah Vomited Onto The Dry Land

JON 2:10 Then the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.

1. “The Lord commanded the fish” - This is Divine intervention in response to his prayer.
2. “and it vomited Jonah up unto the dry land.”
 - a. The location, where he landed, is not stated.
 - b. He may have ended up back in Joppa where he had departed for Tarshish. (Jon. 1:3).
3. The next chapter reveals Jonah immediately and reluctantly obeyed the command of God to go to Nineveh.
4. The last thing he wanted was for the Ninevites to repent and be saved.

Jonah And The Great Fish

1. Jonah being in the belly of “the whale” [the great fish] is an Old Testament narrative that nearly everyone has heard about.
2. Many Bible students accept it as fact, but some Bible students and most or all unbelievers challenge its authenticity and regard it as a myth or parable.
 - a. It is a subject of much ridicule.
 - b. Many seek to deny the inspiration of the scriptures based on this narrative and the host of other narratives they reject.

3. Jesus regarded Jonah as a “prophet” and regarded this Old Testament narrative as fact. (Matt. 12:38-41).

MAT 12:38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

MAT 12:39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;

MAT 12:40 for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

MAT 12:41 "The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

- a. Those who deny the historicity of this account are seeking to deny the endorsement of the Lord and charge Jesus with ignorance or a deliberate lie.
- b. Those who deny the historicity of this account are denying the inspiration of the book of Jonah.
 - 1) This is because of Jonah being saved from the stomach of “the great fish.”
 - 2) This done because skeptics deny the repentance of the Ninevites.
 - 3) They contend it is absurd to believe Jonah alone could lead this entire city to repentance.
- c. Those who deny the historicity of this account are seeking to understand this account with a natural interpretation rather than view it as a miracle.
 - 1) This is a natural approach to the atheist who does not believe in God or miracles.
 - 2) This is a very inconsistent approach for those who believe in a powerful God who created the laws of nature and can supercede them if He wishes.

Challenges To This Narrative

1. Some charge a whale is not capable of swallowing a man.
 - a. This may or may not be correct, but there are some really large whales.
 - 1) Blue whales are often 69 to 90 feet long, and may weigh nearly 200 tons or 400,000 pounds.
 - 2) Whale sharks can be nearly 42 feet long or longer and weigh up to 66,000 pounds.
 - 3) Sperm whales are also huge, and the male sperm whale may be as long as 67 feet and weighing 40 to 50 tons.
 - b. The fact is, however, that neither the Old or New Testaments call the “fish” a whale.
 - c. **The fact is that the whole account is miraculous.**
2. Some challenge the Deity of Christ because Jesus endorsed this narrative and used the word “whale.”
 - a. Jesus used the Greek word “ketos” [**kay** tos].
 - b. This word simply denotes any “a huge fish” or “sea monster.”
 - c. The NASB renders it “a great fish.” [Jon. 1:17].

- d. What kind of fish is not precisely defined by the Old Testament narrative or by Jesus.
 - 1) Many believe the “fish” was of the shark species.
 - 2) Entire human bodies have been found in some fish of this kind.
3. Some allege a person could not stay alive in a whale or fish of any kind for a few hours; much less 3 days and 3 nights. (Jon. 1:7; Matt. 12:40).
 - a. It is charged that the stomach acids of the whale or fish or shark would consume the person.
 - b. This seems to be a valid conclusion if one attempts to explain this account in a natural way.
 - c. This conclusion may be challengeable even using the natural interpretation.
 - 1). In the late 1920's a seaman was swallowed by a large sperm whale in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands. After three days he was recovered unconscious in the whale though he had some damage to his skin. (See R. K. Harrison, 907).
 - 2) Some challenge the truthfulness or accuracy of this account, but this does not necessarily mean it is untrue.
 - 3) Regardless if this account of the seaman surviving is true or untrue, it has nothing to do with God miraculously preserving Jonah alive in the belly of the fish.

A Miracle

1. It is a mistake to seek to explain this account in a natural way rather than as a miracle of God.
2. The Old Testament affirms “the Lord prepared a great fish.”
 - a. The storm was not a natural storm, but was brought on by “the Lord.” (Jon. 1:4).
 - b. It was not a chance thing that the storm ceased as soon as Jonah was thrown into the sea. (Jon 1:15).
 - c. It was not a chance thing that “a great fish” just happened to be there to swallow Jonah. (Jon. 1:17).
 - d. It was not a chance thing that Jonah remained conscious and alive while in “the great fish.” (Jon. 2:1).
 - e. It was not a chance thing that Jonah lived to report his experiences on the ship and in “the great fish.”
3. Skeptics always attempt to explain miracles in a natural way assuming they accept the event occurred at all.
4. They affirm:
 - a. Jesus walked on rocks rather than on the sea. (Matt. 14:25).
 - b. Jesus filled the multitude with His words rather than with miraculously multiplied bread and fish. (Jn. 14:17-20).
 - c. Jesus had a human father rather than being born of a “virgin.”
 - d. Jesus was merely unconscious in the tomb rather than actually being dead, and He later revived and rolled away the stone and escaped past the Roman soldiers.

5. One makes a huge mistake when he/she seeks to explain miracles in a natural way.

6. It is a denial of God and His awesome power.

a. Jesus rebuked the Sadducees who denied the resurrection with these words. (Matt. 22:29-33).

MAT 22:29 But Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures, or the power of God.

MAT 22:30 "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

MAT 22:31 "But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying,

MAT 22:32 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living. "

MAT 22:33 And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

b. Many today are doing the same thing the Sadducees of old did.

7. Nothing is impossible for God. (Matt. 19:26).

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