

# **Jonah: The Grumpiest Missionary**

## **Week 7: Wrap-Up on God's Prophetic Message and Chapter 2:5-10**

Last week, the discussion centered on what God's message through his Old Testament prophets tended to be, especially through the prophets Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah, all of whom were contemporaries of Jonah. The message that God shared with his people through each of these prophets was the same: the people had lived a disobedient lifestyle which meant there was a well-deserved judgment coming. But God would delay that judgment as a way to show that he wants people to turn from their ways and live. At the same time, there would be a glorious long-range future. That's what we'll begin with today. Keep in mind that these same elements will, in a way, come out in Jonah's prophetic message to the Ninevites.

Look up **Hosea 14:4-8**.

1. What did the Lord promise to do for his people in spite of their behavior?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Similar pictures and Bible passages abound when it comes to how the Lord treats us in his grace. Despite the vast evidence God gives of his grace (giving us good things we don't deserve), for what reasons is it sometimes hard to a) believe that we are forgiven and b) live in God's grace?

Look up **Micah 4:1-6**.

3. In the "last days," what will things be like?
  - a. To what "last days" is Micah referring?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Are any of these things fulfilled right now?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How do we square these words with Jesus' prediction of there being "wars, rumors of wars, and...an increase of wickedness" in the last days before the end of the world?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Ultimately, God has forgiven us of every sin through Jesus and his sacrifice—that is when the last days of Micah's prophecy began. If people seem indifferent to that message or perhaps church members seem indifferent to the work of the church, should they be hearing more threats about God's punishment or more assurances of God's forgiveness? Explain.

God's prophets, including Jonah, spoke about how God would restore his relationship with the people of this world. Even though they did not know all of the details of how Christ would perfectly fulfill all these things, they still trusted and proclaimed that God would forgive sins and bring his people to live with him in a place and time much better than the one we live in now.

Before we jump back into the Hebrew of Jonah's prayer, let's remember where we are in the account:

- God shows his control over this situation by hurling a storm onto the Sea which moves the previously pagan sailors to throw Jonah into the Sea where the Lord had a large fish/whale waiting to swallow him whole.
- This time in the belly of the fish would give Jonah time to think, but also to pray, which is what chapter 2 is devoted to.
- Recall that Jonah is very likely doing what all believers do—repeating what they have learned from the Word of God in their prayers. Much of his prayer is found in the Psalms.
  - The last class I led ended with a brief touch on the point that Jesus was likely also praying through the Psalms throughout his time toward and on the cross. As he makes his way to the cross and speaks from the cross, you can notice a number of connections to the Psalms.
- We pick up Jonah's prayer at verse 5. As we continue, watch for connections to the life of a believer and to the life of Christ.
  - Also remember that this was the First Reading for Easter Sunday. When we get to the end, we'll answer the question, "Does Jonah 2 belong on Easter Sunday?"

#### Verse 5

אַפְפוּנֵי מַיִם עַד-נֶפֶשׁ תְּהוֹם יִסְבְּבֵנִי סוּף תְּבוּשׁ לְרֵאשִׁי:

*Waters encompassed me at my throat; the deep surrounded me. Reeds (seaweed) were bound to my head.*

This is an odd use of נֶפֶשׁ which is that "life force" word I talked about previously. It's the word that is translated "throat" in this verse. The idea is easy to understand but translating it in a way that makes sense and grasps the full meaning of the word is difficult to do.

6. Imagine these things are literally happening to you; what is the most likely outcome of these things?
  - a. What emotions does that bring about?
  - b. You can paint the same picture in a spiritual way; the same kinds of things take over us and bring about the same kinds of emotions, reactions, responses, etc.

Psalm connections to verse 5:

- **Psalm 18:4** - The ropes of death entangled me. Floodwaters of destruction rolled over me.
- **Psalm 69:1-2, 14-15** - Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.  
<sup>2</sup> I sink into the deep mud, where there is no place to stand. I have entered deep waters, and the rapids rush over me. <sup>14</sup> Rescue me from the mud, so I do not sink. Let me escape from those who hate me and from the deep waters. <sup>15</sup> Do not let the rapids rush over me. Do not let the deep swallow me up. Do not let the pit close its mouth over me.

## Verse 6

לְקַצְבֵי הָרִים יָרַדְתִּי הָאָרֶץ בְּרַחֲמֶיהָ בְעַדִּי לְעוֹלָם וּפָעַל מִשְׁחַת תַּיִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי:

*To the extremities of the mountains I have gone down; the earth, her bars were upon me forever. But you brought my life up from the pit, Lord my God.*

- Extremities of the mountains – The word for extremity is not used anywhere else in Hebrew. But it's the place where hardly anyone can go or touch. So “roots” of the mountains works well.
  - The phrase about the earth and her bars does not have a verb in Hebrew. This often happens and you simply rely on the context. The EHV does a nice job getting the idea across, “The earth locked me behind its bars forever.”
7. Martin Luther once said that despair is the closest step to faith. Do you agree with that statement? Why or why not?

## Psalm connections to verse 6:

- **Psalm 18:5** - The ropes of the grave wrapped around me. The traps of death threatened me.
- **Psalm 28:1** - O Lord, I keep calling to you. My Rock, do not be deaf to me. If you remain silent to me, I will become like those who go down to the pit.
- **Psalm 30:3** - Lord, you snatched my life from the grave. You kept me alive so I did not go down into the pit.

## Verse 7

בְּהִתְעַטֵּף עָלַי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוָה זָכַרְתִּי וּפָבֹא אֵלַיךָ תִּפְלְתִי אֶל־הַיֵּבֶל קִדְשֶׁךָ:

*During the fainting away of my life, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer came to you, to the temple of your holiness.*

8. This verse doesn't give an exact timeline of events. At the same time, what impression does it give about the length of time Jonah spent in the water or what he thought was happening when the fish was swallowing him?
9. Remember the importance the temple held for the Old Testament people—it was where the presence of the Lord was found. So, Jonah saying that his prayer went to the temple would be the same as us saying that our prayers rise to heaven.

## Psalm connections to verse 7:

- **Psalm 77:11-12** - I will remember the deeds of the Lord. Yes, I will remember your wonderful work from long ago. <sup>12</sup> I will meditate on all your work, and I will ponder all your deeds.
- **Psalm 18:6** - In my distress I called to the Lord. To my God I cried out. He heard my voice from his temple. My cry came before him. It reached his ears.
- **Psalm 11:4** - The Lord is in his holy temple. The Lord is on his throne in heaven. His eyes observe. He focuses on the children of Adam.

## Verse 8

מִשְׁמְרִים הַבְּלִי-יִשְׂוֹא חֲסָדָם יַעֲזֹבוּ:

*Those who pay regard to vanities of nothingness abandon their mercy/grace.*

I realize that translation is much different than you might know it or see it in your Bibles. However, it brings out a few neat features of the language:

- “Those who pay regard to” is one word in Hebrew; most translations use “cling to” as their translation. You can see the connection. To take it a step further, many ancient worship practices, especially of carved idols, involved physical actions such as clinging to the base of the idol to show just how much regard the worshiper was paying to the deity.
- “Vanities of nothingness” is the poetic way to say “idols.” Personally, I like “vanities of nothingness” better; it really carries across what God says about idols throughout the Old Testament (**Isaiah 44:9-23** is a particularly striking section).

10. “Abandon their mercy/grace” is a terrifying phrase. Both mercy and grace are included here because both are plausible translations of the Hebrew. For what reasons is “abandon” such a fitting word for what people do with the grace of God?

- a. When you abandon something, you go to something else in its place. What do people have to rely on (in their minds) when they abandon the mercy and grace of God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. How would you properly phrase what those who worship God do with regard to the grace/mercy of God?

## Psalm connections in verse 8

- **Psalm 97:7** - All who serve idols are put to shame, those who boast in “nothings.”  
Bow to him, all you gods!
- **Psalm 135:15-18** - The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands.  
<sup>16</sup> They have a mouth, but they cannot speak. They have eyes, but they cannot see.  
<sup>17</sup> They have ears, but cannot hear. There is not even any breath in their mouths.  
<sup>18</sup> Those who make them will be like them. So will all who trust in them.

### Verse 9

וְאֲנִי בְקוֹל תְּהִלָּה אֶזְבְּחֶהָ לְךָ אֲשֶׁר נָדַרְתִּי אֲשַׁלֶּמָּה יִשְׁוּעָתָה לִיהוָה:

*But I, in a voice of thanksgiving, I will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed, I will fulfill. Salvation belongs to the Lord.*

11. Vows were often connected to prayers in ancient worship. You can see vows throughout the Old Testament. Do you think it would still be wise for a Christian, living under the grace and forgiveness of Jesus, to make a vow to the Lord? Why or why not?
  
12. Jonah hits the high point of his prayer with the final words. We could perhaps accuse Jonah of thinking that salvation belonged to him. He wanted to decide who gets saved and who doesn't with his initial response to the Lord's call to serve—he fled from the Lord and from his God-given purpose). In what ways might we show that same mindset in our lives?
  - a. This is the literary midpoint of this book—many would also consider it the overall theme of the book and, really, of the entire Bible. Salvation is the Lord's. He determines who receives salvation; how salvation would be accomplished; how and through whom and to whom the message of salvation is shared; what that message will accomplish in people's lives; etc. We do our best to not get in the way, but do what we are called to do as pieces of the puzzles (or cogs in the wheel—fill in the analogy you like best), which is live in love and spread the message of Christ with our words with as many people as we can.

### Psalm connections in verse 9

- **Psalm 50:14** – Sacrifice a thank offering to God, and fulfill your vows to the Most High.
- **Psalm 50:23** – The one who sacrifices a thank offering honors me, and he sets up the way by which I will show him the salvation of God.
- **Psalm 116:14** – I will fulfill my vows to the Lord, now in the presence of all his people.
- **Psalm 3:8** – Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing rests on your people.

### Verse 10

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לְדָג וַיִּקְא אֶת־יֹנָה אֶל־הַיַּבֵּשָׁה:

*Then the Lord commanded (lit. spoke to) the fish and it vomited Jonah out onto the dry land.*

Again, the Lord is in control. His creation cannot do anything against his command. A helpful phrase I've used throughout my study is "When God speaks, things happen."

So, does Jonah 2 belong as a reading on Easter Sunday? Why or why not?

**Closing prayer** 812 Christ, the Sure and Steady Anchor v. 4

**Christ, the sure and steady anchor as we face the wave of death—  
when these trials give way to glory and we draw our final breath,  
we will cross that great horizon, clouds behind and life secure,  
and the calm will be the better, for the storms that we endure.  
Christ, the shore of our salvation, ever faithful, ever true—  
we will hold fast to the anchor; it shall never be removed. Amen.**