

Jonah 2:1 Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, Jonah 2:2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, *and* thou heardest my voice.

Jonah 2:3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

It must have been horrible to be in the belly of a great fish and still be alive. I can't even imagine. As long as he is breathing and conscious, Jonah has the ability to pray—and he does. He prays to YHWH, the God of Israel and *his* God. He's honest by admitting that he is calling out to God because he is in trouble and needs His help. It's also interesting that even though he thought he could run away from God, he knew that God could hear his prayer. Jonah thought that he was just as good as dead, in the belly of hell (sheol/hades, the place of departed spirits). Jonah also recognizes that it was God who intervened with the wind and the seas to bring about his current condition.

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

Even in such awful circumstances because of his disobedience, Jonah was confident of his relationship with God; he was confident of again seeing God's holy temple. At this point, I'm not sure if he was thinking of the earthly or heavenly temple.

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

Jonah 2:6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars *was* about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

After looking at the Hebrew, it would seem that Jonah is making a point that the water surrounded him to the point of taking away the air he breathed. Weeds were wrapped firmly around and bound his head. Jonah expresses his feeling of being at the very depths of the earth to be trapped forever, only to find that YHWH, *his* God, had delivered him to new life.

The wording here indicates Jonah is telling the story after the fact—which would make sense. I don't believe he was keeping a diary; he was following the direction of the Spirit in recounting his experience for the benefit of the people of Israel and those of us in future ages who could learn from his experience as well.

Whether Jonah actually died and was resurrected or was preserved through the experience, only God knows. It doesn't really matter; it was a miracle of God either way.

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

In Jonah's waning conscious moments, he called out to the Lord. He knew that God had heard him in his holy temple. This time I believe Jonah is referencing the heavenly temple, God's dwelling place. Just like David, Jonah knew that the Lord hears the prayers of his people.

Psa. 34:15 The eyes of the LORD *are* upon the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their cry.

Psa. 145:19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

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

Jonah seems to be saying that those who choose to follow false gods place themselves in a position that cannot expect mercy from the one true God. Jonah may have been disobedient (and haven't we all), but he never abandoned his faith and trust in YHWH, the Almighty, the Creator of the universe.

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

The only sacrifice that Jonah was in a position to offer was a sacrifice of thanksgiving with his voice. It's always interesting to me that God considers our expression of praise and thanksgiving a sacrifice.

Jer. 33:11 The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD *is* good; for his mercy *endureth* for ever: *and* of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD.

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

Heb. 13:16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Lev. 22:29 And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the LORD, offer *it* at your own will.

Psa. 107:22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

Psa. 116:17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.

I looked up these verses to see if they could shed a little light as to why.

- In the verse in Jeremiah it is an expression of faith in God as the covenant-keeping God.
- The verses in Hebrews seem to indicate that all that we do in honor, reverence and obedience to God are considered sacrifices.
- This sacrifice is to be done willingly is the emphasis of the verse in Leviticus.
- These sacrifices are to be offered as an expression of gratitude and joy for God's work and provision on our behalf according to Psalm 107.
- Psalm 116 emphasizes that this sacrifice is a verbal communication of gratitude to YHWH.

It's our preconceived ideas that get in the way of understanding sometimes. Jesus made it clear in the Sermon on the Mount that the importance of obedience was in the attitude and intent of the heart. In Isaiah 58 the Lord makes it clear that acceptable fasting is more than denying oneself food, it is denying oneself in service to others. A sacrifice is more than a ritual involving the slaughter of innocent blood, it is an act meant to incur the favor of God, an expression of devotion and commitment.

"I will pay that I have vowed" – I'm not sure what promise(s) Jonah is referring to here. The important thing is that Jonah is renewing his commitment to the Lord to follow Him in faith and obedience.

Jonah realizes that deliverance can only come from YHWH, the one true God.

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

Jonah had worked his way in prayer to a point of thanksgiving and rededication. Finally, he was ready to obey God, to make the right choice. Having accomplished His purpose, the Lord has the fish eject Jonah from its insides onto dry land.