



(For the entire commentary on the book of Jonah click [HERE](#). For other commentaries of Charlie's click [HERE](#))

Jonah

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.

⁵The sea *is* His, for He made it;

And His hands formed the dry *land*.

⁶Oh 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)

⁷And 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.”

³⁷ 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. ³⁸ And

Saul said, “Come over here, all you chiefs of the people, and know and see what this sin was today. ³⁹ 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. ⁴⁰ 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.”

⁴¹ Therefore Saul said to the LORD God of Israel, “Give a perfect *lot*.” So Saul and Jonathan were taken, but the people escaped. ⁴² And Saul said, “Cast *lots* between my son Jonathan and me.” So Jonathan was taken. ⁴³ 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!”

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

⁴⁵ 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...

^{7 (con't)} **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.

⁸ **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. ¹⁷ He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zarahites; and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. ¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ 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.”

²⁰ And Achan answered Joshua and said, “Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done: ²¹ 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.”

²² So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. ²³ 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. ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ 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 mizzeah 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.

⁹ 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...

⁹ (con't) **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.

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

asher asah eth ha'yam 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)

¹⁰ 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.

10 (con’t) 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.

10 (con’t) 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."

¹¹ 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'yistoaq 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? ⁸ 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. ⁹ 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.”

¹⁰ So the people asked him, saying, “What shall we do then?”

¹¹ 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.”

¹² Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?”

¹³ And he said to them, “Collect no more than what is appointed for you.”

¹⁴ 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’yam 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ **“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...

¹² **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...

^{12 (con't)} **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,⁵⁰ 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.”⁵¹ 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, ⁵² 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.

***12 (fin) For I know that this great tempest is because of me.”**

ki yodea ani ki besheli ha'saar ha'gadawl 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.

²⁷ They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,
And are at their wits' end.

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

²⁹ He calms the storm,
So that its waves are still.

³⁰ 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) (4th 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...