

JONAH

Extending Our Reach

Lesson 2:

Without care or concern for his enemies' fate, Jonah abandoned the Ninevites to their end. His hardened heart told him they didn't deserve to hear God's message and have the chance to turn from their ways. Eternal suffering is what they deserved, he told himself... until he found *himself* in an inescapable prison.

For three days and three nights, Jonah dwelt in utter darkness and indescribable fear. Cut off from the land of the living, cast away from God's sight, Jonah tasted eternity without Him. *"For my soul is full of troubles... I am counted with those who do down to the pit. I am like a man with no strength, adrift among the dead, like [those] whom You remember no more, and who are cut off from Your hand. You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the depths. Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and You have afflicted me with all Your waves... I am shut up and I cannot get out"* (Psalm 88:3-8). *"Salvation is of the Lord"* (Jonah 2:9).

Jonah's watery grave was, in part, *"prepared"* (Jonah 1:17), to teach the compassionless prophet to take pity upon those who would spend eternity without God. Until he truly understood that he could share their fate if it were not for God's mercy, he would remain insensitive to their present and eternal suffering.

Read Jonah 2:1-10.

1. Jonah 1:17 says, *"Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."* How have individuals sought to find natural solutions to explain God's miracle?
2. For what purposes was the fish *"prepared"*?
3. For what reason did Jonah cry out to God? (v.2)

Does it appear that he would have done so if he had not been placed into this situation? How are many individuals like Jonah in this regard?

12. What is the result of idols in an individual's life? (v.8) Whose idols is Jonah speaking of?

13. What did Jonah's affliction produce in him? (v.9) (Also see Psalm 66:8-20.)

14. To whom alone does salvation belong? (v.9) Why is Jonah's admission and understanding of this truth imperative to his mission? To ours?

15. What occurred once Jonah vowed obedience to God? (v.10)

16. What appeared to be God's purposes in casting Jonah "into the deep"?

17. Psalm 118:18 says, "*The Lord has chastened me severely, but He has not given me over to death.*" Per Hebrews 12:5-11, what is God's chastening intended to accomplish? What determines its effectiveness?

18. How might Jonah's experience have caused him to be compassionate toward the Assyrians?

19. Examine Jonah's prayer again. With whose salvation did Jonah appear to be the most concerned?

20. In Matthew 12:38-42, Jonah's experience inside the fish is spoken of as a sign to the Ninevites. How might this have been a signal to them?

21. Finally, how was Jonah's experience like Christ's? (Matthew 12:40)