**Jonah 2:1**

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/jonah/jonah-2/jonah-21/>

Jonah prays to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish.

In chapter one we learned that Jonah disobeyed the LORD’s command to go to Nineveh and took a ship to Tarshish, which went a long distance in the opposite direction. When the LORD frustrated Jonah’s plan by sending a great storm on the sea, Jonah told the sailors to throw him overboard. Jonah may have thought he could escape his mission through death, but the LORD’s plan was for him to stay alive to preach to the wicked city of Nineveh. Thus, the LORD commissioned a great fish to swallow Jonah to spare his life from drowning. The prophet remained in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, which creates an image of Jesus’s time in the belly of the tomb (Jonah 1:17).

While Jonah was in the belly of the fish, he came to his senses and prayed. This is the first instance in which the text explicitly tells us that the prophet prayed. It seems Jonah was resigned to die while on the boat. But now that Jonah is in the belly of the fish it seems he has a change of heart.

When the sea was raging, the pagan sailors prayed to their gods and urged Jonah to pray to his god so that the sea might become calm (Jonah 1:6). However, there is no indication that Jonah did so. Instead of repenting and praying to the LORD for forgiveness, Jonah preferred to die in the sea. It seems he thought that in his death, Israel’s enemy, Assyria, would be judged rather than spared through Jonah’s message of repentance. So, he asked the sailors to throw him overboard (Jonah 1:12). Here, at last, he prayed to the LORD.

That Jonah finally prayed is crucial in the development of the narrative. In the previous chapter, Jonah told the sailors that he feared “the LORD, the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land” (Jonah 1:9). Jonah’s statement prompted the sailors to recognize the LORD’s power. So, they prayed to Him before throwing Jonah into the sea (Jonah 1:14). They even sacrificed to the LORD and made vows when He delivered them from their calamity by causing the storm to stop (Jonah 1:16). Here too, Jonah prayed. He addressed his prayer to the LORD his God. Now, both the sailors and Jonah acknowledged God’s power.

The phrase the LORD his God is significant. It makes clear that Jonah had a relationship with the LORD. Jonah was a prophet of God. Unlike the sailors who worshiped and served pagan gods before experiencing the storm, Jonah knew the LORD and was used to worshipping Him because he was a prophet (1 Kings 14:25). Ironically, Jonah rebelled against the LORD his God by trying to escape his prophetic mission. But when the LORD spared Jonah’s life from drowning, he finally acknowledged his dependence on the LORD. So, he cried out to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish.

It is interesting to consider that Jonah’s preference at this point was to die, seemingly. So God sparing his life might initially have been met by Jonah with annoyance. But Jonah’s life inside the fish apparently caused him sufficient discomfort and anxiety to alter his perspective. We can only imagine a man living inside a fish for an extended period. Such an experience would have been painful and fearful for Jonah. But through it all, Jonah learned the lesson God wanted to teach him. He learned to depend on God alone. The prophet humbled himself before the LORD, thanking Him for providing such a great fish to deliver him from drowning.

Although Jonah prayed inside the fish, he recorded the prayer after the fish spit him out. The prophet was thankful that God miraculously intervened on his behalf. So, he recounted the story of his deliverance. In doing so, he articulated his gratitude to the LORD for preserving his life from the inevitable death by drowning through a great fish. In this case, the fish became a source of salvation for the prophet.

**Biblical Text**

**Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the stomach of the fish.**