

THE BOOK OF JONAH
Lesson 4, Chapters 1 and 2

We left off last time as Jonah has just confessed that it is him that has caused this pending calamity of the ship he is on sinking because of a violent storm, and most likely resulting in the loss of lives of the entire crew. How has Jonah caused this? He is in the midst of a great rebellion against his God Yehoveh, and it is Yehoveh that is reacting against his rebellion by hurling an intense, potentially deadly, storm against the ship he is on; a ship whose destination is the farthest west location of the known world: Tarshish.

We have here a clear case of what can happen when we determine to sin against God; it is as likely as not that others will be adversely affected by our personal rebellion. While there are numerous OT and NT verses that speak to this, they can all be summed up by what we read in the Torah in Exodus chapter 34.

CJB Exodus 34:6-7 ⁶ ADONAI passed before him and proclaimed: *"YUD-HEH-VAV-HEH!!! Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh [ADONAI] is God, merciful and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in grace and truth; ⁷ showing grace to the thousandth generation, forgiving offenses, crimes and sins; yet not exonerating the guilty, but causing the negative effects of the parents' offenses to be experienced by their children and grandchildren, and even by the third and fourth generations."*

In reality, what we learn in God's Word is that about the only way our sin can't affect others is if we lived on a deserted island, all by ourselves. It is a God-principle...a governing dynamic of the Universe...that our personal sin can (and probably will) have far reaching consequences affecting the lives of others in our family or in our society even into future generations. Perhaps the best example is the sin of Adam; his sin has affected 100% of humanity in every generation since the day he decided to listen to the Evil One. A divorce...so common today... is perhaps one sin (and yes, it is sin) that we're all most familiar with. Who among us has not been involved with, or witnessed, a divorce with children involved and not observed the damage it does to the children who are essentially innocent bystanders? And, even how the children of divorce sometimes react in such a way on into adulthood, which can actually affect their

own children negatively? How about the sin of religious leaders? Whether we want to admit it or not, much of our faith can rest on the leader him or herself rather than only on God. So, when that leader falls into serious moral failure, some people will even walk away from their trust in Jesus. The failure of a religious leader can destroy a legacy of good works, which in turn can deprive others of wisdom that, otherwise, would have been so very useful to God's Kingdom.

In Jonah's case, the effect of his sin on others is extreme and immediate; it is about to cause the death of several others (the crew of the ship) who were innocent collateral damage. Let's re-read some of Jonah chapter 1.

RE-READ JONAH CHAPTER 1: 10 – 16

In our previous lesson we spent a great deal of time on what may have seemed like super-technical or ultra-detailed matters of the meaning of certain Hebrew and Greek words and terms as well as on what the mindset and understanding of God's chosen people were concerning those words and terms in various biblical eras. We'll not go quite that far today.

In verse 9, Jonah identified himself as a Hebrew, and named his God as Yehoveh, and further that His God was the Creator of the land and the sea. The implication, of course, was that what Yehoveh created He also retained control over. Therefore, the storm at sea was at the direct cause and control of Jonah's God. Along with Jonah's confession, the lots the crew cast in an earlier verse identifying Jonah as the wrongdoer who angered his god enough to put them all in jeopardy, made the only remaining question they had was what to do about it.

Therefore, in verse 11, the crew asks Jonah bluntly what must be done to him to calm these ocean waters. That is, the ship's crew inherently knew that only Jonah could solve this problem for them, but because they knew nothing about Jonah's God, then they had no idea what action was needed to appease that God. In the world of their own god systems, they also inherently knew that someone had to bear the consequence of offending the gods; confession and accepting blame was not enough. There was little time left to resolve this matter; the situation was getting more dire by the minute as the final words of verse 11 explain: "for

the sea was getting rougher all the time". Their desperation increased along with the strength of the storm. Jonah's reply to their question in verse 12 was so extreme that it shocked the crew members to their core.

In verse 12, Jonah says to bodily pick him up and toss him into the frothing waters of the deep. Let's think on that for a moment. On the surface such an offer almost seems heroic. But in reality if ever this was a vivid case of stubbornness to the point of self- destruction, it must be Jonah. He chose to die rather than to cease his rebellion against Yehoveh. Without doubt, had he confessed and told God he sees his wrong, and decided to demonstrate his repentance by agreeing to do as God has bid him to do (go and preach to the people of Nineveh), the seas would have calmed. Yet, he chose his own death instead. In the Torah, in the Book of Deuteronomy, God instructs us about the great responsibility and accountability that He places on His Prophets.

CJB Deuteronomy 18:19-22 ***¹⁹ Whoever doesn't listen to my words, which he will speak in my name, will have to account for himself to me. ²⁰ "But if a prophet presumptuously speaks a word in my name which I didn't order him to say, or if he speaks in the name of other gods, then that prophet must die.' ²¹ You may be wondering, 'How are we to know if a word has not been spoken by ADONAI?' ²² When a prophet speaks in the name of ADONAI, and the prediction does not come true- that is, the word is not fulfilled- then ADONAI did not speak that word. The prophet who said it spoke presumptuously; you have nothing to fear from him.***

The Gemara (which is part of the Talmud) applies this Torah teaching to Jonah. And while I am in agreement with this, another Bible passage that I think even more directly applies comes from the Book of Ezekiel.

CJB Ezekiel 33:6-9 ***⁶ But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the shofar, so that the people are not warned; and then the sword comes and takes any one of them, that one is indeed taken away in his guilt, but I will hold the watchman responsible for his death.' ⁷ "Likewise you, human being- I have appointed you as watchman for the house of Isra'el. Therefore, when you hear the word from my mouth, warn them for me. ⁸ When I tell the wicked person, 'Wicked person, you will certainly die'; and you fail to speak and warn the wicked***

person to leave his way; then that wicked person will die guilty; and I will hold you responsible for his death. ⁹ On the other hand, if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he doesn't turn from his way; then he will still die guilty, but you will have saved your own life.

Jonah openly said, and believes, that it is on the account of his refusal to “warn the wicked” of Nineveh as God has instructed him to do, that the ship is about to sink and all onboard are about to die. Biblically speaking, the only possible penalty for this act of great sin is the Prophet’s own death. I want to remind you that Ezekiel is speaking of the responsibility of God’s **Prophets**; not so much every person who worships that Prophet’s God. Over the many years of teaching the Bible, I have cautioned that a person who has a great desire to be a prophet for God needs to think on this desire very carefully. First, God appoints His prophets; He doesn’t ask for resumes nor does He go by the sincerity of the person who desires such a role in the Kingdom. In Judeo-Christianity (and in this term I’m including whatever every Believer in Yeshua might call themselves) I have seen and spoken to so many who want to be, or already think of themselves, as Prophets. Over and over many of these folks will make predictions that don’t come to pass, and such failure doesn’t seem to faze them or even cause them pause; they just confidently make more predictions in the Name of the Lord. These, brethren, are precisely what the Bible calls false prophets. False prophets only sometimes in the Bible refer to the prophets of false gods. More often this points to people that have anointed themselves and claim this anointing is divine. It is only God’s great mercy that allows them to continue to live because the biblical penalty for being a false prophet...or even a legitimate prophet (like Jonah) who willfully doesn’t tell the truth, or refuses to go do what God tells them to do... is their death. It is that serious of a matter. After all, if you believe a person is a God-appointed Prophet and they foretell something that doesn’t happen or isn’t true, how does this reflect on your own understanding of God? Especially if you defend that person or (worse) go on listening to them?

It's nice that Jonah was willing to accept this punishment and thus spare the lives of the crew. But, the depth of Jonah’s arrogant, self-willed determination to not take God’s oracle to the people of Nineveh because he hated them so much, is difficult to fathom. Jonah is no hero; he is what none of us ought to ever aspire to be. Ironic as it may seem this pagan Canaanite crew had far more mercy than

Jonah, God's Prophet, did; they just couldn't bring themselves to send Jonah to his death. Rather, they decided to try to fight off this storm. So, they rowed hard towards the shore. Jonah's advice to them was appalling. In their eyes, because of their attachment to pagan god systems, they could see and understand no other than Jonah offering himself as a human sacrifice to the god of the sea in order to appease him and thus calm the waters. And yet, they were not willing to let Jonah do that, even if it was to their own best interests.

What the sailors don't entirely get is that just as the sea is under God's dominion, so is dry land. Therefore, their valiant effort to defeat the sea by rowing their battered vessel to shore is doomed. The harder they rowed the rougher became the seas in opposition. Here is a God-principle that it seems even the most seasoned of Believers has trouble remembering at times: running away from the Lord's will is, ultimately, impossible. A common term used especially in allegorical Bible teaching, is that for a Believer to work to foil or ignore God's will is to "kick against the goad". Actually, this is a term borrowed by the biblical writers from the Greek and Roman cultures where it meant to imply a ruinous resistance to something. It is fascinating just how far humans will go to refuse to submit to God. I think there can be but a few Believers that don't know about the following passage in the Book of Revelation concerning the End Times Apocalypse that depicts just such a scenario.

CJB Revelation 16:1 *I heard a loud voice from the sanctuary say to the seven angels, "Go, and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of God's fury!"*

Then a few verses later, after 3 of those 7 bowls of God's wrath had been emptied upon mankind:

CJB Revelation 16:7-11 *⁷ Then I heard the altar say, "Yes, ADONAI, God of heaven's armies, your judgments are true and just!" ⁸ The fourth one poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was permitted to burn people with fire. ⁹ People were burned by the intense heat; yet they cursed the name of God, who had the authority over these plagues, instead of turning from their sins to give him glory. ¹⁰ The fifth one poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom grew dark. People gnawed on their tongues from the pain, ¹¹ yet they cursed the*

God of heaven because of their pains and sores, and did not turn from their sinful deeds.

I will switch to application of this message to you for a few minutes; please indulge me because it will affect many of us. Even in the most devastating, catastrophic, deadly time period the world will ever know, the End Times... when there will no longer be much doubt among the earth's population about the divine source of all this unprecedented, unyielding global pain and suffering...the people who either formerly trusted the God of Israel but gave it up somewhere along the way, or never trusted at all, willfully determine to die at war with God rather than to die at peace with Him. They will NOT, at any cost, humble themselves, repent and ask God for forgiveness and mercy. We see this all around us today (we'd have to be blind not to), and apparently it has been this way to one degree or another since the dawn of humankind. I have personally witnessed this mindset at funerals and in hospital visits with the dying or those who face the possibility of death. People who know they have lived wickedly and are facing the reality of their own imminent death, and may be facing a terrible future eternally. Yet, even when offered the opportunity to repent and to accept the mercy Christ affords us, they refuse it. This is irrationality at its zenith. Such irrationality among normally rational people can have none other than an evil spiritual source otherwise our innate common sense and instinct for self-preservation would kick-in. And indeed, even the human nature of old that we're all born with (the one that Jews call the ***yetzer harah***, our "evil inclination") leans decidedly towards a wicked spiritual source rather than a good one.

Within the make-up of 21st century Believers, and even within modern people who are traditionalists but irreligious, they (we) wonder and worry about what we are observing in this world as regards gender, as an inexplicable out-of-control wildfire-like spread of irrational thought and behavior. How, we ask, since the days of Adam and Eve until just a couple of decades ago, can the simple biological reality of gender suddenly be challenged? There is no more profoundly fundamental, self-evident fact of humanity than the 2 possible genders we are all born with. Something that has never in history spontaneously self-mutated into something different, nor or has it been changeable at our whim. And yet, we have an enormous, nearly global-wide tsunami of elites, intellectuals, secular and religious leaders, and common folk who have bought into the

concept of gender fluidity, or gender by choice, or the erasure of gender altogether. The only possible way this can occur (other than mass insanity) is if it comes from the powerful unseen realm of the spirit world. Believers, I beg you to hear me...there is nothing else with enough power and influence that can account for it; and I am convinced that the willful ignorance of our Judeo-Christian institutions that imply or outright teach that a profoundly robust and formidable spirit world is impossible and a but a primitive myth is why so few seem to not see it. What this means is that human persuasion to try to get the irrational to shuck it off and return to rationality has no hope of success because it is a misdirected mindset and effort. In reality ***"our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"***.

I want you to notice something about what Paul said that is taken from Ephesians 6:12. He said "the spiritual forces of evil in the **heavenly** realms". In the Greek NT manuscripts, the word is **epourionous** and the Greek Lexicons agree that it means having to do with heaven, or of heavenly origin. I've never heard that statement dealt with before in a sermon or a Bible teaching perhaps because Paul is saying that there ARE spiritual forces of evil that exist in Heaven. I never thought much about this until I learned a deeper biblical understanding of the divine council of Heaven, populated by spirit beings called **elohim**. Powerful...the MOST powerful... of created spirit beings, second only to God. And that we learn that some of them rebelled, and God cursed them with eventual death just as He would later curse mankind with death for our rebellion. Nothing in the Bible implies that all the corrupted **elohim** were kicked out of Heaven. Paul is revealing a truth to us that the ancient Hebrews of his day already believed and understood. Do you believe it? I can tell you that my upbringing in Church essentially taught me less to not believe that corrupt beings can exist in Heaven but rather to simply ignore the possibility. The thing is that until we do believe that this mass delusion about gender that has overcome our world societies is result of a wicked spiritual influence and we react accordingly through sincere prayer to The Father along with our adopting a soul-deep determination to live by His moral code, no matter the personal cost, there is no hope for society to come out of its present irrationality that leads only to death and destruction; an irrationality that has thoroughly enveloped us. The result of this irrationality is a crumbling of formerly vibrant orderly societies into chaos, confusion, hypersensitivity,

lawlessness and perversion of every imaginable kind at every level. To fight fire with fire, we must fight the right battle; a spiritual battle. It does little good only to try to openly combat this abomination on a purely human, intellectual basis, which is actually our instinct. Once evil takes sufficient hold of us, then we will indeed choose death over submission to God...just as what Jonah was doing...no matter how irrational that might be.

So, after an apparently valiant effort to row their boat to safety and avoid having to participate in killing Jonah, the crew gave up. The crew's options are now limited to one so they are now depicted as calling out to God for help. Once again my pet peeve pops-up its ugly head. Our English Bibles obscure what is actually said by covering over the pagan sailors calling out to Jonah's God **by name** and instead God's name is substituted with the word "Lord" (*Adonai* in the CJB, which means the same thing). But let's not misunderstand; by no means have the sailors converted, thrown aside all their gods, and switched their allegiance instead to Yehoveh. Rather, they simply added Yehoveh to the mix of gods they accept and bow down to. He's but another god they are now aware of, respect, and so are in no way reluctant to call on Him or think that somehow they are being disloyal to their other gods.

What the crew's prayer is about is that, with all other of their efforts having failed, they realize they are going to have to do the unthinkable: they're going to have to do as Jonah said and throw him overboard. This means certain death to Jonah. But, since it was these men that would essentially execute him if they did as Jonah said to do, might this mean that Jonah's God will turn around and blame them for what has happened, including them tossing Jonah overboard to his death? They beseech this God, Yehoveh, not to blame them or to punish them for doing what Jonah said had to be done. What a contrast! God's Prophet Jonah refuses to call out to the Lord, let alone to obey Him, while the sailors frantically call out to Jonah's God asking to be forgiven when they *do* obey Him!

Yet, these sailors still have a problem. It was still the common mindset of that era that when a person is killed by someone, then the deceased's family is virtually obligated to hunt down the perpetrator and kill him in vengeance, no matter how just the killing might have been. In fact, most cultures and societies of this era operated that way. Shedding innocent blood was extremely serious and involves

the death penalty for those who do so. Would Jonah's God see what they were about to do to Jonah as an act of violence against the innocent? So, in what I strongly feel was their collective sincere mindset, the sailors say to Yehoveh that they have little other choice but to believe Jonah is telling them the truth and so to kill him is following Yehoveh's will. Yet, they can't be certain of it. So, in verse 15, they reluctantly pick Jonah up and throw him into the raging waters. Immediately the sea went calm. With relief they knew their lives had been spared and that they had done the will of Jonah's God who expressed His pleasure by bringing the storm to an abrupt end.

Verse 16 leaves no doubt that they all believed that Jonah's God could do whatever He wanted to do. In response, we are told that the relieved crew sacrificed and made vows...probably to Yehoveh. There's no consensus in Bible academia as to whether this means they made an actual animal sacrifice on board that ship, or that they essentially promised to make a sacrifice once they reached shore. The usual argument against them making an immediate onboard sacrifice is that they had no animals left to make one with; or that this is not something anyone would ever do on a ship. My response is that there is nothing that says that every last bit of cargo was thrown overboard; some animals could have remained. Besides, live animals were regularly brought onboard to be used for food on long voyages. As to the matter of whether ship-board sacrifices occurred, the consensus that this didn't ever occur seem to be incorrect. In his scholarly research book about ancient seafaring Jean Rouge says this:

Routine ceremonies for sea voyages were of two kinds, those for departures and those for arrivals. When a departure was to be made, those who were about to sail would first make a pilgrimage to a nearby temple to obtain divine protection. Then, on board ship, there would be a ceremony, not in port when the ship weighed anchor, but rather when the open sea was reached. The ceremony consisted of a sacrifice and prayers to the ship's god and to the divinities of the sea. Likewise, when a ship was about to put into port, before it actually entered the port, there was another ceremony, this time one of thanksgiving. During the course of the sailing other sacrifices took place whenever an especially famous sanctuary was passed, or in the face of danger serious enough to require recourse to the gods. This is why certain figurative representations of ships show an altar located at the stern, an altar that must not have been portable.

This confirms to me that The Narrator of Jonah's story was correct; the sailors soon after tossing Jonah into the sea, and the storm halting, made a sacrifice on board to thank Yehoveh.

Let's move on to Chapter 2. Before we read it, I want to set the stage so that you will better grasp what is going on. The reality is that the first two verses and then the last verse are typical prose narrative (that is, just regular writing), but everything in between (verses 3 – 10) are a complete composed Psalm that is inserted. The Psalm is done in typical ancient Hebrew poetry literary style. To say it another way: the first two verses are the writer of Jonah essentially introducing the Psalm. Next is the full Psalm, and finally the last verse of chapter 2 comes after the Psalm concludes and it moves the story of Jonah forward. I'm going to have much to say about this Psalm after we read the chapter.

READ JONAH CHAPTER 2 all

So; in a most surprising twist to our story, Jonah who has been chucked overboard at his own urging by a most reluctant and troubled crew, is swallowed alive by a great fish where he remained as though entombed or in a fleshly prison for 3 days and 3 nights. If the story of Jonah consisted of only the first chapter, then the obvious conclusion would be that he, of course, drowned. They were in deep water at the time, many miles from land. Even in calm waters, he had no hope whatsoever of rescue or survival. But, surprise! He doesn't die! Out of nowhere comes a giant fish of some sort that swallows him whole thus saving him from a watery grave.

The story gives us no clue what kind of fish the giant fish was. At some point in history, it was determined that it had to be a whale and so that's how it is mostly viewed today. Just remember; even though we know that scientifically a whale is a sea mammal that made it biologically different from a fish, such differences were not known at that time. If it swam in the ocean, it was a fish...however big, however small, however it looked. In addition, no attempt was made to explain how a human could survive inside the belly of a fish. Naturally, just as we all do, we moderns still scratch our heads in concert with our ancient ancestors and wonder about it since that seems utterly impossible. But, for our ancestors (as it

ought to be for us) this scenario instantly says that what happened is an intervention by God. Nothing else could account for it. For the modern Church and Synagogue, however, where the concept of miracles is only lightly accepted (or in many denominations it is rejected altogether), then here is where the story of Jonah becomes just a fun fable with a good moral.

If we've walked with the Lord long enough, then by now we ought to know that nothing is beyond the limits of our Lord to control. Miracles are just part of His nature; He doesn't strain to do them. A miracle, at its core, is but a divine act that is beyond the bounds of anything a human can duplicate, or nature in its normal state can equal. God, as nature's Creator, can use nature for any purpose He determines, in whatever way He determines. That is the most marvelous of news for Believers; but it is also the most laughable and at the same time terrorizing to skeptics, mockers, and non-Believers.

The next significant fact presented is that Jonah not only somehow remained alive within the innards of that great fish for 3 days and 3 nights, he actually began to carefully re-examine his situation, what led him to it, and what it means in a higher level of understanding. As I urged in the 1st lesson of Jonah, the Introduction, we must not get lost in the weeds by paying too much attention to Jonah and assuming that the moral point of the story is about revealing who Jonah really was; it is far more about revealing who God really is.

The anonymous writer of Jonah tells us that it was from inside the belly of that whale that Jonah prayed what comes next. And what comes next is an eloquent Psalm that thanks God for the mercy he has been shown. The writer (often called The Narrator by Theologians) makes it clear that this Psalm was prayed at that time, and not later after the ordeal was over. This fact actually muddies the waters for many Bible scholars because they doubt why the action would suddenly pause and this complete Psalm would be inserted. It truly is a curious thing that must not be so easily dismissed, so let me explain the issues for the sake of intellectual honesty. This is the part of the story, after all, that is the most controversial simply because of its setting: Jonah alive inside a great fish. The first thing we need to address is where this Psalm might have come from and also why it is placed where it is.

The first fork in the road of deciding the source of this Psalm is that either Jonah composed it and spoke it while he was inside the whale (as The Narrator says it does), or perhaps Jonah composed it later after he had gone to Nineveh and returned home but nonetheless The Narrator thought it made for a better story if he had done it inside the great fish. The next fork is whether this was composed by Jonah at any point and handed down by Tradition to The Narrator or if it was composed by someone else entirely, whether before or after Jonah's time. After that, yet another fork is encountered; was this Psalm composed for the express purpose of being part of the Book of Jonah, or was it borrowed from some other already existing document and stuck in here because it seemed to fit or embellish the story of Jonah quite well. I'm here to tell you that these are all legitimate questions, and considering the highly important part of this story of Jonah that this Psalm plays, it is reasonable to ask and it is necessary to face it and address it.

Let's begin with a basic question; is the way that Jonah's story is constructed...with regular narrative (typical dialogue and description) interrupted by a poem...a Psalm...unique to the Book of Jonah as compared to the remainder of Holy Scripture? Answer: no. It is quite common in the Bible and in other Jewish literature of that era. Virtually the entire Torah (the first 5 books of the Bible) and all of the Prophets use this method of writing and recording events and in the telling of their stories. Poems by gifted writers of poetry have the advantage of being able to "say it all" in a beautifully memorable few words that impact us the most. That is, the art of poetry can best describe and communicate actions or emotions to their fullest, whereas stark narrative cannot. In a famous line from the well-known science fiction movie called Contact...a film inspired by the late Carl Sagan...we find our heroine somehow transported to a different dimension using alien-provided technology. Humanity had been given an invitation of sorts to visit with this advanced species of aliens, and she was the scientist chosen among all others on planet earth to go as humanity's representative and hopefully make contact with the machine's alien creators, but also to bring back with her a record of all that she saw and heard especially to prove the doubters wrong. Who else but a scientist would be trained and equipped for this kind of a job? However, when she arrived at the alien world and began to speak into her recording device what she was witnessing she became awe struck about the incredible beauty and wonder and complete peace that she

was encountering. She says: "They sent the wrong person; they should have sent a poet".

One of the rather standard characteristics of biblical Prophets was that they were trained, expert poets. While that probably can't be said of every last one, it can be said as a general rule of thumb. So, that fact alone says that it is certainly possible that the Psalm we read in Jonah chapter 2 was indeed written by a deeply affected and moved Jonah as he tried to contemplate what was happening to him, and what caused it all, and the higher meaning of it.

On the other hand, Psalms (being basically poetry) are usually intentionally created to be non-specific in their nature. That is, much like proverbs, they aren't inextricably tied to a single event, circumstance, or occasion even though it may have been one event that inspired its writer to compose it. A Psalm's application is general in nature, and pertinent to every age of history, and this is proved by the fact that throughout the centuries Psalms have drawn people of every era to them because of what they say to us as human beings in so many situations. So, was this Psalm that forms the bulk of chapter 2 an already existing Psalm written by an author unknown to us? A Psalm that just happened to work seamlessly with the story of Jonah, so that's why it was chosen to insert? There is nothing so specific about Jonah's Psalm that it could only be understood within the context of the Jonah story. So, yes, that cannot be dismissed as a possibility. But if this was the case, this Psalm has been lost to history in all but the saga of Jonah.

Finally, there is this issue; the Psalm of Jonah is definitely one of Thanksgiving, and there is much belief in the world of Theology that Thanksgiving ought to be the last thing on Jonah's mind as he must currently be living in a state of misery inside that whale. Much more appropriate...especially considering the man, Jonah, and his willful behavior...would be a Psalm that expresses his desperation and perhaps asks for rescue. So, those that think this way believe this Psalm is misplaced and has no business in the Book of Jonah; rather it was added a long time later by a redactor.

These are all valid discussion points I want to make you aware of, but I will cut to the chase. Although this Psalm indeed could be applied to our giving praise and thanks to God over some great mercy He showed to us in any number of

circumstances...probably best suited to our having been rescued from imminent death...it perfectly captures the essence of Jonah's situation and really is rather pivotal in the ongoing story. If it were not there, the story would be incomplete. The Psalm especially helps to expose Jonah's hypocrisy of being shown incredible mercy from God in the midst of Jonah's ongoing disobedience (when certainly none was due to him) versus Jonah's refusal to take a message of God's warning to the disobedient people of Nineveh (whom he felt had no such mercy due to them). That a Psalm could fit such a story as Jonah's so well, and is needed to advance the story to make its ultimate point, but that the Psalm was a general one simply plucked from an already written book of Psalms is so unlikely that it stretches credibility. Jonah had the expertise, and the time, and the circumstance, and the motive to compose this Psalm just as we find it in his book, and there is no evidence at all against it except that skeptics can come up with imaginative alternatives. My mindset is, and will continue to be, that when there is no strong evidence to reject the validity of statements in the Bible, then those statements ought to be taken as authentic.

We'll stop here and begin to examine Jonah's Psalm next time.