

Jonah: The Rebellious Prophet

Jonah Chapter 4: Jonah Anger & God's Love



The life of Jonah is summed up in the forth chapter. Jonah repented in the sea, he begged God to spare him from certain death. He despaired of his rebellion inside the great fish, promising to do what God commanded. God delivered Jonah to the shores of the Mediterranean and re-commissioned him to the city of Nineveh.

Jonah was given the spiritual authority over the city, to bring the message from the one "True" God to the wicked city of God's coming judgment. It was Jonah's hope the people of Nineveh would reject the message, and be judged by God.

This did not happen; the people of Nineveh repented in sackcloth and ashes from king to servant, including the animals. God accepted their repentance and relents from his judgment. Jonah's ministry was a success, the people of Nineveh repented, God heard their repentance so why was their a problem?

The problem was Jonah; Jonah had the wrong view of his mission. He saw the world through his limited earthly perspective. He did not see things from God's view. Jonah was an Israelite, he was proud of his nation and he understood the political circumstances of his day.

He knew the destruction of Assyria, would ensure greater safety for Israel in the future. Jonah knew Assyria was a hard task master in Israel's past, suppressing and taxing Israel in previous generations. Their destruction from Jonah's perspective was well deserved. How could he stand in the way of God's judgment? How could he

allow Israel's persecutor to escape God's judgment by repenting?

Jonah also knows the mercy of God both theologically and personally. After all, about 30-days before he arrived in Nineveh, Jonah was inside a great fish. God prepared the fish to swallow Jonah, rescuing him from the waters after he repented. How could Jonah so graciously accept God's mercy in his life, and not want others to experience the same mercy?



Nineveh.

Jonah is human, and fallen like the rest of us. He does not see the world the way God sees the world. Each of us brings our own prejudices to the table of life, and these prejudices get in our way being the God's light in the dark world. Jonah serves as a model for all of us, we have to learn to empty our personal agendas and prejudices and conform our way of thinking to match God's.

Jonah was given a mission to reach Nineveh, he went reluctantly. God provides Jonah as our object lesson. We can use Jonah to understand God and His vision for the lost. Jesus commanded us to bring the Gospel to the world, in the same way Jonah was commanded to bring His message to Nineveh. The Assyrians were cruel warriors who had little compassion on their enemies. Yet Jonah was called to offer them a message from God. Our fallen world is a cruel place yet we are commanded to go forth and offer God's love through Christ. We commanded to offer the Gospel to the lost. Our world is Jonah's

Jonah regrets Nineveh's

Jonah 4

1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry.

But it displeased: Jonah did not take comfort in repentance of Nineveh. The "But" refers to Jonah reaction to God sparing the city after they repented in sackcloth and ashes. God saw their transformation and turned from His wrath (3:10). Jonah's ministry was successful, he did what he was commanded to do, but his reaction was the opposite of relishing in success. Jonah was obedient, but his obedience was a reluctant disobedience, because his "worldview" and God's "worldview" were different.

Exceedingly: Jonah anger is described as extreme, *Gadowl* means "great". This was an enraged anger. He did not just accept the situation, Jonah became enraged, literally "became hot" at God's mercy. From Amos and Hosea, Jonah probably knows that Assyria would one day destroy Israel in judgment. Jonah was a patriot of his nation Israel, which blinded him to the mercy of God.

Jonah is an emotional and fickle person in these four chapters, he is disobedient in chapter one, he is giving thanks and praise in chapter two, he is obedient servant in chapter 3 and he is angry in chapter 4.

God's mercy and character extends to Jonah, who is allowed to be mad at God. God allows this anger because, He knows Jonah does not understand.

Jonah Prays

2 So he prayed to the Lord, and said, "Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country?

Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.

3 "Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!"

He prayed: Jonah, though emotional and angry cried out to God. He had fellowship and communion with God, despite his hatred for the Assyrians. Jonah talked with God, he let God know how he was feeling. Even when we are in rebellion, we should know God can hear us in our distress and anger.

What I said: Jonah is a contrast in many ways. The mercy he had extended to himself, he wants withheld from others. Jonah literally rebukes God for being "too merciful" to Nineveh. Here Jonah explains to God why he fled to Tarshish, because he did not want God to extend mercy to Nineveh. The Ninevites were waiting and accepting God's mercy and grace, while Jonah though God's grace was too much.

Jonah in many ways is like many believers, who forget the mercy and forgiveness they received, and are incredulous when God extends mercy to others. Its easy to image the line of mercy stops at us and does not extend beyond us.

I know: Jonah knew the character and nature of God, but he did not want the people of Nineveh to know it. He quotes from Exodus 34:6, as God declares His "nature" to Moses.

And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, Exodus 34:6

Jonah lists four aspects of God's character. These are important to understand, when we see the world filled with wickedness and ask the question, why does God allow this to occur?

1. Gracious...merciful: Jonah himself is a recipient of God's grace and mercy. God does not give us what we deserve. He allows space and time for repentance.

2. Slow to anger: Jonah wanted judgment and he wanted it now, while God wanted repentance. God waited to judge the world in Noah's day. Only when it reached a certain level did God send judgment. People often mistake this character in God for "no God", since things don't happen when they think they should.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. 2nd Peter 3:9

3. Abundant in lovingkindness: Scripture is a testimony to the love of God, He revealed himself to fallen humanity. He offered salvation to those who were created in His image. God became "Flesh" to die for our sins.

4. Relents from doing harm: Judgment only comes reluctantly from God. It's in God's nature to hold back judgment. God knows if he were to judge us for our sins, when we deserve judgment no one would remain.

Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. Micah 7:18

Therefore: Jonah wants to die, he can't understand God's mercy. Jonah has not conformed his will to the will of God. God in His mercy and grace, extends it to Jonah.

Take my life: God does not give Jonah what he deserves, rather God uses Jonah as an object lesson for all believers to understand God's character and nature. Jonah is a picture of Israel, a nation who received God's blessings but was unwilling to extend that blessing to others.

Jonah action



4 Then the Lord said, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

5 So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city.

The Lord said: In an extension of God's mercy, he lets Jonah vent and then ask him, what right he has to be angry? God uses "unrighteous" anger as means to help us understand His character and nature. Jesus told a parable of the angry workers to illustrate God's mercy to consternation of those who received mercy.

Matthew 20:1-16

1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 "Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 "And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 "and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. 5 "Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise.

6 "And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?'

7 "They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go

into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.'

8 "So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.'

9 "And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius.

10 "But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius.
 11 "And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner,
 12 "saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.'
 13 "But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?
 14 'Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.
 15 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?'
 16 "So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

Right...angry: Jonah did not understand God's mercy. Jonah was like the sulking child who did not receive the justice he felt was deserved. God as our "father" questions His child's reaction, using it as



object lesson for the rest of His children.

Jonah went out: Jonah did not answer God, but left in a fit of rage to watch what might happen. Maybe Jonah could not believe God would actually spare Nineveh. Maybe he thought their repentance would not last.

East of the city: The city of Nineveh was built on the Tigris River, so Jonah went to an area overlooking the city.

Shelter....sat: He probably constructed a lean to shelter with branches, sulking watching the city in the distance.

What would become: Jonah is angry at the world, because its not going the way he thinks it should. God is too merciful, Nineveh is not judged, He is hoping things change.

The explanation of the Lord

6 And the Lord God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant.

7 But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered.

8 And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

The Lord God: God provides an object lesson for Jonah. Jonah himself becomes our object lesson.

Prepared a plant: God prepared a fish, God caused the storm, God even prepared a plant for Jonah. If we can imagine Jonah trying to make himself comfortable in the hot regions of Iraq, he shelter just

wont do the job. So the plant from God, covers his shelter with thick green leaves providing him with the coolness he needs in the hot sun. Jonah takes a likening to this plant, in the midst of his trouble. Some speculate this to be the castor-bean (*Ricinus communis*), this plant grows to 12-feet, has broad leaves and thrives in the hot sun. However, this is no ordinary plant, since it grows overnight to protect Jonah from the heat.

Shade...head: Jonah was comforted by the plant, it was the only good he saw at this point in the city. This despite the fact of so many people repenting and changing at his word.

Jonah was grateful: He took joy in the plant, it was his delight. Jonah was glad for his comfort, he rejoiced in the plant which was a blessing to him.

God prepared a worm: God prepared the plant, the fish, the storm, now he prepared a worm and then a storm. The worm kills the plant, which brought joy to the prophet. Jonah became affectionate of the plant, because he was so angry at people.



Castor Bean
(*Ricinus communis* L.)

M. Williams 1995

Many of us are like Jonah, we are angry at the world of people, its much easier to show compassion to animals, plants and things then it is for people.

Jonah transferred his emotion to a plant, because he couldn't do it for people, at least not Assyrians. God need to help Jonah understand, so the plant becomes Jonah's object lesson so he can understand the heart of God.

God prepared...east wind: Now to help Jonah further understand the point, God allows Jonah to be discomforted with the hot east wind and heat. God is providing "Tribulation" to Jonah. First Jonah's beloved plant dies, now he feels the heat and the sun, he misses his plant even more now.

Wished death: Jonah reaction is to long for death. He wants to die, this is the second time we are told Jonah wants to die, the first time when Nineveh repents, now he wants to die again, this time when his plant dies. Until Jonah learns to conform his will to the will of God, he will long for death.

9 Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!"

10 But the Lord said, "You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night.

11 "And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left-and much livestock?"

God said: God again questions his disobedient "prophet", like a father asking a son. The difference here is the question is about the plant. Before Jonah was angry and wanted to about the city, now the plant is the cause of his anger.

Angry about the plant: Jonah was angry about the plant. He had moved beyond the city of Nineveh now the plant was the issue in his life.

Lord said.....you had pity: God wants Jonah to see the error of his thinking. He wants Jonah to see his wrong view of plants and people. People are made in the image of God, they are the object of God's mercy and grace. Plants are eaten, they are for our benefit and God's glory. The souls of the city of Nineveh are eternal, while the plant is temporary.

In the same way houses, possession and things are all temporary, they are blessings but they will one day vanish. Therefore people and souls should be our focus, not temporary things.

Should I not: God wants Jonah to conform his thinking to God's view.

One hundred twenty thousand: Nineveh was an ancient city. According to this number there could have been over 500,000 people living there. If 120,000 did not know their right from the their left, these would probably refer to toddlers who don't understand right and left. So when we include older children and adults the population numbers go up quite a bit.

Jonah tomb is in Nineveh, so its easy to imagine Jonah finally got the message. Maybe Jonah stayed behind after all this to help the people of Nineveh understand the God of Israel. He was buried in the



city and became great, because his heart was transformed. To this very day, name Jonah (Junis) is highly thought of in the Arab and Muslim world.

