

JONAH

Session 4: One Angry Man

REVIEW

- ✦ A person's ability to have a proper understanding of God and his/her ability to articulate those understandings do not necessarily have a bearing on his/her spiritual condition (1:9).
- ✦ God knows our hearts and our intentions. As such, He is not pleased by empty prayers that have no bearing on how we live our lives (2:8-10).
- ✦ Chapter 3 begins the application to God's people – namely, the seriousness with which the people of Nineveh took the proclamations of God's prophet. Proclamations which were met with immediate action and repentance hoping that God would relent.
- ✦ God is not a God of determinism (3:10; cf. Jer. 18:8)
- ✦ Key words – Jonah, Amittai, big, going down.
- ✦ Themes – “the LORD commanded” & “for you, O LORD, have done as you pleased”.

LET'S PROCESS

Take 10-15 minutes and discuss with your table the following questions. Assign someone who is willing to share with the entire group.

1. Can you find other OT texts that are parallel to Jonah's confession in 4:2?
2. In what way is 4:3 ironic?
3. What is implied about Jonah's external condition in Jonah 4:5?
4. What is implied about the quality of Jonah's booth in Jonah 4:6a?

1. Structure - Notice the emphasis place by the author on the conversation between Yahweh and Jonah.¹

- a **introduction:** Jonah's anger (4:1)
- b **prayer** (4:2-3)
 - (1) **complaint about Yahweh's mercy** (4:2a)
 - (2) **excuse** (4:2b)
 - (1') **complaint about Yahweh's mercy** (4:2c)
 - (3) **concluding request** (4:3)
- a' **conclusion:** Jonah's anger (4:4)

2. Some Key Points

- a. Jonah's anger towards God should make us stop and wonder (v. 1).
- b. For the first time in the entire book, the reader is introduced to why Jonah fled to Tarshish (v. 2).
- c. Jonah has difficulty coming to terms with exactly who God is (v. 2)
- d. He especially cannot understand why Nineveh has been granted similar mercy and grace which Israel enjoyed (v. 2, cf. Ex. 34:5).
- e. In essence, he cannot understand who God can love the "unlovely" (v. 2).
- f. God's display of forgiveness for Jonah is so intolerable that he wishes he could die (v. 3).

GOD'S OBJECT LESSON (4:5-11)

1. Structure - The Crux of the Matter²

Setting (4:5)

- a **Yahweh prepares a plant for Jonah** (4:6a)
- b **Jonah's response** (4:6b)
- a' **Yahweh destroys the plant** (4:7-8a)
- b' **Jonah's response** (4:8b)
- a'' **Yahweh asks:** should you feel so badly about this plant (4:9a)
- b'' **Jonah's response:** yes I should feel badly → death (4:9b)
- c **CLIMAX: Yahweh's lesson** (4:10-11)

2. Some Key Points

¹ Dorsey, David A., *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Books), p 294

² Ibid, p 294

- a. Rather than repenting, Jonah chooses a location from which he can observe the destruction of the city (v. 5).
- b. Despite Jonah's attitude, God continues to pursue Jonah and is merciful towards him by provided shade (v. 6).
- c. God appoints a worm and a hot eastern wind (vv. 7-8).
- d. Notice God's question to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?" (v. 9, cf. v. 4 and Luke 15:28-30)

LET'S EXPLORE!

Take 5 - 10 minutes or so and discuss with your table the following questions. Assign someone who is willing to share with the entire group.

1. Have you observed Christians being resentful/angry towards God? In what situations do people feel justified in having such attitudes? What are the dangers in rationalizing such attitudes?
2. Are there areas in your life where you have been or are resentful/angry towards God?
3. Why do you think that the author did not give a response from Jonah to God's questions (4:9-10)?

THE BOOK OF JONAH³

1. Literary Structure

a **Jonah commissioned to go to Nineveh** (1:1-3)

b **Jonah and the pagan sailors** (1:4-16)

- ❖ Begins: Yahweh threatens judgment the pagan ship
- ❖ Sailors respond immediately and vigorously w/conviction
- ❖ Sailors cry out to Jonah's God for mercy
- ❖ Their leader the captain expresses hope for God's mercy
- ❖ Yahweh spares the pagans of the ship

c **Jonah's grateful, beautiful prayer** (1:17-2:10)

a' **Jonah commissioned to go to Nineveh** (3:1-3a)

b' **Jonah and the pagan Ninevites** (3:3b-10)

- ❖ Begins: Yahweh threatens judgment the pagan city
- ❖ Ninevites respond immediately and vigorously w/conviction
- ❖ Ninevites cry out to Jonah's God for mercy

³Ibid, p 292

- ❖ Their leader the king expresses hope for God's mercy
- ❖ Yahweh spares the pagans of the city
- c' **Jonah's resentful, mean-spirited prayer** (4:1-4)
- d **CLIMAX: Yahweh's lesson for Jonah** (4:5-11)

2. Some Final Points

- a. Notice that what God had provided by grace (the plant), Jonah expected to continue to enjoy (v. 10).
- b. But, Jonah expectations were incorrect. His concern for a plant is trivial when compared to the destruction of many people.
- c. In contrast, notice God's mercy and grace depicted in v. 11, "But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"
- d. By Jonah and Israel's standards, Nineveh did not deserve this display of mercy from God. However, God was pleased to do so.
- e. The truth is that Jonah and Israel had no right to God's favor, nor do we. God's favor is given to us purely because of His desire to do so. As His children, the Book of Jonah reminds us that we are to reflect the character of our Father in our daily lives wherever and to whomever it is that God leads us.