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Jonah 4

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Jonah 4.

Topics.

- Jonah knew God was a merciful, God who relents from disaster.
- Jonah asks God to take his life for it is better for him to die than live.
- Jonah sat under a booth to see what would become of Nineveh.
- God appointed a plant to give Jonah shade over his head.
- God appoints a worm to attack the plant so that it withered.
- God asks Jonah if he is right to be angry for the plant.

INTRODUCTION: because the story of Jonah contains the story of a fish swallowing a man, many dismiss the book of Jonah as fiction, but (2 Kings 14:25) mentions Jonah as living during the reign of Jeroboam II (about 793–753 B.C.) and Jesus himself considered Jonah a historical person (Matt. 12:39-41). Unlike other prophetic books, the book of Jonah focuses on the prophet himself rather than on his message. When God sent Jonah to Nineveh he rebelled, was swallowed by the fish, repented, was restored, and preached to Nineveh and they repented and the LORD relented from destroying the city. Since only Jonah himself could have known all the facts the story records, the book lists no author.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

JONAH 4:1-2

Jonah knew God was a Merciful, God who relents from Disaster.

- **Jonah 4:1-2:** But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. ²And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.

It is not recorded in chapter one, two or three that the LORD told Jonah he would relent if Nineveh repented and changed their ways, he was only told to speak out against Nineveh saying: -

- Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown! (Jonah 3:4).

Though Jonah was not told God would relent, he did know that He was gracious, merciful and abounding in steadfast love and does relent from disaster. (Jonah 4:2) Jonah suspected the LORD might change His mind if Nineveh did the right thing before God, but it is not recorded that the LORD told Jonah He would relent, so all Jonah could tell the people was that they would be destroyed in forty days. Imagine now how Jonah may have felt, he knew the heart of God was gracious and merciful (v2), but could not proclaim to Nineveh that God would forgive the nation if they did the right thing. Jonah knew he would look like a false prophet to the people of Israel, the king of Nineveh and the people of Nineveh if God did not destroy the city, because all that God had told him was to tell Nineveh they would be destroyed. It is a similar scenario to the religious guys we see today with posters "the end is neigh" that is basically all Jonah could proclaim, so when it didn't come to pass he looked at the best foolish and at the worst like a false prophet, this is why Jonah was disappointed

Nineveh repented and that God spared them. Sadly, it appears that Jonah did not have a heart for the people, it seems he cared more about his own self-image and what people thought of him than he did the lives of the people of Nineveh. This shows that even though the heart of a minister is more concerned about themselves than others, if they do the right thing and obey the LORD'S call they will be approved of by the LORD.

JONAH 4:3-4

Jonah asks the LORD to take his Life.

- **Jonah 4:3-4:** Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." ⁴And the LORD said, "Do you do well to be angry?"

It seems that Jonah would rather die than live with the shame of being labelled a false prophet. This may be hard to understand today, but in Jonah's era a man's reputation was everything, and to be labelled a false prophet would have brought absolute shame not only to him, but also to his family.

JONAH 4:5

Jonah sat under a Booth to see what would become of Nineveh.

- **Jonah 4:5:** Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city.

Booth: comes from the Hebrew word (cukkah) in this context it refers to a hut as made of entwined branches and carries the idea of being a place to hide in secret. Jonah makes some kind of shelter (probably to hide himself) outside the city. He then sits and waits to see what is going to happen to the city, it seems he may still have a little hope that God will destroy it.

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JONAH 4:6

God appointed a Plant to Give Jonah Shade over his Head.

- **Jonah 4:6:** Now the LORD God appointed a plant (Gourd in KJV) and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant.

Gourd: comes from the Hebrew word (qiyqayown) and refers to some type of plant. The Zondervan Bible Dictionary says it is a large bush ten feet high with very broad leaves.

God instantaneously grows a plant: obviously Jonah's makeshift shelter did not protect him from the sun so the LORD grows a massive bush to shade him and Jonah was really happy (for a moment).

JONAH 4:7-8

God appoints a Worm to Attack the Plant so that it Withered.

- **Jonah 4:7-8:** But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. ⁸When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

Sadly, for Jonah the LORD brings a worm to eat the plant, and Jonah is once again so scorched by the discomfort of the heat he wishes he was dead.

JONAH 4:9-11

God asks Jonah if he is right to be angry for the plant.

- **Jonah 4:9-11:** But God said to Jonah, "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?" And he said, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die." ¹⁰And the LORD said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"

Since the plant instantaneously grew into a massive bush protecting Jonah from the sun, he would have clearly known God caused the plant to grow so it is also certain that he would have realised that God was the cause of the plant suddenly dying. God seeing Jonah's anger asks him, "Is it right for him to pity a plant that he did not labour over or make grow and to be angry at its destruction? And Jonah says, yes, it is right for him to be angry, obviously Jonah because believed God should have saved the plant and not destroyed it. The LORD then says to him, if you pity the plant so much why then should I not pity Nineveh which has a population of more than 120,000, why should not I do what I can to save all these families and children who do not know their right hand from there left, (meaning right from wrong) when you are not only angry about me destroying a single plant, but also believe you are justified in your anger.

The lesson: by the withering of the gourd, the LORD taught Jonah the prophet that if a single perishable plant could come to have such value to him, how much greater value should be put on the lives of thousands of men and women, children and animals in the great city of Nineveh. God is using the story of the plant to teach Jonah that the lives not only of men and women but also of cattle and animals mean far more to God than Jonah's gourd could ever mean to him.

THE MESSAGE OF JONAH

The purpose of the book is primarily to teach that God's gracious purposes are not limited to Israel, but extend to the Gentile world. The author wishes to enlarge the sympathies of Israel, so that as God's missionaries they will lead the Gentiles to repentance and to God. The ready response of the Ninevites shows that the heathen are capable of genuine repentance. The Book of Jonah may be regarded as a great work on foreign missions. It anticipates the world wide spread of the Gospel program of Jesus and is the Old Testament counterpart of (John 3:16) "For God so love the world." The moral contained in the story of Jonah is that the LORD does not want to destroy human life, but rather that they would repent and be saved.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
