

Outline of the Book of Jonah

“They that regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy”
Jonah 2:8

Introduction:

Some have considered the book of Jonah as a myth due to its fanciful story of a prophet being swallowed by a great fish and surviving. Jesus’ use of Jonah’s experience at Matthew 12:39-41 stamps a factual approach to the book. Jonah was a prophet of Israel during the days of Jeroboam II (II Kings 14:23-25). The II Kings passage leaves us with the impression that Jonah’s work was at the beginning of Jeroboam’s reign and the middle of Amaziah’s (i.e., the 15th plus year). The date of the book was thereby around the year 790 to 780 BC. Historical evidences point out that Joash, the father of Jeroboam, had been paying tribute to the Assyrians (see ISBE V. 1, pp. 335). During the days of Jeroboam, Assyria was having internal problems yet continued, under king Adadnirai III, to conquer lands to the West and Southwest (i.e., Damascus, Tyre, and Sidon). The weakening of Syria, ruled by Ben-hadad, gave Israel a chance to recover much of its lost land (cf. II Kings 13:22-25). The historical facts regarding Assyria, a ruthless nation that was bent on conquest, forms the background for this study. Assyria worshipped a multitude of deities. The father of all Assyrian deities was known as Anu. Later, Ashur became the national God of the Assyrians. Ashur came to be believed in as the creator and god of Assyrian war that gave them victory (ISBE, vol. 4, pp. 86-87).

Jonah

Jonah was God’s prophet. The Lord had given His prophet a command to speak to the people of Nineveh; however, Jonah disobeyed (Jonah 1:1ff). Jonah tells God that he did not want to preach to Nineveh because he knew that God is *“merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness”* (Jonah 4:2). Jonah clearly had feelings of animosity toward the Assyrians. Jonah’s anger against the Assyrians likely stemmed from their Gentile pagan practices, control over Israel, and threats of world conquest by ruthless means (see intro.). The prophet wanted no part of Nineveh’s repentance and God’s favor bestowed upon them. Jonah’s disobedience brought immediate trouble to not only himself but others. The prophet experienced troubles at sea and troubles on land. The book ends with Jonah still angry that God would save thousands of people from destruction. Jonah was to learn that God is the Lord of all flesh (Jer. 32:27).

The Mariners in the Book of Jonah

The Gentile heathen mariners of Jonah 1 were men who shared only in flesh and blood with Jonah (see Heb. 2:14). A peculiar difference between the mariners and Jonah was their value of life. While the seas churned by God’s wrath for Jonah’s sake they feared for their life yet Jonah slept (cf. Jonah 1:5-6). When Jonah told the mariners that God was responsible for the agitated sea the men grew further fearful. Jonah instructs the men to throw him into the sea that they may be saved; however, the mariners’ value of human life would not allow them to do so. The mariners display great qualities of character. They valued human life (1:5-6), were compassionate (1:13), and came to believe in the power of Jehovah (Jonah 1:14). Jonah proves to be just the opposite in character even though he is a prophet of God.

The People of Nineveh

The people of Nineveh were *“evil and violent”* (Jonah 3:8). When Jonah preached to the great city the people repented of their evil and violent ways. They displayed the character traits of the mariners in that they valued their lives (3:9), feared Jehovah God (3:9), and developed faith through Jonah’s preaching (3:5). God saw the *“works”* of Nineveh’s repentance as they humbly mourned in shame for their sin and thereby the Lord determined not to destroy them (3:10).

Practical Applications

Sometimes God's people are actually worse in behavior and character than those they condemn. Jonah cared nothing for the people of Nineveh because they were heathens, wicked, violent, and worshiped other deities. That which distinguished the people of Nineveh (and the mariners) from Jonah was their concern for human life and spirit of humility. Jonah would have rather died than submit to God's will for the people of Nineveh (cf. Jonah 4:3, 9). Jonah prayed to God saying, "*They that regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy;*" however, he did not follow through with his own conviction. Jonah put his will before the will of God. God's will only anger in the prophet (cf. Jonah 4:1, 4, 9). Furthermore, the prophet displayed a spirit of coldness toward the thousands of inhabitants of Nineveh in that his desire was their destruction (Jonah 4:11). He was also selfish in that he was only concerned about things that would cause him discomfort or threaten his own life (cf. 4:8-9).

The book of Jonah causes us all to look deep within. Am I one who is only concerned about my personal well being yet cold toward others who have needs? Am I one who would harden my heart against God's will because it does not fit my desires? Do I value human life and the souls of even those who mistreat me? Am I compassionate toward others? Am I the type of person who would rather follow my own or another man's will than God's? The book of Jonah ends abruptly without telling us if Jonah changed his heart. We can only hope that he did. If there are spiritual deficiencies that you or I need to change why not take care of it now rather than remaining hardened in sin?

Outline of Jonah

I. Jonah Rejects God's Instructions (1:1-3):

A. "*Now the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me*" (1:1-2).

1. Jehovah calls upon His prophet to perform a duty. Jonah is to go to Nineveh, the great city, and preach a message of repentance due to their wickedness that had "*come up before*" the Lord (cf. Matt. 12:39-41).
2. Interestingly, the etymology for the word Nineveh indicates an association with a fish. Nineveh was located on the bank of the Tigris River. Nineveh was not, at this date, the capital city of Assyria but latter would be so named.
3. The important point here is to note that God had given Jonah a command; i.e., "*go!*"

B. "*But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah; and he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah*" (1:3).

1. Jonah was from the town of Gath-hepher (cf. II Kings 14:25). Gath-hepher was located about ten miles due west of the Sea of Galilee. Rather than obeying God's word and traveling Northeastward toward Nineveh the prophet travels around 50 miles Southwestward to Joppa (a coastal town of Philistia on the Mediterranean Sea). Jonah pays a fare to travel from Joppa to Tarshish (likely a city on the North African coast of the Mediterranean Sea).
2. The fact that Nineveh was a Gentile city belonging to the enemies of God proved to be too much for Jonah's sense of compassion. The prophet was to learn that you can run but you cannot hide from the all seeing eyes of God. The Lord tolerates disobedience in no one.

II. Jehovah captures Jonah with a Great Fish (1:4-17):

A. "*But Jehovah sent out a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god; and they cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it unto them. But Jonah was gone down into the innermost parts of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep*" (1:4-5).

1. Let us consider the facts up to this point. God has given Jonah a task yet the prophet has disobeyed. Jonah has fled "*from the presence of God*" (1:3) (so he thought). Jonah has now involved others in his punishment for disobedience. The mariners of the ship bound for Tarshish are not guilty of Jonah's disobedience yet they are now caught in the middle of this

struggle between God and His prophet. These mariners are filled with terror as they experience God's wrath unleashed upon the seas of the Mediterranean.

2. The identity of the mariners is found as they, in a time of trouble, call upon all to turn "*every man unto his god.*" The mariner's idea of a source of help was each man's deity. Unity in diversity was an obvious practice among the Gentiles (see study # 1; Unity in Diversity of Beliefs). Whatever deity one so chose to serve and associate with was ok with everyone else. There was not one true deity in the minds of the Gentile heathen.
 3. The mariners begin to throw every thing not tied down over board to lighten the ship and lessen its chances of sinking. Meanwhile, Jonah is fast asleep within the ship.
- B. "*So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not*" (1:6).
1. The sea was apparently so turbulent that the mariners truly feared for their lives. This was no ordinary storm but rather a violent tossing about. The master of the ship finds Jonah asleep and cannot believe it. He calls upon Jonah to pray to his God too.
 2. No help was coming from any of the other men's deities and so they request that Jonah call upon his God. They are desperate and seek to find help from any source.
 3. The words "*that we perish not*" illustrate a common fellowship that all the men shared. No one wanted to die!
- C. "*And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; what is thine occupation? And whence comest thou? What is thy country? And of what people art thou?*" (1:7-8).
1. Lots were often cast to determine many things in Bible days (cf. Josh. 18:10; I Chron. 25:8; Lk. 23:34; Acts 1:26). Jonah received the short stick (i.e., some form of throwing stones or choosing sticks of various lengths) that identified him as the source of the trouble. The mariners of the ship now want to know everything about Jonah.
 2. Though they believed in a multitude of gods it was now clear that this great calamity was caused by the God of Jonah.
- D. "*And he said unto them, I am a Hebrew; and I fear Jehovah, the God of heaven, who hath made the sea and the dry land. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, What is this that thou hast done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Jehovah, because he had told them*" (1:9-10).
1. Jonah proceeds to tell the mariners all about himself and Jehovah God (i.e., the creator of all things). News of a mere man angering such a powerful God as the creator of the sea and dry land caused the mariners to be "*exceedingly afraid.*"
 2. It is clear that the men's question, "*What is this that thou hast done*" is not a request for information regarding why Jonah was disobedient but rather a question of utter astonishment that Jonah would do such a thing.
 3. Jonah proclaims his "*fear*" of Jehovah God; however, his actions illustrated otherwise.

III. **Jonah is cast off the ship and swallowed by a great fish due to his disobedience to Jehovah (1:11-17):**

- A. "*Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you*" (1:11-12).
1. Interestingly Jonah had no desire to do anything that may save the Gentile heathen of Nineveh; however, due to this great distress and fear of the events at hand he sees these men's desire to live. The ungodly are no different than the godly from the view of their occupying fleshly bodies and desire to continue their existence rather than perish. Jonah now shared a common plight with the heathens and he was the one to blame for their perilous condition.
 2. The prophet, recognizing that he was the reason for all the current stress, fear and danger to human life, request that he be thrown overboard. Jonah concluded that his life was not worth the lives of all the men on the ship. The prophet said, "*For I know that for my sake this great*

tempest is upon you.” Jonah thereby instructs the mariners to cast him into the ocean so that they might be saved. The prophet has learned his lesson on compassion for other people’s lives and is soon to learn the lesson regarding the value of men’s souls. Jonah would take his life to save the lives of the mariners. Jonah is thereby a type of the Christ (cf. Matt. 12:39-41).

B. *“Nevertheless the men rowed hard to get them back to the land; but they could not: for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Wherefore they cried unto Jehovah, and said, We beseech thee, O Jehovah, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Jehovah, hast done as it pleased thee”* (1:13-14).

1. Jonah has gone from being cold and callous toward the heathen to learning of the value of their lives. No doubt the prophet noted how hard these Gentiles worked to get the crew safe on dry ground yet it was to no avail. Their efforts, however, must have struck a chord of compassion within the prophet. He was put to shame by these heathen Gentiles in the realm of compassion for men’s lives. The very reason he fled the presence of God was because he did not want to see the heathen Gentiles saved from destruction. Now, these same type of men he condemned are trying everything within their power to save him and their own selves. Jonah has fully recognized the Gentiles value of life as they cry out unto God, *“lay not upon us innocent blood...”* and their faith in God as they proclaim, *“for thou, O Jehovah, hast done as it pleased thee.”*

2. The event has brought the mariners to now cry out to Jehovah God for help rather than crying to their own heathen deities (cf. Jonah 1:5).

3. Jonah and the mariners have come a long way in their faith and compassion through this awful ordeal. Often times in life it takes extreme conditions to wake us from our sinful state. The ordeal; however, was just beginning for Jonah. His lessons were yet to be learned from the belly of a great fish.

C. *“So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared Jehovah exceedingly; and they offered a sacrifice unto Jehovah, and made vows. And Jehovah prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights”* (1:15-17).

1. As soon as Jonah’s body hit the sea the fierce storm ceased. We are not told but it seems probable that the mariners witnessed Jonah being swallowed by a great fish.

2. The mariner’s new found faith gave way to their sacrificing unto the one true Lord. Meanwhile, Jonah remains in the stomach of a great fish for three days. During these days he contemplates all that has happened and it prompts him to pray unto Jehovah God.

Chapter 2

I. **Jonah comes to himself and Prays unto Jehovah (2 all):**

A. *“Then Jonah prayed unto Jehovah his God out of the fish’s belly”* (2:1).

1. Jonah had plenty of time to contemplate what caused him to be in the belly of a great fish while it swam throughout the Mediterranean Sea.

2. Jonah, like many of us today who have disobeyed, contemplated his decisions and determines that he must pray unto Jehovah.

B. *“And he said, I called by reason of mine affliction unto Jehovah, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol cried I, and thou heardest my voice. For thou didst cast me into the depth, in the heart of the seas, and the flood was round about me; all thy waves and thy billows passed over me”* (2:2-3).

1. The mark of a true follower of God is one’s willingness to *“call unto Jehovah”* at times of need. The great need of man is to be forgiven of sins and when one invokes or appeals to God’s help for said condition he or she will not be disappointed (cf. Joel 2:32; Acts 22:16). Jonah *“called by reason of affliction unto Jehovah...”* Let the Christian today call unto God for help at times when we are afflicted with pain, ill treatment, emotional duress, stress and any physical maladies (see study # 2; Call upon the Lord when in Need of Help). Jonah was in a perilous

- situation. A great fish, probably a whale, had swallowed the prophet and brought him into the depths of the sea. Jonah calls out unto God for help and the Lord heard the prophet's cries.
2. Jonah contributes his current distress to Jehovah. God had caused the fish to swallow the prophet and bring him into the depths of the sea.
- C. *“And I said, I am cast out from before thine eyes; Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul; the deep was round about me; the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with its bars closed upon me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from the pit, O Jehovah my God”* (2:4-6).
1. The prophet's prayer illustrates a condition of great fear and need of divine help. Without God Jonah was forever doomed. As the great fish plunged into the deep depths of the sea Jonah felt the anxiety as he was held somewhat motionless with seaweeds wrapped about him. He could do nothing but pray.
 2. Jonah's hope lay in the fact that he was still alive and was confident thereby that Jehovah would save him.
- D. *“When my soul fainted within me, I remembered Jehovah; and my prayer came in unto thee, into thy holy temple”* (2:7).
1. When all seemed hopeless Jonah knew that there was only one to turn to in his time of great need, Jehovah of host.
 2. Jonah, knowing the omniscience of God, believed by faith that his prayer entered into the hearing of Jehovah.
- E. *“They that regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that which I have vowed. Salvation is of Jehovah”* (2:8-9).
1. This appears to be a thematic verse for the book. Jonah prayed from the fish's belly and concluded that, *“They that regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy.”* Those that put their trust into ways other than Jehovah have literally eliminated any possibility of receiving mercy for their wicked deeds. Jonah had placed his trust with his own ways. He determined that Nineveh was not fit to preach to and so he disobeyed God's command. Now, through the “University of Hard Knocks,” the prophet has learned that God's ways are the only ways that man may be saved. Jeremiah had to learn a similar lesson (cf. Jer. 15:9).
 2. Application for today. When one gives *“regard”* to something he or she is “considering or taking into account... to give heed to” (AHD 1040). If I give serious consideration, take into account, or give heed to my own religious ideas, worldly interest, fleshly reason, or false teaching in general I have effectively eliminated any hope of receiving God's mercy. Let us learn the fact of Christian hope. Peter, speaking of Jesus said, *“In none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men wherein we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). To put one's hope or trust in man's religious ideas or the things of this world is utter foolishness (see study # 3; Trust in the Lord).
- F. *“And Jehovah spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land”* (2:10).
1. Once the prophet illustrated a disposition of humility and sorrow over his mistakes the Lord was there to save.
 2. I find it fascinating that the Lord not only illustrates authority over the physical elements of the world (Matt. 8:25-27; 14:26-27), demons (Matt. 8:30-32), sickness, diseases, and physical deformities (9:20-21, 29-31; 12:13-14), and life (9:18-19) but he also commanded animals (Matt. 17:27; Jonah 2:10) and they obey his voice. We too ought to obey the authoritative voice of God (see study # 4; The Authority of God).

Chapter 3

I. **Jonah obeys God and preaches to Nineveh (3:1-4):**

- A. *“And the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee”* (3:1-2).

1. The “*word of Jehovah*” came to Jonah the first time at chapter 1:1. God told Jonah to preach repentance of sins yet the prophet disobeyed and consequently suffered in the sea by boat and fish.
 2. The Lord now commands Jonah once again, “*the second time*” to go to Nineveh and preach His words unto it.
 3. It seems interesting to me that God’s purpose for Nineveh did not change even though the prophet would have it his own way. God’s purpose was to save the people of Nineveh. After Jonah’s blunders the Lord continued to desire that the city of Nineveh have a prophet sent to them. You and I may desire change in God yet he remains a constant in this life. Jesus said, “*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away*” (Matt. 24:35). Again, the author of Hebrews said, “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever*” (13:8). I may be foolish in this life and have “*regard lying vanities*” (cf. Jonah 2:8) yet God’s purpose for all humanity remains constant. What this helps man to see is that other people have no power over God’s purpose to save souls. The only way a false teacher, fleshly wisdom, or world desires can cause me to loose my soul is if I let them. God’s promises; however, will always stand (see study # 5; God’s Unchanging Promise).
- B. “*So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh according to the word of Jehovah. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, of three days journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day’s journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown*” (3:3-4).
1. Rather than disobeying God a second time the prophet now gives heed to the Lord’s will. The Lord has answered the prophet’s prayers and gave him help in his time of great need. God now has a request for the prophet, “go, and preach to Nineveh.” Often times you and I want blessings from God such as forgiveness, ease of emotional and financial duress, food, shelter, and travel modes; however, when it comes to fulfilling God’s desires for us we are lax. We often expect God to bless us yet sometimes are not willing to give back to the Lord our complete obedience to His will. Jonah learned this lesson through the boat and fish incident. He now obeys. What about you and I? We ought to pray for God’s patience and mercy in these areas. Sometimes it takes longer for some to learn these lessons in life (see study # 6; All Take and No Give).
 2. Where ever the fish vomited Jonah out it was a three day journey from Nineveh. Upon arrival, Jonah began to preach that the people must change their evil practices else the city shall be overthrown. God gives the people of Nineveh forty days until His judgment shall pass upon them.

II. Nineveh’s Response to Jonah’s Preaching (3:5-10):

- A. “*And the people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. And the tidings reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes*” (3:5-6).
1. The apostle Paul said that “*faith comes of hearing the word of God*” (Rom. 10:17). The people of Nineveh were not casual listeners they evidence the faith and repentance for their wicked deeds by putting on sackcloth and sitting in ashes (outward acts that illustrated a heart of shame and sadness over one’s sins). Not only did all the people from the “*greatest to least*” in the city but also the king himself sat in ashes and clothed his self with sackcloth.
 2. The people of Nineveh fulfilled God’s requirements for those who would be recognized as His. That is, they illustrated a heart of humility by expressing sorrow over their sins (cf. Isa. 57:15). Said disposition was not a part of the scribes and Pharisees heart during Jesus’ day. Jesus referred to them as evil and then said, “*the men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here*” (Matt. 12:41). The men of Nineveh displayed a true desire to do God’s will and thereby “*cried*” (cf. 3:8) (called [invoked or appeal to for help]) unto the name of Jehovah God for his mercy in relation to God’s warning of destruction in forty days (see study # 7; Bible Repentance).

- B.** *“And he made proclamation and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, heard nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water; but let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands”* (3:7-8).
1. The king of Nineveh is so convicted by the preaching of Jonah that he decrees a city wide time of mourning, fasting, and prayer due to the people’s wickedness. Preaching that comes from God’s word has great affects on the heart of those who see the reality of eternity (cf. Heb. 4:12) (see study # 8; The Power of Preaching Truth).
 2. The record of Jonah now tells us Nineveh’s problem that God was displeased with. The people of Nineveh practiced, *“evil ways and violence.”* The standard of God’s word measured the people and they were found to be in error. The question we have in our minds is, “what caused a Gentile city to allow themselves to be measured by God’s standard?” Did they hear of the great fish story? Did Jonah perform some miracle as Philip in Samaria (cf. Acts 8:5)? We are not told; however, what we do know is that the prophet preached the word of God to them and they saw the need for a change.
- C.** *“Who knows whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and he did not”* (3:9-10).
1. Once again we find a people who do not wish to *“perish.”* Recall that the men on the ship, at chapter one, did not desire to *“perish”* (cf. Jonah 1:5-6). Evidently the people of Nineveh were familiar with the power of Jehovah God and did not desire to have His anger kindled against them. The common interest of all men is the breath of life. When the disciples were on the tumultuous Sea of Galilee they cried out to Jesus, *“Save, Lord; we perish”* (cf. Matt. 8:23-27). The key to successful preaching of the gospel (i.e., having people believe and baptized for the remission of sins / converted to truth) is to depict their present lifestyles and decisions as a matter of life and death. People want to live and that forever. To sin is to die forever (cf. Rom. 6:23). Nineveh changed because they wanted to live. Many of those of Israel and Judah died because of their lack of displaying a will to live. Jesus said that many in the future will so die as well (Matt. 12:38-41). Jesus said, *“I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish”* (Lk. 13:3) (see study # 9; Personal Work).
 2. God saw their *“works”* and then changed His purpose of destroying the city. *“Works”* are important in gaining God’s favor. Jonah’s earlier works did not illustrate a love and mercy for the lives of his fellow man. Please note that God’s changing his mind regarding the destruction of Nineveh does not violate the eternal and constant principle of God’s unchanging word. Truth is designed to save not destroy. The standard of truth has always been reward for the faithful and condemnation for the wicked. Paul said that God thereby justifiably justifies the unjust (cf. Rom. 3:5-6; 4:5-8). The people of Nineveh had (past tense) works of unrighteousness; however, they now have (present tense) a heart of humility and repentance. God certainly justifies such people (cf. Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:1-3) who evidence their faith by their works (Heb. 11:1ff; James 2:14ff) (see study # 10; Works and Obedience).

Chapter 4

I. Jonah’s anger and will to Die (4 all):

- A.** *“But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed unto Jehovah, and said, I pray thee, O Jehovah, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hastened to flee unto Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovinkindness, and repentest thee of the evil”* (4:1-2).
1. It is now clear why Jonah disobeyed God at Jonah 1:1ff. Jonah had a conversation with God after the Lord gave him the command to go to Nineveh and preach. The text clearly states that Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh and preach repentance because he knew that God was

- “merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and repents of the evil.”* Jonah wanted no part of Nineveh’s repentance (see study # 11; God’s Character).
2. The result of Jonah’s preaching has caused Jonah anger and God a change of heart toward the people of Nineveh.
 3. Interestingly, Jonah desired and prayed fervently for God’s mercy as he was in the fish yet now that Nineveh is in danger of perishing the prophet seems to be callous to their need (see study # 12; Thinking only of Self).
- B.** *“Therefore now, O Jehovah, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. And Jehovah said, Doest thou well to be angry? Then Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city”* (4:3-5).
1. The value of human life seems to be the thrust of much of the book of Jonah. The mariners were afraid for their lives and did not want to perish (Jonah 1:5-6). The people of Nineveh did not want to perish either (Jonah 3:9). Jonah; however, is ready to have God take his life from him due to his anger.
 2. The Lord asks Jonah, *“Doest thou well to be angry?”* Is it really better to die than to live? Anger at God’s will is nothing more than giving *“regard to lying vanities”* (cf. Jonah 2:8). Jonah’s anger at God’s desire for Nineveh would certainly cause him to perish. No, Jonah does not well to be angry because God exercised mercy on the people of Nineveh. Jonah has now sunk lower than the Gentiles. At least the Gentile people of Nineveh desired to live rather than perish. They did what God’s will was to keep from perishing. Jonah would rather perish than see God’s will for Nineveh be accomplished. Jonah’s heart was certainly hardened against the Lord (see study # 13; Hard Hearts).
 3. Jonah goes outside the city. There the prophet sits in the shade of a handmade booth and watched the city to see what would become of it. Would God destroy or save?
- C.** *“And Jehovah God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to deliver him from his evil case. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the gourd”* (4:6).
1. The intense heat had the potential of doing the prophet harm. God caused a gourd (a plant) to grow up over Jonah that he may be protected from the heat.
 2. Jonah was *“exceedingly glad because of the gourd.”* The plant gave the prophet relief from the heat and a confident heart that God cared for him.
- D.** *“But God prepared a worm when the mourning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd, that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun arose, that God prepared a sultry east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live”* (4:7-8).
1. Once again life and death are put before us. The prophet obviously had an interest in living due to the fact that the gourd made him exceedingly happy. It shaded and protected Jonah from the scorching heat. When the gourd was gone Jonah considered God’s favor gone and thereby life was not worth living.
 2. God *“prepared a great fish”* (cf. Jonah 2:17), *“prepared a gourd”* (Jonah 4:6), and now the Lord *“prepared a sultry east wind”* to beat upon the head of the prophet. God’s providential care for Jonah was in areas that the prophet did not see as care.
- E.** *“And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death”* (4:9).
1. God had earlier asked Jonah if he did well to be angry because He saved the people of Nineveh but the prophet gave no answer (4:4).
 2. God, once again, asks Jonah if it was good for him to be angry at the gourd seeing that it has died and he is under the duress of the hot sun. Jonah answers, *“I do well to be angry, even unto death.”* Jonah was so hardened against God that he is willing to take death before changing his tone. This is again very interesting. The people of Nineveh were given the choice between life and death and they gladly chose life. Jonah; however, would rather die than exhibit a spirit of humility and asks the Lord to forgive him for his lack of love for the souls of Nineveh (see

study # 13). While we may make many excuses for Jonah, in relationship to his hatred for the Assyrians, we cannot excuse his sinful behavior.

- F.** *“And Jehovah said, Thou hast had regard for the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?”* (4:10-11).
1. Jonah’s *“regard for the gourd”* is related to his *“regard for lying vanities”* (Jonah 2:8). To have regard for things that do not save the soul is lose all hope of receiving God’s mercy (cf. Jonah 2:8).
 2. What was the gourd? The plant came up in one night, offered shade to Jonah, and then died. Jonah did not have to work for this relief and neither did he do anything to make it grow. God did all these things for Jonah. Yet when the blessing of God was gone the prophet was angry. Jonah was to see that it was not the gourd that he was to be thankful toward but rather God. God cares for people. The gourd came and then perished forever. God would not desire this for the people of Nineveh nor their cattle and neither should Jonah.
 3. Human life is precious and is to be desired by all. We ought never wish death upon even the worst of our enemies. Once they die there remains no more hope of change toward salvation. Jonah did not think right when wishing for the death of the people of Nineveh. How would death help them with eternity (see study # 14; Bible Love)?
 4. We are not told of Jonah’s response. Did the prophet finally see eye to eye with God? We have no answer to such a question yet you and I ought to learn to value the souls of all men.