

The Pilgrim Way Commentary on
Jonah



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August 2023

Apology for This Work

This commentary follows in a long line of other works by divines of the past as they have sought to study and expound the book of Jonah.

This work grew out of over 35 years of both preaching through Jonah in three pastorates in Maryland, Delaware and North Carolina as well as teaching through the epistle as an instructor at Maryland Baptist Bible College in Elkton, Maryland. I needed my own notes and outlines as I taught and preached from Obadiah, so this commentary flows from those notes and outlines. Thus, the layout of this commentary is a practical one, written by a preacher to be preached from in the pulpit or to be taught in a Sunday School. There are many such commentaries on the market and they tend to be someone dull and not very practical in their application. I patterned the format after the format used by August Van Ryn and Thomas Robinson, in their commentaries on Luke and Romans respectively. They did not write full-blown prose commentaries but short thoughts that were designed to stimulate thought in the reader rather than spoon-feeding him. In this book, my thoughts are deliberately short and sometimes, full sentences are not used. These are more thoughts and observations than a full commentary.

This commentary cannot be easily classified into any single theological system. I believe that no single theological system is an accurate presentation of Scriptural truth in and of itself. When Charles Spurgeon once wrote "There is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else", he displayed a most unfortunate theological hubris. Calvinism is a flawed, limited and uninspired theological system. There is some truth there, as there is in any theological system, but it ranks no better than other competing systems, such as Arminianism (which is nothing more than a modified version of Calvin's teachings), dispensationalism, covenant theology, Lutheranism, Romanism, Orthodox theology, pre-wrath rapture, take your pick. All these systems are flawed as they are all the products of human attempts to understand and systematize Biblical presentations. They can all make contributions to our overall understanding of the truth, but none may claim to be the only correct such presentation, at the expense of all others. Knowing the human impossibility for absolute neutrality and the human love for theological systems, I readily admit that I cannot be as dispassionate and uninfluenced by human teachings in these pages as I would like. No man can be. But I have made every attempt not to allow my own personal systems to influence my understanding of what the clear teaching of Scripture is.

I have freely consulted a wide variety of commentaries and sermons for insights and other views of various texts that I might have missed. As the old preacher once remarked "I milked a lot of cows but I churned my own butter." Direct quotes are attributed to their proper source to prevent that unpardonable sin of literary theft. But simply because I quoted a writer should not be viewed as an endorsement of all that he wrote or of his theological system. I selected the quote because I found it interesting and useful, not because I am in any degree of agreement regarding the rest of his teachings.

This commentary is based on the text of our English Received Version, commonly referred to as the King James Version or the Authorized Version. I believe that this is the most preserved English translation available to us and that it is the superior translation in English. I can see no good reason to use or accept any of the modern versions, especially the current "flavor of the month" of the New Evangelicals and apostate fundamentalists, the corrupt and mis-named English Standard Version. When it comes to these modern, critical text versions, I reject them for a variety of reasons. One major reason is that they have not been proven on the field of

battle. I have liver spots older than the English Standard Version, but I am expected to toss my English Received Text, over 400 years old, and take up this new translation, whose ink is still barely dry? How many battles has the ESV won? How many missionaries have done great exploits with an NIV? What revivals have been birthed and nurtured with an NASV? We will stick with the translations and texts that our fathers have used and that God has blessed. We are also favorably inclined to the Geneva Bible, Tyndale Bible, Matthews Bible, and other “cousins” of our English text. The Greek text used is the underlying text of our English Received Text and its 1769 revision, which is the text most widely in use today by God’s remnant. We will include comparison readings of the Authorized Version, the English Standard Version and the newer Legacy Standard Version, otherwise known as the “John MacArthur Version”..

The presupposition of this commentary is that what the Bible says is so and that we will not change the text to suit our theological fancy. It says what it says and that is what we must accept, else we will be found unfaithful stewards of the Word of God, a judgment we fear. We will not amend our text but will take it as it is the best we can.

This commentary certainly is not perfect, nor is it the final presentation of my understanding and application of the book of Jonah. A commentary over 35 years in the making can never truly said to be finished. As new insights are granted by the Holy Spirit and as my understanding of the epistle deepens, additional material will be added, and sections will have to be re-written. One is never truly “finished” with any theological book. As one deepens and grows in his relationship with the Lord, so does his theological understandings and that should be reflected in one’s writings.

This book was also written as a theological legacy to my four children. They will need to be mighty for God in their generation for their days will certainly be darker than the generation their father grew up in. This book is an expression not only of the heart of a preacher in the early 21st century but also of a Christian father for his children, so they may more fully understand what their father believed and preached during his ministry.

It is my sincere prayer that this unpretentious contribution to the body of Christian commentary literature will be a blessing to the remnant of God’s saints in the earth as we approach the coming of our Lord.

JONAH Introduction

Jonah has four chapters, 48 verses and 1,321 words.

I. Jonah's name means "dove," and his father's name Amittai means "the Truth of the Lord."

A. He was from Gath-Hepher, "the winepress of the well."

1. He arose "**out of Galilee**" (John 7:52), showing how ignorant the leading scholars of Christ's day were in regard to knowledge of the Old Testament.

B. Jonah's message concerns Nineveh. Assyria's conquest and growth made her an antagonist to be feared.

1. Nineveh, the capital of the empire, was one of the oldest, largest, and strongest cities of that day.

2. It was founded by Nimrod (Genesis 10:11), was ninety miles in circumference, and its population was approximately 600,000.

a. Jonah 3:3 says, "Nineveh was an exceeding great city."

3. It was a city with enclosed gardens and pastures that provided food for both man and beast.

4. Its walls, built by Sennacherib, were some forty- to fifty-feet high, and they extended for two and one-half miles along the Tigris River and eight miles around the inner city.

5. Its high wall was so wide that several chariots could drive abreast along the top.

II. Jonah is called to preach to Gentiles, not to Jews.

A. Jonah deals with the topic of foreign missions.

B. Jonah shows how God deals with the Gentile nations in the Old Testament.

III. Jonah was the only prophet who tried to conceal his message. He disclosed the reason for this in Jonah 4:2.

A. The preservation of Nineveh meant the eventual conquest and destruction of Israel.

B. Love of country and hatred of idolatry made his mission distasteful to him.

C. He had no sympathy with God's plan to save a Gentile nation, so God had to deal with him miraculously in order to compel his obedience.

D. The great result of Jonah's prophecy was the repentance of this pagan city. This was an object lesson to Israel. Despite Israel's knowledge of the only true God, despite His many favors, blessings, deliverances, and interpositions in her behalf, the nation was steeped in idolatry.

1. The prophets warned of judgment, but wayward Israel had turned a deaf ear.

2. God then sent a prophet to a pagan nation which would repent of its wickedness at one proclamation of judgment.

3. As Israel had rejected God's prophets, they later rejected His only begotten Son.

4. Referencing this, Christ declared, "**The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here**" (Matthew 12:41).

IV. "Jonah was already serving as a prophet to the nation of Israel when this new commission came from the Lord. Apparently Jonah had been serving as a prophet in Israel for some time, for he had actually predicted that King Jeroboam II would regain the territory that had been lost by Israel down through the years. Jonah lived and ministered during a period when Israel was strong militarily and economically, a period during which God poured out His grace upon the Northern Kingdom. Under the rule of Jeroboam II, the Northern Kingdom of Israel experienced the most illustrious and prosperous time of its history. God actually chose the rule of this

particular king to give the people one last chance to repent. Using the wicked ruler as his instrument, God poured out blessing after blessing upon the people—all with the hope that His goodness would arouse them to turn from their wickedness back to Him. But despite all the blessings-reaching a summit of prosperity and power unmatched since the days of Solomon—there was no spiritual prosperity within the nation. The people’s hearts were far from God (*The Preacher’s Outline and Sermon Bible*).”

V. Most liberals reject Jonah because of his “being swallowed by a whale”.

A. Jesus testified to the historicity of Jonah in Matthew 12:39,40. The only sign that Jesus said He would give to an “evil and adulterous generation” was the “**sign of the prophet Jonas**”.

B. If Jonah is a lie, then Christ was a liar.

VI. “In spite of the insistence of the commentators that the book of Jonah is not a prophecy but only a narrative history, three prophetic truths stand out clearly from the book:

A. It is a prophecy of the future work of the Jewish evangelists who will be called to preach the gospel of the Kingdom (Matt. 10) in the Tribulation (see Acts 9:15 and comments).

B. It is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. It is a spiritual lesson on the life, conduct, chastening, and restoration of a disobedient child of God (Peter Ruckman, *The Minor Prophets*, volume 1).”

VII. “The book of Jonah deals with such subjects as: a man of God’s disagreement with the will and purposes of God; repentance and conversion; the Lord changing His mind; anger and resentment; racism; and much more. We will also find ourselves delving into such topics as the underworld, the true nature of death and resurrection, and some striking dispensational pictures (James Knox, *The Book of Jonah*).”

VIII. Date of writing- probably between 790-760 B.C. (?)

A. Jonah was a contemporary of King Jeroboam II of Israel, who reigned from about 790-750 B.C.

IX. We do hear of Jonah one time in history after these events in 2 Kings 14:23-27: “**In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which He spake by the hand of HIS SERVANT JONAH, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher. For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel. And the LORD said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.**”

Outline of the book

A. Call - 1

1. Disobedience - 1:1-11

2. Punishment - 1:12-17

B. Prayer - 2

C. Preaching - 3

1. Nineveh warned - 3:1-4

2. Nineveh repents- 3:5-10

D. Exclusiveness - 4

1. The gourd - 4:1-9

2. God’s mercy- 4:10, 11

Book List on Jonah

! *The Minister's Library* by Cyril Barber

@ *Old Testament Commentaries for Expositors* by James E. Rosscup

By the author, Dr. John Cereghin

\$ *Commenting and Commentaries*, by Charles Spurgeon

\$ Abbott, George, *An Exposition upon the Prophet Jonah*, 1613. Abbott was a renowned Calvinistic divine, and one of the translators of the present version of the Bible. No set of works on Jonah would be complete without this learned, laborious, and cam-prehensive exposition. It is, of course, very antique in style; but, like "old wine," it is none the worse for its age.

@ Baker, D. W., Desmond Alexander, and Bruce K. Waltke. *Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentary, 1988, 207 pages. Baker on Obadiah, Alexander on Jonah, and Waltke on Micah combine to write a good, concise conservative commentary. It is quite competent and carefully thought through. Baker sees Obadiah 21 fulfilled in a king on earth after the second advent (43) and defends the unity of vv. 17-21 with the earlier part of the book. Alexander defends an early date of Jonah (8th century) against several arguments (51-63). He also argues for authorship by one writer (63-69), apparently the Jonah of 2 Kgs 14:25. He favors actual, historical events, not a parable or a form of fiction, and capably sums up answers to problems, but appears thin in regard to how to explain a great fish swallowing Jonah, though he believes it was a miracle (110-11). Waltke provides a good verse-by-verse study, enriched by expertise in exegesis, history, and customs.

\$ Benjoin, George, *Jonah. Translation, with Notes*, 1796. Plenty of paper. Hame says this work "is literally good for nothing."

@ Beyer Bryan, and John H. Walton. *Obadiah/Jonah*. Bible Study Commentary, 1988, 122 pages. Bryan teaches at Columbia Bible College and Walton at Moody Bible Institute. Bryan dates Obadiah after the 586 B.C. fall of Jerusalem, because vv. 10-14 describe Edom's gloating at that fall. He understands vv. 17-21 to teach a premillennial view with a future millennial kingdom after the second advent. Yet he never says it is millennial, only that it is God's kingdom. He finds a future resettling of Israel in its land. Walton supplies much good information (e.g., the lots of Jonah 1). But since God's preparation of the great sea creature was a miracle, he sees no need to cite accounts of marine creatures swallowing men (29). He apparently does not view Nineveh's repentance as being a conversion to the Lord, to Judaism, or even to monotheism (51). It was not to spiritual salvation (53). Some will not find persuasive his explanation for why Jonah was angry (chap. 4).

! Burn, Samuel Clift, *The Prophet Jonah*, 1981. All things considered, this is one of the best expositions on this book for the preacher.

\$ Cunningham, J. W., *Six Lectures on the Book of Jonah*, 1833. Good simple Lectures.

\$ Desprez, P. S., *The Book of Jonah*. Illustrated by Discoveries at Nineveh, 1857. To make Layard illustrate Jonah was a good idea, and it has been well carried out by this author.

\$ Drake, William, *Notes on Jonah and Hosea*, 1853. Entirely critical. Only useful to Hebrew scholars.

\$ Edwards, Henry, *Exposition of the Book of Jonah*, 1837. Fourteen plain, earnest, practical sermons.

! Ellul, Jacques, *The Judgment of Jonah*, 1971. A relevant investigation into the person, mission, and situation of Jonah and the application of the story to the present day.

\$ Ephraem Syrus, (Died about 379). *A Metrical Homily on the Mission of Jonah*. Translated from the original Syriac, by Henry Burgess, 1853. A literary curiosity—nothing more.

! Excell, Joseph Samuel, *Practical Truths from Jonah*, 1982. A capable devotional commentary that, for all its simplicity, is nonetheless based on sound scholarship.

\$ Mr. Exell, in a very unpretending but able way, brings to light the practical lessons of Jonah. Paxton Hood calls these readings "admirable," and we concur in the verdict.

\$ Fairbairn, Patrick, *Jonah: Life, Character, and Mission*, 1849. The life and times of the prophet are set in a clear light; and the nature and design of his mission fully explained. The work is well done, and is by far the ablest English treatise on this prophet.

\$ Fuller, Thomas, *Notes upon Jonah*. [In "A Collection of Sermons." 1656.] Full of wisdom, and fuller of wit,' in fact, too full of the soul of the latter, for they are far too short.

\$ Gaussen, S. R. Louis, *Jonah, the Prophet. Lessons on his Life*. Addresses to a Sunday School at Geneva.

\$ Harding, Thomas, *Expository Lectures*, 1856. What intelligent man in this kingdom could learn anything from these lectures? The; worthy man writes only such self-evident truisms as must have occurred to anybody and everybody who has read his Bible.

! Hawkins, O. S., *Jonah: Meeting the God of the Second Chance*, 1990. An erudite exposition in which the author causes the events of the Book of Jonah to take on contemporary significance. He adopts the theme of God's sovereignty, and he applies this consistently and with appropriate application to our own milieu.

\$ Hooper, John, *An oversyghte and deliberation uppon the holy prophet Jonas: made and uttered before the Kinges Majesty and his most honorable Councell, by Jhon Hoper, in Lent last past. Comprehended in seuen Sermons*, 1550. It would not repay the student to buy Hooper's works for this short piece. The language is antique, and the thought not of the newest.

\$ Jones, Thomas, *Jonah's Portrait*. 12mo. 1827, "Jonah's Portrait" was very popular fifty years ago, and deservedly so, for Mr. Jones sketches it with considerable power. We should fancy that Jonah's portrait, as he sat under his withered gourd, was not a thing of beauty, or a joy for ever.

! Keddie, Gordon J., *Preacher on the Run: The Meaning of Jonah*, 1986. Timely, practical expositions. Ably correlates the teaching of the Old Testament with the New Testament.

! Kendall, Robert Tillman, *Jonah: An Exposition*, 1978. Contains expository sermons preached at Westminster Chapel, London. Emphasizes the nature of God as well as the willfulness of His servants.

\$ King, John, *Lectures upon Jonas*, 1600. Quaint and rich, with a little occasional quiet mirth. It was the book of its time. Some will think it out of date, others will, like Grosart, prize the work of "the Bishop with the royal name."

! Kirk, Thomas, *Jonah: His Life and Mission*, 1983. It is difficult to think of any devout Bible student failing to receive blessing from a perusal of this fine work. In these pages we are introduced to new insights and brought into a new relationship with God the Father. We also come to understand more clearly the Lord's hand on our lives. This is not a book for academicians but rather for humble, devout believers who wish to learn the secret of God's grace toward them as well as the path of blessing.

Knox, James, *Jonah*, in the Christ Honoring Commentary Series, 1997, 2018, 140 pages. An excellent work. Verse-by-verse comments. Very practical. Based on the Authorized Version.

! Kohlenberger, John R., III., *Jonah and Nahum*. Everyman's Bible Commentary, 1984. A verse-by-verse examination of these two books that have as their point of unification the city of Nineveh. Readily reveals the practical or devotional value of these prophetic writings. Readable, devout, informative.

! Lacocque, Andre, and Pierre-Emanuel Lacocque, *The Jonah Complex*, 1981. Two scholars, a theologian and a psychologist, assess the meaning and central message of the book of Jonah. Neither writer treats the text as an authentic piece of history. Rather, their preoccupation seems to be with symbols and a Jungian form of psychoanalysis.

! Limburg, James, *Jonah; a Commentary*, 1993. Contains valuable exegetical insights. Also discusses the book of Jonah in Apocryphal/ Deuterocanonical literature, the early church, Judaism, Islam, and in the writings of the Reformers.

\$ MacPherson, A., *Lectures*, 1849. Far superior to the general run of lectures.

\$ Martin, Hugh, *The Prophet Jonah*, 1866. A first-class exposition of Jonah. No one who has it will need any other. It is not a small treatise, as most of the Jonah books are; but it contains 460 pages, all rich with good matter.

I found it not to be that interesting. Martin wanders from Dan to Beersheba in his thoughts instead of focusing on the text before him.

\$ Muir, A. S., *Lessons from Jonah*, 1857. A lively, popular, and earnest book, in a specially florid style. The author talks a great deal about "the Son of Amittai" why not say Jonah? We are tempted to pull the finery to pieces; but we stay our hand, for there is really something good in these "lessons."

\$ Peddie, James, *A Practical Exposition of the Book of Jonah*, 1842. The pungent remarks peculiar to the Ralph Erskine school make the Jonah of Dr. Peddie a favorite wherever it is known.

\$ Preston, Matthew Morris, *Lectures*, 1840. Ordinary sermons. Better ones can be bought for a penny.

\$ Quarles, Francis, *A Feast for Wormes. A Poem on the History of Jonah*, 1620. Quaint and rather bombastic verse, but full of meaning.

\$ Raleigh, Alexander, *The Story of Jonah*, 1875. Dr. Raleigh calls your attention to every touch of the strange picture which hangs before us in the life of Jonah. Although we do not always endorse the Doctor's remarks, we can but marvel at the beauty and power of his descriptions and reflections.

Ruckman, Peter, *Jonah in The Bible Believer's Commentary Series, Minor Prophets Volume 1*. Very good commentary, filled with practical comments. Dispensational and based on the Authorized Version.

! Sasson, Jack M., *Jonah*. The Anchor Bible, 1990. The author obliquely sidesteps the historicity of the person of Jonah and seeks instead to draw meaning from "how [the book] works as narrative." His notes are extensive and his six excurses are helpful. The material has been well-written. However, this work is unreliable as an exposition.

\$ Tweedie, W. K., *Man by Nature and Grace; or, Lessons from Jonah*, 1850. A good practical work, expounding the book of Jonah for Christian edification.

\$ Simpson, James, *Discourses from Jonah*, 1816. Very little in the sermons, but their titles are singularly happy, and in themselves enough to afford subjects of discourse to preachers.

JONAH CHAPTER 1

I. The Call to Jonah 1:1,2

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

A. God calls Jonah to go to preach a message of judgment against Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire and the greatest threat Israel faced in that day.

1. They would carry the ten northern tribes into exile in 2 Kings 17.

B. Normally, a Jewish prophet and patriot would have been only too glad to preach a message of doom against their enemy but Jonah knew what would happen if Nineveh responded to this message. If they repented, God would spare them (Jonah 3:10; 4:2). This is why Jonah did not want to go. If no message was preached, Nineveh would have no opportunity to repent and God would destroy them.

1. Jonah was farsighted enough to know that the political successes of Jeroboam II could not last. Israel's moral and spiritual condition called for judgment, and the most likely instrument of God's wrath was Assyria.

2. Why did God insist on Jonah, who didn't want this assignment? Surely God could have found more willing people who would have been more willing to go. But God insisted on calling a man who did not want to go, and to make him willing to go.

3. J. Vernon McGee suggests Jonah had a history with the Assyrians as they may have attacked his hometown and Jonah may have suffered the loss of family or friends at the hands of the Assyrian army (*Thru The Bible Commentary*, Volume 3, page 743.)

C. "Amittai"

1. "Truth" or "truth telling."

a. Preachers and prophets are to be "truth tellers".

2. The fact that Jonah's father is named shows that he was a real, historical, person.

D. Jonah may have been the first Hebrew prophet to the Gentiles.

E. 1:2 Three parts to Jonah's commission:

1. Arise

a. Once we have a call, we must stir ourselves and start the action. The lazy and idle will not fulfill the call of God in their life.

2. Go

a. God sends His messenger to go to a specific place to perform a specific task.

b. Jonah was to go to Nineveh. His commands are clear and we must stir ourselves to action.

3. Cry

a. What do to once he got there? Cry aloud God's message with urgency and passion.

b. Isaiah 58:1, "**Cry aloud and spare not...**"

F. Why send Jonah (or anyone) to Nineveh? Nineveh was a wicked city and ripe for judgment, but the Righteous Judge will first inform the condemned of their sins and impending judgment. The sending of a prophet would inform them that they were condemned of their sins and would suffer for them. We are not given the text of what God told Jonah to preach, although we see in chapter 3 that it was a message of pure judgment with no offer of grace or mercy, although both were extended anyway upon their repentance.

G. God called Nineveh "that great city". God may have called it a great city, but God's consideration of the city was all it counted.

1. It was great in size and great in wickedness.

- a. Man may not have believed that such a city could be overthrown but God declared it.
 - i. Consider how great Mystery Babylon fell in Revelation 17 and 18.
- 2. It was great in power
- 3. It was great in sin.

AV	ESV	LSV
2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.	2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.”	2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before Me.”

“**cry**” The ESV and LSV weaken this to “call out against”. “Crying” implies emotion and fervor, which “calling” does not. This is repeated in 3:2.

II. The Call Refused 1:3

1:3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he 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 the LORD.

A. Fleeing from the call does not cancel a call. Jonah ran all the way to Tarshish, which would be in modern Spain, just about as far as he could run. But distance means nothing to God and He could track down Jonah no matter how far he ran.

1. Psalm 139:1-12 shows that it is impossible to run from the Lord’s presence. **“O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.”**

- a. Those in fellowship with the Lord seek His presence and seek to dwell in it. Those out of fellowship run from His presence.

- 2. Maybe Jonah hoped that God would send another prophet to Nineveh if he ran off in the other direction and made himself unavailable.
- 3. Jonah did “rise” and “go” but to the wrong place and to do the wrong thing as he “fled”.
- 4. Why flee in the first place? Jonah could have disobeyed God and not move an inch.
- 5. Jonah made the same mistake many people make, thinking that God made the mistake of thinking that God was only **“in His holy temple”** (Habakkuk 2:20). Many believe God is only chained to an altar in a church building that that He has no idea what’s going on in the “real world”. They ignore the fact that God is both omnipresent and omniscient.

- a. I knew a preacher once who, despite claiming that he believed in God’s omnipresence, taught that if a Christian was not in a building, then God was not

in that building. Since the Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, He needed a Christian to be in that place for Him to be in that place. When the last Christian left the building, then the Holy Spirit left. But since the Holy Spirit is God and since He possesses all divine attributes, the Holy Spirit is not limited to indwelling a Christian's body since He is omnipresent. God is where no Christian is.

B.1:3 "Tarshish"

1. This was as far as you could get from Nineveh in this part of the world.
2. God called Jonah to go in one direction, he went in the opposite.

C. 1:3 "Joppa"

1. Joppa, on the Mediterranean coast in north Philistia

D. Observe the descending order of a backslidden Christian as he attempts to get out of the calling. You always go down when you are running from God or are backsliding.

1. "Backsliding" sounds like what it is. You progress to a certain point then regress.
 - a. Jeremiah 15:6 **"Thou hast forsaken me, saith the LORD, thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting."**
 - b. Hosea 4:16 **"For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place."**
 - a. Like an animal that is fighting you as you try to drag it forward.
2. It is turning the heart from God
 - a. Numbers 14:43 **"For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you."**
 - b. 1 Kings 11:9 **"And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice,"**
3. It is leaving your first love
 - a. Revelation 2:4 **"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."**
4. It is a common problem
 - a. Hosea 11:7 And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him.
5. Some people refuse to do anything about it
 - a. Jeremiah 8:5 Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.
6. Judgments
 - a. The backslider will be filled with his own ways
 - i. Proverbs 14:14 The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.
 - ii. You would literally write our your own judgment.
7. Backsliding should be self-correcting for the Christian
 - a. Jeremiah 2:19 Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.
 - i. God deals with the backslider and makes him miserable until he gets right.
8. Divine exhortations to return
 - a. Jeremiah 3:12,22 Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger

to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever... Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God.

9. Jonah's backsliding

- a. He goes DOWN to Joppa while running from the call of God (1:3)
 - i. Running away from God prevents us from going up to God but we rather run downward to the world.
 - ii. Genesis 12:10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.
 - a. Going to Egypt (the world) is always portrayed as going "down".
- b. He goes DOWN into the ship (1:3)
- c. He is found DOWN "into the sides of the ship" (1:5)
 - i. The shipmaster bids him to "arise" (1:6)
 - ii. Even the world knows when a Christian is out of place.
 - iii. The world expects a Christian to do what he is supposed to be doing during times of storm and trouble- pray! (1:6).
- d. He has lain DOWN and is fast asleep.
 - i. You become insensitive to your spiritual condition and relation with God.
- e. "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains" (2:6).

E. An officer in an army may resign the commission of his president or king, but a preacher of the Lord is on a different basis. His service is for life, and he may not repudiate it without the danger of incurring God's wrath.

F. 1:3 **"He paid the fare"**

1. Money is no object when you are running from God or rebelling against Him. But Jonah paid more than he was expecting. Running from God can be an expensive proposition, in more ways than one.
2. Most ships were manned by Gentile crews, which meant Jonah was willing to entrust himself with Gentiles as he ran from God.

G. 1:3 The presence of the Lord, a concordance study:

1. Those who hid or ran from the Lord
 - a. Adam and Eve
 - i. Genesis 3:8 And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.
 - b. Cain
 - i. Genesis 4:16 And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.
 - c. Satan
 - i. Job 1:12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.
 - ii. Job 2:7 So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.
 - d. Jonah
 - i. Jonah 1:3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he 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 the LORD.
 - ii. Jonah 1:10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

2. Those who sought God's presence
 - a. Moses
 - i. Exodus 33:15 And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.
 - b. Solomon
 - i. 1 Kings 8:22 And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven:
 - ii. 2 Chronicles 6:12 And he stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands:
 - c. The upright
 - i. Psalm 140:13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence.
3. God's presence (general)
 - a. Exodus 33:14 And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.
 - b. 1 Chronicles 16:27 Glory and honour are in his presence; strength and gladness are in his place.
 - c. 1 Chronicles 16:33 Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the LORD, because he cometh to judge the earth.
 - d. Psalm 16:11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.
 - e. Psalm 68:8 The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
 - f. Psalm 95:2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.
 - g. Psalm 97:5 The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
 - h. Psalm 100:2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.
 - i. Psalm 114:7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;
 - j. Psalm 116:14,18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.
 - k. Isaiah 64:1-3 Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence! When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.
 - l. Ezekiel 38:20 So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.
 - m. Luke 15:10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.
 - n. Acts 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;
 - o. 1 Corinthians 1:29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

- p. Hebrews 9:24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:
- r. Jude 24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,
4. God casting out of His presence
 - a. 2 Kings 24:20 For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.
 - b. Psalm 51:11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.
 - c. Jeremiah 23:39 Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence:
 - d. Jeremiah 52:3 For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, till he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.
 5. Troubled at God's presence
 - a. Job, Job 23:15 Therefore am I troubled at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him.
 6. Judgment at the presence of God
 - a. Psalm 9:3 When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence.
 - b. Psalm 68:2 As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.
 - c. Isaiah 19:1 The burden of Egypt. Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it.
 - d. Jeremiah 4:26 I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger.
 - e. Jeremiah 5:22 Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?
 - f. Nahum 1:5 The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.
 - g. Zephaniah 1:7 Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests.
 - h. 2 Thessalonians 1:9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;
 7. The secret of the presence of God
 - a. Psalm 31:20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.
 8. Inability of leaving God's presence
 - a. Psalm 139:7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
 9. The "angel of His presence"

a. Isaiah 63:9 In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.

10. Standing in the presence of God

a. Gabriel-Luke 1:19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

11. Summary

a. God is omnipresent. We cannot run or escape from His presence

i. Psalm 139:7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

ii. Jeremiah 23:23,24 Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.

iii. Ezekiel 8- God knew exactly what was going on behind closed doors in the temple.

iv. Many tried! Cain, Adam, Jonah...

v. Jonah must have known there was no way he could escape God's presence, so what was he really trying to do? Get out of the will of God? Try to make himself unavailable for God to use? Make it geographically impossible for him to go to Nineveh? Today, the rebel on the run wants to put as much distance between himself and a church house, godly friends and family and anything thing else that reminds him of God as he can.

b. God is not confined to a church building

i. This is a common misconception of the heathen.

ii. Jonah may have thought that if he got out of Israel, God would pay no mind to him. Some believe that if they never go to church then God will never bother them and somehow, God will not be able to judge them.

c. Sinners and backsliders are troubled at His presence

i. Job in Job 23:15 Therefore am I troubled at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him.

d. There is a secret in His presence

i. Psalm 31:20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

H. Jonah was willing to endure a voluntary exile from God and the land of Israel in his unwillingness to submit to the call of God. Being in the presence of God is a wonderful place to be. Multitudes have longed to be in the presence of God, wanting to live in it all their days, but Jonah was willing to sacrifice this coveted place due to his hatred of the Assyrians.

I. "How many times have we heard someone say, "If it's not God's will, I believe He'll close the door." Such is folly. When God has spoken and given us His word on a matter, it is only an act of rebellion to look for "doors." God told Jonah to go to Nineveh. When he turned in disobedience and headed the other way, God did not stop him. As he made his way to Joppa, the Lord did nothing to interfere. When he got to the shipyard, Jehovah did not cause his wallet to be lost nor make every vessel unavailable... Jonah found every light green until he ended up in hell. All the doors were open from the presence of the Lord to the bottoms of the mountains (James Knox, *Jonah*)."

III. God's Pursuit 1:4-16

1:4 ¶ But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

1:5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

1:6 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.

1:7 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.

1:8 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?

1:9 And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.

1:10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

1:11 ¶ Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.

1:12 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.

1:13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

1:14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.

1:15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

1:16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

A. 1:4 Jonah may have thought that he could escape the presence of the Lord but the Lord knew exactly where he was and the intents of his heart. To demonstrate this, God blew up a severe storm that threatened to swamp the ship.

1. **"The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest"** Isaiah 57:20.

2. "Mediterranean tropical-like cyclones, often referred to as medicanes (a portmanteau of Mediterranean hurricanes) but sometimes also as Mediterranean cyclones or as Mediterranean hurricanes, are meteorological phenomena observed over the Mediterranean Sea. On a few rare occasions, some storms have been observed reaching the strength of a Category 1 hurricane. The main societal hazard posed by Medicanes is not usually from destructive winds, but through life-threatening torrential rains and flash floods. The occurrence of Medicanes has been described as not particularly rare. Tropical-like systems were first identified in the Mediterranean basin in the 1980s, when widespread satellite coverage showing tropical-looking low pressures which formed a cyclonic eye in the center were identified. Due to the dry nature of the Mediterranean region, the formation of tropical, subtropical cyclones and tropical-like cyclones is infrequent and also hard to detect, in particular with the reanalysis of past data. Depending on the search algorithms used, different long-term surveys of satellite era and pre-satellite era data came up with 67 tropical-like cyclones of tropical storm intensity or higher between 1947–2014, and around 100 recorded tropical-like storms

between 1947 and 2011. More consensus exists about the long term temporal and spatial distribution of tropical-like cyclones: they form predominantly over the western and central Mediterranean Sea while the area east of Crete is almost devoid of tropical-like cyclones. The development of tropical-like cyclones can occur year-round, with activity historically peaking between the months of September and January, while the count for the summer months of June and July is the lowest (Wikipedia).”

3. Jonah's disobedience endangered others as well as himself.

AV	ESV	LSV
4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea , and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.	4 But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up.	4 But Yahweh hurled a great wind on the sea, and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship gave thought to breaking apart.

“**sent out a great wind**” Both the ESV and LSV have “hurled out”.

B. 1:5 Sailors tend to be a very superstitious lot. They realized at once that this storm was supernatural and was not just a regular event of nature.

1. 1:5 Every man prayed to his god.

a. Atheism was unheard of in the ancient world, especially among sailors. The “heathen” are very religious. A man has to go to school, study long and hard and pay thousands in tuition to talk himself into being an atheist. Atheism is the most unnatural belief system there is.

C. 1:5 They lightened the ship by casting cargo overboard into the sea.

1. When an unsaved man is in trouble, he will do anything in his desperation to save himself, even give up good or income. This is Job 2:4 played out, “And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.”

D. 1:5,6 In the midst of all of this activity, Jonah was asleep in the lower decks of ship. Some of the crew found him asleep. Was he seasick? The crew awoke him and urged him to pray to his god.

1. 1:5 This is the second “**But Jonah**” in this chapter, the first being in 1:3.

2. 1:5 “**gone down**”

a. You always “go down” when disobedient or backslidden.

3. 1:5 “**fast asleep**”

a. Sometimes, the backslider is more dull to his spiritual condition than an unsaved man under conviction is.

E. 1:7 The sailors were not fools. They discerned that the storm was sent to persecute someone on that ship. They cast lots to determine who was responsible for the storm. The lot would fall on Jonah.

1. This is not gambling but was a manner of divination.

2. Proverbs 16:33 “**The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord**”.

3. “Aaron was to cast lots upon the two goats to determine which one was to be slain and which one was to be sent away into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:7-10). Joshua divided the land to the twelve tribes by such a practice (Joshua 18:10). The sinner Achan was found out by lots (Joshua 7:14). The sons of Aaron received their cities by this means (1 Chronicles 6:54). By lots the duties of individual priests were decided (1 Chronicles 24:5). The singers of Israel to be used in tabernacle worship were also

chosen in this way (1 Chronicles 25:8-31); so too were the porters of the Lord's house chosen (1 Chronicles 26:13). In the days of the rebuilt temple, those who would carry the wood offering into the house of God were selected by this method (Nehemiah 10:34). And Matthias was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot in the only New Testament example of the practice (Acts 1:26) (James Knox, *Jonah*).

4. The lot fell on the person but it said nothing of the cause.

AV	ESV	LSV
<p>7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil <i>is</i> upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.</p>	<p>7 And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.</p>	<p>7 Then each man said to the other, "Come, let us have <i>the</i> lots fall so we may know on whose account this <i>calamitous</i> evil <i>has struck</i> us." So they had <i>the</i> lots fall, and the lot fell on Jonah.</p>

"evil" The LSV adds "calamitous" to "evil", something not even the ESV sees the need to do. The LSV does it again in 1:8.

F. 1:8-10 After Jonah was spotted as being the cause of the storm, the crew asks him what he did and Jonah admits that he was running from God.

1. Jonah realized that his sin and disobedience had put the lives of these innocent men at risk. Sin and disobedience never just affect one person, but its effects can spread to engulf many people. Being confronted by a group of seasoned and frightened sailors, Jonah knew that he dare not attempt to deceive or lie his way out of the confrontation.
2. Jonah finally admits his sin in 1:9.
3. The sinners are accusing Jonah instead of the preacher accusing the sinners about their sin!

G. 1:9 "**I fear the LORD**"

1. If Jonah "feared the Lord", why was he running from Him in disobedience?

H. 1:10 "**Why hast thou done this?**"

1. "Why hast thou done this? My, how the Lord pierces Jonah to the heart. The Bible is full of pointed questions which force the human heart to face the truth. The scripture term for such is conviction.
 - The Lord calls to a hiding man in the garden, Where art thou? (Genesis 3:9).
 - To Cain, the murderer who left his brother's corpse lying in the dust, He asks, Where is Abel, thy brother? (Genesis 4:9).
 - To a hiding prophet, despairing in a cave, the Lord inquires, What doest thou here, Elijah? (1 Kings 19:9).
 - A young man trying to impress the only righteous man to ever set foot outside of Eden with his own righteousness is asked, Why callest thou me good? (Luke 18:19).
 - To a fallen disciple who denied his Master Jesus asks, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? (John 21:17).
 - A man fighting against the Spirit's conviction hears the ascended Lord inquire, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? (Acts 9:4).
- In every one of these cases, God is not searching for information. He knows the heart condition of each of these men. He knows what they have done and why they did it. But He uses such pointed questions to reveal to man that he has not gotten away with anything. By such questions mortal man faces the all-knowing God and is made to see the folly of trying to escape His eye. Such questions are also used by the Lord in hopes

that the sinner, convinced and convicted that he cannot avoid accountability to his Maker, will be brought to humble repentance.

Jonah, **why hast thou done this?** The question is thus an arrow to the heart, revealing to the man that his ways are known, and an opportunity to confess and come clean before the God who delights in forgiveness (James Knox, *Jonah*).”

I. 1:11-15 The sailors asked Jonah what they had to do to appease God and Jonah told them to throw him overboard. Jonah was willing to sacrifice himself to save the sailors. Initially, they sailors didn’t want to sacrifice Jonah, but after all their prayers and efforts to stabilize the ship failed, they realized that their only chance of survival was to throw Jonah overboard to appease his God, which they did. And it worked.

1. Why didn’t Jonah just jump overboard? That would have been suicide, an unthinkable sin. But Jonah was willing to subject himself to the judgment of the sailors as he was responsible for their current danger.

2. “One of the most amazing things I have seen in my many years of ministry is the extent to which people will willingly suffer and the torment they will endure rather than repent. I have seen men ruin their entire lives rather than cease an adulterous relationship. I have seen men trade wife and children for dope or alcohol while admitting it was destroying them. I have seen people lose the joy and blessing of God and forsake the assembly of the local church rather than humble themselves and patch up a relationship. Oh, how sin hardens the heart (James Knox, *Jonah*).”

J. 1:12 The only man aboard who knows what the trouble really is is the man who is causing it.

K. 1:12 **“Cast me into the sea”**

“Such a verse is not to be passed by with a nod. Getting pitched over the fantail of a ship in the open sea is no joke no matter who is doing it to whom. I have often thought (while traveling back and forth across the Pacific, 1945–1947) that if someone pushed you off the stern of one of those ships at night, that would be the end of you, sure enough. Nobody would hear you yell, and in less than an hour you would be so far behind the ship you couldn’t reach it if it stopped and waited for you. No captain would alter his course during a troop convoy to pick you up, and the chances of some ship finding you the next morning, when the whole convoy could pass by you in six hours, is one out of 400,000. (Peter Ruckman, *Jonah*).”

L. 1:15 **“The sea ceased her raging”**

1. Dumping the cargo did not end the storm, but dumping the sin that brought the storm resulted in instant peace.”

M.1:16 **“And made vows”**

1. The sailors were impressed by Jonah’s God and they praised Him, offered a sacrifice and made vows to Him.

2. Would this be a “foxhole conversion”? A man gets into a desperate situation and God delivers him. The sinner is impressed with his deliverance at the moment and swears that he’ll serve God. But with time, the memory of his deliverance fades and he reverts back to his old ways. No change of heart or nature has taken place and the man has never gotten saved. His last state is no better than his first state.

IV. Jonah and the Whale 1:17

1:17 ¶ Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

A. Here is where all the problems and controversies begin!

B. God was not going to let Jonah off the hook that easily. He still had lessons to learn.

C. This “great fish” is called a “whale” in Matthew 12:40.

1. "Ignorant people have said that a whale could not swallow a man, but a giant sperm whale that certainly could have swallowed a man is exhibited in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. Captured off Knight's Key, Florida, in 1912, this whale is forty-five feet long, has a mouth thirty-eight inches wide, and weighs thirty thousand pounds. A fish in its stomach at the time it was captured, weighed about fifteen hundred pounds. Numerous stories of men being swallowed alive by whales—and surviving the ordeal—have been validated. In February 1891 the crew of the whaling ship Star of the East sighted a large sperm whale off the Falkland Islands. They harpooned the whale and in its death throes it swallowed a man named James Bartley. A day and a half later his shipmates, who thought he had drowned—found him unconscious in the whale's belly. Bartley lived to tell about it and his story was published in the newspapers. Describing his sensations as he slid into the innermost part of the whale, he said he could breathe easily, but the heat was unbearable. His whole appearance was changed by the ordeal, for his neck, face, and hands, which had been exposed to the whale's gastric juices, were permanently bleached to a livid whiteness. This story gives us an idea of what Jonah experienced when he was imprisoned in the "great fish." (John Phillips, *Exploring the Minor Prophets*)."

D. Jonah would spend **three days and nights** in the belly of this whale, the same amount of time that Jesus would spend in the heart of the earth after His death (Matthew 12:40).

1. The Hebrew idiom "three days" can be used for any part of three days, but when the word "nights" is used with it the term can only mean three literal days and nights.

E. We will take the account literally. The Bible is full of these unusual acts of God.

1. This technically is not a miracle but a natural occurrence as it was repeated several times in history.

F. The Lord does a lot of "preparing" in Jonah:

1. He prepared a GREAT fish (1:17).
2. He prepared a GOURD (4:6).
3. He prepared a WORM (4:7).
4. He prepared an EAST WIND (4:8).

JONAH CHAPTER 2

V. Jonah's Prayer 2:1-9

2:1 Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,

2:2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.

2:3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

2:4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

2:5 The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

2:6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

2:7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

2:8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

2:9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.

AV

2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of **hell** cried I, *and* thou heardest my voice.

ESV

2 saying, "I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.

LSV

2 and he said, "I called out of my distress to Yahweh, And He answered me. I cried for help from the belly of Sheol; You heard my voice.

"hell" You just KNEW the modern versions would not be able to resist translating "hell" as "Sheol".

A. 2:2 Jonah prayer from the **"belly of hell"**

1. It was hot, dark, damp, cramp, smelly and slimy in the whale's belly. No wonder Jonah thought himself to be dead and in hell.
2. From the "belly of hell", Jonah still cried, confident that God would still hear him.
 - a. Psalm 139:7,8 **"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there."**
3. Jonah's language in verses 5 and 6 would confirm that Jonah may have thought himself to be dead.
4. Even if Jonah had not died (although we believe he did), this gave Jonah a sense of what it was like to be in hell, the "torments" side of it (Luke 16). If Jonah had died and if his death was going to be permanent, he may have gone to the "bad" section of hell because of his disobedience and rebellion. God gave Jonah a second chance to remedy his standing with God as a result of this experience,

B. We believe Jonah died here and was resurrected.

1. Jonah did not pray for three days from 1:17 to 2:1. Notice the "then Jonah prayed..." in 2:1. There was a three-day delay from when he was swallowed until when he started to pray. That was the three-day period when Jonah was dead. When he was resurrected, then he began praying.

2. This is necessary to keep the type of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus in Matthew 12:40.
 3. As Jonah was 3 literal days and nights in the whale's stomach, so Christ would be in three literal days and nights in the heart of the earth.
 4. Jesus took the account of Jonah as literal history, so shall we. Some observations about the incident with Jonah:
 - a. Scripture does not say Jonah stayed alive while in the whale's belly. The "sign" turns out to be the sign of the resurrection. Jonah was not alive three days and nights. He was dead (Jonah 2:2, 6; Acts 2:27-34).
- C. There are historical accounts of whales that have swallowed men and disgorged them long after three days, and there are whales big enough to keep a man alive three days. Even if there were no such historical accounts, it would not diminish our faith in this account.
- D. 2:3 **"...floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me."**
1. There is a ministry of evil for the believer. Trials and troubles are designed to cure our backslidings and to bring us back into fellowship and usefulness with God.
- E. 2:4 **"I am cast out of thy sight"**
1. It seemed that way due to his sin and rebellion. Jonah knew he was being judged.
- F. 2:4 **"yet I will look again toward thy holy temple."**
1. Despite his current situation and the apparent hopelessness of it, Jonah had the hope of restoration to God's favor,
 2. As Jonah believed himself to be dead, he had the hope of the resurrection, and a resurrection unto life.
 - a. 2:9 Jonah is still hoping to offer the sacrifices of vocal thanksgiving and to pay his vows in the land of the living.
 3. Backsliding is not fatal. Simply because you fail does not mean you are cut off from the Lord or His channels of grace, like prayer and worship.
- G. 2:5 **"The waters compassed me about"**
1. A reference to Psalm 69:1,2, which is a picture of the Lord's death, **"Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me."**
- H. 2:5 **"even to the soul"**
1. This is as intense and personal pain that you can imagine.
- I. 2:5 **"the weeds were wrapped about my head."**
1. This is a picture of the crown of thorns round about the head of Jesus at His crucifixion.
- J. 2:6 **"I went down to the bottoms of the mountains"**
1. This is about as far down as you can go. Hell, at the center of the earth, is said to be "down".
- K. 2:6 **"yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption"**
1. Jesus Christ did not "see corruption" (Acts 2:27), but Jonah was brought up from it. His flesh was corrupting when God raised him.

AV	ESV	LSV
6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars <i>was</i> about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life	6 at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my	6 "I went down to the base of the mountains. The earth with its bars <i>closed</i> behind me forever, But You have brought up my life from the pit, O Yahweh my God.

from corruption , O LORD my God.	life from the pit, O LORD my God.	
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“**corruption**” The ESV and LSV have “pit”, destroying the cross reference to Acts 2:27.

L. 2:7 When all hope is gone, then Jonah remembers God and cries to Him in prayer.

AV	ESV	LSV
8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy .	8 Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.	8 “Those who regard worthless idols Forsake their lovingkindness,

“**mercy**” The ESV mangles it to “their hope of steadfast love” while the LSV errs with “lovingkindness”. What is the problem with “mercy”?

M. 2:9 “**I will pay that that I have vowed**”

1. Jonah made a vow to God when he was dying. He vowed if God would get him out alive, he would go to Nineveh and preach in obedience to God’s will. Jonah’s vow was a “foxhole prayer,” and if you have ever been in an artillery barrage or any other kind of a life-or-death situation, you understand it. The prayers start something like “Oh God! If you get me out of this...!”

N. 2:9 “**Salvation is of the LORD**”

1. This is the sum of the whole matter and is a major theme of Scripture.
2. Both physical and spiritual deliverance is of the Lord.

AV	ESV	LSV
9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay <i>that</i> that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.	9 But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!”	9 But as for me, I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to Yahweh.”

“**Salvation is of the LORD**” The ESV and LSV err in saying “Salvation belongs to the LORD”. The AV correctly has God being the source of salvation while the modern versions have salvation simply belonging to God, which is not the same thing.

VI. Jonah’s Release 2:10

2:10 ¶ And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

A. Once Jonah “got his mind right”, the Lord commanded it to vomit out Jonah. The fish had served its purpose.

B. “Vomited” is graphic. Jonah was laying in a pile of whale puke on some isolated beach, his skin bleached and smelling awful. But he was alive and that much wiser, and was ready for his re-commissioning in chapter 3.

JONAH CHAPTER 3

VII. Jonah Recommissioned 3:1-3

3:1 And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,

3:2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

3:3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.

A. The call comes again and this time, Jonah is ready to go with no hesitancy or complaint. He probably still does not want to go for the same reasons outlined in chapter 1, but Jonah has now learned obedience.

B. God is a God of the Second Chance. Failure is not fatal. God will use a man if he wants to be used. The Bible is full of examples of men who failed, and some failed miserably, but who God still used as they repented and still wanted to be used. We are frail and we will fail God eventually, but we do not need to allow that failure to be fatal or final.

C. It was no doubt a long trip to Nineveh. We are not told how long it took for Jonah to get there as we do not know where the whale vomited him out.

1. When Ezra made a similar journey, it took him four months (Ezra 7:9).

2. God was insistent that Nineveh would get a witness or a warning and that Jonah would be the prophet to go.

D. Nineveh was a very great city that took three days to walk from end-to-end. The average person can walk about 40 miles in a day¹ so Nineveh would be about 120 miles long.

1. Genesis 10:11,12 says, **“Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builed Nineveh, and the city of Rehoboth, and Calah, And Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city.”**

a. Nineveh was made up of four cities, which accounted for its great area.

2. “A first-century writer named Theodoras Siculus says that Nineveh was a quadrangle, 60 miles in circuit. This has been supported by archeological excavations.

“For example, the work of Layard and Lostus around the year 1850 in Calah, the southern outpost in Nineveh, which is twenty miles from the center of Nineveh, uncovered palaces of Assur Nasipal and other Assyrian kings, who ruled from what was known as Nineveh.

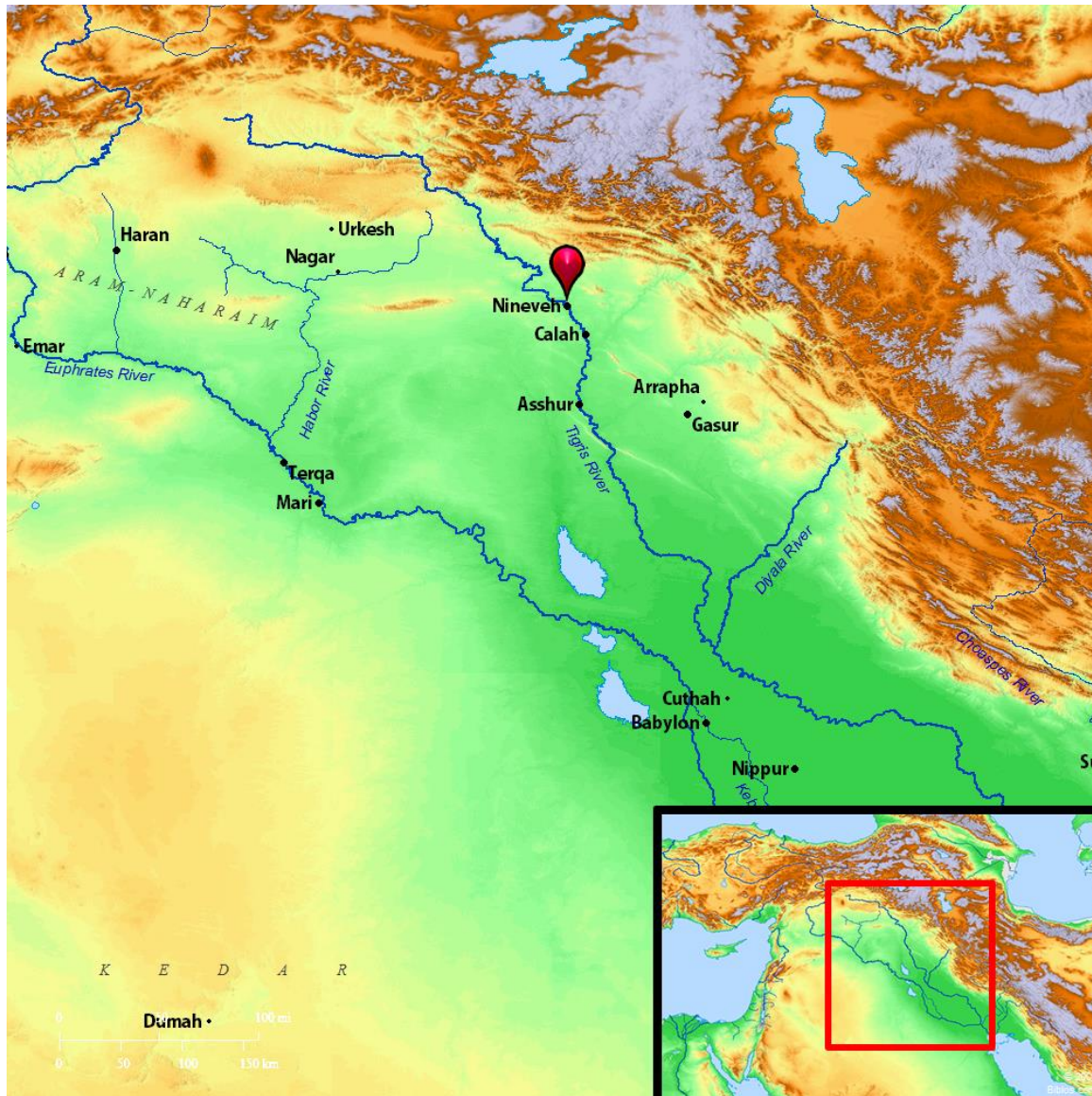
“The northern outposts of the city of Nineveh, according to these excavations, was Khorsabad, which was ten miles north of the center of Nineveh, and this is where the palace of Sargon was found. He was also an Assyrian king who is said to have ruled at Nineveh.

“Thus we find that kings who ruled “at Nineveh” had headquarters in towns 20 miles south and 10 miles north of Nineveh proper. Thus, we are dealing with a city spanning at least 30 miles from north to south (James Knox, *Jonah*).”

3. Dropping one man in the middle of such a huge city was a huge task. It would be like dropping one preacher in New York City. But if the Lord is in it, there will be success, as Jonah would see.

4. The liberals simply will not stand for the fact that Nineveh could be so large. They think all the ancient peoples were barely above cavemen-stage in their advancements, so they cannot image such a large city in terms of either area or population.

¹. Your milage may vary..



VIII. Jonah's message 3:4

3:4 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.

A. "When Jonah marched through the streets of Nineveh sounding out a message of unmitigated doom, 'Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' the people repented to a man. Perhaps the real message was Jonah himself. He had been three days and three nights in the whale's belly – what he himself called 'the belly of hell'. The gastric juices of the whale had doubtless wrought havoc on his exposed flesh. We can well believe that his face was livid and a terror to behold. He was 'a *living epistle*,' (2 Corinthians 3:1-3). People took one look at him and heeded his warning. 'God will punish sin,' they said to themselves, 'it's written all over him.' (John Phillips, *Exploring 2 Corinthians*, pages 60-61)."

B. "Forty" is the number of testing and probation.

C. Jonah “cried” but didn’t “preach”. Jonah went although he didn’t want to, and he made sure he cried the roughest, meanest warnings of the judgments of God that he could.

IX. Nineveh’s Response 3:5-9

3:5 ¶ So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

3:6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

3:7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

3:8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

3:9 Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

A. This is what Jonah was afraid would happen. Even with a message of judgment with no mercy, the residents of Nineveh still repented and God changed His mind in bringing the judgment at that time. He would bring judgment a century later as described in Nahum, but the judgment is now withheld.

1. 3:6 Everyone put on sackcloth and assumed a position of mourning and repentance. This included the king down to the lowest peasant. The revival affected all sections of the city and all social classes.

a. The king even arose from his throne and led the repentance. This is how we know the movement was of God. Don’t talk about national revivals until we see the president, members of Congress, the Supreme Court justices and the state governors doing this.

2. This is probably the greatest revival ever seen in terms of numbers and extent.

3. 3:7 Everyone went on a food and water fast, even the animals.

4. You just can’t explain a true revival, humanly-speaking. One disobedient preacher finally shows up in town and preaches nothing but judgment and the entire city repents, from the king downward. There was no evangelistic outreach or program. There was no organization of the civic and religious leaders in the city to promote the revival. Jonah did not preach on the radio or television and there were no newspaper announcements of the meeting. There weren’t even any revival meetings held. Just one man preached, and the Spirit moved. It clearly was not the result of any human organization or power, unlike some modern “revivals” where one man tries to claim all the credit.

B. 3:8 “the violence that is in their hands”

1. Nineveh was a very violent city that headed up a very violent empire.

2. Other Scriptures tell us just how wicked the Assyrians were:

a. They were a violent, bloodthirsty people guilty of slaughtering so many others that they were known as one of the most cruel people ever to live on earth

i. Nahum 3:1-3 **“Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not; The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the pransing horses, and of the jumping chariots. The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses:”**

b. They were an evil, sinful, wicked people (3:8).

- c. They were a people full of lies and deceit.
 - i. Nahum 3:1.
- d. They were a people guilty of thievery and plundering.
 - i. Nahum 3:1.
- e. They were a people guilty of false worship and of engaging in the world of the occult and witchcraft.
 - i. Nahum 3:4 **“Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts.”**

- C. 3:9 This is sound thinking. We are doomed anyway if Jonah is right, so if we repent of our sins, God may turn and repent.
1. “There is a God. With Him is the power of life and death. We are doomed because of our sins. If we repent, God might repent. We have no guarantee that He will but it is our only hope.”
 - a. This is a version of Pascal’s Wager. If there is no god, you have nothing to worry about. But if there is a God, what would it hurt to believe in Him?
 2. The Assyrians had their gods and their gods were not threatening any sort of judgment. But this foreign God of Jonah was threatening judgment. They did not believe their gods but believed Jonah’s God.

AV	ESV	LSV
9 Who can tell <i>if</i> God will turn and repent , and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?	9 Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”	9 “Who knows, God may turn and relent and turn away from His burning anger so that we will not perish.”
10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did <i>it</i> not.	10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.	10 Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, so God relented concerning the evil which He had spoken He would bring upon them. And He did not bring <i>it upon them</i> .

“**repent**” In both verses, the ESV and the LSV use “relent”, which does not have the same meaning as “repent”. They make the same errors in 4:2.

X. God’s Response 3:10

3:10 ¶ And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

- A. God is a God of mercy Who will respond if repentance is genuine.
- B. “**I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy** (Exodus 33:19; Romans 9:15),”

JONAH CHAPTER 4

XI. Jonah's Reaction 4:1-3

4:1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

4:2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

4:3 Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

A. This is one reason why I know Jonah is divinely inspired, as man would never right an account like this. Humanly-speaking, Jonah would have been proud that he was used in such a mighty way and would have strutted and boasted about his power with God. Jonah then would have gone to establish himself as a great spiritual force in Nineveh. But we see the opposite instead. He gets mad that God showed mercy and God has to give him a rebuke via the object lesson with the gourd.

B. Here is an evangelist angry that God sent a revival and that a whole city got saved! We need to remember that Jonah still did not want to go to preach to a national enemy of Israel as Jonah knew what would happen if they repented. If his message was received, God would not destroy the city and the Assyrian Empire would continue to be a threat to Israel.

1. We should rejoice at God's manifestation of kindness, no matter to whom it is shown, even to an enemy.

2. "Now the pride in Jonah's heart has taken on a new dimension. "I am God's preacher, and I did one little thing wrong, and he sent me to the whale's belly. Did I ever bow down to an obelisk? No! Did I ever worship the bull-god? No! But I go for one little boat ride, and BOOM. Now these wicked, Gentile, heathen never even think about God, and all of a sudden, they get scared of dying under His wrath, and He just wipes the whole slate clean and lets them get away with all the wickedness they've done. I don't like it one bit. You hear that God? I'm angry. Yes, sir — and with YOU." (James Knox, *Jonah*).

3. "He begins to enter the city limits after twenty four hours of "walking" at ten miles an hour! He cries, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (vs. 4). His prophesy falls flat, and it doesn't come to pass for more than sixty years! And this is what bugs Jonah. It was bad enough that he should be called to preach to Israel's enemies, and it was even worse that they had a chance to get right; but what topped the humiliation was the Gentiles made a fool out of him and made his prophesy (vs. 4) look like that of a liar. A lying prophet was of the Devil and was to be put to death (Deut. 18:20). But what appeared to Abimilech as a liar (Gen. 20:7) was a prophet (Peter Ruckman, *Bible Believer's Commentary on Jonah*).

C. 4:2 Divine attributes. God is:

1. Gracious

2. Merciful

a. God was very merciful to Jonah in delivering him from the whale, but Jonah gets very angry when demonstrated that same mercy toward others whom Jonah did not like.

3. Slow to anger

4. Great kindness

a. "**The Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance** (2 Peter 3:9)." Yes, this includes people you may not like or have a prejudice against.

5. Repents of evil that He intends to do
So many people see the “God of the Old Testament” as being a cruel, vindictive bully, but that is not how Jonah understood Him.
- D. 4:2 Jonah definitely has a “root of bitterness” spring up within him.
1. Ephesians 4:31 **“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:”**
 2. Hebrews 12:15 **“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;”**
- E. 4:3 After a great success, Jonah is so upset that he asks God to kill him!
1. Jonah is neither the first nor the last Bible character to desire death at the hand of God.
 - a. After the great victory on Mount Carmel, Elijah received a threatening message from Jezebel and fled to a cave where he sat down in despair and asked God to take his life (1 Kings 19:4).
 - b. Under the great burdens of the rebellious and disobedient nation he led, Moses asked God to kill him (Numbers 11:15).
 - c. During his intense sufferings, Job cries out, **“Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off! (Job 6:8-9).”**
 - d. Paul once found the care of the churches and the burden of the gospel so great that he was pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life (2 Corinthians 1:8).
 - e. Many preachers have sunk to these levels, which is why we need to pray so strongly for these men today, as the ministry can be the most discouraging vocation a man can undertake.
- F. 4:3 **“for it is better for me to die than to live.”**
1. How can Jonah say this? He got a taste of hell in the whale’s belly in chapter 2, and now he wants to go back there? It is better for him to be in hell so he can pout and sulk than to remain in the land of the living and serve God by seeing an entire city spared from destruction because of his preaching?
 2. Jonah is a preacher with no joy of the Lord. He complains. He gets mad. He runs from God. He gets angry when God uses him. He is a racist. He does not rejoice over being used of God for the salvation of sinners. He cares more for plants than he does people. He justifies himself before God and thinks himself more righteous than God. What a miserable man and a miserable preacher! Jonah is a warning to us that we not allow ourselves to develop such a sour attitude that we would fall into such sinful attitudes.
 3. “You see, Jonah cannot go back home to Gathhepher if anyone ever finds out what he preached (Deut. 18:20)... The pagan shipmen were so anxious to save one life (see 1:13) that they took a chance on being swamped, but Jonah is so put out with God for sparing 120,000 children (plus adults) that he would rather die alone in the suburbs of the city than go downtown and do personal work. Jonah is orthodox, but he is more interested in God judging heretics than he is in people getting saved (see 1 Thess. 1:9; Acts 20:20). He should have stayed downtown with his Bible, teaching the Ninevites about the coming Messiah; instead, he goes outside the city (vs. 5) and slumps down in a heap, grumps through his beard, and takes his sixth trip down—this time he goes down into the “dumps.” Elijah, James, and John (Matt. 17) all had this streak in them, and even Moses was not exempt (Num. 20:10) at times. (Peter Ruckman, *Bible Believer’s Commentary on Jonah*).”

XII. The Lord's Question to Jonah 4:4

4:4 ¶ Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?

A. Jonah was angry enough for him to ask God to kill him. God responds by asking Jonah if he thinks he has any reason to be angry. The answer is clearly "no". Jonah has no reason to be angry. God will also show Jonah why he is wrong in his anger. God could forgive these heathen, why couldn't Jonah?

XIII. The Lord's Object Lesson 4:5-11

4:5 So 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 shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

4:6 And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.

4:7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

4:8 And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

4:9 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.

4:10 Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

4:11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

A. 4:5 Jonah goes out of the city, puts up a booth, and sits down to see what God will ultimately do with the city,

B. 4:6 Conditions were hot and dry, and Jonah couldn't get any relief, so God had a gourd to grow up over Jonah to provide shade, for which Jonah was thankful.

1. Jonah was glad for a shade plant, but he was not thankful that God used him to prevent the destruction of a great city.

2. Jonah had been exceeding mad in 4:1 over the salvation of a city but is exceeding glad in 4:6 over a plant.

C. 4:7 The next day, the Lord had a worm burrow into the gourd and kill it, which upset Jonah as now his shade was gone.

1. 4:8 He was so uncomfortable from the sun and the hot wind that Jonah wished himself dead.

a. Jonah always seems to be wishing for God to kill him, as if he couldn't take any trials or reversals!

2. All it took was a little worm to destroy Jonah's happiness. What does it take in terms of circumstances to rob us of our joy?

D. 4:8 Jonah lost his shade plant and now he has to put up with a hot east wind that there was no escape from.

E. 4:9 God comes and asks if Jonah has any reason to be upset for the death of the gourd and Jonah said he did. His reasons were selfish as God had taken away his means of protection from the elements.

1. Jonah was not so much upset over the death of the gourd as he was for the loss of the benefits that the gourd provided him.

F. 4:9 **“I do well to be angry”**

1. We always justify ourselves, our attitudes, our reactions to things. We think we have a reason and a right to react the way we do, and we will justify ourselves to the very end, even to the very face of God. God tells Jonah “What right do you have to be angry over the fact that I spared so many people?” Jonah mutters “I have every right to be angry!”

a. No doubt most sinners who will stand at the Great White Throne judgment will also attempt to justify themselves before God. I think God will give them every opportunity to justify themselves and as much time as they want. But when it is all finished, the justice and righteousness of God will prevail, and their mouths will eventually be stopped, and they will be forced to confess that God was righteous, and they were wrong.

G. 4:10 **“4:10 Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:”**

1. It is as if God is saying “Jonah, over a million people have been saved and I used you in that, so you had something to do with that, yet you are angry. I have you a shade plant and fed it to one of my worms and you had nothing to do with that, and so are so angry, you could chew nails. Do you not yet understand?”

a. The book ends abruptly, so we do not learn of Jonah’s reaction, or if he ever did learn the lesson.

H. 4:10,11 God rebukes Jonah for having more compassion on a plant than he does on possible 1.5 million souls that would have perished if God had not shown mercy on them and if He had not accepted their repentance.

1. 4:11 The **“sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand”** would include children who have not yet reached the age of accountability and those who do not have the mental ability to understand such things. If there were 600,000 such people in Nineveh, then the total population could have been 1.5 million or so.

I. 4:11 **“and also much cattle?”**

1. Yes, God cares for the animals, too. They are also His creation. They would have been consumed in the proposed judgment on Nineveh, but God also spared them. If Jonah cannot find it in his heart to rejoice over the people who were saved, maybe he can find some compassion for the cattle!

J. As the book concludes, Jonah was angry, depressed, hot, and faint. He is left to contemplate God’s words about his own lack of compassion and God’s depth of compassion. Some have remarked that the book of Jonah ends abruptly or somehow in an incomplete manner. On the contrary, the book ends in a way that draws attention and increases its teaching potential by ending with a question. How would you respond to this question?

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About the Author

Dr. John Cereghin was saved on February 9, 1978 at the age of 13 after being raised in the Roman Catholic church. He was saved after listening to a program on missionary shortwave radio station HCJB from Quito, Ecuador. He left the Catholic church in 1983 and joined Maranatha Baptist Church in Elkton, Maryland in 1985. In 1986, she transferred from the University of Maryland to Maryland Baptist Bible College in Elkton, Maryland, earning the first doctor's degree awarded by the school in 1995. Dr. Cereghin also earned his Master of Theology degree from Foundations Theological Seminary in Dunn, North Carolina in 1994.

Dr. Cereghin's ministry background includes working at Radio Station WOEL in Elkton, Maryland (1986-1998), teaching in various capacities at Maryland Baptist Bible College in Elkton, Maryland from 1988-1998, also serving as Dean of Men, Registrar and Academic Dean, and pastoring Queen Anne's Baptist Church, Centreville, Maryland (1989-1990), Charity Baptist Church, Mebane, North Carolina (1994-1995) and Grace Baptist Church in Smyrna, Delaware (1998-present). He is married to his wife Teresa and they have 4 children and 3 grandchildren.