

The Book of Jonah
Class Notes
Session 10

Jonah 4.1-4 (v.2): Jonah now turns his anger to God. God is gracious! This was Israel's understanding of God...toward them!

Psalm 86.15... Joel 2.13

Jonah's anger is mentioned several times (*vs. 4, 9*) and contrasts with God, who is "slow to anger" (*v.2*).

The issue...Jonah does not like God's plan for Nineveh! A "play" on words... *Bad* behavior should lead to a *bad* end, and Jonah takes it very *badly* that it does not.

Jonah's *angry* suggestion? He would rather die than see Nineveh saved.

(v.4): God's response is a question... "Have you any right to be angry?"

"Do you do well" reflects the idea of a result...God asks if Jonah's anger will result in any good?

"God was not rebuking Jonah; God was not even asking him what right he, a man, had to criticize God. Rather he was suggesting to him that he might not be correct in his estimate of the position. Scripture has many examples—Job and Jeremiah being the most obvious—of men in agony who, as they tried to understand the ways of God, used language others might consider blasphemous (cf. Jer 15:15–18; 20:7–18). God shows his compassion with all such, Jonah not excepted."¹

Jonah 4.5-6 In Jonah 4 we have not only the conclusion to this fascinating narrative, we also return to the inner world of the man, Jonah.

Jonah's anger reveals his heart...did Jonah fail or succeed?...As well as his assumptions about God.

Perhaps Jonah was hoping that Yahweh would change his mind and destroy Nineveh.

So...Jonah builds a booth... סֹכֶל (*sūke·kē(h)*)... "Dwelling place"...Likely out of tree branches. Jonah sits and waits!

(v.6): The shelter is inadequate and does not keep the sun off Jonah's head!

So...once again...God shows mercy and "appoints"... מֵנֶה (*mā·nā(h)*)... Lit., "To count" (Determine)... a plant!

"Yahweh...teaches Jonah...a practical lesson likely to have more impact than just verbal reasoning. The God of the sea, who can produce a fish to swallow Jonah, is also the God of the earth and its plants. He produces a plant which grows Jack-in-the-beanstalk fashion and is soon high enough to shade Jonah's head with its huge leaves. The narrator specifies the plant as a *qīqayôn*; its identity is uncertain, but it is probably the quick-growing *ricinus* or castor-oil plant, which in hot climates grows like a tree and gives ample shade with its palmate leaves."²

¹The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets (Zondervan Publishing House).

²L.C. Allen. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1976).

The word “discomfort” is נַחַם (*raʿ*)... “Evil” “Bad” The phrase literally reads... “To save him from his evil.”

The phrase can be interpreted as... “to shade him from his discomfort” (the sun) Or... “to deliver him from his wickedness” A reference to Jonah’s rebellion and misplaced anger.

Commentators point out significant words used in this text, reflecting Jonah’s increasing understanding of who Yahweh truly is. For example, Page and Smith note:

“...the provision of this vine for Jonah’s comfort is ascribed to “Yahweh-Elohim,” the “LORD God.” This composite name perhaps is chosen here to ease the transition from the use of ‘Yahweh’ in v. 4 to ‘Elohim’ in vv. 7 and 8. The name ‘Elohim’ is used to signify God’s divine creative power, which caused the miraculous vine to minister to Jonah...Walton...further notes that the use of the compound name in v. 6...signals the reader that God is putting Jonah ‘in Nineveh’s shoes to help evaluate whether his anger is justified.’ He further notes that in the object lesson, ‘God then *did* to Jonah what Jonah *wanted* him to do to Nineveh.’”³

Additionally, in *v.6*, the Hebrew word *mānā*, translated, “appointed,” is the same Hebrew word in 1.17 to describe the “*appointing*” of the big fish!

Both the fish and the vine are illustrations of God’s continuing mercy, love, and sovereignty over all creation...And Jonah and Nineveh!

Jonah has gone from angry to overjoyed! Translated literally... “Jonah rejoiced concerning the gourd a great rejoicing”⁴

More irony...Jonah was very happy for his “salvation” but not Nineveh’s!

Going Forward: “Jonah has a precious opportunity to preach God’s Word to Nineveh, but his heart is not in it. He does not seem to understand the extent of God’s concern for people who are enemies of Israel, and he hopes that misfortune will come to them. We have the immense privilege of sharing God’s Law and Gospel with the world around us. We have opportunities to be part of His plans. May we never be found guilty of neglecting our mission to make disciples of all nations. Praise God, He did not neglect us but appointed His only-begotten Son as our Savior.”⁵

³ B.K. Smith and F.S. Page. *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995).

⁴ D.J. Wiseman, T.D. Alexander, and B.K. Waltke. *Obadiah, Jonah and Micah: an Introduction and Commentary* (InterVarsity Press, 1988).

⁵ *The Lutheran Study Bible*. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).