

Week 4

God Unlike Us

Jonah 3-4



God is *the* hero of every story in the Bible. In the book of Jonah¹, his patience with Jonah, his compassion for the Ninevites, and his love for his cranky servant are all on display. By their example, often the Lord uses his people to teach how to live the Christian life. Jonah's example is a mixed bag of rebellion, obedience, and selfishness. In the prophet we see ourselves and are called again to repentance and faith.

Proclaiming Judgment (3:1-10)

1. Read Jonah 3:1-10. Jonah 3:3 notes that Jonah finally obeys the word of the Lord, going to Nineveh to pronounce God's judgment upon the city. How is Jonah's response to this second call of God related to what Jonah experienced through the storm and the fish in chapter 1? Why does Jonah obey this time?
2. In the Scriptures, prophecy isn't just about predicting future events. Biblical prophecy is mainly concerned with calling God's people to repent and believe through the proclamation of God's Word. According to Jeremiah 18:1-11, why does God tell the Ninevites that they will be destroyed in 40 days?
3. The text says Jonah's trip through the city of Nineveh would take three days. Yet, he only traveled through the city for a day. Why do you think that is? What does the response of the Ninevites tell us about their faith? (See: Matt 19:16-22; Acts 2:37; 8:36).

¹Visit www.bibleproject.com/explore/jonah for an illustrated summary of Jonah.

Celebrating Compassion (4:1-11)

4. Read Jonah 4:1-11. In chapter 4, Jonah is angry. If you have a study Bible, the footnote on verse 1 explains that the literal interpretation of the Hebrew text says Jonah though the Lord's relenting was "exceedingly evil". Why is Jonah so angry? Is there anything right about it? What's wrong about it?

5. Jonah's anger seems to be directed against God's character. What has Jonah forgotten about his own situation? How often are we prone to forget the Lord's mercy to us? Have you desired to see God's judgement rather than his mercy and compassion come upon someone? Is that right or wrong?

6. According to Genesis 18:16-33, how does Jonah's attitude toward Nineveh contrast with Abraham's attitude toward Sodom?²

7. Three times in Jonah (1:6, 14; 3:9) pagans show more care for those who are perishing than Jonah does. In 4:10 we see Jonah seems to care solely about himself and the withering of his shade plant than he does about others. The conclusion of the book ends with an open question to us all. Rewrite the question in your own terms. How can verses like Ephesians 2:1-3 and Romans 5:8 help us to answer the question correctly?

²Jonah teaches us that the salvation God offers through Jesus Christ he offers to every tribe and tongue. In the Old Testament Israel struggled to believe God would show compassion and mercy to outsiders; those who were not of Israelite ethnicity. In some ways the book of Acts serves as a New Testament version of Jonah as God teaches the church that the gospel is for all nations (See: Acts 10:34-43).