

Jonah 4

Day 1

Read Jonah 4:1-3

Jonah's complaint

1. How did Jonah respond to God's decision about the Ninevite's belief?
4:1 What reason(s) do you see for his anger?

Digging Deeper

Compare and *contrast* Elijah's complaint to the Lord. 1 Kings 19:1-4

FYI: Greatly displeased: "Jonah was *very* upset at the success of his preaching. We should not miss Jonah's intensity here, because the language in the original Hebrew is strong."
- David Guzik

"Human pride, a great sin, rears its ugly head to spoil one of the greatest missionary episodes of all time. Jonah is frustrated because he cares nothing for the people of Nineveh."
- Robert Brown (20)

"Not the waywardness of a child, but the displeasure of a man of God, for great and sufficient reason to him. Now that Nineveh was spared, it might after all be used as God's rod for Israel, and thus destroy the hope held out by him to Israel in 2 Kings 14:25-27."
- The Companion Bible (1251)

2. How did Jonah start out his prayer? 4:2a (How would you describe his attitude/tone?)
 - What reason did he give for his flight to Tarshish? 4:2b To what does the word "*this*" refer?
3. What did Jonah know about God? 4:2c [*Compare what other prophets and kings knew about God - Psalm 86:5; Joel 2:13,14; Micah 7:18,19*]
 - By describing God's qualities (see Exodus 34:6,7), what complaint was Jonah making? 4:2c

FYI: "[Jonah] didn't hesitate to go to Nineveh because he *didn't* know God but because he *did*. While Jonah appreciated the character of God when expressed to him and to Israel, it displeased him to see God's mercy experienced by his enemies."
- Priscilla Shirer (131)

"Jonah himself had just been spared God's fair judgment, but he was unable to appreciate the parallel."
- The Nelson Study Bible (1498)

"[Jonah] fled the call - not out of fear that he would be ineffective, but fear that he *would* be effective!" - David Guzik

4. What did Jonah need to understand about all mankind? Romans 3:9-12
 - About God's love? John 3:16; Titus 3:4

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5. By asking to die (4:3), what was Jonah saying about his missionary assignment to unbelievers? About God's offer of mercy to Nineveh?

- What did it say about Jonah's heart? [i.e. Do you see any "worthless or vain idols/ lying vanities" (2:8) which Jonah was clinging to in his heart? What "grace/mercy" was he still missing?]

Digging Deeper

Compare the problem Paul sometimes ran into with the Jews of his day and what he said about it. Acts 13:44-49

6. What does this honest dialogue that God was willing to have with Jonah say about God's heart? How could God have responded to Jonah at this point?

7. Underline God's plans or desires for the lost.

- Ezekiel 33:11 "Say to them, "As I live!" declares the Lord GOD, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live..." NAS
- Luke 19:10 "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." NAS
- Acts 17:26-27 "From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us." NIV
- 1 Timothy 2:3-4 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. NAS
- 2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. NAS

8. What did Jesus teach about God's love for the lost?

- Matthew 9:10-13
- Luke 15:1-7

9. Underline how and why we are to love others.

- John 13:34-35 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." NAS
- 1 John 4:10-11 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. NIV

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10. How are instructed to treat even our enemies?

- Matthew 5:44-48
- Romans 12:14-21

Applying the Word: “While we may be shocked by Jonah’s response, often we can harbor the same feelings. When the ex who betrayed us, the friend who deceived us, the parent who abused us, or the offender who committed a crime against us receives God’s forgiveness and even His favor, we can quickly fall into a pit of anger and frustration because we secretly long for their demise.” - Priscilla Shirer (131)

*Have you ever prayed for someone to get what they deserve? Have you ever prayed that you would **not** get what you deserve? What kind of a viewpoint do you think helps to extend love and grace to our enemies?*

Day 2

Read Jonah 4:4

God’s rebuke

11. How did the Lord challenge Jonah? 4:4 (What was the only answer to God’s question?)

- Since God knows the answer to every question, why do you think He asked Jonah the question?

Food for Thought: “No reply of Jonah’s is recorded. Perhaps he was no longer speaking to God!” - Robert Brown (20)

“[God] poses questions that we may realize and agree on the truth of the answer. Answering God’s questions requires a soul search that may unearth heart issues we did not formerly recognize, thereby helping us to see in ourselves what God seeks to uncover.”
- Priscilla Shirer (134)

12. How does Jonah’s reason for anger compare to God’s reason for anger (Jonah 1:2) at the Ninevites?

- How does Jonah’s response (4:1-3) compare to God’s (3:9,10)?

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13. What do the following accounts teach about the extent of God's willingness forgive evil? (*Do this in your small group. Have each women look up one of the references and read it out loud.*)

- Abraham: Genesis 18:20-32

- Joseph and his brothers: Genesis 37:18-36; 50:17-21

- Manasseh, King of Judah: 2 Chronicles 33:1-13

- Israel under the leadership of the judges: Judges 2:10-18

14. What do we all deserve? Romans 3:23; 6:23

15. In the following verses circle God's reasons/motives for saving us (if given), wavy underline the state we were in or what we deserved before we were saved, and box what we receive instead.

- John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. NIV
- Ephesians 2:4-6 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, NAS
- Colossians 1:21-22 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach -- NAS
- Romans 5:8-10 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. NAS
- 1 John 4:9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. NIV
- 1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, NAS

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16. Underline the extent of God's love and grace.

- Psalm 86:5 You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you. NIV
- Psalm 100:5 For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations. NAS
- Psalm 103:10-12 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. NAS
- Lamentations 3:22-23 The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. NAS
- Micah 7:18 Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love. NAS
- Ephesians 2:7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. NAS

Applying the Word: What does Jonah's reaction reveal to you about God's capacity versus man's capacity to love? About God's ways versus man's ways? How can God grow your love for others? What will help you submit to God's way over your own way?

Day 3**Read Jonah 4:5-11****God deals with Jonah**

17. From Jonah's actions in 4:5, what didn't he know about Nineveh at this point? What do you think he might have been hoping to see?
18. Record the three things that God *appointed/prepared/provided* and Jonah's reactions to them. 4:6-8

FYI: "God is out to graciously prove a point...The Lord had rescued Jonah (1:17) now He wished to relieve His prophet from the misery of the sun. The reach of God's mercy to the underserving is a theme that continued to elude Jonah even as he experienced it... Remember that God did not command Jonah to sit in the sun. He sat in the sun of his own free will. The incident started when Jonah put God to the test."
- Robert Brown (21)

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19. Why do you think Jonah was “*extremely*” happy (4:6) about the plant? (i.e. Was his reaction just about his comfort or do you see it as something more?)

FYI: “[Jonah] was furious about divine protection given to others but excited and thrilled to receive a bit of his own...When I’m excited about my own need being met but not nearly as anxious to see God’s purposes served...when the insignificant makes our hearts race while the truly significant gets a shrug, it’s startlingly clear we’ve got miles between our hearts and God’s.”
- Pricilla Shirer (139)

20. What do you think God was trying to teach Jonah by taking the plant away?

FYI: “God wanted more. Jonah agreed to preach, but preached with a bad attitude without love...God used the sufferings to realign Jonah’s heart. To bring him to the place of trusting God even when he doubted or despised God’s plan...His only joy was the vine - no joy over 120,000 conversions. God’s desire was to realign Jonah’s heart with God’s own heart.”

21. What focus or attitude did Jonah’s response in 4:8 show? (Contrast Paul’s attitude in Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:20,21.)

FYI: “Pride is the opposite of humility. Pride and stubbornness are partner sins...because one feeds on the other...Self-righteousness blinds one to self and focuses on another’s sin, faults, and shortcomings...Meekness and humility focus us on Christ because we see our own inadequacy, our own poverty.”
- Robert Brown (22)

22. Underline what we should do with anger.

- Ephesians 4:31-32 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. NAS
- James 1:19-20 This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. NAS
- Romans 12:19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. NIV

Digging Deeper

How did Jesus use physical difficulties to teach the disciples spiritual truths? Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 6:46-52.

How did the Lord use difficulties to teach Paul? 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

23. How did God’s second question (4:9) differ from the first (4:4)? (What was the object of Jonah’s anger in each case?)

God's mercy

24. What did God point out about Jonah's priorities? 4:10,11

FYI: "Commentator John Hannah underscores the lesson in God's words. 'The vine was quite temporal...and was of relatively little value. Yet Jonah grieved over it. Whereas Jonah had no part in making the plant grow, God had created the Ninevites. Jonah's affections were distorted; he cared more for a vine than for human lives. He cared more for his personal comfort than for the spiritual destiny of thousands of people. What a picture of Israel in Jonah's day...Jonah had thought God was absurd in sparing the Assyrians, God exposed Jonah as the one whose thinking was absurd.'" - Charles Swindoll (48)

25. Why did God have compassion on Nineveh? 4:11b (The phrase "do not know the difference between their right and left hand" may be referring to moral judgments.)

- What does Psalm 78:38-39 say about God's compassion?

Digging Deeper

What do the following say about man's ability to do good?

- Ecclesiastes 7:20
- Romans 2:1-4; 3:22-24

FYI: "Some commentators believe the figure of 120,000 in 3:11 refers to just one class of the population, such as young children." (See *Deuteronomy 1:39*) - Charles Swindoll (47)

"The lesson of Jonah is what he proclaimed before being freed from the great fish: *Salvation is of the LORD (Jonah 2:9)*, and not of any race or nation or class. This is the same message God made clear to Peter in *Acts 10:34-35* : *In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.*" - David Guzik

26. Underline how we can gain God's perspective.

- 2 Chronicles 16:9 "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His..." NAS
- James 1:5-6 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. NAS
- Psalm 145:18 The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth. NAS
- John 15:4-5 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. NAS
- Luke 8:15 "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance. NAS
- 2 Timothy 3:15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. NIV

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27. What do you think happened to Jonah?

Digging Deeper

Read Luke 15:11-32. Do you see any parallels between Jonah and the story Jesus told about the prodigal son? Which brother does Jonah resemble? How do Jesus' words in Luke 15:31-32 fit Jonah?

FYI: "The book [of Jonah] does not specifically state who wrote it. But the tradition has it was written by Jonah as his own report of his foolish behavior and his final statement of coming to terms with the divine will is a likely possibility." - The Nelson Study Bible (1493)

Applying the Word: *Is there anything that you feel angry at God about? How would you respond to the question: "Do you have a good reason to be angry?"*

Or

Where do you see yourself struggle with priorities? (e.g. Putting concerns for others above your personal comfort...Keeping an eternal perspective above all else...etc.)

Day 4**The Assyrians and Israel**

28. What eventually happened to the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C.? 2 Kings 17:4-6

- Why did the Lord allow this to happen? 2 Kings 17:7-18

FYI: "When Hoshea, king of Israel, who had been placed on the throne by Tiglath-Pileser, refused to pay the required tribute, Shalmaneser attacked Samaria, the capital of Israel. After a long siege, Israel fell to Assyria in 722 B.C., perhaps to Sargon II; and 27,000 inhabitants of Israel were deported to Assyrian territories. This event marked the end of the northern kingdom of Israel. Most of the deported Hebrews never returned to their homeland."

- Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary

29. What happened to the religion of the Northern Kingdom of Israel? 2 Kings 17:29-34 (*What does this add to the story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman? John 4:3-42*)

FYI: 2 Kings 17:24 ***The king of Assyria brought men from Babylon and from Cuthah and from Avva and from Hamath and Sephar-vaim, and settled them in the cities of Samaria in place of the sons of Israel.***

"Such a mixing of populations would break down ethnic distinctions and weaken the loyalties that the people had...Samaria was the whole region where the repopulation took place: the inhabitants would eventually be called Samaritans...

Although a deported Israelite priest was sent back to instruct the Samaritan population in the worship of the Lord, the end result was a mixture of various forms of paganism with the apostate religion of the northern kingdom. In the course of time, both the Samaritans and their religion were rejected by the Jews." - The Nelson Study Bible (641,642)

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30. What did Assyria try to do against the Southern kingdom of Israel (Judah)? 2 Kings 18:13,

- How was this attack averted? 2 Kings 19:32-36

31. What nation eventually conquered the Southern kingdom? 2 Kings 25:8-11

- What happened after their captivity? Ezra 1:1-5; 2:1...

32. What eventually happened to Assyrian empire? Ezekiel 31:10-13 (v:11 - "the ruler/despot of the nations" = Babylon)

33. Read the article "*The Conquest of Israel and Judah*" at the end of this lesson. Mark any interesting facts and write down questions you would like to share.

Applying the Word: *In what ways, if any, has your impression of the book of Jonah changed since you did this study?*

Divided Kingdom Chart

The Conquest of Israel and Judah

The Conquest of Israel

In 722 BC, the Assyrians conquered Israel. The Assyrians were aggressive and effective; the history of their dominance over the Middle East is a history of constant warfare. In order to assure that conquered territories would remain pacified, the Assyrians would force many of the native inhabitants to relocate to other parts of their empire. They almost always chose the upper and more powerful classes, for they had no reason to fear the general mass of a population. They would then send Assyrians to relocate in the conquered territory.

When they conquered Israel, they forced the ten tribes to scatter throughout their empire. For all practical purposes, you might consider this a proto-Diaspora ("diaspora"="scattering"), except that these Israelites disappear from history permanently; they are called "the ten lost tribes of Israel." Why this happened is difficult to assess. The Assyrians did not settle the Israelites in one place, but scattered them in small populations all over the Middle East. When the Babylonians later conquered Judah, they, too, relocate a massive amount of the population. However, they move that population to a *single* location so that the Jews can set up a separate community and still retain their religion and identity. The Israelites deported by the Assyrians, however, do not live in separate communities and soon drop their Yahweh religion and their Hebrew names and identities.

The Samaritans

One other consequence of the Assyrian invasion of Israel involved the settling of Israel by Assyrians. This group settled in the capital of Israel, Samaria, and they took with them Assyrian gods and cultic practices. But the people of the Middle East were above everything else highly superstitious. Even the Hebrews didn't necessarily deny the existence or power of other peoples' gods—just in case. Conquering peoples constantly feared that the local gods would wreak vengeance on them. Therefore, they would adopt the local god or gods into their religion and cultic practices.

Within a short time, the Assyrians in Samaria were worshipping Yahweh as well as their own gods; within a couple centuries, they would be worshipping Yahweh exclusively. Thus was formed the only major schism in the Yahweh religion: the schism between the Jews and the Samaritans. The Samaritans, who were Assyrian and therefore non-Hebrew, adopted almost all of the Hebrew Torah and cultic practices; unlike the Jews, however, they believed that they could sacrifice to God outside of the temple in Jerusalem. The Jews frowned on the Samaritans, denying that a non-Hebrew had any right to be included among the chosen people and angered that the Samaritans would dare to sacrifice to Yahweh outside of Jerusalem. The Samaritan schism played a major role in the rhetoric of Jesus of Nazareth; and there are still Samaritans alive today around the city of Samaria.

The Conquest of Judah

"There but for the grace of god go I." Certainly, the conquest of Israel scared the people and monarchs of Judah. They barely escaped the Assyrian menace, but Judah would be conquered by the Chaldeans about a century later. In 701, the Assyrian Sennacherib would gain territory from Judah, and the Jews would have suffered the same fate as the Israelites. But by 625 BC, the Babylonians, under Nabopolassar, would reassert control over Mesopotamia, and the Jewish king Josiah aggressively sought to extend his territory in the power vacuum that resulted. But Judah soon fell victim to the power struggles between Assyrians, Babylonians, and Egyptians. When Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, became king, the king of Egypt, Necho (put into power by the Assyrians), rushed into Judah and deposed him, and Judah became a tribute state of Egypt. When the Babylonians defeated the Egyptians in 605 BC, then Judah became a tribute state to Babylon. But when the Babylonians suffered a defeat in 601 BC, the king of Judah, Jehoiakim, defected to the Egyptians. So the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, raised an expedition to punish Judah in 597 BC. The new king of Judah, Jehoiachin, handed the city of Jerusalem over to Nebuchadnezzar, who then appointed a new king over Judah, Zedekiah. In line with Mesopotamian practice, Nebuchadnezzar deported around 10,000 Jews to his capital in Babylon; all the deportees were drawn from professionals, the wealthy, and craftsmen. Ordinary people were allowed to stay in Judah. This deportation was the beginning of the Exile.

The story should have ended there. However, Zedekiah defected from the Babylonians one more time. Nebuchadnezzar responded with another expedition in 588 and conquered Jerusalem in 586. Nebuchadnezzar caught Zedekiah and forced him to watch the murder of his sons; then he blinded him and deported him to Babylon. Again, Nebuchadnezzar deported the prominent citizens, but the number was far smaller than in 597: somewhere between 832 and 1577 people were deported.

The Hebrew kingdom, started with such promise and glory by David, was now at an end. It would never appear again, except for a brief time in the second century BC, and to the Jews forced to relocate and the Jews left to scratch out a living in their once proud kingdom, it seemed as if no Jewish nation would ever exist again. It also seemed as if the special bond that Yahweh had promised to the Hebrews, the covenant that the Hebrews would serve a special place in history, had been broken and forgotten by their god. This period of confusion and despair, a community together but homeless in the streets of Babylon, makes up one of the most significant historical periods in Jewish history: the Exile.

Sources: The Hebrews: A Learning Module from Washington State University, ©Richard Hooker

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/Kingdoms1.html>