

THE BOOK OF JONAH

Lesson 4 - Chapter 4

If the book of Jonah would have closed with Chapter 3, Jonah would have been seen as a reluctant but obedient prophet, having preached a message that motivated thousands of people to repentance. But God chose to include Chapter 4, which reveals not only Jonah's obedience, but his heart attitude. In this chapter we are reminded that it is our heart more than our actions that matters the most to Him.

Begin your study with prayer...

Memory Verse – This week's memory verse is John 3:17.

*“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world,
but that the world through Him might be saved.”*

Read Jonah 4:1-4.

1. The fourth chapter of Jonah begins with his reaction to the last verse in chapter 3.
 - a. From Jonah 3:10, what was Jonah reacting to?

 - b. Write the emotional reaction we read of in Jonah 4:1 below.

2. We find the reason Jonah originally fled from the Lord in Jonah 4:2.
 - a. First, write what this verse says Jonah knew about God.

 - b. Next, explain what you see as the reason Jonah disobeyed God and ran.

 - c. How angry was Jonah about this, according to verse 3?

 - d. Who was Jonah really angry with?

It might be good for us to remember at this point that the people of Nineveh were Assyrians, a people who were violent and merciless to the people they conquered, who were greatly feared and hated. This may give us a perspective to Jonah's feelings, but it also reminds us of the extent of the mercy of God!

3. In Jonah 4:4 we read God's response to Jonah's anger.

- a. What did the Lord say?

- b. How would you answer this question?

Read Jonah 4:5.

1. We have no record that Jonah answered God's question. However, Jonah did react.

- a. What did he do in Jonah 4:5?

- b. What was he waiting for?

- c. What does this reveal about Jonah?

2. We must think again about Jonah with what chapter 4 has revealed. It seems that he spoke the words of the prophecy in obedience to God, but his heart was not in agreement with the heart of God.

- a. We have all had times when we may not have agreed at first with what we saw God doing in a situation. What should we do if we find ourselves questioning God?

b. Read Job 42:1-6 and explain what you see in Job's final attitude that differs from Jonah's when he is found in a situation he doesn't understand.

Read Jonah 4:6-8.

Jonah may be angry with God, but God has not given up on Jonah.

1. Just as the Lord had a plan to bring Jonah back to Him when He “*prepared a fish*” in Jonah 1:17, the Lord had a plan to teach Jonah when He “*prepared a plant*” in Jonah 4:6.

- a. What physical effect did the plant God *prepared* have on Jonah where he sat?

- b. What was Jonah’s emotional reaction?

2. In Jonah 4:7 we see the next step in the Lord’s plan.

- a. What did God prepare next?

- b. What did it cause to happen?

3. God is not finished, for His lesson is not complete.

- a. What did God prepare in Jonah 4:8?

- b. How did this effect Jonah physically?

- c. Write the words Jonah spoke at the end of Jonah 4:8 that express how he feels.

Read Jonah 4:9-11.

1. God again asked Jonah if it was *right for him to be angry about the plant*.

- a. What was Jonah angry about this time?

- b. What do you think was really behind his anger in this situation?

- c. Again, what was Jonah’s response in verse 9?

2. Jonah 4:10 begins, “*But the Lord said...*” This shows us that God is about to question Jonah about what he said, to make him think more about what was really happening. The Lord compared the situations of the plant and of Nineveh.

- a. How did God present what happened with the plant in verse 10?

- b. How did God present the difference of what happened with Nineveh in Jonah 4:11?

- c. What do you think was the point God wanted Jonah to understand?

- d. What lesson can we learn from this?

The Lord described the people of Nineveh in verse 11 as not being able to “*discern between their right hand and their left*”. This has been interpreted as being innocent children, especially since the number of people in Nineveh was more than 120,000. It can also be a description of adults with no spiritual discernment or knowledge. Since the people of Nineveh were Assyrians, not Jews, they would not have had the benefit of the teaching the Jews had as God’s chosen people.

3. Can you think of who in our world might be described this same way?

4. The beauty we find in this book of Jonah is that these people, who are subject to judgment for their evil deeds, are also recipients of God’s mercy when they repent.

- a. Considering this, how does it affect your view of the lost around you?

- b. According to Mark 16:15, what has God called us to do?

We now must decide whether we will turn our backs on the lost, judging them in their sin as Jonah did, or we will share the hope and mercy of God with them, remembering God’s mercy on us.

In closing...

In this Book of Jonah we have seen that when Jonah ran in disobedience, God never left him, never gave up on him.

1. Look back to see what the Lord prepared for Jonah in each verse below.

a. Jonah 1:17

b. Jonah 4:6

c. Jonah 4:7

d. Jonah 4:8

e. What do you see as God's purpose for all that He *prepared*?

2. God has a purpose for everything He prepares for us and/or allows into our lives, even though they may make us uncomfortable or even bring pain. What do you see in the following scriptures that applies?

a. Romans 8:28

b. James 1:2-4

3. The Lord prepares things to correct, direct and teach, but He also has prepared wonderful blessings for us. Read the following scriptures and write what you see God has planned or *prepared* for you!

a. Jeremiah 29:11

b. John 14:2-3

c. 1 Corinthians 2:9

d. Ephesians 2:10

Memory Verse

*“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world,
but that the world through Him might be saved.”
John 3:17*