

THE POUTING PROPHET

Jonah 3-4

INTRODUCTION

In Jonah 3:1-4:11, the focus shifts to Jonah's mission to the city of Nineveh and the consequential events that follow. After initially fleeing from his prophetic duty, Jonah obediently delivers God's message of impending judgment to the Ninevites, leading to their sincere repentance and God's merciful response. However, Jonah's own reaction to the city's salvation reveals his struggle with divine mercy and justice, highlighting a tension between personal expectations and God's broader, compassionate plan.

THIS WEEK:

As Christians, we are often sold out to God's moral will for our lives, but often struggle to embrace God's will for the people not like us. This week, discover the passion God wants his people to have towards those who do not know him.

OBSERVATION *What does it SAY?*

Discover key details of the passage by reading Jonah 3 - 4 and answering the following questions:

1. What was the message that Jonah gave the Ninevites in Jonah 3:4?
2. How specifically did the Ninevites respond to the preaching of Jonah (Jonah 3:4-5)?
3. How would you characterize Jonah's response to what God did for the Ninevites (Jonah 4:1-2)?
4. Explain in your own words the reason God gave Jonah for sparing the Ninevites (Jonah 4:4-10):

INTERPRETATION *What does it MEAN?*

Use the Bible to interpret the Bible. Look up the cross references and use them to interpret the passage under study:

5. Jonah 3:10 says God relented from the disaster He had planned for Nineveh because of their repentance. How does this align with the principle found in Ezekiel 18:21-23 about God's desire for the wicked to turn from their ways and live?
6. Read Lam 3:22-23, Rom 5:8, Eph 2:4-5, and Titus 3:4-5 and then write out the central truth about God's character to which these verses speak. What do they say about God? What do they say about people?
7. In Jonah 4:1-3, Jonah reacts angrily to God's mercy on Nineveh. Compare Jonah's reaction to the elder brother in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:25-32). What similarities and differences do you see?
8. God's dialogue with Jonah in Jonah 4:9-11 reveals His compassion for Nineveh. How does this conversation compare to God's conversations with other prophets about His mercy and justice, such as in Jeremiah 18:7-10?



The Outcry Against Nineveh, Horne, Charles, and Julius Bewer. 1909. *The Bible and Its Story: The Prophets, Isaiah to Ezekiel*. Vol. 7. New York, NY: Francis R. Niglutsch.

APPLICATION *Why does it MATTER?*

Now that you have discerned what the passage means, how does it apply to your life?

9. Consider Jonah 3:10: How should an understanding God's mercy towards Nineveh impact the way we view others, especially those we might consider undeserving of mercy?

10. Jonah's struggle was with the Ninevites because of their pagan and ungodly life styles. As evangelicals, who are the "Ninevites" in our culture?
11. In Jonah 4:1-3 depicts Jonah's anger at God's mercy towards Nineveh. Why do you think we sometimes struggle when God displays mercy to our "Ninevites"?
12. What are some present day examples of the Church standing aloof from our culture and awaiting God's judgment on them?

TAKE AWAY *How does this change me?*

13. What does this passage reveal about God?
14. What does this passage reveal about humanity?
15. What is the Holy Spirit revealing in this passage about your life?

Have your kids do the word find puzzle on the next page or read to them Jonah 3 - 4. Use the following questions to have a discussion about how God knows our secret desires and actions.

1. What did God tell Jonah to do in Jonah 3:1-2?
Suggested Answer: God told Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and tell the people there that they needed to change their ways.
2. How did the people of Nineveh react to Jonah's message in Jonah 3:5?
Suggested Answer: The people of Nineveh believed Jonah's message from God and decided to change their behavior.
3. What did Jonah do when he saw that the people of Nineveh had changed their ways in Jonah 4:1-2?
Suggested Answer: Jonah was very upset and angry because he wanted the city to be punished, not forgiven.
4. What did God use to teach Jonah a lesson in Jonah 4:6-7?
Suggested Answer: God provided a plant to give Jonah shade, but then sent a worm to make the plant wither and die. This was to show Jonah the importance of compassion.
5. How does the story of Jonah compare to the story of Jesus forgiving people in the New Testament? (See Luke 15:11-32 for the Parable of the Lost Son)
Suggested Answer: Just like the father in the Parable of the Lost Son forgave his son when he came back, God forgave the people of Nineveh when they repented.
6. How does God's mercy to the people of Nineveh in Jonah 3:10 relate to how God shows mercy to us according to Ephesians 2:4-5?
Suggested Answer: God's mercy to Nineveh shows that He is loving and forgiving, just like in Ephesians where it says God is rich in mercy and saves us by grace.
7. How can you show kindness to someone who has made a mistake, like how God showed kindness to the people of Nineveh?
Suggested Answer: You can forgive them, help them make things right, or be understanding, just like God forgave the people of Nineveh when they changed their ways.
8. When you are upset about something not going the way you wanted, how can you remember God's lessons from Jonah's story?
Suggested Answer: You can remember that God's plans are better than ours and that He teaches us to be patient and compassionate.
9. What can you do if you are feeling like Jonah, when you don't want to forgive someone or help them?
Suggested Answer: You can pray for God to help you have a loving heart and try to understand the other person's feelings.
10. How can you be brave like Jonah when God asks you to do something that might be hard?
Suggested Answer: You can trust that God will help you and that He has a good plan, even if it seems difficult at first.

WORD FIND

Jonah 3 - 4

J O N A H P P A V S
L O E P G R E A T A
R S V P J E O O R C
E I L O R D P K I K
E A N I M A L J G C
E N I N E V E H H L
O G N T P L A N T O
T R P E R I S H C T
U Y J D J C E P I H
R C A R E L E N T E
N S T T S E H N Y N

The word of the **LORD** came to **Jonah** a second time: "Get up! Go to the **great city** of **Nineveh** and preach the message that I tell you." **Jonah** got up and went to **Nineveh** according to the **LORD's** command. Now **Nineveh** was an extremely **great city**, a three-day walk. **Jonah** set out on the first day of his walk in the **city** and proclaimed, "In forty days **Nineveh** will be demolished!" **Then** the **people** of **Nineveh** believed God. They proclaimed a fast and dressed in **sackcloth**—from the greatest of them to the least. When word reached the king of **Nineveh**, he got up from his throne, took off his royal robe, covered himself with **sackcloth**, and sat in ashes. **Then** he issued a decree in **Nineveh**: By order of the king and his nobles: No person or **animal**, herd or flock, is to taste anything at all. They must not eat or drink water. Furthermore, both **people** and **animals** must be covered with **sackcloth**, and everyone must call out earnestly to God. Each must **turn** from his evil ways and from his wrongdoing. Who knows? God may **turn** and **relent**; he may **turn** from his burning anger so that we will not **perish**. God saw their actions—that they had **turned** from their evil ways—so God **relented** from the disaster he had threatened them with. And he did not do it. **Jonah** was **greatly** displeased and became furious. He prayed to the **LORD**, "**Please, LORD**, isn't this what I said

sending disaster. And now, **LORD**, take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." The **LORD** asked, "Is it **right** for you to be **angry**?" **Jonah** left the **city** and found a place east of it. He made himself a shelter there and sat in its shade to see what would happen to the **city**. **Then** the **LORD** God **appointed** a **plant**, and it grew over **Jonah** to provide shade for his head to rescue him from his trouble. **Jonah** was **greatly pleased** with the **plant**. When dawn came the next day, God **appointed** a worm that attacked the **plant**, and it withered. As the sun was rising, God **appointed** a scorching east wind. The sun beat down on **Jonah's** head so much that he almost fainted, and he wanted to die. He said, "It's better for me to die than to live." **Then** God asked **Jonah**, "Is it **right** for you to be **angry** about the **plant**?" "Yes, it's **right**!" he replied. "I'm **angry** enough to die!" And the **LORD** said, "You **cared** about the **plant**, which you did not labor over and did not grow. It appeared in a night and **perished** in a night. So may I not **care** about the **great city** of **Nineveh**, which has more than a hundred twenty thousand people who cannot distinguish between their right and their left, as well as many animals?"