The Book of Jonah

Zanesville, OH | Sunday AM Bible Study

**Chapter 4**

* **4:1-2– God relents concerning the calamity according to His lovingkindess**
* The joy, happiness and peace that accompanies salvation is lost in Jonah. He is *“greatly displeased”* (v.1). Irate, indignant, full of anger, burning, kindled, may be some words tied to this feeling being expressed by Jonah.
* Whereas, not even God wishes a man should die in his sin (Ezek. 18:32), Jonah is absolutely upset that the Assyrians have not perished! What an attitude to have. Even if Jonah wishes that the calamity would come so they could repent, one should not hope for the situation to reach that point.
* It is interesting to note that Jonah’s anger stands in opposition to the anger expressed by Jesus in places like Matt. 23 and Mk. 3:5. While Jesus is angry when people sin and calls them to repent, Jonah is more concerned with why they haven’t been destroyed.
* There are only two times Jonah is recorded as praying in this book: (1) Prayer of thanksgiving in chapter 2 (2) Prayer to have his life taken away in 4:2-4, 8-9.
* Jonah expresses to God in v.2 why he fled to Tarshish at the beginning of the book. He knew God was One who relents concerning calamity and disaster according to His lovingkindess (Jer. 18:7-11) but nevertheless he wanted Nineveh to perish! (v.2). Jonah was delivered in chapter 2 but hates that God has given Nineveh such an opportunity. How does one who thanks God for deliverance, hate that it is being shown to someone else?
* The statement made by Jonah about God’s lovingkindness is one of the most repeated phrases throughout the Old Testament. (See: Ex. 34:6-7; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Psa. 86:5; Psa. 145:8; Joel 2:13).
* The climax of the book can be seen in God pardoning the nation that makes a change and seeks Him in order not to perish. God’s love knows no boundaries and His delight is that all would come to know Him and seek Him unto salvation.
* While there are not many positive things we can take away from Jonah’s attitude in this book, he does exhibit great faith in v.2 with his statement about God. Perhaps we could learn from this and understand that God wants all men to be saved and like Jonah we are called to preach to our neighbors to repent before it’s too late. Who knows if they will repent or not?
* We should not be quick to condemn a person or persons simply because we are afraid they will reject the message. Let God do the heavy lifting and have faith!
* **4:3-4– Jonah pleads to have his life taken away**
* Jonah continues his prayer by begging God to take away his life. In chapter two, he thanks God for life and now he doesn’t desire to live (v.3). What is Jonah’s reason for wanting to die?
* If it wasn’t for God’s lovingkindness in chapter 2, Jonah would be dead already. Notice the irony.
* There are a couple of other instances where this language is used in the Old Testament. (See: 1 Kings 19:1-14; Job 3:20-21, 6:8-9; Jer. 20:14-18). All these seem to have fairly good reason to request death in contrast to Jonah.
* God questions Jonah with the intention of putting him in a position to think about his feelings and his attitude (v.4). Similar to what he does with Cain in Gen. 4:6-7.
* **4:5-11– God appeals to Jonah**
* God prepares to appeal to Jonah to consider his ways his thoughts. Jonah, however, is still holding out some hope that the city would be destroyed in v.5.
* God appointed (1:4) a plant (v.6) to give Jonah some shade from the heat and the sun and he was very happy about it. He was in discomfort.
* The Hebrew word for anger that’s used to describe Jonah’s outrage has the idea of “burning” or “kindled.” Notice how the irony as he longs to be delivered from the heat, scorching sun in vv. 6,8.
* The Hebrew word that’s used for “discomfort” in 4:6 is the same word that’s used for calamity in 3:10 and 4:2. Jonah is in a way experiencing his own calamity and he wants to be delivered from it. “The shoe Jonah wanted Nineveh to wear was on his foot now, and it pinched” (Allen).
* Notice the language of this section empathizes Jonah is focusing on himself and his desires. He was “angry” that God didn’t destroy Nineveh (vv.1-2). He was “happy” about the plant. It’s all about him.
* In vv.7-8 God appoints a worm and it kills the plant. God appoints a scorching east wind in v.8 and the sun beats down on Jonah. “East wind” was often used in OT as a form of judgment (See: Ezek. 19:12; Hos. 13:15).
* Jonah pleads with all his soul to die! He craves death more than he does life (Rev. 9:6)
* God again appeals to Jonah concerning his anger in v.9. Jonah says he has a good reason, but God clearly demonstrates he doesn’t.
* Jonah had compassion for a plant which he never labored for (v.10) even so, shouldn’t God have compassion for people whom He has created? (v.11)
* The phrase found in v.11 “don’t know the difference between their left hand and right hand” is an idiom often implying the significance of not knowing right from wrong.
* God cares for the “great city” suggests he cares for the souls that are on the line because of sin. He appeals to Jonah to consider that and think about that.
* God wants everyone to be saved and he wishes none should die in their sins. May we have the same attitude and mindset in our lives!