

## Jonah - Chapter 4 - Commentary By Mike Wells

### Chapter 4 Overview:

This chapter is an epilogue to the greater story of Jonah. Here, the Hebrew prophet is angry that God spared judgment against a gentile city. He therefore went out and sulked over it. Yet, God used an object lesson of a gourd plant to teach the prophet a lesson that he needed to have compassion on those who are lost and on their way to hell.

#### **Jonah 4 : 1 - *But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.***

- When it became evident to Jonah that God had stayed His judgment against Nineveh, He was displeased and became very angry.
- As a Hebrew prophet, Jonah undoubtedly had a prejudice and hostility against neighboring gentile nations.
- Jews through the centuries have routinely looked down upon gentiles as unclean dogs.
- It is apparent that Jonah had genuinely hoped that God would judge Nineveh.
- His preaching against them, no doubt with passion, was likely energized with a prejudice and bitterness against this pagan city.
- He apparently relished the idea of God judging the city.
- Therefore, he was bitter and angry when he learned that God would not judge them.

#### **Jonah 4 : 2 - *And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my coun- try? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.***

- Jonah therefore prayed to God in bitterness of spirit and anger—a sorry way to pray.
- Apparently when God had called Jonah the first time, when he was yet in his country of Israel, Jonah had told God that this would happen.
- He feared that if he went to Nineveh and preached that they would in fact repent and that God would in fact turn from his wrath.
- Jonah therefore perhaps thought that he would be considered a false prophet for preaching the judgment of God when it did not come.
- He knew that God was “a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.”
- What a wonderful description of our great God.
- Indeed, He is gracious, merciful, and slow to anger.
- Therefore, Jonah feared that God would not send judgment against Nineveh.
- That is how things turned out and now Jonah was angry about the whole matter.

#### **Jonah 4 : 3 - *Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.***

- The immaturity and self-centeredness of the prophet are clear.
- His only concern was his own little world.
- He therefore pouted and sulked and told God to kill him.

- He did not want to live anymore.
- He did not get his way so he fumed and whined and felt sorry for himself.
- The whole story of Jonah is an illustration of an immature, self-directed, unhappy individual.
- He ran from God's call and then when the ministry did not turn out as he thought it should, he wanted to quit.

**Jonah 4 : 4 - *Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?***

- God therefore called the prophet on his selfish immaturity.
- Jonah was indignant and God confronted his foolishness.

**Jonah 4 : 5 - *So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.***

- Jonah therefore, apparently in a huff, stomped out of Nineveh and apparently climbed up onto the bluffs of the Tigris River on the east side of Nineveh.
- He there made a lean-to (i.e., a *booth*— apparently of branches nearby) to get out of the sun.
- He therein sat down to see if God would in fact pour out His wrath upon Nineveh.
- He apparently harbored a hope that God would still judge the city.

**Jonah 4 : 6 - *And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.***

- That day, God caused a vine plant to quickly climb the lean-to which Jonah had made to provide further shade for him.
- The word translated as **grief** ( *er ra'* ) in this context again has the sense of 'trouble' or 'distress.'
- Jonah was glad for the additional shade provided by the gourd vine.

**Jonah 4 : 7 - *But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.***

- Yet, the next morning, God killed the gourd vine plant and it withered.

**Jonah 4 : 8 - *And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.***

- Furthermore, God sent a hot east wind from the desert as the sun gained its morning strength.
- As the middle-eastern sun beat down upon Jonah that day, he wilted in spirit and wished he were dead.
- He thus complained that it would be better for him to die than to live.
- At hand is a clear illustration of a self- directed, immature, carnal 'Christian.'
- The entire focus of Jon- ah was upon himself and his little world.
- He gave little thought that he had been used by God to preach a great revival and that an entire city had repented.

- He rather sat in self pity and whined because his desires had not been fulfilled.
- He truly illustrated the inevitable end of self-directed, self-oriented, immature people.
- They invariably are miserable, depressed, and even become suicidal.

**Jonah 4 : 9** - *And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.*

- God therefore confronted the selfish prophet about his immaturity.
- God directly asked Jonah if he had just cause to be angry over the gourd vine plant.
- In his self-directed misery, Jonah claimed he was justified in his petty anger.

**Jonah 4 : 10** - *Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night.*

- God therefore confronted the prophet over his selfish folly.
- He had had pity on a vine plant upon which he had bestowed no labor in cultivating it.
- It sprang up one night and it withered the next.
- That in itself was foolish—to be upset over a wild vine plant.

**Jonah 4 : 11** - *And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?*

- God therefore delivered his *coup dé grace*.
- How much more important was a city of untold multitudes than a simple vine plant.
- In Nineveh there were more than 120,000 small children who did know right from left.
- They were totally innocent.
- Should not God have spared these along with the multitudes of adults who repented and sought God's mercy?
- The clear implication is that Jonah was petty, immature, and foolish to be so self-directed.
- He had fretted over a vine plant when he should have been concerned about the multitudes in the city which had been spared the judgment of God.
- God used this immature prophet to do a great work.
- He also illustrated His mercy and compassion for even gentiles who will turn to Him in repentance.
- There is a clear lesson of how God's people ought also to have compassion on those who are lost and perishing.
- Finally, there is a lesson of the foolishness of those who are self-directed.
- They invariably are miserable. Jonah had to learn the hard way to do God's will.
- He also learned the hard way that he ought to be concerned for others rather than himself.