

INTRODUCTION TO JONAH

Authorship: Jonah, meaning “dove,” was a prophet from Israel, the northern kingdom, but his written prophecy is biographical and concerns his ministry to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.

Date: Unlike most other prophets, Jonah does not specify the kings during whose reigns he ministered. However, according to 2 Kings 14:23–29, he prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II, one of Israel’s most powerful and prosperous kings—therefore around 760 BC. The duration of his ministry is not known. To some extent he was a contemporary of Hosea and Amos.

Theme: God’s absolute sovereignty in both natural and spiritual realms. “Salvation is of the LORD” (2:9) sums up the message evident in both Jonah’s undeserved deliverance from death and Nineveh’s undeserved deliverance from judgment.

Purpose: To teach God’s people their responsibility to deliver the message of salvation to all and to prefigure Christ’s death and resurrection in Jonah’s experience.

Synopsis: *Jonah’s Contribution to Redemptive Revelation*

Whereas the other Minor Prophets are primarily collections of prophetic oracles, Jonah records only one sermon consisting of five words in Hebrew: “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (3:4). The book is more a prophetic narrative comparable to the stories of Elijah and Elisha, although Jonah is certainly no spiritual hero whose ministry is to be emulated. The book narrates his extraordinary call to preach directly to a heathen people and his equally extraordinary refusal to obey the divine command. Notwithstanding the sometimes surprising plot of the narrative that can hold the attention of the youngest child, the book develops significant theological truths. God’s deliverance of Nineveh from the announced judgment illustrates God’s sovereign grace to the undeserving as well as His acceptance of genuine repentance in response to that grace. The salvation of a city with more than 120,000 citizens was a foreshadowing of God’s purpose to include Gentiles in the kingdom; elsewhere in the Old Testament converts had to come under all of Israel’s covenant obligations. Jonah was a foretaste of both the great number of conversions on the New Testament day of Pentecost and the synod decision in Acts 15 declaring Gentiles to be part of the church without first converting to “Judaism.”

Most significantly, Jonah’s experience in the belly of the fish prefigured Christ’s death and resurrection. Christ was infinitely greater than Jonah, but both were signs to their respective generations of messengers divinely authorized by deliverance from death (Matt. 12:39–40; 16:4; Luke 11:29). This is one reason to defend the historicity of Jonah against those who say the story of Jonah is allegorical or at best a legend to combat Jewish nationalism by showing the all-inclusive nature of divine love. Since the resurrection of Christ was historically real, so was the experience of Jonah. To regard Jonah as legendary jeopardizes the gospel itself.

Outline: The outline reflects the symmetry and balance of the four episodes in the book's plot. Note in chapters 1 and 3 Jonah is in a public setting in which pagans appeal to God. In chapters 2 and 4 Jonah is in solitude as he prays.

- I. God Calls Jonah to Nineveh (1:1–17)
 - A. His Call (1:1–2)
 - B. His Disobedience (1:3)
 - C. The Consequences (1:4–16)
 - D. God's Grace (1:17)
- II. Jonah Prays and God Answers (2:1–10)
- III. God Recalls Jonah to Nineveh (3:1–10)
 - A. His Recall (3:1–2)
 - B. His Obedience (3:3–4)
 - C. The Consequences (3:5–9)
 - D. God's Grace (3:10)
- IV. Jonah Prays and God Answers (4:1–11)

JONAH

CHAPTER 1

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,
2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.
3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.
4 ¶ But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.
5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.
6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto

him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.
7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil *is* upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.
8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil *is* upon us; What *is* thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what *is* thy country? and of what people *art* thou?
9 And he said unto them, I *am* an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry *land*.
10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.
11 ¶ Then said they unto him, What shall we do

Chapter 1: *Jonah disobeys God's call to Nineveh resulting in a catastrophic storm and an unexpected rescue by the great fish.*

GOD CALLS JONAH TO NINEVEH (1:1–17)

His Call (1:1–2)

1:2 *Arise, go.* The two commands without a conjunction express urgency. Although prophets often pronounced judgments against foreign lands, it was normally just for Israel's consolation. It was uncommon for God to send the prophet to the heathen so that they could actually hear the message. This is an evidence of His gracious mercy. *Nineveh*. The capital city of Assyria, great both in size and influence. Ironically, within forty years it would be God's instrument of judgment against Israel. *wickedness*. A word meaning calamity that can refer either to moral behavior or disasters of any kind. *before me*. Even though Nineveh was a pagan city without any knowledge of the true God, their sin was before God and they were accountable to Him.

His Disobedience (1:3)

1:3 *But Jonah.* The prophet's response was unusual and unexpected; other prophets were sometimes reluctant or fearful but not defiant. *Tarshish*. Located in the western Mediterranean, perhaps as far west as Spain; it was in the opposite direction from Nineveh. *From the presence of the LORD* expressed Jonah's unattainable intent in fleeing.

The Consequences (1:4–16)

1:4 *LORD sent.* Literally, "to hurl," emphasizing the violent force of the wind. *The ship was like to be broken.* Literally, "the ship thought to be broken," an idiom meaning the ship was about to be smashed.

1:5 *cast forth the wares.* Literally, "to hurl." They hurled the cargo overboard with the same fervent force that God hurled the wind. Although some interpret this as a pagan attempt to pacify the sea or storm god, it was more likely a desperate attempt to make the ship more manageable, to prevent it from being smashed. *Jonah . . . was fast asleep.* Although the storm was Jonah's fault, sent to get his attention, he was oblivious. His physical sleep was symbolic of his spiritual stupor and insensitivity.

1:6 The captain, along with all the pagan sailors, had more grasp of divine activity than Jonah. Ironically and no doubt startling to Jonah, the captain's alarm call to *arise* echoed the initial word from the Lord. Tragically, it took the imploring of a heathen to get the prophet to pray.

1:7 Casting lots was a common practice in ancient times for making decisions. Although seemingly a matter of random chance, even pagans believed the outcome was controlled by supernatural intervention. The purpose was to discover who was to blame for the *evil*, i.e., the dangerous storm (also 1:8). The lot's identification of Jonah as the culprit confirmed God's superintendence (see Prov. 16:33).

1:9 Jonah's confession of faith is betrayed by his actions. How one behaves often speaks more clearly than what one says.

1:11 *for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.* Literally, "the

unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.

12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.

13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.

15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

17 ¶ Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to

swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

CHAPTER 2

THEN Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,

2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, *and* thou heardest my voice.

3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

5 The waters compassed me about, *even* to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains;

sea was walking and raging," an idiom meaning the storm was growing worse (also 1:13).

1:12 Although Jonah acknowledged his blame in causing the storm, he expressed no repentance but claimed that to cast him overboard would be the only "cargo" sacrifice to save the ship (same word "to hurl" as in 1:4,5).

1:13-14 Yet again, the pagan sailors evidence more humane sensitivity and spiritual concern than the prophet. Their natural reluctance led to their prayer for physical deliverance and absolution from guilt in executing the death sentence. Significantly, perhaps influenced by Jonah's confession of faith, they appeal to God, using His covenant name and confessing His absolute sovereignty.

1:16 The sailors give evidence of genuine faith. God sovereignly used Jonah's disobedience as the occasion for introducing these pagans to the one true and living God. "Salvation is of the LORD" is a principal theme throughout the book.

God's Grace (1:17)

1:17 prepared. The great fish that swallowed Jonah was not uniquely created but rather appointed for this particular task. When God ordered this fish's unusual meal, it was another evidence of His overall sovereignty. The fish was a token of God's grace and mercy. Contrary to expectation, Jonah was not swallowed by the waves to a watery death but was spared at the last moment when there appeared to be no hope.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 1

1. We can only speculate as to why Jonah chose to disobey God—perhaps from fear of Nineveh's size or wickedness, or patriotism, knowing the role that Assyria would have as Israel's conqueror. That no reason is given for Jonah's disobedience suggests that there is never a good reason or legitimate excuse for disobeying God.
2. Jonah warns against the far-reaching consequences of sin. It brings chastisement to the sinner: the storm was Jonah's fault and designed to deal with his disobedience. But sin's consequences jeopardize others who are not directly responsible. In one way or another sin always affects others: there is no such thing as a private sin. The storm threatened the sailors as well as Jonah. The sailors learned why the storm occurred, but there had to be multiple other ships on the Mediterranean going through the same storm without any knowledge of

the fact that their lives were in jeopardy because of Jonah's sin. It is part of Satan's deceit that says sin is without corporate consequence.

3. The first chapter says much about God's absolute sovereignty. He controls the weather, the waves, and the fish to achieve His purpose. His sovereignty in the natural sphere is indicative of His sovereignty in the spiritual sphere as well. That becomes clear in the salvation of Nineveh.
4. The appointed fish that swallowed Jonah illustrates the wonder of grace. Jonah deserved to die, but God let him live. So it is that we deserve death, but God's amazing grace has saved us and given life. Grace is getting what we do not deserve.

Chapter 2: Jonah prays from the belly of the fish, and God delivers him safely to shore.

JONAH PRAYS AND GOD ANSWERS (2:1-10)

2:1 *Jonah prayed . . . out of the fish's belly.* Notwithstanding the prophet's disobedience, his prayer gives evidence of an otherwise spiritual man. Virtually every line of the prayer is either a quotation or allusion to some line in the Psalms. Even in the solitude, darkness, discomfort, and slime of the fish's belly, he was able to draw from his knowledge of Scripture to frame his petitions.

Compare: v. 2 with Pss. 31:23; 120:1; v. 3 with Pss. 42:8; 69:3,16; v. 4 with Pss. 5:8; 31:23; v. 5 with Ps. 69:2; v. 6 with Ps. 30:4; v. 7 with Pss. 88:3; 142:4; v. 8 with Ps. 31:7; v. 9 with Pss. 3:9; 42:5; 50:14.

2:2 *the belly of hell.* The Hebrew word can refer to death, the grave, or the abode of departed wicked spirits. Here, Jonah perceived that the fish's belly was his soon-to-be grave, where his body would decay. At this point, he felt as though he were buried alive.

2:3 *the floods.* The word for river, here referring to the sea currents that surrounded him.

2:5 *to the soul.* To the very extremity of life. Jonah thought that his end had come.

2:6 *Her bars* refers to the bolts of a gate or door. Jonah thought the door of life had been shut forever behind him. *yet hast thou brought up my life.* Contrary to all expectation, his life was spared. It is almost as though it dawned on Jonah in his thought-to-be grave that he was still alive.

the earth with her bars *was* about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay *that* that I have vowed. Salvation *is* of the LORD.

10 ¶ And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry *land*.

CHAPTER 3

AND the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,

2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and

preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.

4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

5 ¶ So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered *him* with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

2:8 *lying vanities*. Literally, "breaths of emptiness," a reference to idols. Idolaters forsake God's covenant loyalty (*their own mercy*). Worshipping God and worshipping idols are mutually exclusive.

2:9 *Salvation is of the LORD*. The Lord is the author as well as the agent of salvation, whether physical or spiritual. This statement sums up the whole message of the prophecy.

2:10 As Jonah prayed, the commissioned fish was transporting him back to shore. He arrived safely but not without the sickly smells and slime of where his disobedience had taken him.

but proclaiming a proclamation. *that I bid thee*. Literally, "that I am speaking to you." As a prophet, Jonah had authority to speak only what God commanded him to speak.

His Obedience (3:3–4)

3:3 Jonah obeys and goes to Nineveh; later verses reveal his persisting reluctance, but he had learned his lesson that the consequences of disobedience were too severe to experience again. *Three days' journey* is most likely a reference to the time frame of Jonah's short-term mission rather than the size of the city.

3:4 *a day's journey*. Jonah begins his proclamation on the first day of his projected stay in Nineveh. *Yet forty days . . . overthrown*. In Hebrew the proclamation consists of five words, terse and to the point. The form of the verb "overthrown" suggests impending action. The verb, meaning "to turn upside down," most frequently refers to the catastrophic judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah and thus forebodes a terrible end for Nineveh. Unquestionably, the warning of doom was the surface and intended point of the declaration, but ironically the word can be used positively with the sense of reformation or transformation. Nineveh escaped being turned upside down in judgment by being turned upside down in spiritual reformation.

The Consequences (3:5–9)

3:5 is a clear example of Rom. 10:17—faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Many of the Ninevites evidenced true conversion: They *believed God* (faith); *they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth* (gestures of repentance). *From the greatest . . . to the least*. A literary device (merismus) that uses extremes to designate entirety. The conversions in Nineveh were widespread, touching every segment of the population.

3:6 *sackcloth . . . ashes*. Outward actions symbolizing the internal realities of sorrow, grief, and repentance.

3:7–8 The inclusion of the domesticated livestock in the external signs although seemingly odd was not uncommon in that culture. The inclusion of the animals does suggest that the wave of repentance extended beyond the city limits. *Let them turn*. This is the principal Old Testament word for saving repentance; it pictures a complete reversal of direction, an "about face" from both their *evil way* (the whole manner of life characterized by sin) and *violence* (specific acts of sin). True repentance always involves a reversal of direction that moves toward God and away from sin.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 2

1. Prayer is an important means of grace that God has ordained for His people. The Bible commands prayer, invites prayer, and instructs about prayer. Jonah's prayer is a good example in how to pray as his prayer is comprised of so much from the Psalms. The link between God's Word and prayer is a key component. We are to pray God's Word back to Him in faith that He will perform it in His faithfulness. The Psalms especially provide patterns that we are to follow in prayer. The Psalms are divinely inspired and show the way God wants His people to pray. It is a good practice regularly to pray through the Psalms, applying the petitions to our own needs just as Jonah did to his.
2. Jonah's prayer also reminds us how important it is to hide God's Word in our hearts so that we can use it and rely on it even when we don't have a Bible at hand. All that Jonah prayed in the darkness and disgust of the fish's belly came from what he had committed to his memory. Becoming saturated with the Word in times of Bible study and devotion enables us to use and rely upon it in times of crisis.

Chapter 3: Jonah's preaching in Nineveh moves the people to faith and repentance, thus averting God's impending judgment.

GOD RECALLS JONAH TO NINEVEH (3:1–10)

His Recall (3:1–2)

3:1 *the second time*. Although undeserving, Jonah received another chance to obey the Lord's command.

3:2 *preach . . . the preaching* refers not to preaching a sermon

8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that *is* in their hands.

9 Who can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

10 ¶ And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not.

CHAPTER 4

BUT it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

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 country? Therefore I fled before unto

3:9 *Who can tell if God will turn* (reverse the threat of judgment) *and repent* (be moved to pity). The question acknowledges God's sovereignty that He is not obligated to accept their repentance while expressing hope that He will.

God's Grace (3:10)

3:10 God had pity (*repented*) and accepted their repentance from *their evil way*, thus canceling the calamitous judgment (*the evil*) that He had threatened. God's dealings with men is always without partiality. God saves those who are truly repentant.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 3

- Jonah's second call to Nineveh is instructive. First, it shows God's sovereignty in being merciful to whom He will be merciful. Compare Jonah with the unnamed prophet in 1 Kings 13. God called him to a dangerous mission before Jeroboam I, instructing him to return home immediately after delivering the message. Without reluctance or hesitation, he obeyed God. However, he was seduced by the old prophet to tarry contrary to God's instruction. Because of his disobedience, lions killed him on his way home. In contrast, Jonah was blatantly and willfully disobedient, yet God spared him and gave him the second opportunity to obey. From a human perspective, the bold yet naïve unnamed prophet seemed worthy of a second chance whereas Jonah more reasonably deserved death. But God acted justly regarding the unnamed prophet, but chose to be gracious to Jonah. It should be occasion for thought. How many times have we disobeyed, deserving punishment, yet how many "chances" has God given us to obey?
- Jonah's second call is also a lesson in the invincible power of God's plan and purpose. God had a purpose regarding Jonah and Nineveh that Jonah's disobedience could not frustrate. According to God's plan, Jonah was the chosen messenger to these wicked people. We believe both that God has sovereignly decreed the end of things and that He has decreed the means to accomplish the purposed ends. This has a sobering application to evangelism. God may sovereignly place on a given individual the dreadful responsibility of being the only one who can reach some people. We all are accountable to God and should not rebel against His purpose. God will

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.

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

4 ¶ Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?

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.

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.

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

unfailingly save whom He will but faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God and how will they hear without a preacher (see the ordained logic of evangelism in Rom. 10:13–17)?

- Where sin abounds, grace superabounds (Rom. 5:20). God's mercy toward wicked Nineveh testifies to the amazing power of grace to save sinners and assures that none are too wicked to receive God's salvation. They were objects of divine wrath under the sentence of death, but they were moved by the Word to repent, and God graciously received them. The words of Christ sum up the truth: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

Chapter 4: Jonah complains about God's mercy to Nineveh, and God explains His grace by exposing Jonah's selfishness.

JONAH PRAYS AND GOD ANSWERS (4:1–11)

4:1 Most prophets would have rejoiced at such a positive response to their preaching, but Jonah was *displeased* (literally, it was an evil or disastrous thing to him) and *very angry* (literally, it was hot for him) over Nineveh's repentance.

4:2 Tragically, Jonah appeals to orthodox truths to excuse his disobedience. He refused to go to Nineveh because he knew the real possibility of God's forgiveness toward them and His pity (*repentest*) on them so as to withhold His judgment (*evil*). Whatever Jonah's motive, he desired Nineveh's destruction.

4:3 *I beseech*. i.e., please.

4:4 *Doest thou well to be angry*. Literally, "it is well hot for you," i.e., are you really mad?

4:5 *booth*. A temporary shelter most likely of interwoven branches. The same word designates the feast of tabernacles (booths) that commemorated the wilderness wanderings. Jonah tried to get comfortable in hopeful anticipation of the city's destruction.

4:6 *God prepared*. To appoint or ordain. The same word is used for the fish in 1:17 and the worm in 4:7. *gourd*. Generally assumed to be a castor-oil tree whose broad leaves would provide added shade and relief against the heat of the sun, alleviating some of his *grief* (*evil*). The enjoyment of this physical blessing from the Lord made him *exceeding glad* (he rejoiced a rejoicing).

4:9 God asks Jonah if he is good and mad, and Jonah re-

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.*

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.

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:

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?

sponds that he is good and mad—so mad that he could die.

4:10 *pity*. To be troubled about or to look with compassion.

4:11 *spare*. The same word as *pity* in 4:10. *Sixscore thousand*. 120,000. *Cannot discern*. Either a reference to the children, which would imply an even greater total population, or a reference to the inhabitants as a whole who were incapable of spiritual discernment. By either calculation, the city, filled with living people, was more deserving of compassion than the temporary plant that so concerned Jonah.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 4

1. Jonah's anger over Nineveh's repentance and deliverance illustrates the principal lesson of the book that "salvation is of the LORD." Had Nineveh's salvation depended on Jonah, it would have perished for sure. What a contrast Jonah is to Jeremiah, who loved his people and prayed for their conversion, but saw little positive response. Ironically, a very short sermon by a prophet who hated the people to whom he preached was used by God to save more people on a single occasion than perhaps at any other time in history. The power is in the Word of God. God can use even unclean vessels to accomplish His will.
2. Jonah's appeal to God's perfections as the excuse for his

disobedience betrays an inappropriate use of truth and theology. Every point of his stated creed about God was right, but his use of truth was terribly wrong. Any understanding or application of theology that breeds coldness or selfishness or any other unspiritual reaction is wrong, but the fault may not be with the theology.

3. Jonah's response to the gourd's growth and its subsequent withering exposes his spiritual selfishness. He received God's favor to him with joy and became angry when the favor was withdrawn. It was all about how things affected him. But the thought of God being merciful to Nineveh was contrary to his desire for its destruction. His attitude is similar to the man Christ describes, who was happy when he was forgiven a large debt, but was without sympathy to one who owed him just a small amount (Matt. 18:23–35). We should rejoice in God's blessings to others as much as we do in our own.
4. The book ends with an unanswered question: should not God pity even those who might be enemies? We don't know how Jonah would have answered the question, so the "little Jonah" that resides within us must answer. The question is rhetorical, but the answer is obvious. Do our lives reflect it?