

Jonah 4 - Brief Perspective on God's Compassion and Jonah's Warped View of it

Do we really want to receive what we deserve?

If so, then we deserve death because the Bible declared that 'all have sinned and fall short of God's glory'¹ and 'the wages of sin is death'².

Having been the recipient of God's compassion and forgiveness earlier, Jonah resented the same compassion and forgiveness when God offered them to someone else. If God had not been compassionate, the narrative might have ended with the line 'Jonah drowned in the storm' or 'Jonah was digested in the belly of a big fish'.

Oh, the deceitfulness of the human heart (Jeremiah 17:9). God can be compassionate with me but NOT with other people.

If Jonah is the focus of these 4 chapters that bear his name, then we will be filled with utter despair.

Thanks be to God, He is the main focus. The God who is 'gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love' is the same God whom we meet in His Word.

¹ Romans 3:23

² Romans 6:23

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Warming Up

1. When was the last time we did a self examination?
2. Have we thought of giving that role to the living Christ who searches the heart and mind of man (Rev 2:23)?

Into the Passages

Read Jonah 4

3. The God we want.
 - a. Contrast between Jonah's stated theology (1:9, 2:2-9) and his incongruent outbursts (4:2-3, 8-9). Suggest some reasons why Jonah behaved the way he did.
 - b. Observe the two questions the Lord asked Jonah (v4 and v9). What was God revealing to Jonah about the condition of his heart?
4. The God Who Is. It's all about God. Jonah was long gone but God is eternal. God sent Someone greater than Jonah, through which all mankind may be reconciled to Him. When you enjoy your quiet time with the Lord this week, ask Him what is on His heart.
5. The God for us. God pursued Jonah because he is chosen of God for this specific mission. Is there a modern day analogy of Jonah?

Moving Forward

We are exhorted to develop God's perspectives as disciples of Jesus. The question is how?

God's ways and thoughts have been revealed to us in the Bible. God's ultimate revelation is in Jesus Christ but now that He is no longer with us, physically, Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit who will teach us everything (John 14:26).

6. Let us go back to the fundamentals of meeting God daily in His Word, allowing the Spirit of God to guide us so that we can point people back to Jesus.

Life Together

The apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5 'For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.'

Die to live is one of the paradoxes that we need to understand and live by.

Lord, when you sent Jonah to preach to the Ninevites, you were prepared to go to the cross for the 120,000. But beyond the 120,000 Ninevites, you were prepared to die for all. We, too, shared in your death that we may be raised to life by the power of the Spirit. Help us to understand and live out this truth that when we try to save our lives, we will lose it, but when we lose our lives for the Your sake, we will find it. Amen.

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These notes are primarily for the Into the Passage portion, and are to be used just as guidelines or commentary notes. Most of them are my own thoughts, so take that with a grain of salt. Let the Word of God lead you to truth, not these notes.

Into the Passage

Read 2 Kings 14:2, Jonah 1

3. The God we want.

- a. Contrast between Jonah's stated theology (1:9, 2:2-9) and his incongruent outburst (4:2-3, 8-9). Suggest some reasons why Jonah behaved the way he did.

Jonah could have seen or experience first-hand the evil behaviour of the Ninevites, or

He could not stomach the compassion that the heathens received while his own people were heading towards judgement

- b. Observe the two questions the Lord asked Jonah (v4 and v9). What was God revealing to Jonah about the condition of his heart?

His self centredness. The plant was for his benefit and when his shade was taken away, he took great offence. He was more concerned about a plant (that benefitted him) than the lives of 120,000 people.

4. The God Who Is. It's all about God. Jonah was long gone but God is eternal. God sent Someone greater than Jonah, through which all mankind may be reconciled to Him. When you enjoy your quiet time with the Lord this week, ask Him what is on His heart.

5. The God for us. God pursued Jonah because he is chosen of God for this mission. Is there a modern day analogy of Jonah?

The Church (including BCEC) is God's chosen instrument for bringing the gospel to this world.