

## Synopsis of Jonah (With Spiritual Lessons)

### Important Note:

This book has been either ridiculed by unbelievers as the “big fish” story or explained away by well-meaning believers as an allegory or parable. However, to the consistent Bible believer, the book of Jonah is what it is presented as- a narrative of actual historical events. This approach is no problem to the one who simply believes that God’s Word is true. There are actual accounts of men being swallowed by large fish, being in them for a time, and then coming out of them alive. Some accounts of this are given in the October, 1927 edition of the *Princeton Theological Review* by A. J. Wilson. However, such information is not even necessary for one who simply believes the Bible. In fact, in the account of the great fish swallowing Jonah, the text plainly states that “the Lord had prepared a great fish” to swallow Jonah. It is not certain what kind of fish this was. In Matt. 12: 40 the word translated “whale” is *k?tos* and can be translated “a huge fish, a sea monster.” Whatever kind of fish it was the Lord had specially prepared it.

The same kind of reasoning is applicable to the rapid growth of the gourd in 4: 6. This is no problem for one who believes in the supernatural power of God.

Another “problem” with some is the size of the city of Nineveh. It is written that “Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days’ journey.” (3: 3). This is an easily solved problem. Nineveh proper was not this large, but Nineveh with her suburbs was. To quote from *Halley’s Bible Handbook*

The term Nineveh refers to the whole complex of associated villages served by one great irrigation system, and protected by the one network of fortifications based on the river defenses. The city proper is also called Nineveh. It is the great palace area in the heart of the greater system...Jonah’s mention of 120, 000 babes (Jonah 4: 11), suggests it might have had a population of near a million.

*Unger’s Bible Handbook* states further:

The long buried and forgotten city has amazed the archaeologist in its resurrection from dust since 1843. It was a complex of cities like modern New York, including Calah to the south, Resen between Calah and Nineveh proper, and Rehoboth-Ir (Rebi-Ninua) W of the capital. Other suburbs included Tarbisu and Dur-aharrukin (Sargonsburg).

The concluding proof, however, is the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ referred to Jonah, the whale, and Nineveh as actual historical events. One who believes in the Lord Jesus must conclude that what we have in this Minor Prophet is actual history. See Matt. 12: 39-41 and Luke 11: 29, 30.

## Historical Setting

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, which ruled in the Near East for about 300 years (900-607 B. C.). She eventually conquered and destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel. She was a very cruel empire. She finally fell to the Babylonians. The conquest of Israel was still a long way off when Jonah prophesied. It has been estimated by conservative scholars that this prophecy occurred somewhere between 773 and 755 B. C. As a result of Jonah's prophesying Nineveh repented and God spared her for a time. However, she soon went back to her wicked ways and God destroyed her.

**The following outline is taken in modified form from *Unger's Bible Handbook*.**

### Chapter One-Jonah's Call and Disobedience

The divine call and attempted escape- vs. 1-3.

The storm at sea—vs. 4-7.

Jonah's Witness and the Outcome-vs. 8-17.

### Chapter Two-Jonah's Prayer and Deliverance

His prayer of thanksgiving-vs. 1-9.

His deliverance-v. 10.

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### Chapter Three- Jonah's Renewed Commission

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Jonah's Obedience-vs. 1-4

Nineveh Repents-vs. 5-10.

### Chapter Four-Jonah's Reaction to the Revival

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Jonah is angered-vs. 1-5.

The Prophet Rebuked-vs. 6-11.

### Observations and Spiritual Lessons

1: 2-God knows what is going on in the world- See Gen. 18: 20; Ex. 3: 7; Ps. 9: 17.

1: 2, 3-The Lord told Jonah to go to Nineveh, about 550 miles northeast of Israel. Instead he boarded a ship for Tarshish, which many conservative scholars believe to have been in Spain, which may have been as far as 2, 500 miles in the opposite direction.

Nineveh was located on the east side of the Tigris River directly opposite the modern city of Mosul in northern Iraq. This site has been extensively excavated.

1: 3-Why was Jonah disobedient to God? He reveals why in 4: 2. He did not want God to be merciful to Nineveh.

1: 3-It was foolish of Jonah to think that he could flee from the presence of the Lord. See Ps. 139: 7-10. Adam and Eve thought the same thing-See Gen. 3: 8.

1: 4-The **sovereignty of God** is prominent in this book. Here the Lord sent a great wind. In 1: 17 He prepared a great fish. In 2: 10 the Lord spoke to the fish. In 4: 6 He prepared a gourd. In 4: 7 He prepared a worm. In 4: 8 He prepared a "vehement east wind."

1: 5-Not every calm we have is a righteous calmness. Jonah here was so at peace that he was sleeping in a terrific storm. This is how much he had hardened his conscience toward God.

1: 7-An interesting commentary on this verse is found in Proverbs 16:33, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD."

1: 8- Even heathen feel a sense of possible guilt and have a sense of the righteous judgment of God. Even fallen man has some remnant of a conscience. See Acts 28: 4.

1: 9- Jonah admitted who he was and whom he worshipped. When he said Lord he meant Jehovah, who was the covenant God of Israel. He also emphasized the fact that God was the Creator. These sailors all worshipped limited tribal deities.

1: 10-These men greatly feared probably because they had heard of some of the exploits of the God of the Hebrews. They had probably heard of their deliverance from Egypt, with the plagues and the opening of the Red Sea. They may have also heard of their conquest of Canaan. They were not dealing with a little God.

1: 12-There are differing interpretations of this verse, but I believe it places Jonah in a favorable light as one who realizes he is a recipient of God's displeasure and does not wish to be responsible for the lives of innocent men.

1: 13-The heathen look good here as they do everything they can to save Jonah.

1: 16- These men may have been truly converted. John Gill writes:" If these men were truly converted, as it seems as if they were, they were great gainers by this providence; for though they lost their worldly goods, they found what was infinitely better, God to be their God and portion..."

1: 17-Not only was the preparation of the great fish an example of God's providential control, but also the fact that the fish was in the right place at exactly the right time to keep Jonah from drowning. We must remember that this is the same God Who caused the rooster to crow two times (Mark 14: 30) and Who insured that not a dog would bark the night the Israelites left Egypt (Ex. 11: 7). This is the same God Who caused the fish that had a piece of money in his mouth to be at just the right place, and who took the hook that Peter put into the water, so that he could pay his taxes. (Matt. 17: 27).

2: 1-9-This is a poetic prayer that includes a cry for deliverance (2: 2), a review of the crisis, (2: 3-6), a review of the deliverance (2: 6, 7), and praise for the deliverance (2: 8, 9), [This analysis of the prayer is taken from the *New Geneva Study Bible*].

It is always good to study the prayers of the Bible to get examples of how we can pray. Much of the Bible is an instructive manual on prayer. This is a very good prayer to teach us how to pray when we face great trouble.

This prayer is an example of the **persevering faith** that is the legacy of each child of God. Jonah was in trouble because of his sin. Yet, even though he had defied God, he turned to this same God when he was in trouble. This wonderful truth is described in 1 John 5:4, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Faith causes the child of God to cry out to the Lord even as the woman with the issue of blood (Matt. 9: 20-22) and as the Syrophenician woman did (Matt. 15: 22-28).

When God's people cry out to Him, He always hears. This is plain from such passages as Ps. 34: 4, 6 and 1 Pet. 3: 12.

2: 9-Jonah uttered a great truth when he said here “salvation is of the Lord.” John Gill has a beautiful quote showing the comprehensive nature of the salvation that Jonah was referring to:

There is one letter more in the word rendered "salvation" than usual, which increases the sense; and denotes, that all kind of salvation is of the Lord, temporal, spiritual, and eternal; not only this salvation from the devouring waves of the sea, and from the grave of the fish's belly, was of the Lord; but his deliverance from the terrors of the Lord, and the sense he had of his wrath, and the peace and pardon he now partook of, were from the Lord, as well as eternal salvation in the world to come, and the hope of it. All temporal salvations and deliverances are from the Lord, and to him the glory of them belongs; and his name should be praised on account of them; which Jonah resolved to do for himself: and so is spiritual and eternal salvation...

A. W. Pink shows the great practical value to a child of God of knowing that salvation is of the Lord and is by His grace:

“It is all-important to insist that ‘salvation is of the LORD’ so that all the glory is ascribed to Him, and so that we may be encouraged to seek grace from Him. For when we are aware of our undeservingness, only the realization of His abundant favor will keep our hearts from sinking.”

2: 10-In another demonstration of His sovereignty, He had the whale close to dry land when He commanded him to vomit Jonah.

3: 1-Here we see the beautiful truth that God is the **God of the second chance**. Even after Jonah’s flagrant disobedience, the Lord still commissioned him to preach to the Ninevites. We have a similar blessed instance of this in the New Testament when the Lord Jesus charged Peter to feed His sheep, even after Peter’s perfidious betrayal. (John 21: 15-17).

3: 2-4-Jonah was obedient to the Lord’s commission, and began to go through Nineveh, preaching as he went.

3: 4-John Gill has an interesting comment concerning the forty days of verse four: “...within forty days, or at the end of forty days, as the Targum; not exceeding such a space, which was granted for their repentance, which is implied, though not expressed; and must be understood with this proviso, except it repented, for otherwise why is any time fixed? and why have they warning given them, or the prophet sent to them?” Gill is saying here that the Lord was telling them through Jonah that if they did repent, He would not destroy them.

Pink expresses himself in this matter much as Gill does: “When the prophet announced ‘yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown’, more was intended than was expressed. He was not there proclaiming God's inexorable fiat, but was sounding an alarm to operate as a means of moral awakening. That ‘forty days’ opened a door of hope for them, and was tantamount to saying, Upon

genuine repentance and true reformation of conduct, a reprieve will be granted. That is no mere inference of ours, but a fact clearly attested in the immediate sequel.”

3: 5-9- The people of Nineveh, including their king, “believed God,” fasted, put on sackcloth, and manifested a great sorrow for their sins. Several commentators believe that this was genuine spiritual repentance and that these Ninevites were children of God. If I have read correctly this seems to be the view of Calvin, John Gill, Albert Barnes, and Matthew Henry. However, I do not understand it this way. The entire city, that is, “the people of Nineveh” believed God. It is highly unlikely that every single individual in this pagan nation was a child of God. The people did manifest their repentance by putting on sackcloth, but this was done corporately as commanded by their king. This was a form of National Repentance.

God does honor this kind of repentance. God temporarily spared Israel when the wicked Ahab repented before Him. Ahab was extremely wicked as recorded in 1 Kings 16:30, 33 "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him...And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him." To all his other sins, the wicked Ahab connived with his evil wife, Jezebel to slay the righteous man, Naboth the Jezreelite. This was so terrible that it is written in 1 Kings 21:25, "But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up." It is obvious that this man was not a child of God.

However, when God sent Elijah to confront him with his sin and to threaten destruction on him and his posterity, Ahab “rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.” In other words, he did just as the king of Nineveh did when Jonah preached judgment upon Nineveh. Because of this show of humility God said in 1 Kings 21:29, "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house."

It is possible for those who do not know the Lord to have a certain kind of respect and fear of God. This is plainly taught in James 2:19, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."

The traitor, Judas, repented, but this was obviously not what we would call true, evangelical repentance. "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders..." (Matthew 27:3).

For all the above reasons, I do not believe that the repentance of Nineveh was the repentance that God gives His children in regeneration. This is an example of National Repentance. It averted God’s judgment from Nineveh. How wonderful it would be in our beloved USA if our leaders and the people in general would turn to God in National Repentance!

## God “Repenting”

3: 10- In this verse we come across the very interesting expression that “God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them.” This expression has engaged the attention of Bible readers for many generations. The skeptics use this as an example of another alleged contradiction in the Scriptures. The Bible believer knows this is not so, but he desires to know how best to “rightly divide the word of truth.” (2 Tim. 2: 15). There are some very reasonable and satisfactory explanations of this verse and of the subject of God’s “repenting,” however, it will be good to hear first from James Montgomery Boice in his *Commentary on the Minor Prophets*:

To begin with, this is clearly a case of employing human language to describe that which is ultimately beyond human language. God is always beyond our understanding. Consequently, we should not be surprised when phrases like this tend to confuse us. We should balance them with other statements—like that of Balaam, who said, “God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?” (Num. 23: 19). If we must choose between apparent contradictions [emphasis, mine], we must side with the truth that God is not changeable and that he does not deal falsely in the revelation of himself to us.

C. H. Cayce, in his *Editorial Writings*, makes a similar appropriate statement:

We would say, first, that the Scriptures do not contradict themselves. If we place a construction upon any portion of Scripture which would make that portion contradict another, it is necessarily true that the construction is wrong. This being true, it follows that any construction placed upon this text that would contradict any plain statement in the Scriptures would necessarily be wrong.

There are, indeed, many plain statements from the Scriptures which teach that God is immutable, that is, that He does not change. One of these is in Malachi 3:6, "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." As Cayce wrote:

Here we are positively told that the Lord changes not. If the Lord ever changes, then this statement is not true. But the statement is true, and the Lord does not change. If He did change, then the sons of Jacob would be consumed. The sons of Jacob are all the heirs of promise. “The Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance...” (Deut. 32: 9). Jacob was a representative character, hence the heirs of promise are called the sons of Jacob. Not one of them will ever be consumed, because the Lord does not change.

Another Scripture which plainly teaches that God does not change is James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." For a Bible believer this does not contradict Jonah 3: 10.

Another very plain Scripture which emphatically teaches that God does not repent in the sense of real change was alluded to above by Boice. It is Numbers 23:19, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" For a Bible believer this does not contradict Jonah 3: 10.

If the Bible does not contradict itself, then, what is the explanation for Jonah 3: 10 and other similar expressions in the Bible? Sometimes we have expressions in the Scriptures which, when they refer to God, are called anthropomorphisms or anthropopathisms. An anthropomorphism attributes human shapes or human characteristics to God. God, absolutely considered, is a Spirit (John 4:24). A spirit has no body, yet we read of God's hands (Is. 1: 15; 19: 25; 45: 12) and eyes (Ps. 11: 4; 34: 15). The Lord, in giving us the Bible, expresses Himself to us in ways that we can comprehend.

An anthropopathism attributes human feelings, emotions, and passions to God. God does not repent in the same way that a man repents. A man repents when he has done something wrong or when he changes his mind or something he has done. If God did this He would not be immutable, and we have seen that the Scriptures plainly state that immutability is an attribute of God.

Concerning this kind of language in the Bible Charles Hodge writes: "Those passages of Scripture in which God is said to repent, are to be interpreted on the same principle as those in which He is said to ride upon the wings of the wind, or walk through the earth."

John Gill explains it this way when he is referring to Jonah 3: 10: "...this is spoken after the manner of men...is to be understood, not of any such affection in God as repentance; but of an effect done by him, which carries a show of repentance, or resembles what is done by men when they repent...here was a change, not of his mind or will concerning them, but of his outward dispensations towards them..."

By putting together the passages which teach God's immutability with the ones that speak of His repenting we must necessarily come to the conclusion that repentance with God is not what it is with man. Repentance, in the sense that it exists in man, can no more exist in God than can ignorance, error, or impotence.

Having looked at these preliminary principles, let us look at the specific case of Jonah and Nineveh. We have already gotten a hint on what God was doing from some remarks of John Gill and A. W. Pink. These men point out that when God told the Ninevites that He would destroy them in forty days, He was implying that He would not destroy them if they repented of their wicked ways. If this were not so, why did He send Jonah to preach to them? If God were intent on unconditionally destroying Nineveh, He would have just done so without sending them a warning. Robert Reymond is in agreement with this assessment as shown by the following quotation from his *A New Theology of the Christian Faith*:

A case in point is his dealing with Nineveh through the preaching of Jonah. While the message

he instructed Jonah to proclaim to Nineveh appears to be unconditionally absolute in its declaration of judgment, the fact that the judgment was not to fall for forty days implies that if during that period of time Nineveh repented of its evil, the “promised” judgment would be withheld. In other words, the full import of Jonah’s message was: “You have forty days to repent. If you do not, Nineveh will be destroyed. If you do, God will not afflict you with his threatened judgment.”

This is not the only time God revealed His operations in similar cases. It is plain to see that when God threatened people as He did the people of Nineveh in this way, He wished to arouse some to repentance that they might escape the judgment which their sins deserved. For example, He did this in the case of Abimelech who was on the verge of taking Sarah to be one of his wives. We read in Genesis 20:3, "But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife." God told Abimelech that he was a dead man. Did God absolutely mean that or were some conditions implied? Obviously there were some implied conditions because when Abimelech pleaded with Him and protested that he had done this only because he had been deceived, God told him in Genesis 20:7, "Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine." God had in His unchangeable mind all along that Abimelech would not die if He repented, but He did not state this at the first when He called Abimelech a dead man.

God has made it plain in several passages how He deals with people. He spoke by His prophet in Jeremiah 18:8-10, "If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them."

This is exactly how God dealt with Nineveh. The change here was not on the part of God, it was on the part of the ones doing the repenting. God’s purpose is unchangeable. It has been pointed out that if an individual were riding a bicycle against a strong wind, the wind would be against him. If he turned around the wind would be at his back helping him. It might appear as if the wind had changed, but it would have been blowing just as before. The change came in the bicycle rider.

Another example is that of Hezekiah. It is recorded in 2 Kings 20:1, "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." This looks like an absolute statement but God did not intend it that way. Hezekiah called out to God with weeping. Almost immediately the prophet returned to Hezekiah with the word from the Lord that He had heard the king’s prayers, had seen his tears and would add fifteen years to his life.

This should be a very encouraging incentive for each of us to immediately repent when we have become aware that we have displeased God. God has revealed Himself that He is pleased with repentance. We should repent with all our might, being encouraged by such Scriptures as Joel 2:12-14,

"Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?"

R. A. Torrey makes some good observations regarding this matter. He makes the point that a railway station remains stationary, relative to a train that moves on the track in front of the station. To a person on the train it might appear that the station is moving, but it is really the train that is moving. Torrey makes these remarks:

So it is with God's attitude toward man. If God remains unchangeable in His character, His purpose and His position, then as man moves from sin to righteousness, God's attitude relative to that man must change. The very fact that God does not repent (change His mind), that He remains always the same in His attitude toward sin, makes it necessary that God should repent in His conduct (change his dealings) with men as they turn from sin to righteousness.

To sum up what we have looked at we must make several observations. The Bible does not contradict itself. To us who are believers, if there seems to be a contradiction, we know that we have not yet arrived at a proper understanding of what is being taught. Because of many plain Scriptures that teach the essential immutability of God, we know that God does not repent as a man repents. What the Scripture calls repentance in God is not what we understand by the ordinary meaning of the word. God does speak to us in anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms. By comparing Scripture with Scripture and with the aid of the Holy Spirit we can often come to the meaning of a difficult text. We can give some illustrations that may throw some light on the subject. However, in the final analysis the Scriptures themselves, which are infallibly inspired, are our final and only rule of faith and practice.

4: 1-3-Here, we see something very remarkable, both on the part of Jonah, and on the part of God. Jonah's attitude and conduct toward God is abominable. God's mercy towards him, on the other hand, is almost incomprehensible. From this we should learn two important lessons: we should realize how prone to sin we are and to keep a close watch on ourselves; we should also have great hope in the mercy of God and flee to Him realizing the merciful nature of His character.

The last thing we read in chapter 3 is that God did not carry out His threatened destruction of Nineveh. Then we read in Jonah 4:1, "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." This is truly remarkable. What this amounts to is that Jonah was very mad at God! Some people say that it is okay to get mad at God, but that is not Biblical. It is true that sometimes God's children do become displeased with God or with something that He is doing in their lives, but that does not make it right. If and when we realize this is happening to us, we should immediately seek repentance. We should honestly tell God how we feel, tell Him we are sorry, and ask Him to help us to overcome our attitude. A good prayer along this line is in Psalms 51:10 "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." If we are having trouble repenting of our attitude, God has a very appropriate prayer for us in Jeremiah 31:18-19, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and

I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented..."

The other stated lesson we should learn here is that God is incredibly merciful. God had been so merciful to Jonah in saving him from the sea and in giving him a second opportunity to carry out his mission. God had blessed that mission to be extremely successful. Now Jonah is mad at God and even speaks to Him disrespectfully, yet God is still patient with Him! This should not tempt us to try to take advantage of God's mercy, but it should encourage us to go to Him in prayer even when we realize that our attitude is terrible.

Jonah told the Lord that the reason he had rebelled in the first place was because he was fearful that He would have mercy on Nineveh. The Assyrians were enemies to God's people and Jonah did not want God to have mercy on them. He was pitting his desires against the plan of God. This was the very opposite of the example our Saviour set for us in Luke 22:42, "Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Jonah was not reconciled to the will of God. There is a danger for us to get this way when life does not turn out the way we think it should. It is easy to say we are in tune with God's will when things are pleasant in our lives, but when immense difficulties come we engage in spiritual struggles. The entire book of Job is a chronicle of such a struggle.

In verse three Jonah asked God to take his life from him. He was so mad and so disappointed that he did not want to live any longer. Jonah is not the only one of God's children to feel that way. God had also blessed Elijah to have a great spiritual success in the destruction of the priests of Baal. However, when Jezebel threatened him, he grew very despondent. How he responded is recorded in 1 Kings 19:4, "But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." Later, with the enabling of the Lord, he performed some more valuable prophetic work. Solomon, for other reasons, had a desire to die. He said in Ecclesiastes 2:17, "Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

This needs to be a warning to us. Sometimes, when we do not like the way some things are going in our lives, Satan comes to us and tells us that life is not worth living. He is the great liar, of course. Life is a precious gift and we should treasure it and live it to the fullest in the service of our Lord as long as we have breath in our bodies. To have this attitude we should habitually cultivate a close walk with our Lord so that we will have the proper perspective even in difficult times. The proper attitude is articulated in Psalms 34:12-14, "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it."

The Bible makes plain that God gives life and gives meaning to it, while Satan tries to kill and destroy. The following Scriptures emphasize these principles:

Proverbs 8:36, "But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death."

Proverbs 11:19, "As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death."

Proverbs 19:23, "The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil."

4: 4- God asked Jonah if he were doing right to be angry. This would have been a good time for Jonah to seek repentance. When God asks us probing questions, we need to examine ourselves and attempt to get in fellowship with Him. Evidently Jonah did not exploit this opportunity to repent of his attitude.

4: 5- Evidently Jonah still hoped that God was going to destroy Nineveh so he went outside the city and prepared a place from which to watch the "fireworks." It is amazing that Jonah was not merciful to the Ninevites, seeing what great mercy God had shown to him. Jonah was acting here much like the elder brother in the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32). The father had mercy on the repentant son and the elder brother was angry about it. In fact, when the father tried to get him to join the celebration, we read in Luke 15:28, "And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him." We must ever keep in remembrance what mercy God has shown to us if we have the proper attitude toward others.

4: 6-8-These are very interesting verses. We see here the amazing sovereignty of God in details. He "prepared" a gourd; He "prepared" a worm; and He "prepared" a "vehement east wind." In doing all this God was teaching Jonah a profound lesson. First, He had mercy on Jonah and shielded him from the fierce heat of the sun. We have heard reports of how hot that sun is from our troops that are in Iraq. When God did this Jonah was "exceeding glad." Then God prepared the worm to destroy the shade and Jonah wanted to die again.

4: 9- I know that I have called several of these verses "amazing" but this one is certainly one to a high degree! God asked Jonah another probing question; He asked him if it was well for Jonah to be angry because of the removal of the gourd. The way Jonah answered God can only be described as giving Him an insolent, "smart-mouth" answer. Instead of destroying or severely disciplining Jonah, however, God used the occasion to teach him a lesson.

4: 10, 11-God told Jonah that he had had pity on the gourd and yet had not had pity on Nineveh. Then God said some interesting things about Nineveh. He said that were more than 120, 000 people there who were infants or very small children ("cannot discern between their right hand and their left"). These were what we would usually call innocent in the common meaning of that term. They had not had time to have done any evil to Israel, yet Jonah did not want God to have mercy on them. We need to remember this when sin affects us and there may be children involved through no fault of their own.

Interestingly, God even mentioned the animals in Nineveh. He mentioned "much cattle." It is not

Biblical to be a part of the contemporary “animal rights” movement which places animals on an equal or higher level than human beings. God has made it plain that He created animals for the use of human beings. One of many places where He makes this clear is in 1 Timothy 4:3-5, "Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." That animals are given to human beings for consumption is plain from what the Lord, Himself, told Peter in Acts 10:13, "And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat."

However, it is also very plain in the Scriptures that we are not to practice cruelty to animals. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 12:10, "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

### **Conclusion**

We do not know how the story turned out with Jonah. We will find out when we get to glory. We do know that this is a remarkable book of the Bible which teaches us important lessons about God and about ourselves.