

JONAH: THE SUICIDAL MISSIONARY

Introduction

The book of **Jonah** has 1,296 words, 47 verses, 4 chapters, and 1 incredible story. It takes place sometime between 786 BC and 746 BC (during the reign of Jeroboam II)—about the time of the first recorded Olympic games and the founding of Rome.

1. Jonah was a **real** man. Compare **Jonah 1:1** with **2 Kings 14:23-25** (this is the same Jonah). The name 'Jonah' only shows up in **2 Kings 14**, the book of **Jonah**, and in the NT rehearsals of the book of **Jonah** (implying it's not a common name). Interestingly enough, Jonah is also mentioned in the Koran as a prophet of Islam.

Wikipedia: According to tradition Jonah was the boy brought back to life by Elijah the prophet, and hence shares many of his characteristics (particularly his desire for 'strict judgment'). The book of Jonah is read every year, in its original Hebrew, on Yom Kippur - the Day of Atonement. (because of the 'repentance is accepted by God' theme)

2. Jonah was a prophet but the book of **Jonah** is not a **prophetic** book.

The book of **Jonah** is not about a fish. The fish is not the story, it's a prop. The book of **Jonah** is about one man's journey with God and how he influences those around him.

Overview

The four chapters of **Jonah**:

1. God's call and Jonah's run (**Pitching**)
2. Jonah's prayer and God's mercy (**Praying**)
3. God's call and Jonah's obedience (**Preaching**)
4. Jonah's bitterness and God's heartbeat (**Pouting**)

Jonah 1 (Pitching)

1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah ['Jonah' means '**dove**.' **Jamieson, Fausset, Brown: Compare Genesis 8:8-9, where the dove in vain seeks rest after flying from Noah and the ark: so Jonah**] **the son of Amittai** [my truth], **saying, 2 "Arise, go** [this is an imperative—it's a command, not a suggestion—we take this mood with our kids] **to Nineveh, that great city** [We're introduced to Nineveh in **Genesis 10:8-12. Adam Clarke on Nineveh: This was the capital of the Assyrian empire, and one of the most ancient cities of the world, Genesis 10:10-11; and one of the largest, as it was three days' journey in circumference. . . . It is reported to have had walls one hundred feet high,**

and so broad that three chariots might run abreast upon them. It had several hundred thousand people (probably more than a million based on 120,000 that were too small to know their right hand from their left as is stated in [Jonah 4:11](#). [Nahum 3:1-7](#) gives a great picture of how God felt about the wickedness of the Ninevites.), **and cry out** [another imperative] **against it; for their wickedness has come up** [personification] **before Me** [literally, 'in my **face**'].” [Observation: God never sent Old Testament prophets to other countries to prophecy against them. He sent prophets to Israel. Jonah is the **first** missionary. Except for Jonah, spreading the message of Yahweh involved telling people that came to Israel about Him up until the time of Jesus. But Jesus told His disciples to “Go” just like Jonah was told to, “Go.” God changed His method (not His message) with Jonah (a foreshadowing of [Romans 3:29](#)).] **3 But Jonah arose to flee** [run away] **to Tarshish** [yellow jasper] **from the presence** [same word for 'face' in [Jonah 1:2](#)] **of the LORD. He went down** [to travel, but also used to describe sinking] **to Joppa** [beautiful], **and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare** [wages], **and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.**

4 But the LORD sent [threw/**pitched**—first time] **out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest** [whirlwind or storm] **on the sea, so that the ship was about to be** [literally, the sailors on the ship thought it would be] **broken up.** **[David Guzik: We often think of Jesus calming the waters, and He can do that. But He can also stir up the storm.]**

5 Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god [How often in our lives do we turn to our 'own gods?'], **and threw** [pitched—the same word used in verse 4 for what God did with the wind—second time] **the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep** [the same word used to describe Sisera's sleep when Jael put a nail through his temple, but not as strong a word as what God put Adam under in [Genesis 2:21](#)]. [Jonah is able to sleep through the storm, like Jesus was sleeping through the storm in [Matthew 8:24](#). However, peace in the midst of a storm should not guarantee us that we are in God's **will** (it simply means we can sleep through a storm or problem in our lives).]

6 So the captain [literally, the chief sailor] **came to him, and said to him, “What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God** [The irony is obvious in that: (1) Jonah was trying to get away from God and this pagan is asking him to call on his God, and (2) Jonah was commanded by God to rebuke pagans (Ninevites) and Jonah is being rebuked by a pagan.]; **perhaps your God will consider us** [think about us—his words display his **theology**, for the captain's god wasn't always thinking about the captain—but our God is constantly thinking about us as in [Psalm 40:5b](#)], **so that we may not perish** [be lost].”

7 And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots [pebbles], **that we may know for whose cause this trouble** [evil, calamity, distress, misery] **has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell** [settled] **on Jonah** [Was God OK with this? See [Joshua 7](#),

Proverbs 16:33; and **Acts 1:26**]. **8 Then they said to him, “Please tell us** [another imperative meaning to publish, declare, proclaim—these are the words used in the New Testament for **evangelism**—imagine pagans asking you to do this!] **For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation** [business]? **And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?”** [20 questions]

9 So he said to them, “I am a Hebrew [literally, ‘one from beyond’]; **and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven** [Jonah is addressing their fears], **who made the sea** [again addressing their fears] **and the dry land** [now he switches to addressing their hopes].” [Jonah is also addressing the fact that Jehovah is the God of **all** three locations whereas the pagans probably had three different gods for these three locations.]

10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid [extreme terror], **and said to him, “Why have you done this?”** [When coming from a pagan, this is incredibly convicting!] **For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. 11 Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm** [quiet, silent—the sound of a storm that would terrorize sailors must have been incredibly loud] **for us?”—for the sea was growing more tempestuous** [stormy].

12 And he said to them, “Pick [Lift] **me up** [imperative] **and throw** [pitch—the third time] **me** [another imperative] **into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest** [storm, whirlwind] **is because of me.”**

13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return [bring back] **to land** [these pagans are looking better than Jonah], **but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous** [stormy] **against them.** [Have you ever had a problem that no matter how hard you worked, you just could not solve?] **14 Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said, “We pray, O LORD** [**Jehovah**—they called upon the actual name of God, not just the generic word for god], **please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood** [life that is free from guilt]; **for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You.” 15 So they picked** [lifted] **up Jonah and threw** [pitched—the fourth time—once used of God pitching the storm, once used of the sailors pitching their cargo and twice used of Jonah being pitched] **him into the sea, and the sea ceased** [stood] **from its raging** [storming, indignation]. **16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly** [same phrase that was used to describe how they felt about the storm], **and offered** [killed] **a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows** [vows of appreciation for being spared]. [They are new believers. God worked in spite of Jonah’s disobedience.]

17 Now the LORD had prepared [appointed, ordained, assigned—not the word for created, but the word for setting aside something that already existed for a special purpose—it’s what we do to **deacons** and **pastors**] **a great fish** [the Hebrew is pronounced ‘dawg’] **to swallow** [engulf] **Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly** [inward parts] **of the fish three days and three nights. What are your observations of Jonah 1?**

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Introduction

Last week we looked at **Jonah 1** and this week we'll look at **Jonah 2**. But before we get there, let's quickly review a few things to bring us up to speed.

1. Jonah was a real man. I didn't go in to this last week, but one of the reasons we know that Jonah was a real man is due to the New Testaments references to him by Jesus. Jesus references Jonah at least two different times (**Matthew 12:39-41**, **Matthew 16:4**, and **Luke 11:29-32**) with **Matthew 12:39-41** being the most thorough:

Matthew 12:39-41: 39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish [Greek word is *ketos*—at that time, a very non-specific term for very large fish. The root of that word meant an opening (similar to a yawn), so the intent is to describe a fish with a large opening in its belly. It was not until much later that the word *ketos* came to be related specifically to **whales (the study of which we now call cetology)], so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.**

Jonah is a **type** of Christ. **Wikipedia: Jonah spent three days in the belly of the fish; Jesus will spend three days in the ground. . . . Jesus compares his generation to the people of Nineveh. Jesus fulfills his role as a type of Jonah; however his generation fails to fulfill its role as a type of Nineveh. Nineveh repented but his [Jesus'] generation, which has seen and heard one even greater than Jonah, fails to repent.**

As you can see, Jesus thought Jonah was real and used Jonah and the Ninevites in His preaching. This also begs an interesting question: **Was Jonah alive or dead in the fish?** There are many commentators that believe that Jonah actually died and God brought him back to life at the end of the three days to be more of a 'type' of Christ than if he were alive the entire time. Be thinking about that as we go through **Jonah 2**. The *answer* is irrelevant, but the *process* of answering forces examination of the text so it's helpful.

2. Jonah was a prophet but the book of **Jonah** is not a prophetic book.

As a reminder, the book of **Jonah** is not about a fish. The fish is not the story, it's a prop used by God to bring Jonah to where God needed him to be. **Jonah** is about one man's journey with God.

1. God's call and Jonah's run (**Pitching**)

2. Jonah's prayer and God's mercy (**Praying**)

3. God's call and Jonah's obedience
(**Preaching**)

4. Jonah's bitterness and God's heartbeat
(**Pouting**)

Views of the Fish

Last week at the end of **Jonah 1**, we left Jonah in the fish. Let's first look a bit deeper at the fish and then we'll dive in to **Jonah 2**.

1. God used an already existing fish to swallow Jonah
2. God created a new fish to swallow Jonah
3. There was no fish (the story is an allegory). The line in *The Matrix*, "Do not try and bend the spoon, for that's impossible. Instead only try to realize the truth—there is no spoon."

As we studied last week, the Hebrew word for 'prepared' means to appoint or ordain (to set aside something that already existed for a special purpose—it's what we do to deacons and pastors), so the Bible lends itself to view #**1**

Let's pick up at **Jonah 1:17** and read through the end of **Jonah 2**.

Jonah 2 (Praying)

1 Then [Just because the word "Then" is used to start the verse doesn't mean that this is the exact order of events in Jonah. **J. Veron McGee: It is characteristic of the Hebrew language to give the full account of something and then to go back and emphasize that which is important.** (p. 35) This technique is used in **Genesis 1-3** as well. This leaves room for the option that Jonah may have prayed this prayer early in the three days or late in the three days.] **Jonah prayed to the LORD his God** [not someone else's God, but Jonah's God. Similar to **Luke 15:18** when the prodigal son says he will go to 'his father'] **from the fish's belly** [The most important point I want to drive home today about **Jonah 2** is Calvin Whaley and the fact that if you are a child of God, you have your Father's **ear** and you can pray anywhere]. **2 And he said:**

"I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction [straits, distress, trouble, also used of a rival wife], **And He answered me. "Out of the belly of Sheol** [**Adam Clarke: Among the Hebrews sheol means the grave, any deep pit, the place of separate spirits, bottom of the sea.** Sheol was the word used in the Old Testament to describe the location of those that were **dead**. Sheol can also refer to the unseen, so this would be a reasonable word to use inside a fish.] **I cried** [shouted], **And You heard my voice.**

3 For You cast [threw—not the same word for pitched as is used in **Jonah 1**; this word means to throw or to cast off—this word does not care about the state or final location of the thing being thrown off] **me into the deep** [Jonah acknowledges that God Himself did this, not the sailors], **Into the heart of the seas, And the floods** [underground streams]

surrounded [enveloped, marched around] **me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me.** [Psalm 42:7]

4 Then I said, 'I have been cast out [driven away, tossed—a new word] **of Your sight; Yet I will look** [Do you see the literary techniques being used here? Jonah is cast out of God's eye, but he uses his own eyes to look toward God's house.] **again toward Your holy temple.'** [John Calvin: Were any to object and say, that then his faith must have been extinct; the obvious answer is, - that in the struggle of faith there are internal conflicts; one thought is suggested, and then another of an opposite character meets it; there would indeed be no trial of our faith, except there were such internal conflicts.]

5 The waters [figuratively used of **danger** and violence] **surrounded me, even to my soul;** [John Calvin: And the Hebrews says that to be pressed to the soul, is to be in danger of one's life.] **The deep** [deep places, abyss] **closed** [enveloped, marched around] **around me; Weeds were wrapped around** [bound up] **my head.** [Psalm 69:1]

6 I went down to the moorings [base] **of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; Yet You have brought up** [caused to be brought up] **my life from the pit** [of Hell or destruction], [John Wesley: In the assurance of faith, he speaks of the thing as **already done**. Great faith prays as if something has already been accomplished. Jonah was still in the fish when he prayed this. I personally shy away from this type of prayer for fear that it will come across to God as cocky or arrogant. See Psalm 30:3] **O LORD, my God** [again Jonah reiterates that Jehovah is his God].

7 "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer went up [entered, came] **to You, Into Your holy temple.** [Psalm 3:4]

8 "Those who regard [to keep, or pay attention to] **worthless** [vain, **empty**] **idols** [literally, **breath**—something that has no substance or real lasting value] **Forsake** [depart, leave, abandon, apostatize] **their own Mercy** [chesed—loving-kindness]. [John Calvin: Men in vain weary themselves when they follow their own inventions; for the more strenuously they run, the farther they recede from the right way.]

9 But I will sacrifice [kill—Jonah 1:16 (the next-to-last verse in Jonah 1) contained this word as well—each part of the story has **sacrifice**] **to You With the voice of thanksgiving** [confession, praise]; **I will pay** [complete, make good, make whole (illustration of the Fatz owner)] **what I have vowed. Salvation** [deliverance] **is of the LORD."**

10 So the LORD spoke [commanded] **to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.**

Wikipedia: The presence of the prayer serves to interpret the swallowing of the fish to be God's salvation. God has lifted Jonah out of Sheol and set him on the path to carry out His will. The story of **descent (from Israel, to Tarshish, to the sea, to under the sea) becomes the story of **ascend** (from the belly of the fish, to land, to the city of Nineveh).**

JONAH: THE SUICIDAL MISSIONARY

Introduction & Review

Two weeks ago we looked at **Jonah 1**, last week we looked at **Jonah 2**, and this week we'll look at **Jonah 3**. But before we get there, let's quickly review a few things to bring us up to speed.

1. Jonah was a real man. Despite what any liberal theologian might suggest, Jonah was a real man and this story actually occurred. If you're in doubt, check out Jesus' statement in **Matthew 12:39-41**.

2. Jonah was a prophet but the book of **Jonah** is not a prophetic book.

Overview

The four chapters of **Jonah**:

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So now that Jonah's agreed to go to Nineveh, let's pick up with **Jonah 3** and see what he does when he gets there.

Jonah 3 (Preaching)

1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time [I saw on Facebook this morning that Stacey Bandy was talking about how 'strong-willed' her kids are and she made the following statement: **I am reminded at how much love God has for me when I am that willful**], **saying, 2 "Arise** [an imperative—the same word used in **Jonah 1:2**], **go** [an imperative—the same word used in **Jonah 1:2**] **to Nineveh, that great city** [the second time God refers to the city of Nineveh this way. Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria and Assyria was a world power. **Wikipedia: Assyria often opposed Israel and eventually took the Israelites captive in 722-721 BCE. The Assyrian oppression against the Israelites can be seen in the bitter prophecies of Nahum. John Wesley: The greatest city of the known world at that day It is said, her walls were an hundred foot in height, her walls broad enough for three coaches to meet, and safely pass by each other; that it had fifteen hundred towers on its walls, each two hundred foot high, and one million, four hundred thousand men employed for eight years to build it.**], **and preach** [an imperative meaning to call, cry, proclaim, summon, and invite—the same

word used in **Jonah 1:2** **to it the message** [proclamation] **that I tell you.**" [The clear implication is that God is going to tell Jonah exactly what to say—something that we can find highly irritating when God tells us only a part of what is to come next. Also note that this little phrase was not present in **Jonah 1:2** when God originally instructed Jonah.] **3 So Jonah arose** [obedient act #1 this chapter—the exact word used in **Jonah 3:2** with a different tense] **and went** [obedient act #2 this chapter—the exact word used in **Jonah 3:2** with a different tense] **to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly** [the Hebrew word is **elohiym**—one of the words used to describe God and common among the Jews to use *elohiym* to describe something that is so big that no other thing like it can compare to it except the bigness of God] **great city, a three-day journey** [walk—the average person could walk 20 miles a day and historical evidence shows that Nineveh was a little more than 60 miles in circumference, so we see that the Bible gets this historical fact correct] **in extent. 4 And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out** [obedient act #3 this chapter—the exact word used in **Jonah 3:2** with a different tense] **and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown** [this is the same word that the Bible uses to describe what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah in **Genesis 19:25!**"] **[John Calvin: Jonah . . . proves . . . how much he had improved under God's scourges. . . We hence learn how well God provides for us and for our salvation, when he corrects our perverseness; though sharp may be our chastisements, yet as this benefit follows we know that nothing is better for us than to be humbled under God's hand.]**

5 So the people of Nineveh believed [stood firm, trusted, were certain] **God** [the Hebrew word is *elohiym*], **proclaimed** [same word for **preached** in **Jonah 3:2**] **a fast** [abstinence from food], **and put on** [wore] **sackcloth** [material used for bagging grain—the modern-day equivalent would be a burlap sack (the thing that you use in a sack race)], **from the greatest** [oldest] **to the least** [youngest] **of them** [It's interesting to note that **every** person in the entire book of Jonah repents at some point in the narrative]. [The Ninevites show **both** faith and repentance. **John Calvin: faith and repentance are connected together. Visual aid: yellow for repentance combined with blue for belief makes green for new life with God.] 6 Then word** [speech] **came** [reached] **to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside** [literally, he caused someone to take away] **his robe** [symbol of his glory], **covered himself with sackcloth and sat** [sat and remained/abode] **in ashes. 7 And he caused it to be proclaimed** [called out] **and published** [said] **throughout Nineveh by the decree** [taste—he preferred it like someone would prefer one meal over another—repentance and faith had changed his **tastes**] **of the king and his nobles** [greatness], **saying,**

Let neither man nor beast [any animal], **herd** [cattle] **nor flock** [sheep and goats], **taste anything; do not let them eat** [graze], **or drink water. 8 But let man and beast** [any animal] **be covered with sackcloth,** [Question: Why would the Ninevites cover their animals with sackcloth? Perhaps to show God that even their animals now belonged to

Him. There is historical evidence to support that this occurred for great events as Virgil (the great Roman poet) wrote this of the death of Julius Caesar:

The swains forgot their sheep, nor near the brink

Of running waters brought their herds to drink.

The thirsty cattle, of themselves, abstain'd

From water, and their grassy fare disdain'd.]

and cry [same word for preached in **Jonah 3:2**] **mightily** [strongly, violently] **to God; yes, let every one turn** [repent, go the opposite way. **David Guzik: In the Christian life, repentance does not describe what you must do to turn to God; it describes the very process of turning to God.**] **from his evil** [wicked, displeasing, injurious] **way** [direction, habit] **and from the violence** [wrong, cruelty, injustice—remember the violence that the Ninevites did by stacking body parts outside their city?] **that is in his hands. 9 Who can tell** [know, perceive] **if God will turn** [**repent**, go the opposite way] **and relent** [be sorry, have compassion], **and turn away** [repent, go the opposite way] **from His fierce** [burning] **anger** [**nose**], **so that we may not perish** [be lost or exterminated]? [Note that the Ninevites were repenting without firm knowledge that God would spare them—obedience to God without regard to results is a sure sign of repentance]

10 Then God saw [looked after, observed, considered] **their works** [labor, undertaking], **that they turned** [repented, went the opposite way] **from their evil** [wicked, displeasing, injurious] **way** [direction, habit]; **and God relented** [was sorry, had compassion] **from the disaster** [injury, misery, calamity] **that He had said** [promised] **He would bring upon** [do to] **them, and He did not do it.**

Jonah 3 illustrates that God can use prophecy not only to (1) **prove** that He is all-knowing, but also (2) as a means to **draw** people to repentance.

Question: Can God repent? Answer: Yes, if we understand repentance correctly (it's turning from a prior decision)

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Introduction & Review

Before we look at **Jonah 4**, let's quickly review a few things to bring us up to speed. The book of **Jonah** could have easily ended at the end of chapter three if the book had been about Nineveh and the Ninevites. But the book isn't about the great city of Nineveh or the Ninevites. The book of **Jonah** is about Jonah. **J. Vernon McGee: The problem is no longer Nineveh—the problem now is Jonah.**

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A theme throughout the book of **Jonah** is that God models the behavior he is looking for in Jonah—in **Jonah 1**, God modeled persistence; in **Jonah 2**, God modeled compassion; in **Jonah 3**, God modeled repentance; in **Jonah 4**, God modeled **love**.

J. Vernon McGee: Jonah's story is an illustration of how God treats His children when they sin and come back to Him. This is something we can all relate to.

Jonah 4 (Pouting)

1 But it displeased [trembled, quivered] **Jonah exceedingly** [**John Calvin: It is a wonder that Jonah withdrew from his lawful call; for he knew that God was merciful, and there is no stronger stimulant than this to stir us on, when God is pleased to use our labour.**], **and he became angry** [hot, scorched, burned—a humorous foreshadowing (pun intended)]. **2 So he prayed to the LORD** [it is good that Jonah took his problems to God, but Jonah **blamed** God], **and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? [Did we know about this conversation? No] Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish** [While Jonah attempts to justify his sin, we understand why Jonah ran from God: he didn't want the Ninevites to repent. Some commentators say Jonah did not want the Ninevites to repent because that would make God look bad, but that's not

what Jonah says is the reason in **Jonah 4:2.**]; **for I know that You are a gracious and merciful** [compassionate] **God, slow to anger** [long nosed] **and abundant in lovingkindness** [chesed], **One who relents** [shows sorrow, pity, and compassion] **from doing harm.** **3 Therefore now, O LORD, please take** [take in your hand, capture, seize] **my life from me, for it is better** [agreeable] **for me to die than to live!**" [The **second** time that Jonah has wished to be killed in **Jonah**]

4 Then the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" [David Guzik: **God likes to ask us questions, because they reveal our heart.** This could be phrased, "Are you happy you're angry?" If Dr. Phil were asking, he'd say, "How's that working for you?"]

5 So Jonah went out of the city [Jonah prayed that angry prayer to God while still in Nineveh. I hope none of the Ninevites heard him!] **and sat on the east side of the city.** [J. Vernon McGee: **The east side of the city was up in the hill country, up at an elevation.** This would have given Jonah a great view of the city.] **There he made himself a shelter** [a covering from the sun (Nineveh is located in modern-day northern Iraq—a very sunny place)] **and sat under it in the shade** [literally, the shadow—what other Bible verses talk about shadows? The Psalms are filled with verses that speak of the 'shadow of God's wings,' but this is the shadow of **self**-pity.], **till he might see** [observe, inspect] **what would become of the city.** [Jonah's prophecy was that in 40 days Nineveh would be overthrown and Jonah was going to wait it out to see if it happened.] **6 And the LORD God prepared** [appointed, ordained, assigned—not the word for created, but the word for setting aside something that already existed for a special purpose] **a plant** [a plant or a gourd (the particular Hebrew word used causes most commentators to agree with **Jamieson, Fausset, Brown: It grows from eight to ten feet high. Only one leaf grows on a branch, but that leaf being often more than a foot large, the collective leaves give good shelter from the heat. It grows rapidly, and fades as suddenly when injured.**)]—the verb form of this Hebrew word means 'to **vomit**' or 'disgorge' and the noun form is a 'gourd'—a subtle reference in Hebrew that connects the great fish and the gourd] **and made it come** [rise] **up over Jonah, that it might be shade** [literally, shadow—perhaps an application of, 'the shadow of God's wings'?] **for his head to deliver** [rescue] **him from his misery** [What does the fact that God need to provide **Jonah with shade say about Jonah's ability to provide for his own comfort?** Jonah didn't do a very effective job of providing for himself (and neither do we)]. **So Jonah was very grateful** [exceedingly happy and rejoicing—this is the **first** time we find Jonah happy, even though he should have been happy with God's sparing the Ninevites] **for the plant.** **7 But as morning dawned the next day God prepared** [appointed, ordained, assigned—not the word for created, but the word for setting aside something that already existed for a special purpose] **a worm** [literally a grub worm—the verb form of this Hebrew word means 'to **swallow**' and the noun form is a 'worm'—a subtle reference in Hebrew that connects the great fish and the worm], **and it so damaged** [attacked, damaged] **the plant that it withered** [dried up—so God has used His creation

to swallow so that something gets wet (Jonah) and He has used His creation to swallow so that something dries up (the plant). Never underestimate God's ability to use anything to expose **sin**. **8 And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared** [appointed, ordained, assigned—not the word for created, but the word for setting aside something that already existed for a special purpose] **a vehement** [harsh, hot, silent] **east** [God causes this wind to blow in Jonah's face—much like the sin of Nineveh came up before God's face in **Jonah 1:2**] **wind** [wind—the verb form of this Hebrew word means 'to smell **odor**' and the noun form is a 'wind'—subtle reference in Hebrew that connects the great fish and the wind]; **and the sun beat** [the same word used of the worm in **Jonah 4:7** meaning attacked, damaged] **on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint** [literally, wrapped himself up to prevent fainting]. **Then he wished** [begged] **death for himself** [this is the **third** time that Jonah has wished to be killed], **and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."** [The exact same phrase he used in **Jonah 4:3**]

9 Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" [Exactly as asked in **Jonah 4:4**, with the addition of one phrase. **John Calvin: But let us be reminded . . . how furious and unreasonable are the passions of our flesh. There is, therefore, nothing better than to restrain them, before they gather more strength than they ought; for when any one feeds his vices, this obstinacy and hardness always follow.**]

And he said, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!" [Arrogance and pride—and Jonah's **last** words in the book of **Jonah** (I hope my last words are not a death wish!)]

10 But the LORD said, "You have had pity [had compassion] **on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished** [was exterminated] **in a night.** **11 And should I not pity** [have compassion—same word used in **Jonah 4:10**] **Nineveh, that great city** [the third time God refers to it this way], **in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern** [distinguish] **between their right hand and their left** [God is most likely referring to children here—shouldn't Jonah have pity of young children more than he has pity on a plant? We get our priorities mixed up so much and sometimes it takes a simple comparison to set us straight] **—and much livestock?** [Why include the livestock? Because even if Jonah could argue that the plant was more significant than the Ninevites whom he hated, he couldn't argue that the plant was more significant than the livestock.]”

J. Vernon McGee: God is saying to a great many people today, "I want you to go and take the Word of God to those who are lost." And they say, "But I don't love them." God says, "I never asked you to love them; I asked you to go." I never find anywhere that God asked Jonah to go because he loved the Ninevites. He said, "Jonah, I want you to go because I love them. I love Ninevites. I want to save Ninevites. And I want you to take the message to them."

Despite all of Jonah's objections in **Jonah 4**, God never interferes with Jonah's free **will**.

Conclusion

Q: Why doesn't the book of Jonah feel 'finished'?

A: The book of **Jonah** is my story. It is my story. It's my story because I can relate to Jonah because I didn't listen the first time. I rarely listen the second time. God has given me multiple chances and I get angry when things work out His way at times. The book of **Jonah** is also my story because the book of **Jonah** isn't finished. I don't know how Jonah finishes his life. I don't know if he goes back in to Nineveh and continues preaching. I don't know if he dies on that hill on the east side of the city. I just don't know. And just like that, I don't know how my life is going to turn out—the story isn't finished. That's up to me—and that's why I can relate to the book of **Jonah**—it's an unfinished story, just like mine.

I want to close this series with the words of **John Calvin: Let us learn by the example of Jonah not to measure God's judgments by our own wisdom, but to wait until he turns darkness into light. And at the same time let us learn to **obey** his commands, to follow his call without any disputing: though heaven and earth oppose us, though many things occur which may tend to avert us from the right course, let us yet continue in this resolution, that nothing is better for us than to obey God, and to go on in the way which **he** points out to us.**