

Jonah: The Reluctant Prophet - 17

Introduction: This is the final chapter in the book of Jonah. In this chapter, we see God once again dealing with Jonah. Spiritual growth is certainly in view here as well as a view of God's ways.

Text: Jonah 3:10-4:1-4

In this account, we are given a glimpse of the thoughts and actions of God toward a people group. When we see this take place, we ought to remind ourselves that this is not just an isolated incident. The Bible says, *"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."*

1. God saw their works. **v10**

We might express the marvel of this best using the plain words of Scripture.

Psalm 144:3-4 *"3 Lord, **what is man, that thou Takest knowledge of him!** Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him! 4 Man is like to vanity: His days are as a shadow that passeth away."*

2. God dealt with them in _____. **v10**

What was it that God saw? *"...that they turned from their evil way..."*

First of all, rest assured that God **does not change.**

Malachi 3:6 *"6 **For I am the Lord, I change not;** Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."*

Psalm 102:27 *"27 **But thou art the same,** And thy years shall have no end."*

James 1:17 *"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.**"*

Preacher on the Run: The Meaning of Jonah The Unchangeableness of God To ask, 'Could God not change his mind about some things?' is to ask the wrong question. If he could change his mind, he would not be God. What does it mean for you to change your mind? At the very least, it implies that unforeseen circumstances have arisen. Or it may be that your earlier decision was wrong and needs to be corrected. Or it may be that you were powerless to carry out your intentions and have been obliged to change your approach. But God is not ignorant of the future, or guilty of

erroneous opinions, or powerless to carry out his will. He is not a man that he should change his mind. He is the eternal I AM, who knows the end from the beginning. He is the Lord; he does not change.

It is helpful for us to understand a few things about this.

1. **God is unchangeable but He is not inactive.**¹

When we look out at this world today, we see change all the time. There are decisions that people make and consequences that take place many times unforeseeable consequences to us.

God has given us **within bounds** a certain scope of choices. But our understanding of these choices are bound in time. In God's Word, He has made known to us the ends of some of our choices. When we think about eternity, for instance, we have been given in plain terms the result of receiving or rejecting His way and means of Salvation. If I receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior by faith, as God has drawn me to Himself through His grace, 'I shall be saved.'

John 3:36 *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."*

But I do know based on His Holy Word the sure consequences and results of rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior. **What you and I perceive as God changing towards us is not His changing, but rather our changing or making choices.** So, while it appears that God changes, **from our perspective**, He in fact has not changed at all but rather is dealing with us **based on our change**.

2. God deals with us in terms of what we are and where we are.²

In other words, God condescends and accommodates us and deals with us at our level. He is the creator and infinite, we are creatures and finite.

He speaks to us in **plain human language**.

As we have discovered before when the Bible uses an anthropomorphism such as "the hand of the Lord..." it is human language and attributes applied to God strictly for our understanding.

3. God deals with us in terms of promises and threats; punishments and rewards.³

¹ Preacher on the Run: The Meaning of Jonah Gordon J. Keddie (just the main points)

² Ibid.

³ Ibid

“The direst threats point to the richest of blessings.” Gordon J. Keddie, Preacher on the Run: The Meaning of Jonah.

When we consider God’s Holy Word, we find within the pages of Scripture God’s help to man, who is lost and undone. A delivery of truth that exposes us to how things truly are. The Lord guides us by showing us who He is and by doing so, we know for instance the wages of sin.

And so, we see God’s grace and mercy vividly on display for us here in this passage. Again, the Bible says, *“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.”*

IV. Jonah’s Pouting: God’s Presentation - Chapter 4

A. Anger and _____ v1-4

Read **Jonah 4:1-4**

We begin this chapter with this plain statement as to Jonah’s thoughts and emotions. The Bible says, Jonah was displeased ‘exceedingly.’ And if that was not enough it states he was not just angry, but “very” angry.

“How sad the contrast between God’s feeling on the repentance of Nineveh towards Him, and Jonah’s feeling on the repentance of God towards Nineveh. Strange in one who was himself a monument of mercy on his repentance! We all, like him, need the lesson taught in the parable of the unforgiving, though forgiven, debtor (**Mt 18:23–35**)”

Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 686.

Why do you think Jonah is displeased and angry? At the end of the day, the reasons are important and helpful to us, but they are ancillary to the root cause - - - which is pride.

“He would, like many of us, govern God’s world better than God Himself. Short-sighted and presumptuous! Yet not more short-sighted than those who, in fact, quarrel with God’s Providence, the existence of evil, the baffling of good, “the prison walls of obstacles and trials,” in what we would do for God’s glory.” - Albert Barnes