

JONAH

An Expanded Analysis based on the New American Standard Bible

"MERCY AMID JUDGMENT"

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Then the LORD said, "You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and *which* you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. {11} "Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know *the difference* between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?"
Jonah 4:10-11

Prepared by James T. Bartsch
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Email Contact: jbartsch@wordexplain.com

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JONAH

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Chapters 1-3: God works on Jonah's obedience.
Chapter 4: God works on Jonah's attitude.

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A 1 FLIGHT FROM MERCY: The Consequences of Disobedience 1

B 1 Jonah's Disobedience to God's Call 1:1-3

C 1 Divine revelation: {1} The word of the LORD came ¹ to Jonah ² the son of Amittai

¹ 1:1 - the word of the LORD came: This phrase appears in the OT approximately 100 times. It describes Yahweh's method of speaking to His prophets. It is used of Yahweh's communication with Abram in a vision (Gen. 15:1, 4). It is used of Yahweh's communication with such prophets as Samuel (1 Sam. 15:10), Nathan (2 Sam. 7:4), Gad (2 Sam. 24:11), Elijah (1 Kings 18:1), Isaiah (2 Kings 20:4; Isa. 38:4), David (1 Chron. 22:8), Jeremiah (Jer. 1:11), Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:3), Haggai (Hag. 1:1), and Zechariah (Zech. 1:1). The phrase appears frequently in Jeremiah, and most frequently in Ezekiel. Here in Jonah it appears but twice – in 1:1 and 3:1. With rare exceptions (such as Gen. 15:1, 4) we are not told how the word of Yahweh came to His prophets, only that it came. Jonah, for example, undeniably knew that the word of Yahweh had come to Him. The first time he disobeyed that word. The second time, he obeyed!

² 1:1 - Jonah: Jonah, son of Amittai, is the likely author of this book, though it nowhere specifically names him as the author. Even though he wrote of himself in the third person (so, at times, did Isaiah and Daniel), that does not prevent him from being the author. Jonah, who hailed from Gath-Hepher, situated in the land of Zebulun (Josh. 19:13), prophesied during the reign of Israel's Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:25), who ruled from 793-53 B.C. Thus, Jonah likely wrote this evangelistic narrative during that period.

Thomas Constable picks 780 B.C. as the approximate date of writing (Thomas Constable, *Notes on Jonah*, 2010 Edition, p. 3) (see <http://www.sonlight.org/constable/notes/pdf/jonah.pdf>). Charles C. Ryrie (*Ryrie Study Bible*, [RSB]) dates the writing at 760 B.C. Liberal critics, writing from an anti-supernatural bias, deny the historicity of the book along with Jonah's temporary entombment in the belly of a large fish. Typical of liberals, they "late-date" the writing of the book. "Some regard this book as an allegory, written about 430 B.C. to counter the exclusivism of Ezra and Nehemiah. In this view, Jonah represents disobedient Israel; the sea represents the Gentiles; the great fish is Babylon; and the three days in the fish's belly symbolizes the Babylonian captivity of the Jews" (RSB).

Jesus was not a liberal, and He not only treated Jonah's experience as factual history, but made Jonah's three-day stay in the fish's belly the basis for His prophecy of His own entombment (Matt. 12:39-41). To deny the

saying, 1:1

C 2 Divine command 1:2

D 1 The destination: {2} “Arise, go to Nineveh ³ the great city

D 2 The mission: and cry against it,

D 3 The reason: for their wickedness ⁴ has come up before Me.”⁵

historicity of Jonah is to impugn the credibility and factuality, and therefore the Deity, of Jesus Christ. Whatever lessons may be learned from Jonah, and there are many, the allegorical interpretation of the narrative is not one of them.

³ 1:2 - Nineveh: Nineveh later became the capital city of Assyria, an empire that not only dominated Mesopotamia, but would, in a few decades, extend its ruthless reach into the land of Israel. Here is Constable’s description of Nineveh (*Notes on Jonah*, 2010 Edition, p. 2).
<http://www.soniclight.org/constable/notes/pdf/jonah.pdf>

Nineveh stood on the eastern bank of the Tigris River. It had walls 100 feet high and 50 feet thick, and the main one, punctuated by 15 gates, was over seven and one-half miles long. The total population was probably about 600,000 including the people who lived in the suburbs outside the city walls (cf. 4:11). The residents were idolaters and worshipped Asur and Ishtar, the chief male and female deities, as did almost all the Assyrians. Assyria was a threat to Israel’s security (cf. Hos. 11:5; Amos 5:27). This is one reason Jonah refused to go to Nineveh. He feared the people might repent and that God would refrain from punishing Israel’s enemy (4:2).

God would use Assyria to discipline the people of Israel (the northern ten tribes), carrying them into captivity in 722 B.C. Jonah’s aversion to taking a message of judgment to Nineveh was based on his nationalistic fervor. As the narrative will reveal, Jonah knew that God was a merciful God, and that if he warned Nineveh of its coming judgment, the people might repent and thus avert the coming judgment. Jonah did not wish that to happen. He wanted Assyria judged by God so the empire could not damage his own people, Israel. God used Jonah’s disobedience and subsequent repentance to reveal His own evangelistic heart. God extends mercy amid coming judgment.

⁴ 1:2 - their wickedness has come up before Me: God takes careful note of evil in the world, not only in individuals, but in nations. “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, watching the evil and the good” (Prov. 15:3). Similarly, the outcry of the exceedingly grave sin of Sodom and Gomorrah had so caught Yahweh’s attention that He and two angels came down to see if the cities were as evil as reports that had reached heaven (Gen. 18:20-21). We all know how that investigation turned out (Gen. 19:1-29). Four hundred years before the exodus from Egypt, God was scrutinizing the nations of the land of Canaan. By the time of Israel’s exodus, the nations of Canaan would have maxed out their quota of evil. God would send Israel to judge them in conquest (Exod. 15:13-16). On an individual level, there is such a thing as sin that leads to (physical) death (1 John 5:16-17). The United States of America is edging ever closer to maxing out its quota of evil (Romans 1:18-32), even as it spends itself ever closer into insolvency. In the case of Nineveh, God had determined to judge the people for their evil. As the narrative turns out, however, reprieve was still possible if repentance ensued.

⁵ 1:2 - before me: The Hebrew idiom reads, literally, “their wickedness has ascended to My face.” (The English word “presence” translates the Heb. “face” (*paneh*, plural *panim*, 6440). The evil of the people of the city of Nineveh had arisen to the very face of God. The irony is that in the next verse (1:3), Jonah sought to flee from the face of Yahweh! Sin, I might note, is *never* logical!

C 3 Prophetic disobedience 1:3

D 1 Jonah's destination: {3} But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish⁶

D 2 His objective: from the presence of the LORD.

D 3 His arrival at port: So he went down to Joppa,

D 4 found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.⁷

B 2 The Effect of Jonah's Disobedience on the Sailors 1:4-16

C 1 The sailors' battle with the storm 1:4-9

D 1 The great wind 1:4

E 1 The cause of the wind: {4} The LORD hurled a great wind on the sea⁸

E 2 The result of the wind: and there was a great storm on the sea

E 3 The severity of the wind: so that the ship was about to break up.

D 2 The fearful sailors 1:5a

E 1 The fear of the sailors: {5} Then the sailors became afraid⁹

E 2 The prayers of the sailors: and every man cried to his god,¹⁰

⁶ 1:3 - flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD: In response to Yahweh's command, Jonah determined to flee the opposite direction from the face (*paneḥ*, 6440) of Yahweh, even though Yahweh had told him that the evil of Nineveh had ascended to His face! Jonah's route to Nineveh would have taken him by land. He determined to sail. Nineveh was north and east; Tarshish was straight west. Tarshish was located on the Atlantic coast side of SW Spain (Constable, p. 9). Jonah was attempting to sail to the edge of the then known world to escape God! Of course, no one can flee from the face of the LORD (Psalm 139:7-12).

⁷ 1:3 - the presence of the LORD: This is the third occurrence of this term. The evil of Nineveh had ascended to the presence (face, *paneḥ*, 6440) of God (1:2). Jonah had arisen to walk to Joppa to flee from the face (*paneḥ*, 6440) of God (1:3). Now he in fact has boarded a ship to flee from the face (*paneḥ*, 6440) of God by sailing westward into the Mediterranean (1:3). Why he thought he could escape the face of God is a mystery. Clearly he did not escape.

⁸ 1:4 - the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea: Not to be thwarted by Jonah's disobedience, Yahweh Himself erects a substantial barrier to his progress. Clearly, Yahweh exerts His Sovereignty over the forces of nature to accomplish His own will.

⁹ 1:5 - the sailors became afraid: These men were not novices. They undoubtedly had years of experience sailing the Mediterranean. It takes a monster storm to make hardened sailors fearful. This was a monster storm, engineered by God Himself.

¹⁰ 1:5 - every man cried to his god: We have no idea how religious these sailors were, but their sailing career was foremost in their mind. Now they fear for their very lives, and they each cry out in desperation to his own god for salvation from this mighty tempest.

E 3 The desperation of the sailors: and they threw the cargo ¹¹ which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them.

D 3 The apathy of Jonah 1:5b

E 1 His retirement below: But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down

E 2 His sound sleep: and fallen sound asleep.¹²

D 4 The angry captain 1:6

E 1 His rebuke: {6} So the captain approached him and said, “How is it that you are sleeping?”¹³

E 2 His command: Get up, call on your god.¹⁴

E 3 His motivation: Perhaps your god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish.”¹⁵

¹¹ 1:5 - threw the cargo ... into the sea: This act shows the desperation of the sailors. Only the ship's cargo could make their voyage profitable. Only the ship's cargo would guarantee them a paycheck. To throw the cargo overboard meant financial hardship. Yet, since their very lives were in danger, they participated in the unthinkable – they jettisoned the ship's cargo.

¹² 1:5 - sound asleep: Jonah presents a remarkable contrast to the sailors. They were all frantically doing their part to stave off disaster. They had thrown the cargo overboard, they were undoubtedly hard at work on the oars (see 1:13), and they were all praying. Jonah quietly disappeared from view, not venturing to help out at all. He was not even praying! He was fast asleep. How Jonah could sleep in a storm like that and with a conscience he was searing, I do not know. But asleep he was!

¹³ 1:6 - How is it that you are sleeping? This is delicious irony. Jonah cannot even escape the notice of the ship's captain. How on earth can he possibly escape the notice of Yahweh?

¹⁴ 1:6 - call on your god: Tragically, the unbelieving world sometimes have higher standards for us than we do for ourselves. Jonah might not be much help in rowing or securing the tackle above deck, but at least he could pray. And he was not doing so. All the unbelievers were praying, but the believer was not.

¹⁵ 1:6 - concerned about us so that we will not perish: The captain's theology was impeccable. That is exactly the kind of God Jonah was running away from. God was indeed concerned, not only for the sailors, but for the Ninevites, and even for Jonah. He wanted none of them to perish. But God was here resorting to extreme measures to ensure the salvation of all. God is even able to take bad (Jonah's disobedience) and bring about good through it – the salvation of the sailors, the salvation of the Ninevites, and the rehabilitation of Jonah.

D 5 The random expose 1:7

E 1 {7} The impulse of the sailors: Each man said to his mate, “Come, let us cast lots”¹⁶

E 2 The purpose of the lot: so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us.”

E 3 Their casting of lots: So they cast lots

E 4 The accuracy of the lot: and the lot fell on Jonah.¹⁷

D 6 The fearful interrogation 1:8-9

E 1 The sailors' interrogation 1:8

G 1 Their demand to know the reason for the storm: {8} Then they said to him, “Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us?”

G 2 Jonah’s occupation: What is your occupation?

G 3 Jonah’s origin: And where do you come from?

G 4 Jonah’s geography: What is your country?

G 5 Jonah’s nation: From what people are you?”

¹⁶ 1:7 - Come, let us cast lots: This seems, on the surface to be a ship-wide spontaneous response to the intense storm. Was it God who actually inspired the idea? The sailors apparently operated under the theological framework that misfortune, especially life-threatening misfortune, could be attributed to someone’s culpability (John 9:1-2). From what we know from elsewhere in God’s Word, that may be true or it may not be true.

In the case of Job (see chs. 1-2), it was not his guilt that brought about his trials, but it was precisely the opposite – his integrity! In the case of the man born blind, it was the glory of God that engineered his blindness (John 9:3). In the case of some Galileans who had been brutally killed by Pilate, they were not worse sinners than other Galileans (Luke 13:1-3). And the eighteen men killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them were not worse sinners than others in Jerusalem (Luke 13:4-5).

In this particular case, however, the sailors were exactly right. The only reason the storm had fallen on them in all its fury was in retaliation for one person’s disobedience. Though the text does not state it, I rather think that it was God who put it in the hearts of these sailors to cast lots to determine culpability. If God could engineer a furious storm, He certainly could engineer motives and impulses in the hearts of sailors.

¹⁷ 1:7 - and the lot fell on Jonah: In a random act of chance, the lot fell unerringly upon Jonah, on whose account the storm had descended. Without this Divinely-guided superstition, Jonah and his deliberate disobedience would never have been discovered. Indeed, God planted this impulse in the minds of the sailors precisely to uncover Jonah’s delinquency. Jonah was not about to reveal his hand, but God forced him to! “The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD” (Prov. 16:33).

- E 2 Jonah's revelation of his God (Maker of Sea and Land!) 1:9
 - G 1 His national origin: {9} He said to them, "I am a Hebrew,
 - G 2 His God: and I fear the LORD God of heaven¹⁸
 - H 1 Creator of the sea: who made the sea
 - H 2 Creator of the dry land: and the dry land."
- C 2 The sailors' battle with Jonah's God: Their futile attempt at saving Jonah 1:10-13
 - D 1 Their consternation at Jonah 1:10
 - E 1 The fear of the sailors: {10} Then the men became extremely frightened¹⁹
 - E 2 The incredulity of the sailors: and they said to him, "How could you do this?"
 - E 3 Their knowledge of his flight: For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD,²⁰
 - E 4 The revelation of Jonah: because he had told them.

¹⁸ 1:9 - I fear the LORD God of heaven: In none of their questions had the frantic sailors asked him who his God was. But by now, if he had not known it before, Jonah senses that it is time to face the jury and tell them the truth. One cannot really separate the Jewish people from the Jewish God, who lives in the heavens (*shamayim*, 8064) and who in fact created the sea and the dry land. By this time Jonah knew it was on his account that God had sent the furious storm.

¹⁹ 1:10 - extremely frightened: Literally, "And they feared – the men (did) – with fear great!" The sailors' imprecise theology happened to be extremely precise at this point. This passenger aboard their ship worshiped the God who had made the sea! They knew exactly what was going on now, and they were even more frightened than they had been. Now they knew they were up against the God who had made the sea and who was opposing them because this passenger was running away from Him, as 1:10 goes on to elaborate.

²⁰ 1:10 - fleeing from the presence of the LORD: This is the fourth and final occurrence of the phrase "presence of the LORD" in Jonah. As indicated previously, the word "presence" translates the Heb. "face" (*pane*, 6440) of Yahweh.

D 2 Their negotiation with Jonah 1:11

- E 1 Their query as to the proper course of action: { 11 } So they said to him, “What should we do to you ²¹ that the sea may become calm for us?”
- E 2 The reason for their query: —for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy.

D 3 The advice of Jonah 1:12

- E 1 His answer of self-sacrifice: { 12 } He said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea.²²”
- E 2 His prediction: Then the sea will become calm for you,
- E 3 His certainty: for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you.”

D 4 The exertion of the sailors on behalf of Jonah 1:13

- E 1 Their attempt to row to land: { 13 } However, the men rowed desperately to return to land ²³
- E 2 Their inability: but they could not,
- E 3 The increasing ferocity of the sea: for the sea was becoming even stormier against them.

²¹ 1:11 - do to you: Somehow, these sailors believed, they had to placate Jonah’s God to stop the sea from raging. Normally, that would have been a primitive, misguided religious belief similar to the child sacrifices offered to Moloch (or Milcom), the god of the Ammonites, and to Chemosh, the god of the Moabites (1 Kings 11:7). Child sacrifices to Moloch were expressly forbidden (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5), prevented (2 Kings 23:10), and stated as a cause for judgment (Jer. 32:35). Child sacrifice to Chemosh was hinted at in 2 Kings 3:26-27, and perhaps alluded to in Num. 21:29 and Jer. 48:46. Chemosh is referenced in Num. 21:29; Judges 11:24; 1 Kings 11:7, 33; 2 Kings 23:13; Jer. 48:7, 13, 46. Even in our modern era the primitive Kara tribe of Ethiopia kills infants whose top teeth come in before his bottom teeth (Matthew D. LaPlante, “Ethiopia’s River of Death,” *Christianity Today*, August 2011, pp. 40-41). In the case of these sailors, however, they were exactly right. A human would have to be sacrificed to placate the God of the Sea.

²² 1:12 - throw me into the sea: Though Jonah previously had disappeared from sight into the ship’s hold and was sleeping instead of praying, now he understood exactly what was happening. Perhaps it was prophetic intuition, or perhaps God had revealed it to him – he was the cause of the tempest. He also knew, though we are not told how, that the sea would stop its raging once he was cast overboard.

²³ 1:13 - the men rowed desperately to return to land: Despite the life-threatening storm and Jonah’s instructions, the sailors attempted to save his life. However, they were unsuccessful. God merely increased the intensity of the wind, and thus, the waves.

C 3 The sailors' salvation through faith in Jonah's God 1:14-16

D 1 Their plea for mercy from Yahweh 1:14

E 1 The object of their prayer: {14} Then they called on the LORD ²⁴ and said,

E 2 The earnestness of their prayer: “We earnestly pray, O LORD,

E 3 Their request to live: do not let us perish on account of this man’s life

E 4 Their plea for clemency: and do not put innocent blood on us; ²⁵

E 5 Their rationale – the Sovereignty of Yahweh: for You, O LORD, have done as You have pleased.” ²⁶

D 2 Their successful sacrifice of Jonah 1:15

E 1 Their abandonment of Jonah to the sea: {15} So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, ²⁷

E 2 The calming of the sea: and the sea stopped its raging. ²⁸

²⁴ 1:14 - they called on the LORD: Though each sailor had previously prayed to his own god (1:5), with one accord they all now prayed to the God of Jonah and the Hebrews – the God of the heavens who had made the sea and the dry land (1:9). Entirely without Jonah’s intention, evangelism among the Gentiles was taking place! This abrupt turn of events illustrates the theme of this book: “Mercy Amid Judgment.”

²⁵ 1:14 - do not put innocent blood on us: The sailors knew they were in danger of losing their lives because of Jonah’s wrong – his flight away from his God. But the sailors also did not wish to take another man’s life. They knew instinctively that was wrong. Yet confronted with the ferocity of the storm and Jonah’s instructions, they felt they had no choice. They asked for mercy from Yahweh, the God who made the sea. They asked not to be held accountable for the blood of Jonah, whom they termed an “innocent” man. In reality, though, Jonah was not innocent.

²⁶ 1:14 - done as You pleased: These sailors were acknowledging a fundamental truth of the Scriptures – Yahweh is Sovereign – He does exactly as He pleases. See <http://wordexplain.com/Godsovereignty.html>.

²⁷ 1:15 - threw him into the sea: This act ran directly counter to the natural instincts of the sailors. At all costs, it was part of their DNA as mariners to prevent men from being washed overboard, and to attempt to save those who accidentally were. In this instance, they must have cringed as they deliberately threw an “innocent” man overboard. They knew he could not long survive in this storm.

²⁸ 1:15 - the sea stopped its raging: The sailors must have been astonished at the abrupt change in the sea. They knew how long it took a stormy sea to subside even after a storm passed on to another locale. This storm was utterly different. There was an immediate calming effect upon the sea. The waves were fierce enough to plunge Jonah far beneath the surface so that he could not swim up to safety (see Jonah 2:2-3, 5-6). Once Jonah’s demise was secured (barring Divine intervention), the sea must have become instantly becalmed!

D 3 Their sacrificial fear of Yahweh 1:16

E 1 Their fear of Yahweh: {16} Then the men feared the LORD greatly,²⁹

E 2 Their sacrifice to Yahweh: and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD³⁰

E 3 Their vows to Yahweh: and made vows.³¹

²⁹ 1:16 - the men feared the LORD greatly: The fear of Yahweh is, indeed, a healthy fear. It is not difficult to see why this phrase was used! The sailors came within an inch of having their ship break apart in the pounding of the seas. They had found out that Yahweh, the God of Jonah, was creator of the seas. When they had thrown Jonah into the sea to appease Yahweh, the storm abruptly stopped! The text states, literally, “And they feared – the men – with fear great – Yahweh” Who would not be afraid of a God who had so much power that He could cause a huge storm that almost killed you, and then when you placated Him, he abruptly stopped the storm? That is what we today call in the vernacular “a no-brainer.”

The problem with most people is that they do NOT fear Yahweh! People have willfully distorted who God is (Rom. 1:18-32), so they have become either apathetic toward Him or they deliberately oppose Him. In early August, 2011, it has been obvious, hearing reports of Britons rioting in the UK, that the rioters do not fear the British police, who carry no guns, and who debate whether or not they should use water cannons or plastic bullets. What’s to fear?

The Bible commends the fear of Yahweh. “Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD” (Ps. 34:11). “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever” (Ps. 111:10). “The fear of the LORD leads to life, So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil” (Prov. 19:23). See also Ps. 128:1; Prov. 1:7, 29; 2:5; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:27; 15:16, 33; 16:6; 22:4; 23:17; Acts 9:31; 2 Cor. 5:11.

³⁰ 1:16 - offered a sacrifice to the LORD: Because these sailors “feared Yahweh with a great fear,” they proceeded to worship Him. They offered a sacrifice to Him. We are not told what that sacrifice was. Perhaps it was some animal they kept aboard ship. Whatever it was that they had at hand, they offered a sacrifice. They could do so now that their ship was drifting in calm waters.

³¹ 1:16 - made vows: Their worship did not cease with sacrifice. They also proceeded to make vows. Presumably those vows included activities they would perform on behalf of Yahweh once they reached dry land. It would seem that these sailors, through the miracle they just witnessed – Yahweh’s sovereign and instantaneous control of the sea, had converted to worshipping Yahweh. God’s mercy amid judgment is marvelous to behold! I fully expect to see these sailors when God takes me to the other side of the great beyond, either through death or through His coming to take me to Himself. (See <http://www.wordexplain.com/rapture.html>.)

B 3 The Effect of Jonah's Disobedience on Himself: God's appointment of a great fish to swallow Jonah 1:17

C 1 Appointed ingestion: { 17 } And the LORD appointed ³² a great fish to swallow Jonah,³³

C 2 Appointed duration: and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.³⁴

C 3 Principles from Jonah chapter 1³⁵

³² 1:17 - the LORD appointed: Yahweh's sovereignty is repeatedly on display in this historical narrative. Having precipitated a great storm, having calmed the sea as soon as Jonah was cast overboard, Yahweh now appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah. God was not through with His runaway prophet. He would live to see another day. Yahweh's original summons must be obeyed. Yahweh could have found another prophet to go to Nineveh, but Jonah was the one He wanted to use. And besides, God is in the business of extending mercy amid judgment!

The word *appointed* in 1:17 is *manah*, 4487. This is the first of four appearances in the text of Jonah. God *appointed* a fish (1:17 [2:1 in Hebrew]). God would also appoint a plant (4:6), a worm (4:7), and a scorching east wind (4:8).

³³ 1:17 - a great fish to swallow Jonah: This account is one of the great divides in Scripture. There are those who treat the preservation of Jonah inside a great fish as myth, and those who treat it as history. The narrative of Jonah treats it as an historical event. The text does not state that Jonah was swallowed by a whale, but by a large fish.

John D. Hannah, in his commentary on Jonah which appears in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (http://www.wordexplain.com/Review_The_Bible_Knowledge_Commentary.html#Old_Testament), maintains that the creature was "possibly a mammal, a sperm whale, or perhaps a whale shark."

C. F. Keil (Keil and Delitzsch), in his commentary on this text, states that whales are very rare in the Mediterranean, and that whales have too small a throat to swallow a man. He states rather that the great fish was a large shark or "sea dog," said to be common in the Mediterranean. He gives the account of a sailor in 1758 lost overboard in a storm and swallowed by a "sea-dog (*carcharias*)."

The captain fired a cannon at the creature, whereupon it vomited forth the sailor, who was taken, unharmed, back aboard the ship. For C. F. Keil's view on Jonah and the fish, go to http://books.google.com/books?id=bFIHAAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA398&lpg=PA398&dq=sea-dog+carcharias&source=bl&ots=OOzr19VHL8&sig=9z9YafKuJTOILQ-pWILw3jQ7g8o&hl=en&ei=BlGTrS6JqzsAL9zYySCA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CB0Q6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=sea-dog%20carcharias&f=false

Here is a link to a New York Times account of a pastor who believes Jonah is myth: <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F20715F9345417738DDDAD0994D8415B878CF1D3>.

I take the position that the entire book of Jonah is historical fact. Certainly Jesus took it that way (Matt. 12:39-41; Luke 11:29-32). Chapter 2, of course, is poetic, but the poetry presumes the historicity of the narrative in chapter 1, and, in fact, advances it. Chapter 2 also serves as a bridge to the historical narrative of chapter 3.

There are some artists who depict Jonah swimming on the top of the sea, about to be devoured by a large fish or whale. That is not at all what happened. When Jonah was thrown overboard, there was no whale or fish in sight. As Jonah's prayer reveals (chapter 2), he was carried forcibly down to the bottom of the Mediterranean by a powerful current. At the point of his losing consciousness and dying, Jonah was devoured at the bottom of the sea by a great fish. That actually saved his life.

³⁴ 1:17 - three days and three nights: "The phrase three days and three nights need not be understood as a 72-hour period, but as one 24-hour day and parts of two other days (cf. Esther 4:16 with 5:1 and comments on Matt. 12:40, where Jesus said His burial would be the same length of time as Jonah's interment in the fish's stomach)" (John D. Hannah, op. cit.).

³⁵ Principles from Jonah chapter 1:

What we learn about God from Jonah 1:

1. God's warnings are an act of mercy.
2. God warns people to jar them into repenting.
3. God's goal is for the greatest number of people to get right with Him.

C 4 Jonah as a type of Israel: The following is an excursus by Charles L. Feinberg from p. 138 of *The Minor Prophets*, published in 1976. Feinberg was fluent in Hebrew, having trained for the rabbinate.³⁶

A 2 PRAYER FOR MERCY: Jonah's Prayer for Personal Mercy in the Sea and in the Fish 2

B 1 Desperation: Jonah's Prayer to God from the Fish's Stomach 2:1-9

C 1 **Introduction:** The nature of Jonah's prayer 2:1

D 1 The object of his prayer: { 1 } Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God³⁷

-
4. God is Sovereign. He orchestrates storms so we do what He wants!
 5. God has an uncanny way of using even chance to accomplish His plans!
 6. God has a way of stopping us dead in our tracks when we refuse to serve Him.
 7. God is so powerful He can use even a disobedient Christian to turn unbelievers into believers.
 8. God is very powerful. He can arrange every detail to accomplish His will.
 9. God's judgment of the storm convinced the sailors to worship Him.
 10. Even in judging Jonah, God showed mercy by having a fish swallow him.

What we learn about ourselves from Jonah 1:

1. Sometimes God asks us to do things we do not wish to do.
2. When we refuse to do what God wants, we are saying we are smarter than God.
3. We can only see from our limited perspective. God sees the whole picture.
4. When we do not see our enemies the way God sees them, we drift away from God.
5. There are no foxhole atheists.
6. Sometimes unbelievers have higher standards for us than we do for ourselves.
7. When we run away from God, He has a way of getting our attention!
8. It is foolish for us to think we can hide from God.
9. When Christians run away from God, it doesn't even make sense to unbelievers!
10. When we avoid doing what God wants us to do, our troubles are worse than if we had obeyed in the first place.

³⁶ Jonah a Type of Israel, by Charles Lee Feinberg, p. 138.

Though there is not a word of prediction in the first chapter of this book, yet it is full of prophecy concerning Israel. Jonah is a picture of Israel. Israel, like Jonah, was chosen of God to be His people and His witness. (See Deu 14:2 and Eze 20:5.) As Jonah, so Israel was commissioned of God. (Note Is 43:10-12 and 44:8.) Like Jonah, Israel was disobedient to the will of the Lord. (Cp. Ex. 32:1-4; Judg 2:11-19; Eze 6:1-5; Mk 7:6-9.) Just as Jonah found himself among men of different nationalities, so Israel in disobedience has been scattered throughout the earth. (Deu 4:27; Eze 12:15.) While Jonah was among the heathen they came to a knowledge of God; while Israel is among the nations the Gentiles come to know the Lord. (Note Ro 11:11.) Jonah was miraculously preserved in the sea monster. Israel has been miraculously preserved in the plan of God through the centuries of exile and dispersion. (See Ho 3:3; Jer 30:11 and 31:35-37.) Truly the book of Jonah is a prophecy of Israel.

³⁷ 2:1 - prayed to the LORD his God: Sadly, this is the first reference in the entire narrative of Jonah's having prayed. Jonah did not pray about running the other direction. He just proceeded. When we are disobeying God, we do not wish to speak to Him! Fortunately, it was not the last conversation Jonah and Yahweh would have. To be fair, Jonah also prayed during his near-drowning experience. He references that prayer in his prayer while incarcerated in the fish's stomach.

D 2 The location of his prayer: from the stomach of the fish,³⁸

C 2 Flashback: Jonah's prayer while drowning in the sea 2:2-7

D 1 Jonah's successful cry to Yahweh from the sea-depths: {2} and he said, 2:2

E 1 His first expression

G 1 Jonah's distressed call: "I called out of my distress to the LORD,"³⁹

G 2 Yahweh's answer: And He answered me.

E 2 His second expression

G 1 Jonah's near-death cry: I cried for help from the depth of Sheol;⁴⁰

G 2 Yahweh's response: You heard my voice.

³⁸ 2:1 - from the stomach of the fish: There are critics, of course, who ridicule the historicity of Jonah's having stayed alive in the stomach of the fish. But there is no good reason to question the integrity of the prophet. John Hannah writes, Sperm whales are known to have swallowed unusually large objects including even a 15-foot shark (Frank T. Bullen, *Cruise of the Cachalot Round the World after Sperm Whales*. London: Smith, 1898). Others have written that whale sharks (the *Rhineodon Typicus*) have swallowed men who later were found alive in the sharks' stomachs

More to the point, it seems that, once Jonah had escaped his harrowing, near-drowning experience, he found himself in the dark of the fish's stomach. That place must have reeked. Evidently the fish had swallowed enough air with sufficient oxygen content not only to keep Jonah alive, but lucid. It is helpful to understand that Jonah actually prayed two prayers. His first prayer was on his turbulent descent. His second prayer was from the belly of the fish. In his second prayer, he recounted his first prayer, to which he referred in 2:2. In 2:3-7, Jonah recounts his harrowing journey to the floor of the sea. In 2:8-9, Jonah returns to real-time, praying from his entrapped confinement in the fish's belly.

³⁹ 2:2 - I called out of my distress to the LORD: Those who are familiar with Hebrew poetry will understand that it rhymes ideas, not sounds. There are four lines to the initial part of Jonah's prayer, in which he recounts his prayer while in the sea. There is a delayed parallelism that occurs here: line 1 parallels line 3; line 2 parallels line 4. In the first line Jonah called out of his distress to Yahweh. In the second line Jonah acknowledged Yahweh's response: "And He answered me." In the third line Jonah uses synthetic parallelism, in which he expands on (or synthesizes) the information given in line 1. We understand from line 1 that Jonah was distressed when he cried out to God. Now in line 3 we are given the added information that he was near the point of death. (Sheol is the place of the dead.) In line 2 we are told that Yahweh answered Jonah. In line 4 Jonah recounts, "You heard my voice." This is synonymous parallelism, in which the second member (line 4) says the same thing as the first member (line 2), but in a slightly different way.

⁴⁰ 2:2 - from the depth of Sheol: Sheol is the place of the dead. It is often accompanied by the direction "down." Here, the word "depth" is consistent not only with the downward direction of Sheol, but with the bottom part of the sea, the place to which Jonah descended. Some, including J. Vernon McGee, believe that Jonah actually died, and that God resurrected him. I do not believe that is what Jonah meant. I believe rather that he retained his consciousness, but was, indeed, very near death. In his view he descended to Sheol, but never actually stepped across that threshold.

D 2 Jonah's acknowledgment of Yahweh's sovereign sea-discipline 2:3

E 1 Yahweh's disciplinary action

G 1 {3} "For You had cast me into the deep,"⁴¹

G 2 Into the heart of the seas,

E 2 Jonah's hopeless submersion

G 1 And the current engulfed me.⁴²

G 2 All Your breakers and billows passed over me.

D 3 Jonah's resolve to pray toward the temple 2:4

E 1 His judgmental exile: {4} "So I said, 'I have been expelled from Your sight."⁴³E 2 His resolve to pray to Yahweh in His temple: Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple.'⁴⁴

⁴¹ 2:3 - You had cast me into the deep: It was the sailors who had cast Jonah into the deep (1:15), but Jonah understood the sovereignty of Yahweh in all this. Yahweh had given the sailors no other alternative – they had no choice but to cast Jonah overboard if they wished to survive. So it was, in reality, Yahweh who had cast Jonah into the deep.

⁴² 2:3 - the current engulfed me: The word current is the Heb. *nachar* (5104). The vast majority of the time it is translated as *river* or *rivers*, less often as *stream* or *streams*. Here, the word *current* is an appropriate translation. Anyone who has watched a flood on a river of any size understands that there are strong undertow currents that make swimming in a flooded river extremely dangerous. On a seacoast, there are places where a strong rip current flows at a fast pace out to sea perpendicular to the shoreline. Jonah was thrown overboard in a violent storm. I believe that God arranged that a powerful undertow current, a river within the sea, pulled the helpless Jonah virtually straight down to a considerable depth. No matter how hard Jonah would have tried to swim upward, he was powerless to extricate himself. The sensation Jonah experienced must have been terrifying!

⁴³ 2:4 - "I have been expelled from Your sight": Jonah, entrapped in this powerful, under-sea current, understood that he was being judged by God. God was judging him and was banishing him from his sight (literally, eyes, *ayin*, 5869).

⁴⁴ 2:4 - I will resolve to look again toward Your holy temple: The imagery, and Jonah's faith here, are poignant. When Solomon had completed the temple of Yahweh and was dedicating it, he prayed a remarkable prayer. Addressing Yahweh, he said, "Listen to the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place; hear in heaven Your dwelling place; hear and forgive" (1 Kings 8:30). Solomon understood that God might exile His people to a different land because of their disobedience. But if they there should pray toward the temple in Jerusalem and repent, Solomon asked God to hear their prayer, forgive them, and grant them their supplication (1 Kings 8:46-52). It was precisely in this spirit that Jonah desperately prayed to Yahweh from the doorway to Sheol as he was helplessly driven to the sea-bottom. And it was in this spirit that Daniel regularly prayed toward Jerusalem from his house in Babylon (Dan. 6:10). This resolve of under-sea Jonah to look, as best he knew, from the bottom of the Mediterranean toward the temple in Jerusalem and pray an anguished prayer to Yahweh, was the turning point in his journey. Yahweh did indeed hear Jonah's prayer, and He answered it!

D 4 The depths of Jonah's distress 2:5-6a

E 1 His engulfment by the sea 2:5

G 1 His near drowning: {5} “Water encompassed me to the point of death.”⁴⁵

G 2 His entrapment: The great deep engulfed me,⁴⁶

G 3 His encounter with sea weed: Weeds were wrapped around my head.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ 2:5 - Water encompassed me to the point of death: Literally, “Water encompassed me even to the soul (*nephesh*, 3515). *Nephesh* occurs frequently in the OT with a wide variety of translations. In the NASB, it is most frequently translated with some variation of soul, souls, or soul’s (251X). Less often, it is translated as person or persons (78X). In our language today, Jonah might say, “Water encompassed me within an inch of my life.” His soul, or life was almost extinguished. Here, Jonah describes the utter helplessness and doom of his condition. First, he was at death’s door, surrounded by water.

⁴⁶ 2:5 - the great deep engulfed me: “Great deep” translates the single word *tehom* (8415), used only here in Jonah. Three significant uses occur in Genesis. It refers to the primeval ocean in Gen. 1:2 – “darkness was over the surface of the deep (*tehom*)” (so also in Proverbs 8:27). In Gen. 7:11 it refers to subterranean water: “the fountains of the great deep (*tehom*) burst open;” likewise in Gen. 8:2 “the fountains of the deep (*tehom*) and the floodgates of the sky were closed.” In Exodus 15:5, 8; Isa. 51:10 (where it is synonymous with sea (*yam*, 3220) it refers to the waters of the Dead Sea, through which Israel crossed and which inundated the Egyptian army. In Job 38:16, sea (*yam*, 3220) and deep (*tehom*) are synonymous. The same is true in Psalm 33:7; 106:9 and 135:6. Here (Job 2:5) it is used as a poetic synonym for sea (*yam*, 3220), the much more common word in Jonah and in the entire OT. In Jonah, *yam* is used for the sea in 1:4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15; 2:3. Here, *tehom* could just as easily be translated “ocean.”

⁴⁷ 2:5 - Weeds were wrapped around my head: Jonah, in his prayer to Yahweh from the stomach of the fish, continued to relive his descent into the ocean depths. “Weeds” translates *suph*, 5488. In the first two occurrences of *suph* in the OT, it refers to the reeds along the Nile River (Exod. 2:3, 5). Most often it refers to the Sea of Reeds (*yam suph*). Most translations translate *yam suph* as Red Sea, but Sea of Reeds is more accurate. That there were reeds (*suph*) in the Red Sea need no more dictate that it was a shallow sea than that the presence of weeds (*suph*) in the Mediterranean dictate that it is a shallow sea. Probably the weeds to which Jonah referred were seaweed.

Now seaweed, a large form of algae, can be detached from its hold on rocks in shallow sea water if battered repeatedly by surf and wind. It can drift thousands of miles. It is possible, therefore, that Jonah chanced to encounter some drifting seaweed. But the context of Jonah 2 indicates more likely that Jonah did not encounter the seaweed which wrapped around his neck until he bumped the bottom of the sea. Jonah referred to seaweed to indicate how deep Yahweh had plunged him into the ocean. He was indeed at the point of death!

Seaweed needs light to grow. So the presence of seaweed indicates a relatively shallow ocean depth of 50 meters (160 feet) to 70 meters (224 feet), in all probability, less than 50 meters (see the comments on “roots of the mountains” below). The deepest growing seaweed in New Zealand waters, for example, is 70 meters (see <http://www.nzunderwaterlife.000space.com/seaweed.html>).

E 2 His descent to the floor of the sea 2:6a

G 1 The depth of his descent: {6} “I descended to the roots of the mountains.⁴⁸

G 2 The hopelessness of his prospect: The earth with its bars was around me forever,⁴⁹

D 5 Jonah's successful prayer to Yahweh before losing consciousness 2:6b-7

E 1 Jonah's real-time acknowledgment of Yahweh's preservation: But You have brought up my life from the pit,⁵⁰ O LORD my God. 2:6b

E 2 His prior prayer: I remembered the LORD,

E 3 His semi-conscious condition: {7} “While I was fainting away,⁵¹

⁴⁸ 2:6 - roots of the mountains: Anyone familiar with ocean topography understands that there are more mountains and canyons below sea level than there are above, inasmuch as seventy percent of the earth's surface is covered with water. Jonah had evidently been plunged to the bottom of an ocean canyon, and he could actually see mountains on either side of him abruptly extending upward. Jonah was certainly at the bottom of the sea floor, but he must have been fairly near a continental land mass. I say that because at a depth of 50 meters (160 feet), there is less than one percent of the light available that there is on the surface (cf.

<http://www.nzunderwaterlife.000space.com/seaweed.html>). At that depth, virtually nothing is visible. Since Jonah could detect that he was at the base of the mountains, his depth must have been less than 50 meters, else he could not have seen the mountains in the darkness. Even when God works miracles, He typically exercises a certain economy. By that I mean that He operates within the laws of nature that He Himself has set up. For example, God could have teleported Jonah to land, but He did not do that. He used a great fish to transport him. A great fish swallowing a man is not normal, but it is not outside the realm of either possibility or actual history. And so, in this case, it is proper to assume that the availability of light at a certain ocean depth is a limiting factor in determining Jonah's depth.

⁴⁹ 2:6 - forever: Jonah, at the bottom of the earth in an ocean canyon, felt as though the prison bars of the earth had closed upon him for all time. This does not mean that he denied the existence of a resurrection, but only that he felt as though his present life on earth was to be forever concluded.

⁵⁰ 2:6 - You have brought up my life from the pit: Pit translates *shachath* (7845), used primarily in poetic passages in the OT. The pit (*shachath*) is synonymous with *Sheol* (7585), the place of the dead in Job 33:18; Ps. 16:10. Here, “pit” means that Yahweh has brought Jonah back from the point of death. Jonah has briefly switched back to his vantage point in the belly of the fish, grateful that Yahweh had preserved him from certain death.

⁵¹ 2:6-7 - I remembered the LORD while I was fainting away: Jonah was just about to lose consciousness while he was praying. How could he retain consciousness long enough to sink even to a modest depth of 100-150 feet (31-47 meters)? The answer is complicated by the fact that Jonah undoubtedly held his breath when he was tossed overboard. (He had plenty of time to prepare himself). A human body with lungs full of air is buoyant and, under ordinary circumstances, with minimal swimming effort, Jonah should have arisen to the surface and floated. But these were not ordinary circumstances. Yahweh had deliberately arranged a violent storm and an ocean current powerful enough to drag Jonah relentlessly downward. He never had a meaningful chance to swim up to the surface.

Assuming Jonah had gathered a big quantity of air into his lungs, how long could he hold his breath before passing out? I have often held my breath for two minutes while driving a car (a tactic I have used to ward off sleepiness). Once, in my younger days, I held it for three minutes. Before the advent of scuba gear, Greek sponge divers worked at a depth of 30 meters (96 feet) for 3-5 minutes at a time, depending on their individual lung capacity (<http://www.divingheritage.com/greecekern2.htm>). Jonah was probably not in that kind of physical condition. But let's say that he could have held his breath for two to three minutes. With the relentless pull of the current down to the ocean bottom, and with his mind racing at breakneck speed, Jonah had plenty of time to pray toward Jerusalem, beg Yahweh for mercy, notice that he had seaweed wrapped around his neck, and even to survey wildly his surroundings at the ocean bottom before beginning to pass out. At the last instant, the large fish swallowed him, perhaps even before he had let go his breath and inhaled sea water. But it was close! God is never late, but He is

E 4 The arrival of his prayer: And my prayer came to You,

E 5 The location of Yahweh: Into Your holy temple.⁵²

C 3 Resolution: Jonah's resolve within the fish to keep his vow to God 2:8-9

D 1 Jonah's indictment of idolaters for unfaithfulness 2:8

E 1 {8} "Those who regard vain idols"⁵³

E 2 Forsake their faithfulness,

D 2 Jonah's sacrificial determination to pay his vow 2:9a

E 1 His anticipated sacrifice: {9} But I will sacrifice to You

E 2 His anticipated audible thanksgiving: With the voice of thanksgiving.⁵⁴

E 3 His anticipated fulfillment of his vow: That which I have vowed I will pay.⁵⁵

rarely early. He wanted to leave a lasting impression on Jonah. Obviously, in view of Jonah's prayer (Jonah 2) and his subsequent obedience (Jonah 3), God had succeeded in capturing Jonah's attention!

⁵² 2:7 - Into Your holy temple: Jonah had already directed his attention to Yahweh in His "holy temple" in Jerusalem during his wild descent into the ocean (2:4). Now, lodged safely, if wretchedly, in the fish's stomach, Jonah gratefully acknowledged that his prior prayer had actually reached Yahweh in His "holy temple" (2:7).

⁵³ 2:8 - those who regard vain idols: Jonah had never been guilty of idolatry. He had been guilty, however, of disobeying the one true God. Here he expressed his abhorrence of idolatry.

⁵⁴ 2:9 - But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving. Jonah, I believe, here contrasted His anticipated worship of the true God with the futile worship of idolaters. He anticipated that he would some day step into the temple in Jerusalem and bring sacrifices, not only of an appropriate animal, but also the sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15). He would praise God for His faithful deliverance of himself from death. Here he expressed faith that God, who had delivered him from drowning, would also deliver him from entombment in the fish's stomach. The word voice / sound (*qol*, 6963) signifies that which is audible. Sacrificing with thanksgiving means audible, public praise including, but not restricted to, songs of thanksgiving.

⁵⁵ 2:8 - that which I have vowed I will pay: On his descent into the depths of the sea, Jonah was fighting for his life. He scarcely had time to observe his surroundings, and to offer up an emergency prayer to Yahweh in His holy temple, and to assess the odds of his own survival. Yahweh had answered his prayer and saved him from drowning. Now that he was entombed in the fish's belly, he had time to ponder and reflect. He spent much time in prayer. He came to the conclusion that, given a second chance, this time he would obey Yahweh and take the message of judgment to Nineveh, even though he feared they would respond positively. But he went a step farther. He made a vow. I believe his vow was that if God would save him from the fish's belly, he would indeed take the message to Nineveh.

D 3 Jonah's acknowledgment that salvation is from Yahweh: Salvation is from the LORD.⁵⁶ 2:9b

B 2 Regurgitation: Yahweh's Answer to Jonah's Prayer (His causing the fish to vomit Jonah on to dry land 2:10

C 1 The command of Yahweh: {10} Then the LORD commanded the fish,⁵⁷

C 2 The regurgitation of the fish: and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.⁵⁸

C 3 Jonah and Israel: The following is a statement by Charles Feinberg, pp. 141-142 on the typology of Jonah in relation to Israel as found in Jonah 2.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ 2:9 - salvation is from the LORD: No doubt Jonah referred to his own salvation from drowning as well as to his anticipated salvation from imprisonment inside the fish. But his words had a greater reference than he thought. The salvation of the people of Nineveh would also be from Yahweh! Indeed, our salvation, two and a half millennia later, is also from Yahweh! And Yahweh's salvation comes through His anointed Messiah/King, Jesus, whose very name means, "Yahweh is Salvation." There follows an excursus by Charles Feinberg on "Salvation of the Lord" (p. 142-143):

Beyond all things else Israel needs to learn today the great pronouncement of the prophet Jonah: "Salvation is of the Lord." The people of Israel know they are in perilous times; they know that hostile forces are arrayed against them on every hand; they know how diabolical the enemy can be in his persecutions. But they do not know that salvation is of the Lord. They are looking for deliverance in the political sphere, hoping against hope that the nations of the world may be able to solve their problems. They are seeking deliverance in the social sphere, trusting that education and social culture will curb the hostile desires of their sworn enemies. They are trying for deliverance in the military sphere, attempting a long last to take up the cudgel on their own behalf. But these and a thousand other devices are all unavailing. Deliverance, safety, and salvation can be Israel's only through the Lord. And this salvation is imparted through the Person and work of One alone, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel.

⁵⁷ 2:10 - Then the LORD commanded the fish: The fish had no intention of releasing its human cargo. But just as Yahweh arranged a violent storm, just as He had prompted the casting of lots, just as He had arranged for the disposition of the lots, just as He had convinced the sailors they had no choice other than to throw Jonah overboard, just as He had arranged a powerful current to convey Jonah relentlessly to the bottom of a relatively shallow portion of the sea, and just as He had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah at the right time with enough oxygen in his stomach to permit Jonah to survive, so now Yahweh prompted the fish to regurgitate the human he had swallowed – not in the middle of the sea, but on dry land!

⁵⁸ 2:10 - dry land: By all rights, the great fish with the stomach ache should have vomited out in the ocean. Under the Sovereign hand of God, He vomited Jonah on the seashore. Presumably Jonah found himself on the eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean. We are not told if it was near Joppa, his prior port of departure, or somewhere farther north or south. That is not germane to the history. We are told only that he was vomited upon dry land and that Yahweh caused the fish to vomit. Jonah had prayed for mercy and mercy he had received. Now, would Jonah carry out his vow? That is the subject of the next chapter.

⁵⁹ Jonah and Israel, by Feinberg, pp. 14:

Just as the events of chapter 1 picture the history of Israel, so does chapter 2 give further details of the type of God's chosen people in the life history of Jonah.

Though Jonah was preserved of the Lord in the belly of the fish, he was at the same time under the chastening hand of God. During her exile among the nations Israel too, though miraculously preserved in spite of the persecutions of Satan's hosts, undergoes the chastening of the Lord. Deuteronomy 28 is a remarkable portrayal with the greatest of fidelity of the condition of Israel when in worldwide dispersion. She will be oppressed, knowing no ease nor rest for body or soul, life in constant danger and fear. (Read carefully Deu 28:58-68.)....

A 3 EXTENSION OF MERCY: God's Extension of Mercy to Nineveh Because of Her Repentance at Jonah's Message of Judgment 3

B 1 Jonah's Obedience to God's Renewed Call 3:1-4

C 1 Yahweh's recommissioning of Jonah 3:1-2

D 1 The second word of Yahweh to Jonah: {1} Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time,⁶⁰ saying, 3:1

D 2 The essence of the command 3:2

E 1 Destination: {2} "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city"⁶¹

E 2 Proclamation: and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you."⁶²

C 2 Jonah's obedience 3:3-4

D 1 Jonah's trip: His departure to Nineveh in obedience to the word of the Lord 3:3

E 1 His obedience: {3} So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh⁶³ according to

⁶⁰ 3:1 - Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time: This is, indeed, the second time the word of Yahweh came to Jonah. The first time was in 1:1. Yahweh had explained the contents of that message in 1:2. Jonah disobeyed that word from Yahweh, and in the process, almost died because of Yahweh's discipline. This time he obeyed (3:3). The word that came to Jonah is recorded in 3:2.

John Hannah (p. 22) has pointed out that God has given others a second chance to serve Him. He mentioned, for example, Peter (Matt. 26:69-75 cf. John 21:15-17) and John Mark (Acts 13:5, 13 cf. Acts 15:36-41 and 2 Tim. 4:11).

Hannah also mentioned that God does not always give His servants a second opportunity to serve Him, but instead uses someone else. He gave no examples. Let me include some: Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron who used "strange fire" (Lev. 10:1-3); King Saul, who offered a sacrifice himself instead of waiting for Samuel (1 Sam. 13:8-14); Uzzah, who reached out to steady the ark of the covenant (2 Sam. 6:6-7); the disobedient prophet who came from Judah to Bethel (1 Kings 13); Ananias and Saphira, who misrepresented the amount of money they had given to the apostles (Acts 5:1-11).

⁶¹ 3:2 - go to Nineveh the great city: This time Jonah obeyed and proceeded to the city. There follows an observation by Feinberg (p. 144) on the association of Jonah and Nineveh.

It is known that Ninevites worshiped the fish god, Dagon, part man and part fish. Interestingly enough, "Oannes" (with "I" before it the name spells Jonah in the New Testament) was the name of one of the incarnations of Dagon. Too, there is an Assyrian mound "Nebi Yunas" (the prophet Jonah). The archaeologist Botta associated the two with Nineveh and uncovered the walls of the old city.

⁶² 3:2 - proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you: Unlike the first time, Yahweh did not here reveal to Jonah what the message would be, only that he was to go to Nineveh. There it would be told him what to say. Jonah had already balked at proclaiming a message of judgment. This message would probably be no different, but Yahweh did not here reveal if the message had changed.

⁶³ 3:3 - Jonah arose and went to Nineveh: What did Jonah look like after he had been in the stomach of a great fish for portions of three days and nights? He cannot have smelled very good. One would think that his clothes would have been eaten by the fish's stomach acid, and that even his skin, at the very least, would have been bleached by his environment. Obviously, God supernaturally preserved Jonah. Did the prophet take the time to stop by his own

the word of the LORD.

E 2 The size of the city: Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city,⁶⁴ a three days' walk.⁶⁵

D 2 Jonah's traverse: {4} Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk;⁶⁶ 3:4

D 3 Jonah's traumatic message: and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown."⁶⁷

home, take a bath, and change into clean clothes? One would think so, but the text does not illuminate the subject. If Jonah did travel to Gath-hepher, his home first, it would have been an additional 500 miles in a straight line from his home to the city of Nineveh. In any event, the journey to Nineveh was a trip of many days. He would have taken the time somewhere along the way to get cleaned up.

⁶⁴ 3:3 - an exceedingly great city: NASB note: "A literal translation: *a great city to God.*" JTB note: According to Hannah, Nineveh was surrounded by two walls – an inner wall and an outer wall. The inner wall was huge. It was 100 feet high and 50 feet wide, and was eight miles in circumference. The outer wall encompassed fields and smaller towns, such as Rehoboth, Ir, Calah, and Resen (cf. Gen. 10:11-12). According to C. F. Keil, quoting Diod. ii. 3, the diameter of the city measured 150 stadia (17 miles). He must therefore be referring to the outer wall, not the inner one. Quoting Niebuhr, Keil states that the circumference of what we today would call the greater metropolitan area, including the outlying towns, would have been about 90 English miles.

⁶⁵ 3:3 - a three day's walk: It is uncertain what this means. It could mean that it took three days to walk through the city from one extremity to the other. Judging by the limited extent of the city's ruins, this seems problematic. Another suggestion is that it would have taken three days to walk around the outer perimeter. That view does not seem to square with 3:4, which seems to picture Jonah walking through the city. "Probably the "three-days walk" describes the time it took to visit the city and its outlying suburbs" (Constable, p. 23). Constable (pp. 23-24), quoting Donald J. Wiseman, "Jonah's Nineveh," Tyndale Bulletin 30 (1979), p. 38 and Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, pp. 487-88, gives another possible explanation:

Another explanation is that the literal meaning of the phrase, namely, "a visit of three days," describes the protocol involved in visiting an important city such as Nineveh. It was customary in the ancient Near East for an emissary from another city-state to take three days for an official visit. He would spend the first day meeting and enjoying the hospitality of his host, the second day discussing the primary purpose of his visit, and the third saying his farewells.⁷⁸ If Jonah was such an emissary, he went as a divine representative to Nineveh's king and other government officials as well as to the people. This explanation suggests that Jonah's preaching may have started with the king and then proceeded to the people rather than the other way around. This view may account better for the king's repentance and his decree to all the people to repent (Heb. sub; vv. 6-9) compared to the traditional view.

This latter explanation, in my view, sounds a bit fanciful, given the existing reading of the text.

⁶⁶ 3:4 - Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk: According to C. F. Keil, quoting Herodotus, 150 stadia (17 miles), the diameter of Nineveh, was a one day's walk. It would make no sense to say that Jonah walked completely through the city and then began to preach. The text states that Jonah *began* to travel a day's journey. The text does not require that he did not begin preaching until after he had completed a day's journey. So Jonah entered the city, traveled an indeterminate distance, and then began to preach on his first day of walking. Nor does the text require that Jonah walked in a straight line. Presumably he wandered about, proclaiming his message briefly at a great number of stations throughout the city (Keil, agreeing with Theodoret). Proceeding as he was, it would have taken him three days to completely cover the city, stopping at point to point along the way to proclaim his message. The text does not indicate that Jonah preached for three days. Indeed, it seems to suggest that the response to Jonah's message was almost instantaneous, meaning on the first day of his preaching.

⁶⁷ 3:4 - Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown: Yahweh gave Jonah a more specific message than at the first (Jonah 1:1-2). Judgment was coming. The city would be overthrown in forty days. The word "overthrown" (*haphak*, 2015) is the same word that Moses used in connection with the judgment of the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, and neighboring cities (Gen. 19:21, 25, 29).

B 2 Nineveh's Resultant Revival 3:5-9

C 1 The penitence of the people 3:5

D 1 Their faith in God: {5} Then the people of Nineveh believed in God;⁶⁸

D 2 Their humility

E 1 Their calling a fast: and they called a fast ⁶⁹E 2 Their clothing in sackcloth: and put on sackcloth ⁷⁰

D 3 Their participation

E 1 from the greatest

E 2 to the least of them.⁷¹C 2 The penitence of the king: {6} When the word reached the king of Nineveh,⁷² 3:6

⁶⁸ 3:5 - Then the people of Nineveh believed in God: This astounding response of the people of Nineveh to the God of Jonah was striking on at least two levels: (1) Jonah's message was a message of enormous negativity, a doomsday message. People do not like to believe negative, doomsday messages about their own country and their own city. What prompted them to believe Jonah? (2) What would have motivated an entire city to be so overwhelmed at the message of a prophet from a distant, small country that they would believe in his foreign God and repent? The only plausible answer can be that God touched their hearts. He made them want to respond.

It is possible that there were some other contributing factors. For example, it is possible that Jonah's "bleached" appearance from having encountered the gastric juices of the fish's stomach could have prompted questions. Why did he look that way? He would have had to explain Yahweh's unique discipline that he had encountered attempting to flee from God. That example of judgment narrowly averted would have added a huge exclamation point at the end of his message. We can not know that, of course. We can only speculate.

John Hannah concludes that invading nations to the north pushing the northern border south within 100 miles of the capital would have made the king and his vulnerable nation receptive to the message of judgment that Jonah proclaimed. Again, that is plausible, but we cannot know for certain. All we know is that God softened the hearts of the king and his fellow-Ninevites so that they responded in faith to Yahweh (cf. Ezek. 11:19; 36:26).

The actions of the people described in Jonah 3:5 are summary, yet descriptive. A more precise sequence is explained in Jonah 3:6-9. God's response to their penitence by withholding judgment is described in 3:10.

⁶⁹ 3:5 - fast, sackcloth: According to Constable, p. 25), fasting and putting on sackcloth exhibited an attitude of humility in the Middle East (see 2 Sam. 3:31, 35; 1 Kings 21:27; Neh. 9:1-2; Isa. 15:3; 58:5; Dan. 9:3; Joel 1:13-14).

⁷⁰ 3:6 - sackcloth: (*saq*, 8242) – rough, sturdy fabric designed to store grain. Like today's burlap, this fabric was not designed for clothes. To wear it was a sign of grief, humility, and mourning. See the note on ashes, below.

⁷¹ 3:5 - from the greatest to the least of them: From the top echelons of government and high society to the lowest poverty-stricken slave, all the citizens of Nineveh believed Jonah, believed in Jonah's God, and participated in the symbols of humility and repentance. Nowhere else in recorded history is there such a massive positive response to one message as this recorded in the book of Jonah. The faith of all the people of Nineveh in God has to rank as the greatest miracle in the entire book (Charles L. Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 1976, pp. 144-145).

⁷² 3:6 - the king of Nineveh: The universal faith in Yahweh and participation in the symbols of repentance and humility described in 3:5 is aptly illustrated in the example of Nineveh's king in 3:6. It is possible that the fasting and wearing of sackcloth by the populace erupted spontaneously among the people and was subsequently seized upon by the king as appropriate for codification into law. But it is also possible that verse 5 is a general statement of what happened and that vv. 6-9 give a more detailed sequence of events (see also Constable, 2010 edition, p. 26). I lean slightly toward the latter interpretation.

- D 1 His exit from the throne: he arose from his throne,
 - D 2 His laying aside his robe: laid aside his robe from him,
 - D 3 His covering himself with sackcloth: covered *himself* with sackcloth
 - D 4 His sitting on ashes: and sat on the ashes.⁷³
- C 3 The proclamation of the king 3:7-9
- D 1 The agreement of the government 3:7
 - E 1 The decree of the king: {7} He issued a proclamation and it said, “In Nineveh by the decree of the king
 - E 2 The consent of his nobles: and his nobles:⁷⁴
 - D 2 A total fast 3:7b
 - E 1 Applicable to man and animal: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock⁷⁵ taste a thing.
 - E 2 The exclusion of food and liquid: Do not let them eat or drink water.
 - D 3 Abject humility – the covering of man and beast with sackcloth: {8} “But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; 3:8
 - D 4 Earnest prayer: and let men call on God⁷⁶ earnestly

⁷³ 3:6 - ashes: (*epher*, 665) – A sign of mourning and great grief on account of or in anticipation of a great calamity (2 Sam. 13:19; Est. 4:1, 3; Job 2:8; Ps. 102:9; Isa. 58:5; 61:3; Jer. 6:26; Ezek. 27:30; Jon. 3:6) and / or humble contrition and repentance at having offended God (Job 42:6; Dan. 9:3; Jon. 3:6). Ashes are often associated with sackcloth and fasting. The king was leading the way in expressing abject humility and repentance toward God!

⁷⁴ 3:7 - by the decree of the king and his nobles: Every official has a supporting cast of administrative officials who help him govern his kingdom. This decree, which imposed requirements on every citizen, was to be seen as having the broadest base of official support.

⁷⁵ 3:8 - man, beast, herd, or flock: To the western mind it is amazing that the king applied his edict of self-deprivation (no food or water) not only to humans, but also to all domesticated animals! Not only so, but he required not only humans, but also domesticated animals to be clothed in sackcloth! Obviously, this king wanted to make the maximum impact upon Yahweh in hopes that He might be dissuaded from His judgment of Nineveh in the next 40 days!

⁷⁶ 3:8 - let men call on God earnestly: The God here spoken of is *elohim* (430), the generic word for God, used also, for example, in Gen. 1:1. *Elohim* is a plural name and means “Strong One.” Most scholars say *Elohim* is a plural of majesty. But in my view, it leaves room for the triune nature of God (see Gen. 1:26: “Then God (Elohim) said, ‘Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...’”).

D 5 Universal repentance

E 1 Concerning wickedness: that each may turn from his wicked way ⁷⁷

E 2 Concerning violence: and from the violence which is in his hands.

C 4 The hope of the king: Divine reprieve! 3:9

D 1 The placation of God's anger: {9} "Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger ⁷⁸

D 2 The survival of his people: so that we will not perish."

B 3 God's Withholding of Judgment 3:10C 1 His observation of Nineveh's departure from evil: {10} When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, ⁷⁹

C 2 His relenting of the promised calamity

D 1 then God relented ⁸⁰ concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them.

D 2 And He did not do it.

C 3 Jonah: A Picture of Israel. (Feinberg, p. 147, states the analogy from Jonah 3.) ⁸¹

⁷⁷ 3:8 - wicked way, violence: Wickedness (*raah*, 7463) and violence (*chamas*, 2555) characterize all societies that depart from the worship of the one true God. The conditions were especially desperate before God sent the world-wide flood in Noah's day (Gen. 6:5, 11-13). As America has slid from its Judaeo-Christian foundation, wickedness and violence have escalated exponentially (Romans 1:18-32).

⁷⁸ 3:9 - withdraw His burning anger: This Assyrian king had a good grasp of this aspect of theology!

⁷⁹ 3:10 - they turned from their wicked way: The people of Nineveh turned from their "wicked (*raah*, 7463) way." Their acts of humility and contrition were not merely outward shows. They actually stopped performing the wicked deeds they had been engaged in! This was a national revival!

⁸⁰ 3:10 - God relented concerning the calamity: "Relented" translates *nacham*, 5162, which appears here in the Niphal verb stem. It means here to "be sorry, moved to pity, have compassion" (*Brown Driver Briggs Lexicon – BDB*). In other words, when God saw that they had changed their wicked ways, He felt compassion for them and decided not to overthrow their city in judgment. We learn from this that God sends messages of judgment in order to dissuade sinners from their evil ways. He hopes that they will turn to Him in faith and that their lives will be changed in response to pronouncements of coming judgment. God is, indeed, a God of mercy, willing to suspend judgment if sinners repent!

⁸¹ Jonah: A Picture of Israel. (Feinberg, p. 147)

Chapter 3, like the previous chapters, prefigures the dealings of God with His chosen people, Israel. After Jonah's restoration to the Lord and to the land, he was recommissioned of God to preach the message God had intended from the first.

When Israel turns to the Lord, when the veil is removed from the heart, when she cries out in truth to the Lord from the midst of her distresses, the Lord will restore her not only to her own land but also to the commission of witnessing to the Lord.

A 4 OBJECT LESSON ABOUT MERCY: God's Object Lesson to Jonah Justifying His Extension of Mercy to Nineveh 4

B 1 Jonah's Displeasure at God's Mercy on Nineveh 4:1-4

- C 1 Jonah's angry displeasure: {1} But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry.⁸²
- C 2 Jonah's protestation of Yahweh's mercy to Nineveh as his rationale for having fled 4:2
- D 1 Jonah's reminder: {2} He prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my *own* country?"⁸³

This commission is stated repeatedly in the Scriptures. (Note Is 43:10, 12.) Israel was to be a priestly nation ministering God's will among the nations (Ex 19:5-6).

This commission will be fulfilled in the future. Men from all nations of the earth will realize that Israel is the repository of the truth of God (Zec 8:20-23). While the nations of the world will be the plowmen and vine-dressers in that day, Israel will ultimately accomplish God's will for her as priests of the Lord and ministers of God. (See Is 61:5-6.) In that time, Israel, as Jonah of old, will be armed with the message of God for all peoples....

⁸² 4:1 - it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry: Jonah's nationalistic fervor is the motive for his displeasure. He knew that Assyria was God's future instrument of judgment against disobedient Israel. Any repentance in Assyria would prepare the way for that nation's disciplinary invasion of Israel. That is the last thing Jonah wanted.

Jonah knew all the promises God had made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. God had made an unconditional covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15). In His unilateral covenant Yahweh had bequeathed land to Abraham's descendants – the land that stretched “from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates” (Gen. 15:18). Earlier, Yahweh had promised Abram that He would give that same piece of real estate to Abram and his descendants forever (Gen. 13:14-15).

Now Yahweh was in the process of preserving alive from judgment the very people who would savagely slaughter the nation of Israel and then rip the survivors of that nation out of the very land that He had previously promised in perpetuity to them! God would remove the Jewish people and the vast majority would never come back! As far as Jonah was concerned, God's mercy was destroying His fidelity to His chosen people. Jonah grew angry with God for what he perceived to be an irreconcilable contradiction.

⁸³ 4:2 - Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my *own* country: Jonah, in his prayer, displayed his limited perspective. He was looking at the whole turn of events from the perspective of “his country” – Israel. Yahweh looks at events from a vastly larger perspective – the entire world of people He has created. Jonah's perspective was national; Yahweh's, global. From Jonah's limited perspective, he was justified in his displeasure at Yahweh. From God's perspective, Jonah was not justified. He needed to view the matter from God's perspective – that of the entire world. But we humans are finite, and sometimes it is almost impossible for us to focus on anything broader than how matters affect us personally, or our family, or our nation. God seeks gently, in the remainder of this narrative, to help Jonah look at things from a broader perspective.

We who read this narrative are typically aghast at Jonah's provincialism. Most, I suspect, cannot even understand his logic. But that is because we can't or don't crawl inside Jonah's skin and view matters from his perspective. The displeasure of Jonah takes place all the time. Yet we don't recognize it because it occurs in different situations. Let me illustrate:

A teenager grows angry at his parents because he looks only at how matters affect him personally, not his whole family. Parents grow angry at leaders in their church because the parents view matters only from the perspective of their own family, not that of the entire church. Citizens and special-interest groups within the United States grow angry at leaders who propose across-the-board spending cuts to manage unsustainable increases in national indebtedness. Everyone is willing to see spending reduced – just not in their area. So senior citizens on Social Security or about to enter the program don't want spending decreased in Social Security. Farmers growing corn and investors in bio-fuel industry don't want subsidies to the ethanol industry cut. People on food stamps don't want spending for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) reduced. And so nothing ever gets cut. And the citizens of different nations view world events through the prism of how they benefit their own country, not

D 2 Jonah's flight to Tarshish: Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish,⁸⁴

D 3 Jonah's knowledge of God

E 1 for I knew that You are a gracious⁸⁵ and compassionate⁸⁶ God,

E 2 slow to anger⁸⁷ and abundant in lovingkindness,⁸⁸

E 3 and one who relents concerning calamity.

how they benefit all nations. To one degree or another, each of us is a Jonah.

⁸⁴ 4:2 - in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish: Despite his Divine discipline, Jonah still feels justified in having fled to Tarshish. Though God had disciplined him, and he had obeyed, his heart was not in it. He was dismayed that the Ninevites had repented. He knew the disastrous effects their repentance would have upon his nation. He understood, unlike most Christians today, God's eternal election of Israel (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-8; 18:18; 21:12; 22:15-18; 24:6-7; 26:2-5, 24; 27:27-29; 28:3-4, 12-15; 31:3, 11-13; 32:24-30; 35:9-13; 45:7-8; 46:3-4; 47:27; 48:3-6, 15-16, 21; 50:24). And so he could not reconcile that election with God's global love of all people, particularly if it meant the rehabilitation of a nation destined to be a deadly enemy of Israel. Two thousand years after the coming, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Messiah, we who comprise the nations of the world can easily understand God's global love, and we bask in it. But Jonah was Jewish, and he lived over two-and-a-half millennia the other direction – the other side of the cross, the empty tomb, and the Great Commission.

⁸⁵ 4:2 - gracious: *channun*, 2587, used 13 X in the OT, uniformly translated gracious (*NASB*) and only referring to God, never man (Ex. 22:27; 34:6; 2 Chron. 30:9; Neh. 9:17, 31; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 112:4; 116:5; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2), and almost always linked with one or more of the following attributes in Jonah 4:2.

⁸⁶ 4:2 - compassionate: *rachum*, 7349, translated (*NASB*) as compassionate (11 X) and merciful (2 X), 12 X referring to God (Ex. 34:6; Deut. 4:31; 2 Chron. 30:9; Neh. 9:17, 31; Ps. 78:38; 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2) and possibly once referring to an upright man (Ps. 112:4). Typically it is linked with one or more of the five attributes found in the list of Jonah 4:2. It often conveys the notion that God, because of His mercy, is willing to forgive the iniquity of Israel and not destroy them.

⁸⁷ 4:2 - slow to anger: The phrase, slow (*arek*, 750) to anger (*aph*, 639) is used frequently in many of the same lists as gracious (*channun*, 2587) and compassionate (*rachum*, 7349). Used of God, this phrase is found in Ex. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nahum 1:3. Used of man, this phrase is found in Prov. 14:29; 15:18; 16:32; 19:11 (here the word for "slow" is *arak*, 748). "Slow to anger" means that God is patient and forbearing. The NT equivalent is *makrothumos*, 3116 (Acts 26:3), meaning long on wrath, not given to quick outbursts of anger. In both the OT phrase and the NT word, we could say, in the vernacular, that God has a long fuse – He doesn't lose His temper.

⁸⁸ 4:2 - abundant in lovingkindness: Jonah described God as abounding in loyal love (*chesed*, 2617). Jonah was grateful for the loyal love that Yahweh exhibited toward His chosen people, the sons of Israel. But he grew angry that God exhibited loyal love to the Gentiles who would one day slaughter his own people. The word *chesed* (2617) is common, appearing 249 times in the OT.

C 3 Jonah's request for death 4:3

D 1 His request: {3} "Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me,"⁸⁹D 2 His reason: for death is better to me than life."⁹⁰

C 4 Yahweh's questioning of the reasonableness of Jonah's anger: {4} The LORD said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?" 4:4

B 2 Jonah's Appreciation of a Mere Plant 4:5-8

C 1 Jonah's observation of Nineveh's destiny 4:5

D 1 His situation: {5} Then Jonah went out from the city and sat east of it.

D 2 His shelter: There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade

D 3 His purpose: until he could see what would happen in the city.⁹¹

C 2 Yahweh's provision of a shading plant for Jonah 4:6

D 1 His appointment: 6 So the LORD God appointed a plant⁹²

D 2 His provision: and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort.

D 3 Jonah's appreciation: And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant.

⁸⁹ 4:3 - take my life from me: Jonah was so distraught over this turn of events that he wished to die. He knew that, ethically, he could not commit suicide. So he requested that Yahweh kill him. He did not wish to live to see the rehabilitation of these national enemies of Israel who would one day slaughter his own people.

⁹⁰ 4:3 - death is better to me than life: As far as Jonah is concerned, death would be preferable to continuing to live. Somehow Jonah, as a prophet must have been shown the not-too-distant future, when the Assyrian army would march ruthlessly through every town and village in Samaria, rape the Jewish women, disembowel the pregnant women, brutally kill toddlers, torture and leave dying strong young men, and impale senior citizens. He could not believe that God could possibly allow these evil Ninevites to live to see another day in view of their coming diabolical dismemberment of the Jewish nation. God's mercy was completely violating his own personal code of ethics. God was going to have more compassion on raw pagans than He would His own chosen people. Jonah couldn't stand it. He wanted to die.

⁹¹ 4:5 - see what would happen in the city: Jonah, for the reasons stated above, was hoping against hope that God would destroy the city. We do not know how long he waited. Presumably he was going to wait for forty days. But God intervened. He wanted to broaden Jonah's perspective.

⁹² 4:6 - appointed a plant: Just as God had appointed (*manah*, 4487) a fish in 1:17 [2:1, Heb.], now he appointed (*manah*, 4487) a plant to grow up over Jonah's head and provide shade from the rays of the sun. God is sovereign. He is able to use elements of nature to accomplish His purposes. He has done that in the past, and doubtless He still does so, whether we are aware of it or not. The word plant (*qiqayon*, 7021), perhaps refers to the castor-oil plant, which has broad leaves, and can grow to a height of 8 or 10 feet in a few days. This particular growth was miraculous, for it sprang up to a height sufficient to provide shade for Jonah overnight (Jon. 4:10). The stalk of this fast-growing plant is particularly susceptible to injury. The castor-oil plant is sometimes known as *palma Christi*, Latin for "palm of Christ," owing to its medicinal value, both topically as well as internally.

C 3 God's appointed demolition of the plant 4:7

D 1 His appointment of a worm: {7} But God appointed a worm⁹³

D 2 The time: when dawn came the next day

D 3 The worm's attack: and it attacked the plant

D 4 The plant's demise: and it withered.

C 4 God's appointment of scorching heat upon Jonah 4:8a

D 1 The time: {8} When the sun came up

D 2 God's appointment: God appointed a scorching east wind,⁹⁴

D 3 The hot sun: and the sun beat down on Jonah's head

D 4 Jonah's physical disability: so that he became faint

C 5 Jonah's renewed plea to die 4:8b

D 1 His plea: and begged with *all* his soul to die, saying,

D 2 His complaint: "Death is better to me than life."

B 3 God's Defense of His Compassion for the Ninevites 4:9-11

C 1 God's questioning of Jonah's anger about the plant 4:9

D 1 God's question: {9} Then God said to Jonah, "Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?"

D 2 Jonah's reply: And he said, "I have good reason to be angry, even to death."⁹⁵

⁹³ 4:7 - God appointed a worm: Just as God had appointed (*manah*, 4487) a fish in 1:17, and had appointed (*manah*, 4487) a plant in 4:6, now in 4:7 He appoints (*manah*, 4487) a worm to destroy the plant He had previously appointed.

⁹⁴ 4:8 - God appointed a scorching east wind: Just as God had appointed (*manah*, 4487) a fish to swallow Jonah (1:17); had appointed (*manah*, 4487) a plant to shelter Jonah (4:6); had appointed (*manah*, 4487) a worm to attack the plant (4:7); so now He appointed (*manah*, 4487) a scorching east wind to dry up and kill the plant (4:8). God went to interesting lengths in His sovereignty to preserve Jonah and to teach Jonah. Clearly God cared as much for Jonah as He did for the Ninevites, though Jonah may not have been so inclined as to believe that at this point.

⁹⁵ 4:9 - I have good reason to be angry: We humans can always justify how we feel about things, regardless of what God's viewpoint is (Jon. 4:8-10).

- C 2 Yahweh's observation of Jonah's compassion on a mere plant 4:10
- D 1 Jonah's compassion: { 10 } Then the LORD said, "You had compassion on the plant⁹⁶
 - D 2 Jonah's non-contribution
 - E 1 for which you did not work
 - E 2 and *which* you did not cause to grow,
 - D 3 The plant's quick entrance: which came up overnight
 - D 4 The plant's quick exit: and perished overnight.
- C 3 Yahweh's justification of His compassion on a great city of humans and animals 4:11
- D 1 The reasonableness of Yahweh's compassion: 11 "Should I not have compassion on Nineveh,⁹⁷
 - E 1 The great city: the great city
 - E 2 The presence of many small children: in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know *the difference* between their right and left hand,⁹⁸
 - E 3 The presence of many animals: as well as many animals?"⁹⁹

⁹⁶ 4:10 - You had compassion on the plant: The plant is God's object lesson. *chus* (2347) means "to look with compassion or pity upon." It is frequently (but not in Jonah, where it is used only twice, in 4:10 and 4:11) coupled with the noun eye (*ayin*, 5869), as in Deuteronomy 7:16, "your eye shall not pity them" (see the linkage also in Deut. 13:8; Isa. 13:18; Ezek. 5:11; 7:4, 9; 8:18; 9:5, 10; 16:5; 20:17). Yahweh's point is clear – "You (the pronoun is emphatic here), Jonah, had compassion on the plant, for which you contributed nothing. Do I not have the right to exercise compassion on even the children and animals of Nineveh?" (author's paraphrase).

⁹⁷ 4:11 - Should not I have compassion on Nineveh, the great city: This is Yahweh's punch-line, the point of His object lesson with Jonah. If Jonah was justified in feeling compassion toward a mere plant, to whose rapid growth and demise he had contributed nothing, was not Yahweh justified in feeling compassion for the great city of Nineveh, which housed 120,000 children, not to mention animals? It is a haunting question.

I must ask myself, "Do I have a right to feel compassion toward the air conditioner in my home on a hot summer day, yet ignore God's compassion for the lost people of my town or neighborhood?" The questions could go on and on. Yesterday, September 11, 2011, we remembered the event, ten years ago, when Muslim pilots crashed civilian jet aircraft loaded with passengers into the twin towers of the New York city skyline. Some 3,000 people lost their lives as the towers crumbled. Many Americans feel justified in their anger against Muslims. Yet God felt enough compassion for the world of Muslims to send His Son, Jesus, the Messiah, to die for all their sins. Are American Christians to begrudge God's compassion for Muslims?

⁹⁸ 4:11 - know *the difference* between their right and left hand: Evidently a reference to small children.

⁹⁹ 4:11 - as well as many animals: Yahweh's point was that Jonah had justified his compassion for a mere plant, which did not even possess the higher quality of animal life. Wasn't Yahweh justified in feeling compassion for mere animals, not to mention children, not to mention the adult population of Nineveh?

D 2 Closing thoughts.¹⁰⁰

Expanded Analysis of Jonah with New American Standard Bible Text, Annotated
Prepared by James T. Bartsch
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Email Contact: jbartsch@wordexplain.com

Scripture taken from the *NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE*®,
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¹⁰⁰ Closing thoughts: The book seems to end abruptly, with no response from Jonah to Yahweh's poignant question, "Do I not have the right to exercise compassion upon the people of the great city of Nineveh?" Indeed, God does. That is what God is all about – exercising compassion upon a world of people who blatantly oppose Him and ignore Him. God has done so in sending His Son, Jesus of Nazareth, to pay the death penalty for all their sins so that mankind need not perish eternally in the Lake of Fire and Sulphur (John 3:16; Rev. 20:11-15). Indeed, God, the Supreme Sovereign, has the right to exercise mercy and compassion on whomever He wishes (Ex. 33:11; Rom. 9:15). Yet the book ends here, with the haunting question, "Do I not have the right to show compassion...?" The tones of that question reverberate throughout the centuries, like the tones of a gigantic bell that sound long after the bell has been struck.

The implications of God's compassion are manifold. I feel justified in feeling compassion for my home, my car, my air conditioner. Yet God feels compassion for my neighbors who do not know Him. Am I willing to adjust my compassion level to God's?

Did Jonah ever change His perspective on the people of Nineveh? The text does not say. But in answer to that question, I would answer, "He wrote the book." If he had not changed, why would he have written the book?