

MESSAGE THREE

JONAH 3 & 4:

PEOPLE ARE IMPORTANT TO GOD; PEOPLE ARE GOOD

QUICK RECAP:

1. JONAH is a **book of 2 halves** – the *bad half* and the *worse half*
2. And everything went downhill after **chapter 1:2** and literally hit rock bottom at **chapter 2:6**
3. And then things started to turn around and get better. But not for long...

JONAH THREE

VS 1: A SECOND CHANCE:

“the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time,”

- Some will immediately declare that **GOD IS A GOD OF SECOND CHANCES!**
*The word of the LORD came to Jonah the **SECOND** time!*
- We should not **PRESUME** on God’s Grace:
- The **SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD** is *just that!* Remember **Chapter 1:14** – **GOD WILL DO WHATEVER HE PLEASES!**
We must see **chapter 3:1** with **1:14 & 2:9** – God is **SOVEREIGN**; He will do as HE PLEASES

And God calls Jonah – **A SECOND TIME!**

But does this make GOOD SENSE?

- He is a tired/jaded/weary/damaged worker
- He doesn’t want to go
- He is a “FLIGHT-RISK”
- He doesn’t really pray very much
- He **HATES** the NINEVITES!

Yet God calls Jonah **again**; & God gives Jonah a **SECOND CHANCE**; **GOD WANTS JONAH!!**

The truth of the matter is that **GOD** doesn’t need **JONAH** – **JONAH** needs **GOD** – **he needs to go!**

- Jonah has **genuinely repented** of his disobedience; he has turned around; but he is not **completely restored** yet; he is not yet **whole again**; his **deep-seated prejudices** are still **unresolved**
- See **2 Corinthians 4:7-12** – we are simple unadorned **jars of clay** to show that the power belongs **to God** and **not to us!** We are all **afflicted**; we are **perplexed**; **persecuted**; **struck down**; and **damaged** – so that the glory when it comes, goes to God and not to us! Jonah **chapter 3** demonstrates this perfectly.
 - God doesn’t call the **well-rested**; the **completely recovered**; the **fully-prepared**; the **fighting-fit**
 - **God calls us** – **as we are**; where we are; and He works with us; & He deals with us!

VS 2: WHAT’S SO GREAT ABOUT NINEVEH:

In **chapters 1 & 2** – it is not as significant – it is mentioned **only once**

But here in **chapters 3 & 4** – it becomes **significant** – in **1:2; 3:2; 3:3; 4:11** – same appellation: **‘that Great City’**

Every time **Nineveh** is mentioned, it is followed by the same description – **that Great city**

Yet in **NAHUM** – the **other prophet** to Assyria, 140 years later – Nahum never describes the city this way!

Nahum 1:1; 2:8; 3:7 – no appellation – so, by the time of Nahum – **it’s not so great anymore!**

- And yet we know that there was no **decline** in the city from the time of **Jonah** to the time of **Nahum** – the city had **grown** in might and power – in the **7th century BC**, Nineveh was the **largest city in the world!**
- **Why is it then, that Jonah calls Nineveh GREAT and Nahum doesn’t?**
*God sees something in **Jonah’s Nineveh** that is no longer there in **Nahum’s Nineveh** – that we cannot see!*
Jonah’s Nineveh was great in God’s eyes; **Nahum’s Nineveh** wasn’t.
- What was it? Maybe, the **great number** of **souls yet to be saved** in the city at Jonah’s time; that are no longer there in Nahum’s time – by **that time**, they are all gone and Nineveh was ready for **destruction!**

VS 3: THREE DAYS

3 days in the **big fish**; 3 days to walk **across the city**; and we will see **another** 3 days **east of the city!**

There’s something about Jonah – everything happens in **3 days!**

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- A **3-day walk** would be about **60 miles** or **100 km** across
 - It is estimated that Nineveh had **600,000 residents**
Chapter 4:11 says it had **120,000**, who could not tell their **right** from their **left**.
 - It was a **very large city** – one of the largest in the world at the time. By comparison, to walk from **city wall** to **city wall** in **Jerusalem** would take about **two hours**.
 - What is the purpose of telling us the size of Nineveh?
It is to emphasize the **immense size** of the city – **BIG STORM; BIG FISH; BIG CITY; BIG LEAFY PLANT**.
NINEVEH was so big; a **MASSIVE ARMY** could not conquer it! Yet one man – **Jonah** – was able to walk right into the **heart** of Nineveh; and **stop it** dead in its tracks; and **turn it around!**
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VS 4: THE GREATEST GOSPEL MESSAGE IN THE WORLD:

FIVE WORDS in *Hebrew* / **EIGHT WORDS** in *English* – and the **whole city repents!**

Obviously, there must have been a severe amount of editing here:

- Jonah must have introduced himself; and introduced His God
- He must have warned the Ninevites of their sin – and urged them to turn to God
- He would have threatened judgment if they did not – **40 days and Nineveh would be destroyed**

But it is very telling to note what Jonah chooses to record – only the threat of judgment!

VS 5: NINEVEH REPENTS:

The **entire city** – from the **GREATEST** to the **LEAST**

- **EVERYONE BELIEVES!** This is the greatest response to a Gospel message in history!
- Never before or since has 100% of the audience responded to the Gospel like that!

And they spontaneously **declared a fast** and **put on sackcloth** to demonstrate their seriousness & commitment

VS 6: THE KING

Then the news got to **THE KING**:

- He got off his throne – this must be **serious!**
- He removed his royal robes – he must really have felt **humbled** and **submissive**
- He put on sackcloth too – he identified with his people in their **mourning**
- He sat in a heap of ashes – he demonstrated his **true repentance**

VS 7: AND HE TOO DECLARES A FAST

- The fact that the direction of the action was from **the people to the king**; from **bottom up** – demonstrates the **genuineness** of the **repentance** of both **the people and the king!**
 - It was an **absolute fast** – no food and no water
 - It was an **indefinite fast** – there was no end to the fast
 - It was a **universal fast** – not only people but animals also **fasted**; and **wore sackcloth!!**
*It was from the **GREATEST** to the **BEASTS!***
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VV 8-10: TRUE REPENTANCE:

Listen to the king's commands:

- Let everyone **TURN** (Hebrew: **shoob**) from his evil ways and violence that is already in his hands
- God may **TURN** (Hebrew: **shoob**) and relent; and **TURN** (Hebrew: **shoob**) from His fierce anger

See what God did:

- God saw that they **TURNED** (Hebrew: **shoob**) from their evil
- God relented from His judgment of them

How many times did the people TURN?

Trick question – they turned **ONCE!** But Jonah wanted to really emphasize it!

And we can argue until all the cows in Nineveh come home about whether God changes His mind;

But remember that all of you are in the business of **turning** God's wrath away from the sinner who truly repents and **turns** to God in faith!

AND THEY ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER...

If we just preach **3 Chapters** – it would be just nice!

Chapter 1 – sailors believe

Chapter 2 – Jonah repents

Chapter 3 – Nineveh repents and believes

What a refreshingly uplifting book!!

- To motivate; encourage; fire-up tired and weary workers
- To rush out and do the Lord's will

BUT THERE'S A CHAPTER 4!!

Like a KOREAN DRAMA

JONAH FOUR

VS 1: JONAH GETS MAD:

This verse is very interesting in that all the versions translate it – Jonah was displeased/upset and angry

Only **one version** gives a different translation – do you know which one? **NIV!**

And the **NIV** is actually closest to the Hebrew!

Jonah experienced 2 things:

1. He felt that what God did was **a GREAT WRONG; (a GREAT EVIL)**
2. He was **EXTREMELY ANGRY** because of this

JONAH FELT THAT WHAT GOD DID WAS WRONG (EVIL) AND HE WAS FURIOUS ABOUT IT!

And the whole of chapter 4 shows how God works with him and deals with him.

BUT WHAT DID GOD DO?

GOD SHOWED GRACE AND MERCY TO EVIL & WICKED NINEVEH AND PARDONED THEM!

WHY WAS THIS SUCH A GREAT EVIL?

Jonah was a prophet to ISRAEL – the **Northern Kingdom**

- And he spent his whole life preaching to them
- And they REJECTED and SPURNED him
- His whole life and ministry seemed like **an utter and complete failure**

Then God calls Jonah to go on a SHORT-TERM MISSION TRIP to **Nineveh**:

- And he goes on a mission trip to Nineveh – the EVILEST city in the known world!
- And everybody believed and God spares the whole empire – it was **an unqualified success!**

And Jonah is completely **shaken** – because God's actions upset his entire **WORLD VIEW**:

- **His sense of GOD** – God was supposed to be just and fair and righteous and do the "right thing"
- **His sense of MORALITY** – for Jonah: evil must be punished; and good must be rewarded
- **His sense of SELF-WORTH** – for Jonah: Jews are the **chosen ones**; the pagans are NOT.

HOW CAN GOD SAVE THE EVIL ASSYRIANS AND YET REFUSE TO SAVE HIS PEOPLE?

- This was **NOT** the God Jonah thought he was working and slaving for all his life! And he was **MAD!**
 - And the rest of **chapter 4** works out what God does in response to this.
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VS 2: FLASHBACK:

Like a **true Korean drama** – he has a **FLASHBACK**:

- He **complains** that this is what he said from the beginning, when he was still in Israel:
 - God is a **gracious God**; God is **merciful**; God is **slow to anger**
 - God is **abounding in steadfast love**; God **relents from inflicting judgment**
- He is quoting from **Exodus 34:6-7**:

⁶The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

You see, in Jonah's mind – he KNOWS that God is '**INDISCRIMINATE**' with His **GRACE**

But not for Jonah – Jonah happily accepts that the **first part** is for himself and the Jews –

The **grace; mercy; hesed love** and **forgiveness** part (**vs 6**)

But the **second part**, he wants to inflict on the pagan Ninevites! –

The **visiting iniquity** on the **children** and the **children's children** part (**vs 7**)

But notice something else interesting here:

- Jonah here only quotes from **Exodus 34:6**
- While Nahum in **Nahum 1:3** only quotes from **Exodus 34:7**

Judgment on the wicked DID COME in time, after pardon for the repentant was complete

Jonah rushed headlong to **judgment**; running ahead of God (actually by some **140 years**)

VS 3: BETTER TO DIE THAN TO LIVE:

See in **chapter 2** – Jonah cries LET ME LIVE! And here in **chapter 4** – he cries LET ME DIE!

IT IS BETTER TO DIE THAN TO LIVE!

Jonah's whole WORLD VIEW was in chaos – he was facing an EXISTENTIAL CRISIS! And he wanted to DIE!

Jonah's **repentance** was real and genuine

But his **rehabilitation** was incomplete; and his **recovery** was fragile

Just as we saw yesterday, that:

It is possible to be functional and profitable in a state of disobedience

It is also possible to be dysfunctional and unprofitable in a state of obedience

We can serve God & He can use us, even though we have a **wrong attitude**

We can do the **right things** with a **wrong heart** and still be **blessed**

Remember in our first session – we said a **Good Prophet** required **4 things**:

- **INSIGHT; FORESIGHT; COURAGE; COMPASSION**
- Jonah may have – Insight; Foresight; and even Courage
- But there was still something wrong with his heart – **he lacked COMPASSION for the lost**
- He had **no love** for the lost Ninevites and **no desire** to see them saved – **he had NO COMPASSION!**

He had no heart for the lost and he lost his head – and he wanted to DIE!

VV 4-9: A VERY BIG OBJECT LESSON:

First of all; can you see that **vv 3 & 4** and **vv 8b & 9** are word-for-word repetitions??

Jonah says – “IT IS BETTER TO DIE THAN TO LIVE!”

And God says – “WHY ARE YOU SO ANGRY?”

In between is God's **very big object lesson!** – with a **very big object!**

VS 5 – Jonah leaves NINEVEH and picks a nice spot EAST of the city

He builds a shelter of dry branches

And he sits, waiting and watching and hoping for the destruction of Nineveh

Even after God had pardoned Assyria – Jonah refused to let go of his PREJUDICES

And this sets the stage for another **3-DAY ORDEAL** for Jonah:

In **chapter 2** – he spends 3 days in in a dark, wet and soggy fish

In **chapter 4** – he spends 3 days in blindingly bright, hot and dry desert

- **VS 6 – FIRST** God sends a huge LUXURIANT VINE with **big huge leaves**
It springs up overnight and Jonah basks in the ample shade of the big leaves
- **VS 7 – SECOND** God sends a FEROCIOUS WORM with a **giant appetite**
It springs up overnight and eats this giant vine and – it is **gone**
- **VS 8a – THIRD** God sends a SEARING HOT EAST WIND and burning sun
Jonah sits roasting under the sun and wind until he is **almost dead**

And Jonah GIVES UP!

- He **KNOWS** all this is the Lord's doing – **giant plants** don't grow up overnight & die overnight in the desert!!
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- He **KNOWS** that God is working on him again – just like the 3 days in the belly of the fish; the 3 days in the desert are **designed to change his HEART**
- But he will not have it this time, he blows his top and loses it completely; he wants to DIE!
He says (again) **IT IS BETTER TO DIE THAN TO LIVE!**

VV 10-11: GOD'S PUNCH LINE:

He says:

- 2 times I ask you if you have a “**good reason**” to be **ANGRY**
- And both times you said **YES**; angry enough to **DIE!!**

	GREAT LEAFY PLANT	GREAT CITY
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not work for it • Did not grow it • Gone in a day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked hard in it • Preached in it • 600,000 souls
Attachment & Compassion	✓	x
KILL	x	✓
SAVE	✓	x
LET ME DIE!!	vv 3 & 4	vv 8 & 9

- And the only “good reason” you have, is:
 - The **plant** gave you shade & some relief from the sun!
 - The **great immense number of lives** – you feel NO COMPASSION for them; you just hated them!
 - YOU are prepared to **sacrifice** so much human and animal life & and **spare** one plant!
 - YOU had NO COMPASSION at all; only SELFISH REGARD for what benefits you!
- **WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU, JONAH??**

WE ARE VERY MUCH MORE LIKE JONAH THAN WE CARE TO THINK

- You see, this world, and everyone in it, is literally going to hell!
- But we, like Jonah, are actually going in the opposite direction!
 - In Jonah’s case, he was trying to **run from God**; for us, we are **headed for heaven!**
 - But the **NET EFFECT** is actually the same – we are like 2 ships passing in the night
- And we have **2 CHOICES**:
 - We can have COMPASSION; reach out; do whatever we can; for whoever we can; for as long as we can;
 - We can mind our own business; do what is necessary; to get the job done; and until we are out of sight!!

DID HE GET IT?

Did God’s **RADICAL TREATMENT** work?

Did JONAH change? Did he find his **HEART** again?

We don’t know – the Bible doesn’t say!

In fact, just 30 something years after JONAH, **ISRAEL** was conquered by the **ASSYRIANS**

Yet some commentators say that the fact that Jonah was written and included in the Bible

Means that Jonah mush have learned his lesson and recorded it for us.

In the end – just like a **good Korean drama** – we don’t know!

APPLICATION:

1. THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

The Knowledge of God:

- Simply put:
God KNOWS EVERYTHING about EVERYTHING, because He MADE EVERYTHING! He is OMNISCIENT
- But the theologians like to remind us that:
 - God knows everything that WILL HAPPEN; AND everything that WILL NOT HAPPEN.
 - They like to say – **GOD KNOW ALL THINGS – ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL.**

WHAT DO THEY MEAN?

A **DECISION TREE** is used in Decision Sciences; Artificial Intelligence; Machine Learning; Business Management; Behavioural Analysis; even Medicine!!

- Basically, when we make **DECISIONS**, we choose **ONE** of several **OPTIONS** available to us.
- In any given day, we make **hundreds** of these choices; and **7 billion of us** make quadrillions of choices!!
- Many of our decisions affect the decisions of those around us!

God knows every single one of them!

God knows not only the options we WILL CHOOSE. But He also knows all the options we WILL NOT CHOOSE!

GOD KNOWS ALL THINGS – ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL – for every person on the planet!

This is the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD – HIS OMNISCIENCE

The Wisdom of God:

The WISDOM of God is the KNOWLEDGE of God APPLIED

This means that of **ALL** of the possible options, of **ALL** of the decisions that **ALL** of us make each day: God **chooses** the VERY BEST OPTION for us in order to achieve His will for us

All things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose! (Romans 8:28)

WHY AM I TELLING YOU ALL THIS?

God knows all the options available to the **Ninevites** in **755 BC** – REPENT or REJECT God

And He determined to allow the **Ninevites** to REPENT and BE SAVED

So that in **722 BC**, they can be the instrument of God's judgment on Israel

And in **612 BC**, they themselves, would be the recipients of God's judgment and utterly destroyed

GOD KNOWS ALL THINGS – AND THEY WORK FOR OUR GOOD AND ACCORDING TO HIS WILL

A quote from the movie, The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel (2011) goes:

Everything will be alright in the end, so if it is not alright, it is not yet the end!

And this is true of God's perfect will too! Everything, everything will be alright/wonderful/perfect in the end! It might not appear that way right now, but that's because it is not yet the end! And we cannot see that far!

We need to just **TRUST** in the KNOWLEDGE and WISDOM of God!

EVERYTHING WILL BE ALRIGHT IN THE END! IF IT IS NOT ALRIGHT, THEN IT IS NOT YET THE END!

2. YOU ARE NOT ALONE, JONAH!

There is one very conspicuous characteristic in the book of Jonah – it is conspicuous because it is ABSENT!!

Did you notice that JONAH IS ALL ALONE??

In fact, **JONAH** is the only named character in the book of **JONAH** – it is just Jonah and his God!

No other individual is named!

Jonah had NO ONE:

That is why, from beginning to end:

- Jonah **prone** to making the wrong decisions
- He is **given** to extreme mood swings
- He **persists** in his presumptions and prejudices

His **negative feelings** and **negative thoughts** are disproportionate & untempered

Because he could hear no other voice except his own

BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THAT WAY!

Loneliness and negative self-talk **deludes** us; **distorts** reality; & **heightens** fears

The remedy is **other people's talk**!! We need to talk with others!

3. A SANCTIFIED COMMUNITY

- The goal of the Christian's race is not to finish FIRST!
- The goal of the Christian's race is to finish TOGETHER!

Just as prayer is not going to an ATM for cash; a **Sanctified Community** is not a SELF-HELP GROUP

That's NOT what we are interested in here!

A community focused on affliction only **drags everyone down with you!**

- We need to set our hearts and minds on things **above** where Christ is seated at the right hand of God!
- We need to remember we are the “BRIDE of Christ” and we must prepare for the wedding!

How should we make ourselves ready to be a good wife of the Lamb? Through:

1. **WORSHIP** – heartfelt & Biblical – when we glorify God and enjoy Him forever; when we focus on adoring God; and praying the attributes of God
2. **INSTRUCTION** – intentional & consistent – when we get to heaven, only 2 things follow us – the Holy Spirit in our hearts and the Bible in our hands. Learn the Word of God. It is the greatest gift of the Spirit!
3. **FELLOWSHIP** – intimate & positive – where you focus on building one another up; because the goal of the Christian’s race is not to finish **first**; but to finish **together**
4. **EVANGELISM** – faithful & joyful – because this is **THE LIFE**, the eternal life that we want to share with the LOST when we do evangelism and missions!

At this time:

1. *Read the BIBLE – believe every word; put your full weight on it; and trust God*
2. *Pray – really pray; begin with ADORATION for He is worthy of all your praise*
3. *Reach out to one another – strengthen and encourage one another*

AMEN