

Compassionate God

Lesson 4

Jonah 3

August 8, 2021

God's Merciful Compassion

Introduction

During a testimony, a woman stated that she usually says her life story is not very exciting, yet recently had a change of heart. She realized claiming she hadn't been promiscuous or delved into a life of drugs did not negate the fact that she was a sinner like those who had. Her original stance was, in fact, one of pride, claiming that her sin was somehow lesser and more acceptable than others with a "better" testimony.

The life of Jonah is similar. He played the comparison game and viewed the Ninevites sin as worse than his. However, Jonah also needed the mercy of God. In fact, it was his pride and unforgiveness that led him to run away from God's call for him to go to Nineveh.

The goal of the journal this week is to attempt to read it for the first time. The story of Jonah is one that you may have heard from childhood, and it can have a particular lullaby effect in that we listen to it so much that it becomes rote. As you read, consider what questions you might have, what concepts you do not understand, or what cultural details might be hidden with which you as a westerner wouldn't automatically connect.

Memory verse: "When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened."—Jonah 3:10

Pray and read Jonah 3. What questions or observations do you have about this passage?

What does the passage say?

1. What was it the Lord said to Jonah the second time?
(Jonah 3:1)
2. What was it Jonah proclaimed while he walked through Nineveh? (Jonah 3:4)
3. What was the reaction of the Ninevites? (Jonah 3:5)
4. How did the King of Nineveh react? (Jonah 3:6)
5. What was the king's edict concerning people and herds?
(Jonah 3:7-8)
6. What did the king urge everyone to do after they called on God? (Jonah 3:8)
7. When God saw what the people did, how did He react?
(Jonah 3:10)

What does the passage mean?

1. By simply reading the passage as if it's the first time, some questions might arise. What significance does Nineveh (capital of Assyria) have to do with the story of God's people? Why does Jonah despise Nineveh as he does? (2 Kings 15:29, 18:9-12; 2 Chronicles 32:1-2; Isaiah 36:1)
2. The message, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown," looks pretty concrete. Is this a definite proclamation, or was it always God's plan to change His mind when they repented? (Jeremiah 18:8, 26:3-6; Amos 7:3)
3. Why did they put on sackcloth? (Job 42:6; Isaiah 15:3; Matthew 11:21)

