

Jonah 4

The Truth of God's Love and Mercy



Significant Aspects & Lessons

- God's Love Even for Heathens and Animals
- God's Mercy on His Creation
- God's Delay in Judgement



1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. 2 So he prayed to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. 3 Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!"

Q: Jonah had come to repentance and obedience. He had been through a miraculous supernatural event. He proclaimed the truth to the Ninevites and they responded. Why was Jonah so (exceedingly) angry?

- Judgement had not come
- It was not the outcome Jonah desired

Q: What would have delighted Jonah?

- Destruction of the City

Q: How did Jonah justify his position?

- First, that he was right in the first place
- Second, Jonah tried to prove God "wrong", that God didn't do what He said He would do (maybe with Exodus 34:6-7 in view). This is similar to how Satan tried to corrupt Jesus

Q: Has Jonah reconciled his will with God's will?

- No, he wishes for death again

Q Are you (and me) acting in full obedience to God's will?

- We all have on-going situations, people, issues in our lives
- We often question and even disagree with God's approach, as if our approach is the better one
- Ever met a "miserable" Christian?
- How about the ushering in of the rapture/tribulation?

4 Then the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

5 So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. 6 And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. 7 But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. 8 And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

Q: What does Jonah do after God questions him?

- Still sulking, he goes outside the city to see the outcome
- He may have wanted to say to God "See, they went back to their old selves! It was lip service!"
- He still wanted God to judge them

Q: Is it right to be a spectator?

- No, we are called to be participants

Q: Did God give up on Jonah?

- No, He prepared Jonah to receive the truth

Q: What finally makes Jonah happy in this story?

- Selfishly Jonah is happy for God extending compassion on him and providing the shade plant

Q: Is it selfish for us to be happy when God blesses us?

- It's not wrong to be happy for our blessings, but not at the expense of others.
- Ironically Jonah was more concerned for his comfort than the souls in the city

9 Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

And he said, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!"

10 But the LORD said, "You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. 11 And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?"

Q: Why was Jonah so angry at the removal of the plant?

- He felt God was mistreating him

Q: Do we ever become angry at the minor things?

- Group discussion

Q: How does God open Jonah's eyes?

- He does not supernaturally change Jonah
- Instead, He illuminates the truth about His love and mercy

Q: Who does God focus on in His response?

- The children (those who cannot discern between the right or the left)
- Even the animals!

Philippians 2

14 Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,
16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

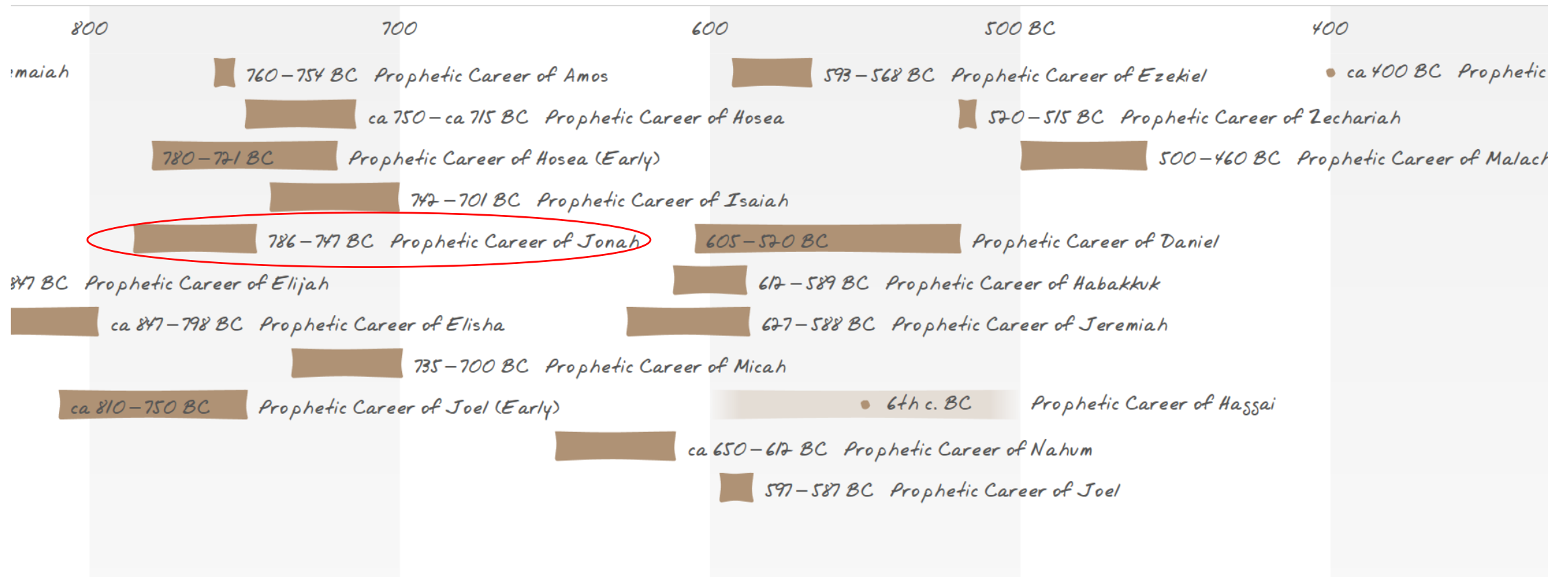


What did we learn?

- God Cares for His Creation
- God has a Reason for His Actions
- Proper Response to His Will



Appendix



Historical Context

- One of four (Elisha, Elijah, Isaiah) Old Testament prophets referred to by Jesus
- Considered the “Acts” of the Old Testament
- Written completely in the 3rd person
- Jonah was from near Nazareth, in the Galilee
- Likely written around 790BC, during the reign of the northern kingdom’s King Jeroboam
- The only prophet sent to the heathen nations
- Nineveh was likely the largest city in the world, 60 miles across and 100,000+ inhabitants
- Nineveh had gone through significant natural disasters, perhaps priming them
- Hosea and Amos predictions of future conquest of Israel may have produced Jonah’s reluctance

