

Jonah: The Comedy Among Prophets

Week Two: The Big City



Let's Try This again

- Compare Jonah 3:1-4 with Jeremiah 14:1-2, Ezekiel 15:1-2, and Micah 1:1-2 and then with Jonah 1:1-2. What common features and formulas do you see? What amusing difference immediately stands out?
- Now look at 3:5. What is the radically unexpected result? Remembering the first two chapters, whom and what do the people of Nineveh join as they exhibit perfect and immediate obedience?
- In verses six through nine, how extensive is the fasting in the city? How extensive is the wearing of ceremonial garments of penance? What exactly does a cow sound like crying to God for forgiveness?
- In verse ten, whose actions does God echo? (Hint: Look at chapter one, verse 13.)

A Positively Peevish Prophet

- What is Jonah so mad about in 4:1-3? How dramatic does he get? How different is Jonah from the pagans in 1:13? Are the pagans or is the prophet acting more like God at this point?
- How great is God's question in 4:4?
- What kind of shelter does Jonah build in verse five? What event in Israel's history does this call to memory? (Hint: The Jews in Jesus' day had a festival for this particular kind of shelter.)

God's Final Joke

- What does God "give and take away" in verses six and seven? What is Jonah's relationship to the plant? Why is Jonah being so dramatic again in verse eight?
- When Jonah gives his petulant answer in verse nine, have we readers started to get the joke already? What's keeping Jonah from getting it?
- In the final verses of the book (one of the most wonderfully abrupt endings in the Bible), how does God ridicule the petulant prophet?
- Don't you just love the last phrase? I can hear the sheep now: "What we've done is baa-a-a-d!"