

## The Book of Jonah Chapter 4

**Verses 1-2:** The anxious people of Nineveh waited for the 40 days to end. When nothing happened, they knew that God had heard their prayers to forgive them. He was not going to destroy their city and everybody in it. The people were very glad. But Jonah was very annoyed. Why did God not punish these cruel and evil people? Jonah thought that they deserved it.

When God called him the first time, Jonah suspected that God was too kind to punish Nineveh. This was the real reason why Jonah decided to run away from God. Jonah could not understand how God could love such cruel people. The people of Nineveh deserved to die. However, God had not destroyed them.

**Verse 3:** Jonah decided that life was not worth living. ‘Let me die!’ he tells God.

**Verse 4:** But once again, God has no hard words to say to Jonah. He merely asks him a question: ‘Have you the right to be angry?’ But Jonah is so angry that he does not bother to answer.

**Verse 5:** The writer goes back to an earlier time in the story. This was when Jonah was not sure about what would happen to the city after his warning. The writer wants to finish the story with an important lesson. This is that Jonah is wrong and God is right.

It seems that Jonah began to shout his warning in the west of Nineveh. He then walked on towards the east. He chose a place to sit outside the city, with the rising sun behind him and so shining on the city. He was still hoping to see God destroy Nineveh. This would be like the

time when God destroyed the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1-28). Meanwhile Jonah made a simple shelter out of branches to protect himself from the hot sun.

**Verse 6:** As God provided a great fish (chapter 2), so now he provided a plant. Jonah was glad of the extra shade that the plant gave him against the fierce sun. But the plant lived for only one day. God intended to teach Jonah a lesson about kindness.

**Verse 7:** So, as God had provided a fish and then a plant, so now he provided a worm. That night the worm attacked the plant, and the plant died. So Jonah lost its shelter.

**Verse 8:** Next day, when the sun grew hot, God also provided a hot east wind to blow upon Jonah’s head. Jonah felt so weak and miserable, he wanted to die. Jonah’s words were like Elijah’s words in the desert. Elijah, too, had run away. But he really wanted to do God’s work, and thought he had failed (see 1 Kings 19:4).

**Verses 9-11:** Jonah still did not understand how wrong he was. God has no pleasure in seeing evil people die. He told Jonah that he was wrong not to pity the people of Nineveh. God knew that they were like children. They needed God to be like a good father to them.

God cares for everything that he has made. He cares for every person and he cares for every animal (Psalm 145:9). He is very patient. He will go to great trouble to try to persuade every person in every nation to trust in him and to follow him.

© 1997-2002, Wycliffe Associates (UK)

Mark Kirkpatrick

October 2002

[www.easyenglish.info](http://www.easyenglish.info)