

# The Old Paths

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## “God’s Pointed Question”

Jarrod Jacobs

When studying the book of Jonah, we often focus upon the actions of Jonah as he runs away from God (chapter one), then runs toward God (chapter two), and runs with God (chapter three). There are numerous sermons and articles that could be produced from this book, often called “the gospel of the Old Testament.” No doubt, a very important lesson we learn is the “type and anti-type” Jesus taught when He compared His upcoming death, burial, and resurrection with Jonah’s being swallowed up and three days later, released by the great fish (Matt. 12:40). In this article, however, I want to focus upon Jonah 4:11, and make some applications.

### God’s Pointed Question

The book of Jonah ends with God’s pointed question: “*And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?*” (Jon. 4:11). This question ends the book of Jonah rather abruptly. Remember that the fourth chapter of the book of Jonah records Jonah running ahead of God as he becomes angry when he sees God showering His abundant mercy upon the penitent people of Nineveh (Jon. 3:10-4:2). Yet, this was what God intended the whole time! He wanted these folks to repent while there was

still a chance for them (II Pet. 3:9)!

When we understand the historical background of Jonah, perhaps we can see why someone like Jonah would run away from God’s commands, and then be angry when the people repented. Yet, he should have been happy to see these people repenting and humbly turning to their creator (Jon. 3:7-9). Jonah did not want this to happen (Jon. 4:2). Therefore, God “*prepared*” a gourd, a worm, and an east wind (just as He “*prepared a great fish,*” Jon. 1:17) in order to teach Jonah a valuable lesson about true love, and teach us upon whom God bestows His highest honor (Jon. 4:6-8, 11).

### Jonah’s Problem

The problem with Jonah was that he was focused upon the wrong things during this time! This is evident as we read the book of Jonah and see that the only time he was “*exceeding glad*” was while sitting under the gourd (Jon. 4:6)! He was not happy seeing the population of a city the size of Nineveh turn to the Lord (Jon. 4:1), so God asked him that question in Jonah 4:11.

God let Jonah know that his mindset was wrong. In Jonah 4:11, God leaves Jonah sitting beside a wilted gourd in the hot sun, to ponder the love, grace, mercy, patience, and kindness of God for the lost. Jonah readily confessed that God was merciful and loving (Jon. 4:2). Yet, he was upset when God took the opportunity to exercise His love, kindness, mercy, and patience toward Nineveh. So, God let him “sit and stew” for a while! Perhaps

it would be good for each of us to sit under Jonah’s wilted gourd for a while!

### Applications We Can Make

God’s love, grace, mercy, kindness, and patience have not wavered in the passing years since Jonah was alive. We read, “*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever*” (Heb. 13:8). It is true for the Father as well! In fact, we see Jonah 4:2 expressed to its greatest degree when we read of the love God had for this world in sending His Son to die for us (Jn. 3:16). Truly, no greater sacrifice was given, no greater gift was offered, and no greater degree of love was expressed than when the Son of God was sent to Calvary (Rom. 5:8).

Knowing that Christ died to save sinners (Lk. 19:10; I Tim. 1:15), and that “*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23), it becomes apparent that those of us who are saved from sins, need to be out looking for other lost souls so that they can be saved, too (Mk. 16:15-16)!

It is a fine thing to appreciate and thank God for His many spiritual blessings, those “gourds” that provide us with comfort and hope in this life (Eph. 1:3). Yet, let us not lose focus to where we become complacent, or simply become lazy toward the lost souls in the “city” who need saving! If we follow in the footsteps of Christ (I Pet. 2:21), we will be looking out for lost souls, and show care for their souls to teach them the truth, just as someone showed proper care toward our souls and taught us the truth.

God spared Nineveh for a reason. He spares us for a reason, too (Rom. 2:4). Let us therefore, thank God for the love, grace, mercy, kindness, and patience He shows to us on a daily basis, and be ready to show others the way to salvation.

# “I Got ‘Googled!’”

Jarrold Jacobs

**J**ust to read that sentence elicits a smile. “Google” seems like a nonsense word to those not familiar with the computer-world! “Google.com” is a website where one can search for information on literally anything in the world. Usually, after typing the description or name of something one wants to search, “Google” returns with many webpages from which one can choose to find information on that item. It is like searching in the “index page” of the internet.

A few days ago, someone informed me that I was “googled”! From this search, this one found our website ([www.southside-churchofchrist.com](http://www.southside-churchofchrist.com)) as well as my articles on other websites that have used my work. No doubt, someone who “googles” enough will find my address, phone number, etc.

This is truly a marvel of human invention. “Google” began in 1996 as the research project of Larry Page and Sergey Brin. “Google’s” mission statement is, “to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful.” These facts alone teach me something about Creation that the majority of this world refuses to recognize. You see, “Google” is not the result of random electrons coagulating on the internet. “Google.com” is not the end result of some electronic accident 20, or even 15 years ago! This website, that has a specific purpose or mission, was deliberately made by two men some 11 years

ago. My question is that if we can marvel at the possibilities in cyberspace when two men make such a powerful search engine only 11 years old; why is it that our society accepts as “scientific fact” a theory that says things infinitely more complex than a webpage, such as the sun and stars, the earth, animals, you, and me are the result of some cosmic “accident” that occurred some 5 billion(+) years ago? Foolish, isn’t it? Men recognize that the creation of a website demands a creator, but we are then told that the creation of the universe demands nothing but chance and time!! (See: Gen. 1:1; Ps. 33:6-9, 14:1; Matt. 19:4-6; etc.)

While “Google” is a powerful web-index, there are certain facts that even “Google” does not know. For example, regardless of what someone may find concerning me (or you) on a website, there is no website that: 1) Knows as much as God knows about us. 2) Can reveal our spiritual standing before God.

God, and His Son Jesus Christ, know infinitely more than “Google”! God and Christ know their creation, and everything about them (Heb. 4:13)! While Jesus walked the earth, the Bible declares, “*he knew what was in man*” (Jn. 2:25, 6:64). Of course, we know that this fact has not changed (Prov. 15:3)!

God knows all about us, and one day will allow Christ to sit in judgment over all mankind (Jn. 5:22, 26-27). In so doing, His purpose will be, “*that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*” (II Cor. 5:10). The Romans were told that Christ’s work includes judging “*the secrets of men*” (Rom. 2:16). Yes, “Google” is an amazing tool, but Christ knows more than “Google”!

Finally, remember that “Google.com” cannot reveal our spiritual standing before God! Websites may find links to reports of the great or evil things we have done for others, but only Christ can look at a person or a group of people and know their hearts. Only Christ can say something like, “*I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead*” (Rev. 3:1). Only Christ can look at a group of people who declare, “*Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*” and say to them, “*I never knew you*” (Matt. 7:22-23). Christ looks into the hearts of men and women to discern just “who” they really are! There is no man-made invention that has such insight!

Getting “googled” is OK, but it is far better to know that I belong to Christ and that He knows me! (Col. 3:2-3)

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