



***In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, planting a lush green garden paradise in its middle. In Eden, He planted Lord Adam and Lady Eve—the crown of His creation, made in His own image. God so loved that world as a great gardening Lover of souls. His people are His special plants. In Isaiah 5:1-4 & 7, He even sang a song over Israel for they peopled His vineyard.***

*Let me sing now for my well-beloved, a song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. <sup>2</sup>He dug it all around, removed its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine.... He built a tower in the middle of it and also hewed out a wine vat in it... He expected it to produce good grapes... it produced only worthless\* ones. <sup>3</sup>And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between Me and My vineyard. <sup>4</sup>What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless\* ones...<sup>7</sup>For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is Israel and the men of Judah His delightful plant.*

***In Hebrew, worthless\* grapes is boobooshim. As surely as Adam spoiled the Garden, Israel fell short of the glory of God. How then would God fix this disaster? By sending His only Son, for God so loved the world. Also in Isaiah, God referred to His Son as a tender plant Whom He watched grow. This was His Son in Whom He was well pleased. That Son grew up perfectly to become the infamous suffering servant—the Messiah—for God so loved the world.***

*For [Messiah] grew up before [the Father] like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground... <sup>3</sup>He was despised and forsaken of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like One from whom men hide their face. He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. <sup>4</sup>Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. (Isaiah 53:2-4).*

***Our Senate Study now concludes as we get dirt under our fingernails and garden with God to find a golden truth buried deep in the dark dirt of Nineveh's evils and Jonah's sins.***

## **1. GOD, THE GREAT GARDENER, PLANTS A PLANT TO: PLOW THE SOIL OF JONAH'S HARD HEART**

God's got a great green thumb and heavenly stockpiles of Miracle-Gro®. Watch how He sovereignly sets up a *religious monster* for a fall.

**Jonah 4:6** *“So the LORD God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. Jonah was extremely happy about the plant.”*

The classic *sukkah*-booth was roofless with walls made of readily available stone. The rabbis said God made Israel and dumped all His buckets of rocks across her. It is a land of a billion rocks. Wood was a rare commodity in Israel. Any sticks Jonah could find would form a trellis roof, to be thatched with palm leaves and even tall grasses. We last saw Jonah asking for assisted suicide, burning mad about his enemies' salvation. His attitude was bad, and his dry, hot hut was no fun. God mercifully, miraculously caused a plant to grow at Jack-and-the-beanstalk speed up over his hut and his head. As it interwove its cool, broad leaves into the *sukkah* trellis, Jonah was relieved from both problems. He gladly welcomed the cooling effect, and it took his mind off the city over which he had obsessed in monstrous hatred.

➤ The plant's name (*qi-qi-yon* in Hebrew) pokes fun at our sickening (soon to be sun-sick) Semite by doubling up the word for vomiting (*qi + qi*) with his name (*yon(a)*). Sickening Jonah! Vomit-vomit-Jonah. The huge whale could not stomach Von Rad's *religious monster* and vomited him out.

The actual plant was the castor-oil plant with wide cooling, palmate leaves known for that reason as the *Palma Christi* plant. A trailing plant, gardener God let it quickly climb up Jonah's hut.

All in the Capitol Community Are Welcome to be a Part of Regular Bible Study and Fellowship

SENATORS' WEDNESDAY STUDY: 6:45-8:05 AM, ROOM 2010 CAPITOL MINISTRIES, NEBRASKA [WWW.CAPMIN.ORG](http://WWW.CAPMIN.ORG)

STAFF WEDNESDAY STUDY: 12:00-1:00, ROOM 1306 PHONE: 402-327-0011 REV. PERRY M. GAUTHIER, V.D.M.

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Sacrificially accepting the scorching sun's punishment within its healing *Palma Christi* leaves, the fast-growing plant was loner Jonah's new best friend. That reminds me of the isolated Tom Hanks and Wilson, his barely inflated volleyball, in the movie *Cast Away* (2000). Jonah was absolutely elated! Little did he know, he would soon star in a drama staged by Jehovah.

## **2. GOD, THE GREAT GARDENER, GETS A GRUB TO: EAT AWAY AT JONAH'S HARD HEART**

Can God worm away at Jonah's stubborn pride?

**Jonah 4:7** "But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day. It attacked the plant and it withered."

Bible scholars translate the Hebrew word *tola'ath* (= תולעת) as a centipede, worm, weevil, cutworm, caterpillar, larva, beetle, grub, and maggot. I am no entomologist, but scientific precision is not vital here. God was about to make a big point to a sleeping Jonah through a small invertebrate that worked nightshift. It happily gnawed at and chewed on the tender root of the *qiqiyon*, sucking out its sap and life. The word "attacked" is used when kings attacked enemies. Gardener God designed an assault; He gave and took away.

➤ God so loved His stubborn son that He sent a worm to attack his comforts. God wanted to break up the hate-baked, rock-hard soil of Jonah's hard heart. *Religious monster—meet My worm!* Praise God that He uses what He chooses (big or small) to cultivate the "plants" that are His people. In Chapter 1 it was a gigantic leviathan. Here it is a tiny worm which delivers a deathblow, like an assassin's singular bullet ends a dynasty. Senators, please know God can use creatures great and small to build your character and cultivate your fruitfulness in the Capitol.

**GOD USED BOTH THE GREAT FISH AND THE TINY WORM.**

## **3. GOD, THE GREAT GARDENER, BLOWS IT ALL AWAY TO: BLAST AND MELT JONAH'S COLD HEART**

East of the forgiven capital, a fourth divine "appointment" came flying at Jonah's hut from the Arabian deserts—a brutal sirocco wind. Such winds can reach hurricane speeds (like they do in North Africa) during the intensely hot summers.

**Jonah 4:8** "When the sun came up God appointed a sirocco, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die, saying, 'Death is better to me than life.'"

The *Palma Christi* was protective *from* but also vulnerable *to* the sun and heat, having been severed at its base in the cool night. Denis Baly's *The Geography of the Bible* adds important details:

When Jonah was resting...a wind blew across the barren desert land...known in Palestine as a sirocco (an) exceedingly hot, dry movement of air... (c)ausing simultaneously a sharp rise in temperature and a fall in humidity. It gives the impression that all the moisture is removed from the air...a fine dust and haze fills the air reducing visibility while the heat is almost unbearable. <sup>a</sup>

➤ Note that the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* adds: At times, every scrap of moisture seems to have been extracted from the air so that one has the curious feeling that one's skin has been drawn much tighter than usual...making even the mildest people irritable...to snap at one another for apparently no reason at all...all hasten to find shelter, but for Jonah there was no shelter, unless he was willing to reenter Nineveh. p.387 <sup>b</sup>

The *Palma Christi's* protective leaves shriveled as the windy juggernaut blew away Jonah's leafy roof, sandblasting his tenderized skin. The small-minded, burnt-up man dizzied and shimmered in the heat, closed his parched eyelids, and begged with all his might to his own soul to die. "Poor soul! Souls can't quite do that kind of thing. God created them to live. There is this rock-bottom, ontological stubbornness about our life...

**...THAT IT CANNOT SIMPLY CHOOSE NOT TO BE."** <sup>c</sup>

**4. GOD, THE GREAT GARDENER, TUGS AT TOUGH WEEDS:  
AND BITTER ROOTS IN JONAH'S HEART**

When God wrestled Jacob all night long, He dislocated his hip to make him cry "Uncle!" God had baked Jonah's pate like a wood-fired Lazlo's pizza. Maybe NOW He might get through.

**Jonah 4:9**           *"Then God said to Jonah, 'Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?' And he said, 'I have good reason to be angry, even to death.'"*

Jonah had been talking to himself, not the Lord, but the Lord read his mind. God knew of Jonah's revived death wish, and He challenged the reasonability of such suicidal emotions. Roots of bitterness, left unpulled, go deep. Gardener God was trying to yank those stubborn deep roots up and out of His son, his chosen "plant."

➤ However, Jonah's perverted patriotism and racist roots had fingered so deeply into his brain they had strangled his reason. Sullen and vexed, he STILL wanted to die. Jonah's very last word in Scripture was "death." He felt very badly.

**FEELING BADLY COMES FROM  
THINKING BADLY—THINKING  
BADLY ABOUT GOD.**

Jonah had had enough. If God wasn't going to be godly, and if years of notorious Ninevite war crimes could be forgiven after just a few days of fasting in sackcloth, Jonah wanted out. Not fair!

The trials of sun and wind were engineered to make Jonah feel *better* and to help him think *better*. Instead, they made him *bitter*. The sun was brutal. Sunstroke can cause death. The wind was severe and debilitating. In some Muslim countries, the punishment of a crime committed while the sirocco is blowing can be reduced at the discretion of the judges. How would Jonah fare?

**5. GOD, THE GREAT GARDENER, TALKS ABOUT:  
HOW JONAH REALLY LOVES PLANTS, TOO**

God applies the lesson of the gourd to get through Jonah's thick gourd that God so loves the world. He really was "*The LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness...*" (Ex. 34:6). Jonah had finally shown compassion for the first time in our story.

**Jonah 4:10**           *"Then the LORD said, 'You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight.'"*

Jonah loved his green creature comfort. For the first time in the 689-word book, Jonah was happy, exceedingly happy, but without good reason. He did not make the investment of a farmer who planted, watered, watched, fertilized, tended, weeded, trimmed, and cared for his crop.

**THE ATTACHMENT COULD  
NOT HAVE BEEN TOO GREAT  
SINCE THE PLANT LIVED  
ONLY 24 HOURS.**

➤ In Hebrew, this one tiny plant was "a son of the night." It came, grew, and perished all before the next nightfall. Jonah had genuine care and compassionate concern for something as low on the scale of worth as one small plant, not 99 mute oxen, and not 120,000 human souls—all sons of Adam, all made in God's own image.

God is able to use His creatures, great and small, to do His bidding. God also has a dual ability to create and destroy. As the suffering Job said in Job 1:21, "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." Suffering Jonah did not get that point. God is not *only* loving. God is not *only* giving justice. God sovereignly decides when He displays each.



## **6. GOD, THE GREAT GARDENER, TALKS ABOUT: HIS HARD WORK AS A FARMER/GARDNER**

God farmed His world well. God's good green thumb started in the Garden of Eden when He created paradise, concluding it was "very good." The crowning glory of Eden was Lord Adam and Lady Eve. All the sons of Adam and daughters of Eve are made in His image. Even Ninevites.

**Jonah 4:11** *"Shouldn't I have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand as well as many animals?"*

Jonah was elated at his green creature comfort, suicidally grieving its loss. Gardener God, a great Teacher, had Jonah where He wanted him. God argued from *weak to strong* in an *a fortiori argumento* (Latin: *from the stronger argument*). This means He showed that *if* Jonah had cared greatly for a plant which he did not tend, *then how much stronger a reason* for God, the Great Gardener, to care for the lost and desperate souls in the teeming capital forgiven and to their West. *God so loved their world!*

➤ The Assyrian capital, Nineveh, was teeming indeed. The 120,000 who didn't know right from left are perhaps children, roughly under the age of 7 (the age of accountability according to some). If so, the greater Nineveh four-city tetropolis was about 600,000 people.

More likely, God was referring to the babyish moral state of the capital city's entire population, calling them virtual children, morally. God had thundered in Chapter 1 against their immoralities threatening to destroy them as He did Sodom in 2066 BC. Nineveh was so morally corrupt—a city as big as Nashville or Baltimore—that it could be summarily called morally infantile.

They might be adult in years, but in character they were children—willful, passionate, perishing without vision yet not without value ...undisciplined and overgrown children yet also the work of God's hands (emphasis mine).<sup>d</sup>

Jonah never saw the value of the cherished garden God planted East of Israel in Nineveh. It cost Him no end of patient labor and love. For God So Loved that Capital! Praise Him for His glorious character. He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished but is also compassionate and full of mercy—just as He has always said!

~ The 105<sup>th</sup> Legislature's First Session Senate Study Conclusion ~

## **JONAH'S JOURNEY AND JEHOVAH'S JURISDICTION**

Jehovah's jurisdiction is every square inch of the universe and every fiber of our being. Jonah's theme is (not evangelism but) **"God is God, and I am not."** This is evident in every chapter. Yes, the sovereign Lord is a holy and loving God—whether we like it or understand it or not.

Jonah 1's Prodigal Prophet tried to run from a sovereign God's assignment to announce doom and His holy hatred of sin in a godless capital.

Jonah 2's Praying Prophet had one whale of a time in the gastric gut of a maritime savior where he confessed his own sins, crying out for mercy.

Jonah 3's Preaching Prophet was used by God to bring the Bible's greatest revival in spite of the preacher—all starting with the king's repentance.

Jonah 4's Pouting Prophet was burning mad since his thinking was seriously wrong—thinking wrongly that God was only wrath, especially when it came to Jonah's enemies' sins.

## **THANK GOD: GOD IS GOD & WE ARE NOT!**

Dear Senator:

Praise God for His holiness and grace, since all of our sins are far *worse than we ever feared*, and yet God loves us all *more than we ever dreamed*.

In holy Christian love as your unworthy servant,

Rev. Perry M. Gauthier V.D.M. (cell/text: 402-770-6270)

<sup>a</sup> Denis Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, Harper & Row, © 1957, pp 67-70.

<sup>b</sup> *The Evangelical Bible Commentary, Volume 7*, ©1984, Zondervan Corp.

<sup>c</sup> Phillip Cary, *Brazos Theological Commentary*, ©2008, Brazos Press, p 151.

<sup>d</sup> A.D. Martin, *The Prophet Jonah: The Book and the Sign*, © 1926, p 87.