

Jonah 4:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

Analysis

So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. Despite God's question (4:4), Jonah doesn't answer but acts—he exits Nineveh, builds a shelter, and waits. The Hebrew vayetse Yonah min-ha'ir vayyeshev miqqedem la-'ir vaya'as lo sham sukkah (יצא יונה מִן־הָעִיר וַיֵּשֶׁב מִקְדֵּם לְעִיר וַיַּעֲשֶׂה לוֹ שָׁמֶן סֻכָּה) describes stubborn surveillance—Jonah still hopes God will destroy the city.

"On the east side" (miqqedem) may be significant—east often represents separation from God's presence (Genesis 3:24, 4:16). "Made him a booth" (sukkah, סֻכָּה) refers to temporary shelter from branches and vegetation, like those Israel dwelt in during wilderness wandering (commemorated in Feast of Tabernacles). The irony: Jonah constructs physical shelter while remaining spiritually exposed. He sits "in the shadow" (batsel, בָּצֶל) seeking physical comfort while rejecting God's spiritual instruction.

"Till he might see what would become of the city" reveals Jonah's lingering hope for judgment. The forty days (3:4) apparently haven't fully elapsed, or Jonah doubts God's relenting is final. This stubborn expectation of destruction despite clear evidence of God's mercy shows how deeply prejudice and self-righteousness can blind us. Jonah prefers vindication—his prophecy fulfilled—over the salvation

of 120,000 people (4:11). This exposes the perverse pride that cares more about being "right" than seeing sinners saved.

Historical Context

Sitting east of Nineveh, Jonah would have a vantage point to watch the city. Ancient Near Eastern prophets sometimes performed symbolic actions or maintained surveillance to verify prophecies (Jeremiah 32:6-15). Jonah's booth-building suggests he expected to wait days or weeks watching for destruction. The temporary shelter was common in agricultural work (guarding fields during harvest) and military campaigns (surveillance posts). Jonah's vigil represents the last gasp of his rebellion—hoping God will yet conform to his desires rather than submitting to God's revealed character.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. In what ways do we sometimes stubbornly cling to our expectations or desires even after God has clearly revealed His different purposes?
2. How does Jonah's preference for vindication over salvation expose the dangers of religious pride?
3. What does it mean to seek spiritual shade (God's presence) rather than merely physical comfort while remaining spiritually opposed to God's will?

Interlinear Text

בָּעֵיר: מִן־יְהוָה וְאַז אָז
went out So Jonah H4480 of the city H5892 and sat H3427 on the east side H6924 of the city H5892

וַיַּעֲשֶׂה וְשָׁם לֹא יָשַׁב סֶכֶת הַשְׁמִינִית וְיִשְׁעַשׂ
and there made H0 H8033 him a booth H5521 and sat H3427

בָּעֵיר: תַּחַת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ שָׁמַע אֶשְׁר־יְהוָה יָרַא הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
under it in the shadow H6738 till he might see H7200 of the city H5892

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 19:9 (Parallel theme): And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?

1 Kings 19:13 (Parallel theme): And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

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