



A Systematic Expository Study on the book of JONAH

Study 9: REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION OF A GREAT CITY **Jonah 3:4-10**

Jonah may have been a *fleeing* prophet, a *frightened* prophet, a *fearful* prophet but definitely not a *false* prophet. He preached the Word of God faithfully. The text we are considering in this study shows the response of the people of Nineveh to his preaching. His preaching produced repentance; it had a greater result than the result of the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost, three thousands repented and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. But in the case of Jonah, the whole city with population estimated at 600,000, including **"more than six score thousand persons (120,000 children) that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand"** repented and turned to the Lord.

PREACHING THE REVEALED TRUTH FAITHFULLY

Jonah 3:4; Matthew 3:7-10; I 1:22-24; 12:41; John 5:22,26,27-29; Acts 10:36,39,40,42; 17:22-24, 17:26-31; 24:25; 2 Corinthians 5:11; Hebrews 2:2,3.

Jonah proclaimed and preached faithfully the revealed truth of judgment: **"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."** As he declared faithfully what the Lord told him to declare, the Lord worked with him. Likewise, when we faithfully declare in the power of the Spirit of God the revealed truth of the Word of God, there will be repentance, revival and the church of God will be turned around. Jonah preached and gave the people of Nineveh warning about an impending judgment. Evangelistic messages today lack the truth of the future judgment. Evangelistic messages in the New Testament contain warnings of coming judgment. From the gospel according to Matthew all through to the Book of Revelation are warnings of judgment to come. Faithfulness demands that we preach every part of the revealed truth. Warnings about divine judgment for transgressions are contained in both the Old and the New Testaments. In Genesis, Abraham called God the judge of the whole earth. In Exodus, Moses spoke about the judgment of God. All the prophets spoke about the judgment of God. In the New Testament, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, our loving Lord and Saviour and the apostles spoke and wrote unequivocally on judgment for unrepentant sinners. Paul the apostle preached it. When we preach the evangelistic message, we shouldn't avoid the message of warning about judgment. **"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."** We should tell sinners about the fury, indignation and wrath of God that is to come on the final day if they do not repent. If we are going to be faithful to the revealed truth of the evangelistic message in talking to sinners, we will need to include the very fact that if they are rebellious and unbelieving and do not repent, everlasting judgment awaits them.

THE PRAYER OF REPENTANCE WITH FASTING

Jonah 3:5-9; Joel 1:14,15; 2:11-17; Matthew 11:20,21.

Following the preaching of Jonah, **"the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast."** It is challenging to know that the people did not count the Word as the word of Jonah. They knew and believed that it was the Word of God; that was why they proclaimed a fast for everyone - for the young and for the old, for the nobles and for the commons, for the king and for his subjects. The message called them not only to fasting but also to fervent prayer and repentance. The call to repentance is a recurring theme in the evangelistic messages throughout the scriptures. In the Old Testament, whenever they needed to repent nationally or en masse, it was alright for them to fast and seek the face of God in prayer. Jonah's message to the people of Nineveh demanded urgent attention and response. They all believed that the Word was from the God. Because of that, they mourned, repented and turned away from their sins. They proclaimed a fast and in prayer, cried mightily unto God. They knew why God was angry with them. They knew what they had done wrong. They knew that what they did was not right in the sight of God. They acknowledged their sins, repented of them and the Lord had mercy on them. If the Lord had mercy on the people of Nineveh, if we will preach faithfully today the Word of the Lord, He will have mercy upon the people we are preaching to if they will repent and believe on the Lord.

PROMPT RESPONSE WITH FORGIVENESS

Jonah 3:10; Jeremiah 18:7,8; Job 33:26-29.

As soon as the people of Nineveh repented, God forgave them all their sins. This is in accordance with- God's nature. If God says He will judge a nation, a family, an individual, if that nation, family, individual will repent and turn from their evil way, the Lord is so merciful that He will forgive and change His mind from the evil He thought to do unto them. Jonah did not understand this truth. He did not understand that no matter how deep a sinner might have gone into sin, the moment he repents, God forgives and transforms him. **"He looked upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man."**

As we preach the evangelistic message, we must hope for the best; we must believe that the people we are preaching to will repent and call upon God for the forgiveness of their sins. If Nineveh could repent, any group of people can repent. If Saul of Tarsus could repent, any individual can repent. Preach the Word faithfully. Don't omit anything. Tell them everything God has given you to tell them. Jonah's message produced a great result - a result comparable or even greater than that of the day of Pentecost. The Spirit of God can move the heart of the most unlikely people if we submit to God and preach His Word faithfully. There will be conversions in the city and revival in the church if silent soulwinners will **speak up**, if Christian soldiers will **stand up** and declare the evangelistic message; if the dry bones will **shake up**, if discouraged members of the church will cheer up, **sit up** and **shape up**, if the lukewarm will **stir up**, if Christian leaders will **step up** prayer and evangelistic activities. Evangelism should not be something we do at our convenient time. If we will preach the Word faithfully in the power of the Spirit of God, many will turn to the Lord in repentance and faith.

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