



A City Repents

Jonah 3:6-10
February 11, 2024

Marking yet another miracle of God's incredible grace, the city of Nineveh, the jewel of the dreaded Assyrian empire is transformed from within. The people of Nineveh, from the greatest to the least, repent and turn away from their wickedness.

Jonah 3:6-10¹

⁶ The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷ And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, ⁸ but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹ Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish." ¹⁰ When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

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Opening Questions

- Pray for insight and understanding into the text (Psalm 119:18)
- Take the time to highlight key phrases from the text. Look for repeated wording, contrasts, similarities and things that are emphasized.
- Highlight key words or actions in which you see the characters engaged.
- In one clear sentence summarize the passage and write your sentence below.

Bible Study

1. Can you think of a significant event by which the course of your life drastically changed? Was it for better or the worse?
2. Think of someone in your life right now who could be described the same way the Bible describes Nineveh and its inhabitants (1:2, 3:8, 3:10). How would you feel if they repented and trusted Christ?
3. What word do you see repeated in this passage of Jonah?
4. Repentance can be described as “a godly grief over, and turning away from sin.” What evidence do you see of authentic repentance in the king of Nineveh in 3:6-10? Must all of these elements be present for someone to be truly repentant?
5. Observe the king’s proclamation to the citizens of Nineveh in Jonah 3:7-9. How does this differ from Jonah’s message in verses 2-4? Why do you think that he so was hopeful that God could relent?
6. Read 1 Kings 21:17-29, as well as Isaiah 37:1-20 and notice the effect of repentance in the face of coming judgment. What does this tell you about God’s character?
7. What role, if any, does repentance play in your daily life? What practical steps can you take to increase your practice of it?
8. Read Jeremiah 18:7-8 and compare with 18:9-10. What are the two promises contained in these verses?
9. Notice that the king of Nineveh calls all of his subjects to repent of their sins in verses 7-8. Do you think that as individuals we bear a responsibility to do something similar, or do you think this was

a unique situation? Compare this with Ezra 10:1-17.

10. Read 2 Corinthians 7:9-11.

- a. What do you think is the difference between “worldly grief” and “godly grief” over sin?
- b. Can you think of a time when your life demonstrated worldly grief only?
- c. Is there sin in your life currently that you grieve over only at the worldly level? What can you do to change this?

Diving Deeper

1. The book of Acts contains many references to repentance. Read Acts 2:37-41, 3:18-21, and 26:19-20. What other actions are called for alongside repentance? Why do you think repentance is so many times paired with other actions?
2. Read Esther 4:1, Jeremiah 6:26, and Daniel 9:3.
 - a. What is significant about the ‘sackcloth’ and ‘ashes’ mentioned in Jonah?
 - b. What could be a modern-day equivalent to this ancient practice?
3. Is repentance the same as remorse, or being sorry for sin? Why or why not?
4. Consider how seriously the Ninevites took their sin by stopping everything in their daily lives to focus exclusively on repenting and crying out for mercy. Do you take your sin and the process of repentance as seriously? Why or why not? Take some time at the end of this study to ask God to increase the seriousness of your sin.