

### **Jonah 3: He Preached 11-19-17 PM**

Jonah 3 records Jonah's second calling to go to the people of Nineveh. This time Jonah makes the journey, and arrives in Nineveh. He preaches his message, and all of the people repent. God determines to offer them mercy.

The City of Nineveh was one of the oldest cities in the world. It was built by Nimrod (Genesis 10:11-12) right after the flood. In the time of Jonah it was an enormous city of 120,000 citizens (4:11). It tells us that it was a "3 days walk" either around, through or in. While it was spared in this moment, it would be destroyed by its former vassal Babylon a century and a half later (612 BC).

Jonah's message is unique for many reasons. First, it was a message to Gentiles. These Gentiles were not even a nation related to the Jews (such as Edom, Moab, etc). This was a truly pagan nation. Second, his message is unique because it was not a message of repentance. Instead, it was simply an announcement of destruction ("forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown").

What follows is perhaps the heart of a lesson for us. All of the people of the city, from the least to the greatest, began to repent. In fact, the king himself set aside his garments and declared a total fast to implore God to have mercy. At the end of the chapter, we see that it works, and God gives them a reprieve.

In chapter two we considered the "Sign of Jonah" that Jesus mentioned in Matthew 12:40, that as Jonah was 3 days in the fish, so would Jesus be 3 days in the grave. But there is also another "Sign of Jonah" mentioned in Luke 11:29-32. This is the repentance of that city. Jesus said that this would be a testimony on the day of Judgment. It is not Nineveh alone that would testify; in Matthew 11:21 a number of ancient cities are mentioned as being a sign of the failure of men now to repent.

This is our lesson: when God warns us, do we repent? What should it take to repent? Should we have to beg others to change? Should we need to drag people to worship? Should we need to force people to learn? Nineveh judges us for not seeking God and His mercy with all of our being and strength.

What does successful repentance look like? First, we might consider that it is broken hearted over sin, as seen in places such as Psalm 51 and Luke 18:10-14. But successful repentance is NOT just feeling heartbroken over our sins, it is also taking action to change (Acts 26:20, James 1:22-25). Finally, we might consider too that it is preventing the opportunity of sin in the future, as Paul declares in Romans 13:14.

Nineveh contrasts with a place like Jericho in that they both believed in the God of Heaven through the Jews, but only one of them did something the people of Nineveh believed God, that He would bring His punishment on them. This is demonstrated in the fact that they changed. This is the belief that saves us, and this is the unbelief that condemns us; not a belief in God, but believing God is who He says He is AND that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.