

The Men of Nineveh Repented

Text: Matthew 12:41

Introduction:

1. Most are familiar with the Bible account of Jonah and the great fish.
2. However, many focus on the ordeal of Jonah and neglect the humility of the Ninevites.
3. Yet, Jesus stated that their repentance was an example for and a challenge to the people of His day.
4. Consider the repentance of the men of Nineveh...

I. They Had Only One Prophet (Jonah 3:1-3)

- A. Jesus declared that they heard the preaching of Jonah.
- B. In fact, God commanded Jonah to go and preach to Nineveh (Jonah 1:1-2; 3:1-3).
 1. Prophets who were contemporaries of Jonah included Hosea, Amos, and Isaiah (possibly Elisha and Micah as well).
 2. Yet, none but Jonah was sent to Nineveh.
- C. In Jesus' day, some had the opportunity to hear at least 70 of His disciples proclaim the Gospel (Luke 10:1)!
 1. Still, they failed to repent.
 2. Nineveh, a Gentile nation, repented at the preaching of one prophet of God.
- D. Today, the opportunities to hear the Word of God are nearly limitless.
 1. How many preachers and teachers have we heard?
 2. Have we repented?

II. They Heard Only One Sermon (Jonah 3:4)

- A. Jonah's message was simple: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."
- B. In response to this warning, the men of Nineveh repented.
 1. They feared God's judgment and punishment.
 2. They sought God's love and mercy (Jonah 3:9).
- C. In Jesus' day, the people heard many lessons from Jesus and His disciples (cf. Matthew 5 – 7; 13; etc.).
- D. Today, the amount of sermons and lessons available is numberless.
 1. How many lessons have we heard?
 2. Have we repented?

III. They Heard Only a Bitter Teacher (Jonah 1:3; 4:1-3)

- A. Jonah despised the nation of Nineveh so greatly that he fled in the opposite direction to avoid his responsibility to preach to them!
 1. After his ordeal with the great fish, he went to Nineveh and delivered God's message to them.
 2. However, he did so with little enthusiasm and no sympathy.
 3. Contrast with Abraham (Genesis 18:22-32) and Jesus (Matthew 23:37).
- B. In spite of this, the men of Nineveh still repented.

- C. In Jesus' day, the people were able to hear a Savior who loved them more than His own life (John 3:16; 10:11).
 - 1. Truly, as Jesus stated, "A greater than Jonah is here."
 - 2. But they refused to repent.
 - D. Today, there are many sincere, sacrificial Gospel preachers.
 - 1. How many have prayed for and pled with us?
 - 2. Have we repented?
- IV. They Heard Only Condemnation (Jonah 3:4-10)
- A. The message was one of doom and destruction.
 - B. There was no "good news" of salvation delivered to them.
 - C. There was no command to repent and no invitation to respond.
 - D. Even though they did not know if there was any hope, they repented!
 - 1. From the least to the greatest
 - 2. In sackcloth with fasting
 - 3. Including their animals
 - 4. With a change in behavior
 - 5. And with pleas and prayers to God
 - E. In Jesus' day, the people heard the Gospel – good news of redemption.
 - F. In Jesus' day, the people were invited to repent and respond in hope of salvation and spiritual rest (Matthew 11:28-30).
 - 1. Yet, they rejected the message and the Messenger.
 - 2. Stubbornly, they refused to repent.
 - G. Today, the "good news" and the "great invitation" are proclaimed continuously.
 - 1. How many times have we heard the Gospel?
 - 2. How many times has the invitation been extended to us?
 - 3. Have we repented?

Conclusion:

- 1. How tragic will be the Day of Judgment when we are condemned by the Ninevites!
- 2. Will we repent at the preaching of Jesus?