

How Men Act When They Repent

In Matthew 12:41, Jesus said, "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here." According to Jesus, the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah.

You remember the story, don't you? God had commanded Jonah, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me" (Jonah 1:2). Now Nineveh was not only a city filled with wickedness, it was also the capital of the Assyrians, hated enemies of the Israelites. Jonah didn't want to go. He fled from God's presence.

However, after being given some quality time in the belly of a fish to reflect and pray, Jonah decided to obey God. Jonah walked through the city proclaiming the judgment of the Lord upon these pagan people: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (Jonah 3:4).

The people of Nineveh repented. They "proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them" (Jonah 3:5). When word came to the king of Nineveh, "he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes." He decreed that "neither man nor beast, herd nor flock" were to eat or drink and that "every one" was to "turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hand" (Jonah 3:7-8).

The text says that, "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them" (Jonah 3:10). God can read men's hearts. He knows more about what is going on in our heads than we do ourselves. But He did not need to read the minds of the Ninevites to know that they had repented. He "saw their works, that they turned away from evil". When the men of Nineveh repented, nobody was left to wonder whether or not their repentance was genuine. Nobody was left guessing about their intention to stop committing evil. Nobody would have doubted they had actually repented of their sins.

We really need to learn this lesson from the men of Nineveh. We need to learn how to act when we repent. Repentance isn't just saying "excuse me," "my bad," or "forgive me," and then going on with our lives as if nothing happened. Repentance should produce real change in our actions. We are to "bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8). I am afraid that too many of us think that our repentance should go unnoticed. We are incognito repenters! And while God hardly asks us to don sackcloth and ashes today, He does ask us to "do works befitting repentance" (Acts 26:20).

Let's resolve to turn away from sin in our lives, and make sure that we behave in such a way that folks can tell that's what we've done!

- by Steve Klein

Facts About The Bible

The Bible is composed of 66 books. There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. Some 39 or 40 men had a part in the writing of the Bible, from Moses to the apostle John. It took over 1500 years to produce the Bible.

Out of all the men who wrote the books of the Bible, Luke "the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14) was the only Gentile. He penned the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.

The first section of the Old Testament is called the Pentateuch. It contains the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). These books, written by Moses, cover the period of time from Creation to the death of Moses, just prior to the entrance of God's people into the promised land.

The Old Testament contains twelve books of history, from Joshua through Esther. There are five books of poetry: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. There are five books of the major prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel. There are 12 minor prophets, from Hosea through Malachi.

The New Testament contains four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), each telling the story of the life of Christ from different viewpoints. The New Testament has one book of history, the book of Acts, which tells of the establishment of the church and the growth of Christianity in

the first century. It also has 21 epistles (Romans through Jude), the majority of which were written by the apostle Paul, and one book of prophecy (the Revelation), penned by John while on Patmos.

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew (with the exception of Daniel 2:4b-7:28 and Ezra 4:8-6:18). The New Testament was written in Greek.

- *selected*

“I’ve Been Studying This For A Long Time”

It seems there is an increasing tendency to start a religious discussion by claiming a lengthy and in-depth study of the subject at hand. *“I’ve been studying this for a long time”* is the initial assertion by one of the disputants. We think this is a faulty approach to proving one’s position, and we offer these observations in reaction to this common declaration:

1) The very statement (“I’ve been studying this . . .”) contains an implication that others have not been doing so. This is an affront to all other serious students and is an insulting way to begin a discussion.

2) The one who argues this way seems to suggest that others have not been clever enough to notice what he has now unraveled. Not likely! True scholars have been pouring over the Bible for centuries. Faithful brethren have devoted their lives to the Word. Do you really imagine that you have discovered what they did not find!?!

3) Is something learned after one year of study necessarily more accurate than something learned after one day of study? We are certainly in favor of deep, lengthy, dedicated study of God’s Word. But the amount of time it took you to unearth the truth is not the determinant of whether or not your conclusions are correct. Truth is truth, no matter how long it took you to find it.

4) There is a tendency on the part of some to assume that if a thing has been believed and practiced for a long time by our brethren it is probably wrong. We think the opposite. If good men have traditionally held to a position we will not immediately assume it is wrong. In fact, it’s probably right. Yes, we want to search it out for ourselves, but we will not start with the assumption that others have ‘missed it’ while we have ‘found it’.

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” (Romans 11:33). Let us all apply ourselves diligently to know and obey His will. Think!

- *by Greg Gwin*