

Does God Ever Change His Mind? (Jonah 3:5-10)

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1. Introduction

A. Does God ever change His mind?

1. what does it mean when it says God "repented" of what He was about to do.
2. Doesn't scripture teach us that God doesn't change His mind.
3. There are a number of verses that say he doesn't. (Numbers 23:19) God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent.

I Samuel 15:19 - The strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for He is not the son of man that He should repent.

B. So if you take these verses you can certainly build the case that God does not repent.

1. But how about scriptures like Gen. 6:6 - It repented the Lord that He made man on the earth.
2. Exodus 32:14 - The Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do to His people.
3. Can we harmonize the many statements about the unchangeableness of God with the statement in Jonah that "God repented" and changed his mind.

C. As a sovereign God He had a plan from eternity. He knew exactly what He was going to do so there would be no need for changing His plan or His mind.

1. The repentance of Nineveh did not cause God to change His mind. Rather it was God's way of carrying out His purpose for Nineveh.
2. God knew that Nineveh would repent, He wanted them to repent.
3. To bring this about He went to all the trouble of getting Jonah to go preach to them.

II. The Change of Purpose

A. The statement, "God repented" does not imply a change of mind but rather He heard the prayer of the Ninevites and in His great mercy spared them.

1. The Hebrew word for repentance is NACHAM. It's root meaning is to pant or sigh.
2. The word came to mean to lament, to grieve, to pity.
3. The verse then can be translated this way, God was grieved over the judgment that was to come upon Nineveh and pitied them
and sent His message to save them.
4. Nacham is used 40 times in the O.T. and in almost all the cases refers to repentance on the part of God.
5. In every instance it means God was grieved over their condition and in pity offered them salvation.

B. In the N.T. whenever the word repentance is used, it refers in almost every instance to human repentance and implies a radical change of mind and a turning from sin.

1. This is illustrated in Nineveh's repentance they not only changed their minds but proved it by their works (Jonah 3:8).
2. when the Bible states~that God repents, it does not mean the same as human repentance.
3. God doesn't have to be sorry for anything He has done, because He does all things fairly and in accordance with justice.
4. He never has to turn from evil as He is holy and sinless.

C. In the case before us God's purpose in the message of judgment He sent through Jonah was accomplished.

1. The people turned from evil and God in mercy could pity them and withhold the judgment that had been threatened.
2. If Nineveh had not repented in the 40 days it would have been destroyed.
3. But the if applied to Nineveh not to God.
4. The change took place in Nineveh not in God - He had always wanted them to repent for judgement is His strange work.
5. Because God pitied them and grieved over them, salvation for them was possible.
6. I think God's pity is clearly implied in the fact that He gave them forty days to repent. If it had been His purpose to destroy them He could have done it.
7. However God did set a deadline - forty days

III. God's Deadline

A. God sets a deadline for sinners too and when that point is reached, God acts in either salvation or judgment.

1. God set a deadline for the people in Noah's day - 120 years.
2. When that time came and they still hadn't repented then judgment came.

B. Everyone of us has a limit too. Our days of opportunity will also come to a close.

1. If we are not saved when that time comes, we have had it. Once the time is up it is forever too late (Heb 9:27)
2. There is a time to be born and it is appointed for man also to die. When will that moment be for you?
3. You don't know the day or the hour so we must repent and believe on Jesus on the only day we have - that's today.

C. Will you like the Ninevites repent and believe or like the sinners in Noah's day cross the deadline and perish under the judgment of God.

1. Praise God we still live in that time the Bible calls "the accepted time."
2. But the Bible says that accepted time is now - now is the accepted time - today is the day of salvation.
3. If you have never called on Jesus to save you, I beg of you make this day the day of your salvation.
4. The poet has put it most graphically in this couplet ...

There is a line by us unseen, that crosses every path;
The hidden boundary between God's patience and His wrath.
Oh, where is this mysterious bourne, by which our path is crossed;
Beyond which Cod Himself hath sworn, that he who goes is lost.
One answer from the skies is sent, Ye who from God depart;
while it is called today, repent, and harden not your heart.