

## 132-5 We the People ... Repent

**Jonah 3:4-10 (NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup> And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

<sup>5</sup> So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. <sup>6</sup> Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup> And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying,

Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. <sup>8</sup> But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. <sup>9</sup> Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

<sup>10</sup> Then 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, and He did not do it.

"Grassroots" movements start when the rank and file compel their leadership to engage in response to their actions. In the story of Jonah, God told him to preach to Nineveh, Assyria's capital city. Jonah's commission may not sound like much to us, but the Assyrians were Israel's enemies. It was hard for Jonah to preach for their salvation, but after three days and nights in the fish, he obeyed the LORD.

Jonah walked an entire day when he entered the city. Then he stopped and preached the simple message of repentance the LORD commanded. He hoped the people would reject his words, but they paid attention and started a revival that swept through the city up to the king and his court.

As the king repented, he commanded the city to observe Jonah's warning and turn away their evil. He ordered them to dress in sackcloth, fast from food and water, and pray to the God of Israel so He would relent of their destruction. A fantastic thing happened, much to Jonah's disapproval. God mercifully withheld His wrath from Nineveh's destruction when Jonah's enemies repented.

While God restrained the destruction of the city, the Ninevites failed to maintain their commitment to Him. Eventually, the evil empire ransacked the nation of Israel and carried many of its citizens into captivity. About 150 years after Jonah, the Assyrians knocked on Judah's door. God sent the prophets Nahum, whose name means "Comfort," and Isaiah to assure His people they would not fall to them. God sent an angel who killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers overnight. The army lifted its siege and returned home (see **2 Kings 19**).

There are some critical lessons for "We the American People." First, the rank-and-file people of our nation have always played a crucial role in our history. The people have been in charge and selected their leaders instead of the higher powers specifying them. The king did not appoint **Pastor William Brewster** to lead the **Pilgrims**; the voice of the people did. As a result, the Pilgrims came to the new world away from tyranny as a people's movement with their chosen leadership. Other groups followed their lead and likewise settled the colonies. In case after case, the people selected their leaders following the biblical examples of Jethro's suggestion to Moses in **Exodus 18** and the apostles' directive in **Acts 6**. Notice the people's involvement in the process in **Acts 6:3-4 (NKJV)**:

<sup>3</sup> Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; <sup>4</sup> but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Second, in addition to the people's grassroots movement, the king of Nineveh complied with God. He stepped into his God-ordained role as the primary leader of the people. He became an example to the people in obeying God. Our presidents, **Thomas Jefferson** and **James Madison** attended church services in the

US Capitol every Sunday during their administrations. Jefferson rode his horse regardless of the weather, and Madison rode in his carriage – maybe for Dolley’s benefit. President Jefferson explained his commitment to church services:

“The Christian religion is the best religion that has been given to man, and I as chief magistrate of this nation am bound to give it the sanction of my example.”

We cannot wait on or trust our political leaders to do the right things. “We the People” must be responsible and set the pace. As the Ninevites repented, the king followed suit. If we repent and invoke God’s blessings on the nation, our leaders will join us. **2 Chronicles 7:14** (NKJV, emphasis added) accentuates the people, including the leaders.

**<sup>14</sup>if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.**

We must help our religious and political leaders see their responsibility before God. Our leaders' tasks are more significant than law-making or law-keeping. We are in a spiritual war between good and evil. It appears evil is winning. Leaders must get on board with God and engage the enemy in the spiritual conflict. Preachers who want to abdicate their God-ordained responsibilities and hide behind "just preaching Jesus" and legislators who hide behind political corruption need to wake up and lead because "We the People" want God as King of all of life. We must encourage them to do the right things.

Jesus came as a man to lead us in God’s ways so we would know Him. He didn’t wait on the Sanhedrin’s or the Roman government’s approval. He acted as one of “We the People” and transformed the world through everyday folks who impacted their political and religious leaders for good.

Keep The Light of *We the People’s Leadership in Repentance* Burning!

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