**“They repented at the preaching of Jonah”**

*Matthew 12:41*

**Introduction**

1. One cannot turn many pages within the New Testament before finding something about repentance.
2. That the gospel of Christ requires repentance is an unavoidable fact.
3. What is repentance? What is Christ truly seek from us when He tells us to repent?
4. **Matthew 12:41** speaks about repentance.
   1. The overall context helps us to know what it is that Christ desires.
   2. Also, the exact language used to refer to the actions of Nineveh give us great insight into the concept of repentance.
5. A “Causal” eis?
6. “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ [because of] the remission of sins?”
   1. **Acts 2:37-38** – shows the obvious necessity of baptism for salvation.
      1. **Acts 2:41** – if you gladly receive the word, you will be baptized.
      2. **Matthew 28:18-20** – this is the fulfillment of Jesus’ “great commission.”
   2. Those who refuse to believe in the necessity of baptism have suggested that “for” means “because of.”
      1. That is, baptism is done “because of” salvation, or the remission of sins.
      2. It is a **post-salvation** action that **follows** the remission of sins.
      3. Salvation by faith only.
      4. **Baptism as an “outward sign of an inward grace.”**
7. ***“for”*** – *eis* – to or into (indicating the point reached or entered), of place, time, or (figuratively) purpose (result, etc.) (STRONG)
   1. **This never means “because of.”**
   2. Would have used *dia* – “(2) through; (2a)the ground or reason by which something is or is not done; (2a3) because of for this reason” (THAYER)
8. **Matthew 12:41** is used as a proof text of a “causal” eis?
   1. *Metenoēsan* (“they repented”) *eis* (“at”) *to* (“the”) *kērygma* (“preaching”) *iōna* (“of Jonah”)
   2. ***“at”*** is the Greek, *eis.*
   3. “Did they repent **in order to** get Jonah to preach, or did they repent **because of** Jonah’s preaching?”
      1. Suggesting that this is proof that *eis* is used in a causal sense – because of.
      2. **This is still not the case because *eis* does not mean “because of.”**
   4. **Literal – “they repented into the preaching of Jonah”**
      1. This may seem awkward, but it is exactly what Jesus said, AND IT IS HOW THEY WOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD IT.
      2. **Figure of speech – Metonymy of the Cause** – “The ORGANIC CAUSE or instrument is put for the thing effected by it.” (E.W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, 545)
         1. **Example** – **Matthew 10:34** – ***“sword”*** is the organic cause of division (**cf. Luke 12:51**) – ***“sword”*** (cause) is put for the effect (***“division”***).
         2. ***“preaching”*** is the cause of the “change, or alteration of life” to conform to the message (**the effect of preaching**).
         3. **They repented INTO the requirements Jonah was enjoining upon them in his message of repentance – or the effect intended by Jonah’s message.**
      3. The context of the passage bears out this meaning, as well as the specific context of Jonah.
9. The Text in Context
10. Ultimately, the context manifests the Jews, namely the scribes and Pharisees, were refusing incontrovertible evidence of Jesus’ divinity and Messiahship.
    1. As they refused the evidence before them, they did not accept what it signified. (**cf. John 6:26-27** – miracles showing God has set His seal on Jesus to offer everlasting life – through the spiritual food of His words – **John 6:63, 68**)
    2. Therefore, they did not respond to the gospel of salvation which Jesus (and His disciples – chapter 10) was preaching.
11. Attributing Jesus’ miracle to Beelzebub **(vv. 22-30)**
    1. **(vv. 22-23)** – Jesus healed a blind/mute – demon possessed, cast out demon – multitudes entertaining the conclusion that He is the Messiah.
    2. **(v. 24)** – Pharisees interject, claim Jesus did it by the power of Beelzebub (Satan).
    3. **(vv. 25-30)** – Jesus uses sound logic to refute their claim, and challenges the crowd to follow the evidence fully, and follow Him.
       1. **(vv. 25-26)** – if Satan is divided against himself hiss kingdom will not stand.
       2. **(v. 27)** – your sons must use the same power when they cast out demons.
       3. **(v. 28)** – only alternative is the Spirit of God, and if that is the case the kingdom is upon them. (Will they accept it? No, that’s the point.)
       4. **(v. 29)** – Jesus’ actions are one of an enemy, not an ally. (Compare vv. 25-26)
       5. **(v. 30)** – those who have witnessed this cannot be neutral. Jesus’ works demand faithfulness to Him.
12. Jesus’ warning concerning blasphemy against the Holy Spirit **(vv. 31-32)**
    1. This was the work of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with Jesus **(v. 28).**
    2. When they attributed the work to Satan, they SPOKE EVIL AGAINST (blasphemed) the Holy Spirit.
    3. IF they refuse Jesus’ testimony, they could be convinced of another testimony and be forgiven. (**cf. John 5:31** – true in the sense of valid, or sufficient in a judicial setting).
    4. If they refused the testimony of the Spirit which corroborated Jesus’ then there would be nothing left following, thus no forgiveness as they continued to SPEAK EVIL AGAINST the Spirit’s work. (**cf. John 5:36; 10:24-25, 37-38; Acts 2:22; 10:38)**
    5. Age to come – when the Spirit, through the apostles – spoke the message of Jesus and confirmed it through miracles.
       1. As they had rejected the plain evidence then, they rejected it ***“in the age to come”*** – **Acts 4:16-17**
13. Jesus’ correct estimation of the Pharisees, and further warning **(vv. 33-37)**
    1. NOTE: He correctly does what they just incorrectly did. They see the miracle (casting out of the demon) and reach the erroneous and illogical conclusion that He is working with Satan. He sees their fruit of blasphemy and obstinance, and logically concludes that their heart is evil.
    2. **(v. 33)** – Jesus is saying they need to repent and change their heart.
    3. **(vv. 34-35)** – He knows their heart is evil based on what they just said.
    4. **(vv. 36-37)** – they will be judged based on this, and their rejection of Jesus.
14. Jesus responds to their request for a sign, showing their inconsistency **(vv. 38-42)**
    1. **(v. 38)** – they request a sign, which implies they want to believe, and will believe if they see the proof.
    2. **(vv. 39-40)** – Jesus calls them on their inconsistency – they actually won’t believe, because they haven’t believed the other signs.
       1. Jesus would not give them their request.
       2. Instead, Jesus will give the final sign in His resurrection of His triumph. (In part, over their part played in scheming against God’s will.)
    3. Two accounts used to show their refusal to respond to Jesus and His message is without excuse.
       1. **(v. 41)** – Nineveh repented at Jonah’s preaching. JESUS IS GREATER THAN JONAH.
       2. **(v. 42)** – Queen of South (Sheba) came aa long way to hear Solomon. JESUS IS GREATER THAN SOLOMON AND IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF THEM.
15. Jesus warns them about their unwillingness to act according to what they have witnessed and heard – speaking a parable **(vv. 43-45)**
    1. Jesus is saying that if His work and message is not fully embraced by positive action, and assimilation of His teaching, then more evil will corrupt them than before – they must fill the void.
    2. **(v. 23)** – act on this with true discipleship – obedient faith.
    3. **(vv. 33, 35)** – bear fruit.
    4. **(v. 41)** – change – repent.
    5. **(v. 42)** – heed the wisdom spoken – i.e. not mere audible reception, but application.
    6. **Jesus and His work is having an effect on them. He is saying, “LET IT HAVE THE FULL EFFECT.”**
16. Jesus identifies with those who respond to His preaching **(vv. 46-50)**
    1. This ties up the context perfectly.
    2. The ultimate goal of Jesus’ miracles and the message they confirm is for the people to ***“[do] the will of [His] Father in heaven.”***
17. “They repented at the preaching of Jonah”
18. The example of Nineveh’s response to Jonah’s preaching is a perfect example of how Jesus intended the people to respond to all that He was saying and doing.
19. ***“they repented [into] the preaching of Jonah”***
    1. I.e. into the EFFECT intended by the message Jonah preached.
    2. **Another way of saying, THEY CHANGED THEIR WILL TO REFLECT JONAH’S MESSAGE, AND RESPONDED WITH THE CORRESPONDING ACTIONS.**
20. Jonah’s Message and Nineveh’s Response
    1. **Jonah 1:1-2; 3:1-2, 4** – Jonah’s message was one of destruction due to great wickedness.
       1. He knew it was a message intended to warn, and bring about change to save – **Jonah 4:2**
    2. **Jonah 3:5-10** – led by the king of Nineveh the people repented.
       1. **(v. 5)** – fast.
       2. **(vv. 7-9)** – decree published for fast.
          1. **(v. 8)** – turn from evil ways, from violence.
       3. **(v. 10)** – God saw their works.
    3. Jonah’s message included:
       1. Rebuke for their wickedness, including violence.
       2. The need to show sorrow and proclaim a fast and turn from their evil.
       3. We know this because ***“they repented at (into) the preaching of Jonah”*** – THEY CHANGED THEIR WILL TO REFLECT WHAT JONAH TOLD THEM TO DO, AND DID IT.
    4. This is precisely what Jesus was seeking to get the Jews, including the Pharisees, to do! – Change their will in accord with His message and follow Him faithfully (**cf. Matthew 12:50**).
21. True Repentance – The Gospel’s Imperative
22. The Gospel Requires Repentance – **Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30-31**
23. Jesus Preached Repentance and Revealed What it Actually Means
    1. Jesus preached repentance – **Matthew 4:17**
    2. John prepared the way for Jesus by preaching repentance – **Matthew 3:2, 7-8**
       1. Bear fruits worthy of repentance – **Luke 3:8, 10-14**
       2. Change your heart and deeds to conform to the will of God.
    3. **The words of Jesus fit this perfectly – paraphrased – “they changed their will and actions into conformity with the demands of Jonah’s preaching.”**
    4. This is the repentance that the gospel requires!

**Conclusion**

1. We are required by Jesus to change our thinking/will (repent) into His own.
2. This change of will to reflect the will of Jesus will lead to specific activity that is required by His will.
3. We must be willing to “repent into the preaching of Jesus!”