

RUSSELL SANDER
JONAH PART 19
CH. 3:5-6

As Jonah preached God's judgement, verse 5 says, ***"...the people of Nineveh believed God (Elohim), and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. (v 6) For word came unto the King of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth and sat in ashes."***

These people quickly discerned that this was a serious warning of impending destruction due to their evil ways. They were a religious pagan society believing in both blessings and wrath of the gods. The founder of Nineveh, Asshur (Assur) was worshipped as god. Other Assyrian gods included Adad, Sin, Ninurta, Nergal, and Ninlil, in addition to Ishtar, the fertility goddess after who the Roman Church named Jesus' resurrection day Easter (Eesh-tar: Eas-tar).

The fear of the gods fell upon them. It is interesting to note that the word "God" used by the Ninevites was "Elohim," not "Yahweh." While Elohim (a plural word for God) is sometimes used to indicate the trinitarian form of Yahweh, it can also be applied to a plurality of other "gods."

Everyone from the king on down put on sackcloth and ashes, with many fasting. Sackcloth and ashes demonstrated great grief and sorrow, coupled with repentance, to seek forgiveness and grace (undeserved favor). "Sackcloth and ashes" are referred to 42 times in the Old Testament, mostly in reference to Israel. Jesus referred to it also (Matt. 11:21; Luke 10:13). Sackcloth is also the clothing of the two witnesses in Revelation 11:3.

God often judges a nation according to the actions and deeds of the head of the nation. Although the king had been responsible for the evil that brought the pronouncement of judgement, he responded with sorrow, grief, and repentance in sackcloth and ashes.

Sackcloth was the poorest of fabrics and showed humility. Ashes represented the crumbling of their works as though tried by fire. Scriptures show that God honored it.

We might not use sackcloth today, nor sit in ashes, but God still honors true repentance. Psalm 51:17 says, ***"...a broken and contrite heart, Oh God, Thou wilt not despise."*** Also, in Psalm 34:18 it says, ***"The Lord is nigh (near) unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."***

I would desire to see that in the world today. Perhaps it will take severe judgement and catastrophe in America to bring this country to repentance. Our survival as a nation depends on that repentance and a turn toward God. Let us pray for the fulfillment of God's plan for the land. Let us pray that His peace would fill our hearts and souls should we have to go through calamity.