

## In Jonah everyone repents



Why do the sailors repent?  
**They respond to God's power.**

Why does Jonah repent?  
**He responds to God's grace.**

Why does Nineveh repent?  
**It responds to God's warning.**

## But why does God repent (in chapter 3)?

### How have Christians responded to this question?

1. **Control** - Some believe that God does not really repent.

John 19:11

“Jesus answered, ‘You could have no power at all against me, **except it were given you from above.**’”

Acts 15:18

“Known unto God are all his works **from the beginning of the world.**”

Isaiah 45:7

“The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; **I am the Lord who does all these.**”

### But how are we to understand these passages?

Jeremiah 4:28

“For this shall the earth mourn and the heavens above be black because I have spoken. I have purposed and **will not repent**, nor will I turn back from it.”

Jeremiah 15:6

“You have forsaken Me, says the Lord, You have gone backward. Therefore I will stretch out My hand against you and destroy you; **I am weary of repenting!**”

Jeremiah 18:7

“The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, **if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will repent** of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.”

### How have Christians responded to this question?

1. **Control** - Some believe that God does not really repent.
2. **Relationship** - Some believe that God relates to people with respect for their free decisions.

- Genuine human moral responsibility demands it.
- Genuine relationships with God demand it.
- Separating evil from a holy, loving God demands it.
- The spiritual conflict motif in Scripture demands it.
- A straightforward literal rendering of Scripture demands it.

### How have Christians responded to this question?

1. **Control** - Some believe that God does not really repent.
2. **Relationship** - Some believe that God relates to people with respect for their free decisions.
3. **Knowledge** - Others believe that God knows what will happen but does not decree or control all of it.

Matthew 11:21

“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For **if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”

## Areas of agreement

- a. **God is sovereign Lord of all.** The real question: “What does that mean?”
- b. **God has fixed some future events.** The real question: “Are all events in the future fixed?”
- c. **Many of our personal choices are restricted by the nature of who we are and the context in which we live.** The real question: “Are all of my actions contingent on external forces?”
- d. **We have limited understanding.** The real question: “What should I believe?”

**Biblical examples of both determinism and freedom together.**

### **The crucifixion of Jesus. Acts 2:23**

“this Man, delivered up by **the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God**, you nailed to the cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”

### **The betrayal of Jesus by Judas. Mk.14:21**

### **The hardening of Pharaoh’s heart. Rom.9:15-18**

## Mistakes to avoid

1. **Confusing God’s unchanging nature and purpose with the manipulation of every detail of life.**

When the earth warms do we believe the nature of the earth has changed?



2. **Believing that Divine sovereignty demands the decree and control of all human behavior and all circumstances.**

When I freely make a chess move while playing a grandmaster will it change the results?



3. **Emphasizing one teaching at the expense of other Biblical points.**

Texts on side are to be taken literally

Other texts are not to be taken literally

4. **Interpreting Scripture without respect for genera or accommodation to limited human horizons.**

## How are we to understand “conflicting” texts?

1. **When we read everything at face value there will be unavoidable and blatant contradictions.** But such readings disrespect the nature of God’s Word and human language.
2. **It is not unreasonable to assume that some of God’s revelation is an accommodation to our limited weakness and perspective.** Matthew 19:8 “because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted . . .”
3. **Not all texts are intended to be read literally.** True respect for the normal meaning of Scripture starts with a sensitivity to the genera, context, culture, and style.
4. **We do not have to understand everything in order to believe anything.** God is big and we see dimly.

**God’s promise and our comfort come not from believing that God decrees every detail but rather from knowing that**

**God is with us in every situation, offering power and wisdom to respond with assurance that the final result is consistent with His purposes.**

