

KEY ADMONITION: REPENTANCE

Do you remember the first day of a class when a new teacher would walk into the room and you thought: 'I wonder what they will say and what will their voice sound like? What will they be like? Something similar may have happened in the autumn of 26 A.D. at the Jordan river valley area in Israel. Word had spread about a rough looking prophet named John the Baptist. Here was the message he delivered in a fiery manner:

Repent...the kingdom of heaven is near! - Matthew 3:1-2

In a little while, along came another man named Jesus, whom John baptized. He began his ministry with these words that were spoken with great authority and resolve:

Repent...the kingdom of heaven is near. - Matthew 4:17

This word repent should catch our attention. It is the first word of the good news of the kingdom of God. Peter used the same word in the first message given in the early church:

Repent and be baptized.... - Acts 2:38

The apostle Paul continued the same practice when he preached:

*I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they **must turn** to God in **repentance** and have faith in our Lord Jesus.* - Acts 20:21

Repentance is a key foundation lesson in God's kingdom school. / Hebrews 6:1. In his last messages to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus implores most of them to **repent**. God does not suggest repentance. He **commands** all people everywhere to **repent**, for he has set a day when he will judge the world through Jesus / Acts 17:30. What does repentance mean?

*John the Baptist made his public proclamation with that formality, gravity and authority which must be listened to and obeyed...be having a **change of mind** which issues in **regret** and a **change of conduct**....* - Matthew 3:1-2 Wuest Greek translation excerpts

To **enter life** in God's kingdom, we must repent of going **our way**, leave the kingdom of self and follow Jesus who is **The Way**. / Isaiah 53:6, John 14:6. To **enjoy life** in God's kingdom, we must learn to walk in the Spirit and be ready to set aside things that hinder our spiritual journey. In Hebrews 6:1 we are told to repent from **dead works**. They come in various forms.

Works of the Flesh - Galatians 5:19-21. These are the selfish indulgence of our sinful nature expressed in various ways. Extreme grace teachings give one a **license** to live like this even after becoming a believer.

- * **Sexual:** immorality, impurity, debauchery, orgies
- * **Spiritual:** idolatry, witchcraft, sorcery, mediums, fortune telling -Deuteronomy 18: 9-12
- * **Social:** hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness

There are many lists of sins which will keep one from kingdom of God if they remain as a lifestyle: Mark 7:20-23, Romans 2:5-9, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Ephesians 5:3-7, Revelation 9:20-21; 21:8; 22:14-15

Works of the Law / Galatians 2:16; 3:6-10 These are the self-effort actions by which some seek to inhibit the fleshly lusts and achieve favor with God by keeping rules.

This is **legalism**. Jesus had more warnings for the religious leaders than any other group as they were filled with religious pride. / Matthew 21:31-32; Matthew 23. It is often harder for those who are full of their own righteousness to become Christians than those who are bound in fleshly sins. They do not see their need for salvation, whereas the others are more likely to come to the end of themselves and desire to be free from their sins.

In the story of the prodigal son we see an example of this. The wayward son ends up in the pigpen after living in carnal self indulgence, but comes to his senses and repents. The older son served his father faithfully at home. He appeared more righteous in his own eyes, but his heart was not right. He did not see any need to repent, but looked down with self righteousness upon his sinful brother. However, God and heaven rejoice over those who truly repent of their sins! Luke 15. God receives us as we are but does expect to see a change in our desires and actions. Luke 3:7-14.

Repentance implies an intellectual and hearty giving up of all controversy with God upon all and every point. It implies a conviction that God is wholly right and sinner wholly wrong, and a thorough and hearty abandonment of all excuses and apologies for sin. - Charles Finney / A great revivalist in the 1800's

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