

People Jesus Met, part 2 – John the Baptist (Repentance)

“Repent and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out . . .” Acts 3:19

“I preached to all people everywhere that they should repent and turn to God . . .” Acts 26:20

Without repentance, the “sinner’s prayer” never reaches “critical mass.”

“In those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is near.’” Matthew 3:1

“This was he of whom Isaiah the prophet spoke, ‘A voice calling in the desert, “Prepare the way for the LORD, make straight paths for Him.”’” Matthew 3:3

“People were coming out to John from Jerusalem and all Judea . . . confessing their sins and being baptized by John in the Jordan River.” Matthew 3:5, 6

“John said, ‘I am baptizing you with water for repentance. But one more powerful than I is coming, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. And He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.’” Matthew 3:11

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. John tried to deter him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by You - - and You come to me?’” Matthew 3:13

“But Jesus replied, ‘Let it be for now; it is proper for us to do this so we may fulfill all righteousness.’ Then John consented and baptized Jesus.” Matthew 3:15

Jesus clearly endorsed the ministry and message of John the Baptist - - and the ministry and message of John the Baptist was all about repentance.

Question: “Why did God send John ahead of Jesus preaching repentance?”

Answer: (Matthew 3:3) “. . . to prepare the way for the Lord (Jesus) . . .”

The Bible teaches that - - in God’s economy - - repentance always precedes grace, because repentance is the one-and-only basis upon which God does business with sinners.

“Repent and turn to God so that (then) your sins may be wiped out . . .” Acts 3:19

“. . . repentance and (then) forgiveness of sins.” Luke 24:47

“How can a person walk a church aisle and pray the sinner’s prayer and ask Jesus into their life - -and not be a true Christian?”

Unless the sinner’s prayer is accompanied by Holy Spirit-generated repentance - - it will not result in true, born-again salvation.

So What?

“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. Therefore, be earnest and repent.” Revelation 3:19

Repentance is not just for non-Christians.

The Bible teaches that repentance is the one-and-only basis upon which God does business with all sinners - - lost sinner and saved sinners!

Step #1 - - We must admit that we’re going in the wrong direction.

“My father’s lowest servants have plenty to eat and I’m here starving to death!” Luke 15:17b

The Prodigal son made a brutally honest assessment of how his life was going and was forced to admit that he had made a total mess of his life.

As sinners, we will cling to our pride right to the last gasp - - just like the Prodigal son did!

"After 42 years of drinking . . . I was physically and emotionally worn out. I'd hit rock bottom . . . I knew I couldn't go on like this. I knew I needed a change." Mickey Mantle

There can be no repentance without this contrite, broken-hearted admission that our behavior is wrong and self-destructive.

Step #2 - - We must come clean about our sin

"I will get up and go back to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.'" Luke 15:18

Step #3 - - We must accept the consequences of our actions - - and make amends if possible

"I am no longer worthy to be called your son; just make me like one of your hired men." Luke 15:19

"Lord, whatever I have cheated people out of, I will pay them back four times the amount." Luke 19:8

"Today, salvation has come to this house . . ." Luke 19:9

"I preached that people should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds." Acts 26:20

If there's true, godly repentance happening in our lives - - people are going to see it!

Step #4 - - We must make a clean break from our sin

"So he got up and went to his father." Luke 15:20

Unless there is a deliberate decision to make a clean break from our sinful behavior - - repentance never reaches "critical mass."

"He who covers his sin will not prosper, but he who confesses **and forsakes it** will find mercy." Proverbs 28:13

For true repentance we must:

#1 - Admit we're going in the wrong direction

#2 - Come clean about our sin

#3 - Accept the consequences & make amends if possible

#4 - Make a clean break from sinful behavior

"God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble." James 4:6

If you want to repent, God will see to it that you have all the power you need to do it!

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and I will give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit in you and I will empower you to follow My laws." Ezekiel 36:26, 27