

Read or listen
on your phone



5 MINUTE LESSONS ON THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Don't Read This! You Never Hear About It Anyway.

Last night my son said to me, “You sure seem to talk a lot about repentance in your lessons. That’s something we sure don’t hear about in the churches we have been around. We hear a lot about love and faith, but I never hear about repentance.”

That is interesting isn’t it? Some of the first words of Jesus (Matthew 4:17), John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1-2), the twelve apostles of Jesus (Mark 6:12), and the Great Commission of Luke 24:47 was “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Notice that repentance is linked to the forgiveness of our sins. And yet it is not spoken about often. When is the last time you heard the foundational teaching of Christ on repentance (Hebrews 6:1-2)?

It is interesting to discover that repentance is a theme of both Old and New Testament teaching.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach...” (2 Timothy 3:16 NLT)

The word that expresses the biblical concept of “repentance” is *šûb*. It is used over a thousand times in the Old Testament. It can indicate a **turning from evil to God or a turning from God back to evil**. In Ezekiel 18:26-27 we see the description of both:

“²⁶When a righteous person turns from his righteousness and practices iniquity, he will die for this. He will die because of the iniquity he has practiced. ²⁷But if a wicked person turns from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he will preserve his life.”

(Ezekiel 18:26-27 Holman Christian Standard Bible)

Jesus is the righteousness we need, the wisdom we need, the redemption we need. In fact, He is everything we will ever need (1 Corinthians 1:29-30).

The danger in the early church, as well as today, was that individuals were turning away from Jesus to the law for righteousness (Galatians 2:21), returning to another sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:4), and to another priesthood for help (Hebrews 7:11). In doing so, the Apostle Paul declares repeatedly and boldly:

*“²Listen to me, for this is serious: if you are counting on circumcision and keeping the Jewish laws to make you right with God, then **Christ cannot save you.** ³I’ll say it again. Anyone trying to find favor with God by being circumcised must always obey every other Jewish law or perish. ⁴**Christ is useless to you** if you are counting on clearing your debt to God by keeping those laws; you are lost from God’s grace.” (Galatians 5:2-4 The Living Bible)*

In “repentance” someone always turns FROM something, TO something. On the positive side, it turned the Thessalonian believers FROM idols TO serve the true and living God (1 Thessalonians 1:9). On the negative side, the writer of the book of Hebrews warned of turning away from Christ and back to sin (Hebrews 3:12-14), away from Christ and back to the law for their justification (Hebrews 10:1,14), and away from Christ and back to the Old Testament priesthood (Hebrews 7:11). The same kinds of warnings are given repeatedly throughout the book of Galatians and most of the New Testament. I am surprised that most people have never seen it!

A friend of mine who is a teacher in the “grace movement” says that (based on Hebrews 6:4-6) he believes that a believer can turn from Christ and His sacrifice, but it is so rare that it would be almost impossible to ever happen.

What my friend doesn’t realize is that this same warning is all over the New Testament and the New Testament writers also include themselves in the warning that they give. The personal pronoun “**we**” meaning “a group of people that includes the speaker” is used repeatedly throughout the New Testament.

For example:

*“But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are **we**, if **we** hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” (Hebrews 3:6)*

*“For **we** are made partakers of Christ, if **we** hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;” (Hebrews 3:14)*

“Repentance” should be towards God (See Acts 20:21), but sometimes it appears that people change their mind and turn back:

*“²⁰And anyone who has escaped the pollution of the world once by coming to know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and who then allows himself to be entangled by it a second time and mastered, will end up in **a worse state than he began in.**” (2 Peter 2:20 Jerusalem Bible)*

When a person turns towards sin he begins a process of turning away from Christ and His sacrifice (Hebrews 10:26). If continued in, it will lead to a hardening of the heart, unbelief and departure from the Living God (Hebrews 3:12-14; James 5:19-20; 2 Peter 2:20-22).

These same warnings are repeated continually throughout the New Testament. I am surprised that so many professing Christians have never seen these passages or

acknowledged them. I think it may be the result of following men, the result of not having an honest and open heart to all the Scriptures, and the hardening effects of the lifestyles of a twentieth-century church. Nevertheless, the warnings are there and anyone may freely read them if they so desire. The Bible both Old and New Testaments are full of these kinds of warnings.

It is a shame that repentance towards God has been linked with legalism, the keeping of God's commandments with works of the law, or the confession of sin as being sin consciousness (Acts 3:19; John 14:15; 1 John 1:9; Acts 8:22).

Questions

1 Read Matthew 4:17.

"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." - Matthew 4:17

Some of the first words of Jesus were:

- A. Ask Me into your heart.
- B. See you in church on Sunday.
- C. Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

2 Read Matthew 3:1-2.

*"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, ²And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
- Matthew 3:1-2*

John the Baptist preached:

- A. Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- B. God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.
- C. Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? (Matthew 3:7)

"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" - Matthew 3:7

3 Read Mark 6:12.

“And they went out, and preached that men should repent.” - Mark 6:12

What did the 12 apostles of Christ preach?

- A. See you at the church supper tonight.
- B. Men should repent.
- C. Be kind to others.

4 Read Luke 24:47 (New American Standard Version).

*“and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”
- Luke 24:47 (New American Standard Version)*

Can you see that repentance is linked to the forgiveness of sins?

Yes or No

5 Read Ezekiel 18:26-27 (HCSB).

*“²⁶When a righteous person turns from his righteousness and practices iniquity, he will die for this. He will die because of the iniquity he has practiced. ²⁷But if a wicked person turns from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he will preserve his life.”
- Ezekiel 18:26-27 (HCSB)*

The Biblical concept of repentance can indicate:

- A. A turning from evil to God.
- B. A turning from God back to evil.

6 Read 1 Thessalonians 1:9 (The Message Bible).

“People come up and tell us how you received us with open arms, how you deserted the dead idols of your old life so you could embrace and serve God, the true God.” - 1 Thessalonians 1:9 (The Message Bible)

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True or False

We want to hear from you!

We would love to hear your feedback on these lessons and how you use them in your own study or in discipling others. If you have any thoughts, stories, testimonies, comments, or questions we would love to hear them!

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Answer Key

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C. Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

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Yes

Luke 13:3 says, “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

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True

Acts 26:18 *“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins...”*