

The Message the World Did Not Want to Hear (and still doesn't!)

(The Reason for the Season Series – Part Two)

It makes perfect sense. Matthew was one of Jesus' twelve disciples—hand-picked by the Master to walk with Him and learn. He was a Jewish man the Jews hated because he had, in their minds, betrayed his people. He was a despised tax collector—collecting money from the Jews to give to the Romans. A Jewish man could sink no lower than that.

Fast-forward through that amazing three years spent with Jesus—His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and we find Matthew writing what some believe was the first of the Gospels. (Some argue that Mark wrote first, but I lean with the Matthew group). Matthew was an eyewitness. Mark and Luke were not. As I told you during the series on the first epistle of John, he was also an eyewitness, but wrote much later in the first century AD.

Now for the part that makes perfect sense. Matthew, being a Jew, began his gospel with the genealogy of Jesus. Unlike Luke, Matthew gave the lineage from Abraham through David ending with Joseph. Jesus could not take the throne as King, upon His return, without being a descendant of David because God said so. Nathan, the prophet of God, said to David.

“Your house and your kingdom shall endure before ^[e]Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.” 2 Samuel 7: 16

Foreshadowing the Sole Purpose of Messiah

The word *Messiah* means the same thing in Hebrew and Greek—**“anointed one”**

*"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, **for He will save His people from their sins.**" Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US." And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus." Matthew 1: 18-25*

The Old Testament ends with the Jews having lost their nation for one reason—generations of sinful disobedience of God. God is serious about His people being holy and obedient. He hates sin. That is second of two statements that can be used to sum up the OT. The first is God created people out of love to enjoy a love relationship with Him. That was broken in Genesis 3 and continued to worsen up to the Flood of Noah and in the generations that followed.

Malachi, the last OT prophet, prophesied in Judah toward the end of the fifth century BC. Three of the most important messages God gave him were written to the remnant that returned from Babylon. God loved them (Malachi 1: 2). A messenger who would be a forerunner of the Messiah would be sent. And judgment loomed.

The Old Testament ends followed by ~ 400 years of silence from God—meaning no further prophetic words. Then, at the

appointed time, John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, came as Malachi foretold. (Jesus confirmed his words in Matthew 11.)

"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts."
Malachi 3: 1

The Forerunner and the Message

John was the first new prophet to come from God in four hundred years. His message was a continuation of that which the "prophets of old" brought with one critical addition.

*Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"* Matthew 3: 2

Repent (Greek – metanoó)

These words from a Bible commentary I use during my study, described this very well.

*"after hearing such preaching, the sinner is led to understand, that the way he has walked in was the way of misery, death, and hell...and if to live in a constant opposition to all the dictates of true wisdom; to wage war with his own best interests in time and eternity; to provoke and insult the living God; and, by habitual sin...Repentance, then, implies that a measure of Divine wisdom is communicated to the sinner...That **his mind, purposes, opinions, and inclinations, are changed; and that, in consequence, there is a total change in his conduct.** It need scarcely be remarked, that, in this state, a man feels deep anguish of soul, because he has sinned against God, unfitted himself for heaven, and exposed his soul to hell. Hence, a true penitent has that sorrow, whereby he forsakes sin, not only because it has been*

ruinous to his own soul, but because it has been offensive to God."

The kingdom of heaven is at hand

Christ, Who is the full embodiment of the perfection of God in heaven, is about to be walking among them. The love of God is about to be poured out by His mercy and from His grace, once for all who will receive their salvation (forgiveness of their sins) in Christ alone. Most of the Jews and Gentiles of His day rejected Him. Today, most of the world continues to do so.

*"From that time (after His baptism by John and temptations by Satan) Jesus began to preach and say, **"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."** Matthew 4: 17*

Even a child can read and understand that message is the same from the prophetic forerunner of Christ the Messiah and Jesus Christ Messiah Himself.

One more verse found in all three synoptic Gospels. Jesus restated His message and mission. It could not be clearer.

"I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

As born-again Christians, we responded to these words of Jesus when the Holy Spirit brought them to us. We were convicted of our sins and broken like King David. The Holy Spirit brought us to our knees and the place the Apostle Paul so eloquently described.

"For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death." 2 Corinthians 7: 10

For those who continue to reject the Message and Messiah, I beg you again to allow the Holy Spirit to awaken you to this

need for repentance and that you may receive Christ as Savior. Let this be the first real Christmas you ever celebrated because you finally understood what we mean when we say, He is the only Reason for the Season!

For Christ's sake,

Walter