

The “Lynchpin” Doctrine of Repentance

In 1937 H.A. Ironside wrote his book, “Unless You Repent” addressing the error that said repentance is not necessary for salvation. What was a serious problem those many years ago has gone to seed in our day. While the doctrine of REPENTANCE is overlooked by many, I contend that without biblical REPENTANCE no one will see the kingdom. Repentance is not an addition to FAITH, but rather is descriptive of the right kind of faith!

The word “*repent*” simply means “***to change your mind***”. A fundamental change of mind is involved in a saving faith. It involves a change of mind about SIN and a change of mind about Christ as LORD and SAVIOR! You can’t have one without the other. To truly change your mind about Christ inherently involves a change of mind about sin.

While the prophets' ministries often overlapped, they made distinct contributions in terms of emphasis. Moses was “the Lawgiver.” Joel emphasized “the Day of the Lord.” Isaiah had a pronounced emphasis on the Messiah. Daniel highlighted God's sovereignty, while Ezekiel stressed the “Lord GOD” (literally “Adonai [Master]—YHWH”).

And while essentially all the prophets emphasized REPENTANCE, it was John the Baptist who uniquely made this the hallmark of his entire ministry. John the Baptist’s REPENTANCE MINISTRY is a “lynchpin” ministry. His ministry of REPENTANCE connects back to the Old Testament and going forward in the New Testament everything builds on it. In terms of POSITION, no one was ever in a greater place than that of John the Baptist (cf. Mt. 11:9-11). He was the forerunner of the LORD! He prepared the way for the LORD in calling for REPENTANCE. His ministry of REPENTANCE was prophetically and poetically depicted back in Isaiah 40:3-4 (cf. Mal. 3:1).

The MAJOR thing in John the Baptist’s ministry was calling people to REPENTANCE which is what his baptism signified (cf. Mk. 1:4; Acts 13:24). It was not essentially about the baptism, but rather about the REPENTANCE (cf. Mt. 3:7-8). John prepared the way of the LORD. REPENTANCE was NECESSARY to receive the Messiah (cf. Acts 19:4). The way to the kingdom is through REPENTANCE.

John the Baptist said, “***Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!***” (Mt. 3:2). Building on the introductory ministry of John, Jesus said the same thing: “***Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.***” (Mt. 4:17). The ONLY way to the kingdom is by way of REPENTANCE! What Jesus meant by repentance is the SAME thing that John meant.

John called for a radical change of mind that resulted in a changed life (cf. Lk. 3:7-14). The NATURE of saving faith which involves REPENTANCE is the same in all ages (cf. Heb. 11). The “content” of faith was progressive in keeping with progressive revelation, but the NATURE of true faith involving REPENTANCE is consistent in all dispensations! (cf. Heb. 11:6).

Looking forward, not only did the ministry of Jesus build on the concept of REPENTANCE emphasized by John, but so did that of the apostles (cf. Lk. 24:47; Acts 3:19-21; 20:21; 26:20; 2 Tim. 2:25; 2 Pet. 3:9). John the Baptist’s ministry of REPENTANCE reaches back to the OT (cf. Isa. 40:3-4; 55:6-7) and is also a LYNCHPIN to everything that follows in the New Testament (cf. Rev. 9:20; 16:9, 11).

It is ever true! The way to the kingdom is through REPENTANCE. The “unrighteous” who refuse to repent will not ***“inherit the kingdom of God”*** (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-11). YES, we are saved by faith alone, but it must be THE RIGHT KIND OF FAITH. It must be a CHANGE OF MIND kind of faith! God’s bow of judgment is bent, and it is aimed at all those who will not turn in REPENTANCE to Him and accept Christ as their Lord and Savior (cf. Deut. 32:41; Ps. 7:12; Lk. 13:3, 5; Jn. 3:18-21; 1 Jn. 5:9-12).

God now ***“commands all men everywhere to repent”*** (Acts 17:30). John POINTED to Christ and called for REPENTANCE. Those who truly RECEIVED Christ were those who BELIEVED in His name (cf. Jn. 1:11-13). These were the REPENTANT! Sometimes the emphasis in Scripture is BELIEVE and sometimes it is REPENTANCE, but in truth where you find the one you always find the other! It’s just as sure as Jesus is linked with John in their emphasis on REPENTANCE!

“Repentance is the inseparable companion of faith.” – Charles Spurgeon