

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY

Revela!

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

MATTHEW 3

READY OR NOT

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

*“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.’”*

John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

MATTHEW 3.1-6

REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND!

► "Repent!"

repent (*metanoeo*)- to undergo a change in frame of mind and feeling
to make a change of principle and practice
to change your whole life

"Turn your life around or else!"

Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

MATTHEW 3.8

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. . . . every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

LUKE 3.7-9

REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND!

- ▶ There is a fundamental incompatibility with the kingdom of everyday life and the kingdom of heaven.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeatedly stated: “You have heard it said . . . but I tell you”— and each time he draws a distinct contrast between contemporary values and those he represents as the core values of the kingdom of heaven.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. . . . Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”



What is your only comfort in life and in death?

Answer: That I am not my own, but belong—

body and soul, in life and in death—

to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,

and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. . . .

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM, *Question 1*

What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?

Answer: Three things:

first, how great my sin and misery are;

second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery;

third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.

How do you come to know your misery?

Answer: The law of God tells me.



John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him,

“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?”

Does God permit such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?

Answer: Certainly not. God is terribly angry with the sin we are born with as well as the sins we personally commit.

As a just judge, God will punish them both now and in eternity, having declared:

*“Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey
all the things written in the book of the law.”*



... the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

What is involved in genuine repentance or conversion?

Answer: Two things:

the dying-away of the old self,
and the rising-to-life of the new.

What is the dying-away of the old self?

Answer: To be genuinely sorry for sin
and more and more to hate and run away from it.



Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Since we have been delivered from our misery
by grace through Christ without any merit of our own,
why then should we do good works?

Answer: Because Christ, having redeemed us by his blood,
is also restoring us by his Spirit into his image,
so that with our whole lives
we may show that we are thankful to God for his benefits,
so that he may be praised through us,
so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits,
and so that by our godly living
our neighbors may be won over to Christ.



Why will God then have the ten commandments so strictly preached, since no man in this life can keep them?

Answer: First, that all our lifetime we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature,
and thus become the more earnest in seeking the remission of sin
and righteousness in Christ;
likewise, that we constantly endeavor and pray to God
for the grace of the Holy Spirit,
that we may become more and more conformable to the image of God,
till we arrive at the perfection proposed to us in a life to come.

REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND!

[Christ] has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For,

*“In just a little while,
he who is coming will come
and will not delay.”*