

The Gospel According to Matthew pt 7

(the kingdom of heaven is at hand)

Read Matt. 3:1-8

John the Baptist was once again the fulfillment of old testament prophecy, some 400 years before, a messenger of God, a Prophet of the most High, wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; **“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts”** (Mal 3:1).

Many years before that, the Prophet Isaiah, also inspired by the Holy Ghost, wrote these words; **“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it”** (40:3-5). This prophecy is declared fulfilled by Matthew in verse 3 of chapter 3. How appropriate it is, that the first Gospel letter of the new testament has so many declarations of God’s Word being fulfilled!

This is the record of the last of the old testament prophets, who all prophesied of the coming Messiah. John came crying; **“Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight”**, that’s the message of every Preacher sent of God, there is only one way, Christ Jesus is The way; (Joh 14:6) **“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”** the way is narrow.

What did John preach? What were the leading themes of his ministry? With what message did he prepare the way of the Lord? John the Baptist spoke plainly about sin and repentance.

Brother Don Fortner wrote; *“No man is faithful to your soul or faithful to God who does not expose your sin and proclaim to you the necessity of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ”*.

Because we are all sinners, if there is no repentance, we must all perish. We are all sinners by divine imputation (Rom 5:12) **Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.** We are all sinners by birth and nature (Psa 51:5) **Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.** We are all sinners by choice and practice (Psa 58:3) **The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies;**

(Rom 3:9-19) **What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.**

We are all sinners at heart (Jer 17:9) **The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?; (Mat 15:19) For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.**

We are all so thoroughly sinful that even our righteousness must be repented of (Isa 64:6) **But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.**

(Isa 64:7) **And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.** John the Baptist was a preacher of repentance who faithfully exposed and reprovved the sins of his hearers.

(Mat 3:7-8) **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? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance?**

He plainly declared the necessity of repentance, warning religious men not to rest in their religious privileges and services. He was no less faithful in preaching to the great and mighty than to the meek and lowly (Luk 3:18-20) **And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people. But Herod the tetrarch, being reprovved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.**

After John the Baptist comes the fulfillment of all scripture in Christ Jesus. And John's message was, "Repent", turn from and turn too. Turn from religion, turn from works, turn from death, and turn to Life, turn to Grace, turn to Christ Jesus, Repent means to turn from something, to something else!

He tells us what we are to turn too; **"the kingdom of heaven"** it is at hand, It is near, (2Co 6:2) **behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.**

What is the Kingdom of heaven? 32 times this phrase is used, and in its exact form, only here in the letter from Matthew. Other places in the lord's Word we see the Phrase "The kingdom of God".

What is this Kingdom of heaven?

Let us answer this through the Holy Word of God!

(Mat 5:3) Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who's spirit has been made poor, blessed are those who are destitute in the spirit, those who know their condition before a Thrice Holy God, those who have been brought to see they have no righteousness in themself!

(Mat 5:10) Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Those who are part of this Heavenly Kingdom are those who are tortured by their sin and who trust in Christ and His righteousness alone for their standing with God, the religious world, our own blood kin, turn against us for Glorifying the Lord in everything that is, they hate a Sovereign God and they hate us for loving Him; **“I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world”** (Joh 17:14).

(Mat 7:21) Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

This is that very thing the world persecutes us for. How dare you say “I am a sinner”, I have turned myself from those acts and now I choose to follow christ”. How dare you say **“So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy”** (Rom 9:16), God's word says not everyone who declares to be a Christian will enter this Kingdom of Heaven. so we see this “Kingdom of Heaven” is for some but not others. **“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him”** (Eph 1:4).

What is the will of the Father which is in Heaven? That all whom He gave to His son would come to Him. **“And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured at him”** (Joh 6:40-41)

Going through these verses, reading the Word of truth, we see the Kingdom of heaven is a group of those who will do the Fathers will, those who will believe, those who are chosen in the righteousness of His Son the Lord Jesus. those who will be persecuted for His Name sake!

What is the Kingdom of Heaven? It is the people of God, for whom God has made His Son Lord of, King of, not that Christ is not Lord of all already, for He is Lord of everything, but that He has made it known unto us He is Lord! we Know Him now as our Lord, we know Him as our King, where we once thought ourselves to be lords, through Grace the Truth has been revealed! This is the message of every preacher of Truth! We are saved by Grace through faith! (Eph 2:8)

Salvation is of the Lord! Not of works lest man will boast!

John describes Himself as “**The voice of one crying in the wilderness.**” (Joh 1:23).

Christ is “**the Word of God**” (Joh 1:1), the Revelation of the Triune God (Joh 1:18) **No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.**

A gospel preacher is simply a voice conveying the Word of God, a voice echoing the message God has given. “*And what is a voice?*” asked Robert Hawker. “*It is a nonentity, a mere sound, light as air, and so short in its being and existence, if it can be called by such a name, that when it hath performed its office, it dies away in the air, is dissolved, and is known no more. Such said John am I, when considered in any comparative view with my Lord and Master.*”

Yet, the voice is not indifferent. He is found “*crying in the wilderness,*” arousing and awaking sinners with the claims of God. His garments were plain and simple. His diet was plain and simple.” **And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey**” (Mat 3:4).

Like John, God's servants are ordinary men. They are not pampered, self-serving men of luxury and ease. Our message is the same in all places, to all whom God chooses, "**repent, the Kingdom of heaven is at hand**"

How can I be in this Kingdom of Heaven?

Mat 18:1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

Mat 18:2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

Mat 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 18:4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 18:5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

Mat 18:6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Mat 18:10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

Mat 18:11 For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

Mat 18:12 How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

Mat 18:13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

Mat 18:14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Child like faith! Child like belief!

I believe God when He says I did not choose Him, He chose me! (Joh 15:16)

I believe God when He says there are none righteous no not one! (Rom 3:10)

I believe God when He says He by Himself purged me of my sins! (Heb 1:3)

I believe God when He says He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified! (Heb 10:14)

I believe God when He says my sheep hear my voice! (Joh 10:27)

I cannot explain His Grace too me but I know it is so! His Word says so, and that is good enough for me!

I know He was Gracious in manifesting Himself in the flesh for my sake!

I know He was Gracious in establishing righteousness in that flesh, always doing what pleased the Father, for my sake!

I know He was Gracious in being obedient even unto death, for my sake!

I know He was Gracious in laying down His life, shedding His own precious Blood, dying for my sake!

I know He is Graciously sitting at the right hand of the Father, the Throne of Grace, for death could not hold Him, making intercession on my behalf!

Mat 19:13-14 Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

What is the Kingdom of Heaven? It's God's chosen blood bought children, who believe because of His Graciousness too them! That's the message!