

The Mind of Christ

The Great Beginning – Part One

INTRODUCTION:

I. In one brief sentence, Mark describes the beginning of the ministry of Jesus.

Mark 1:14-15 – *“Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”*

A. It’s been said that a wise military commander not only has to decide WHEN to begin his campaign, but also WHERE to begin.

1. The POINT of attack is just as important as the TIME of the attack.

a. In the case of Jesus, the TIME for the beginning of His mission came in the late Spring or early Summer of 30 A.D.

b. But the PLACE where His mission would begin was different from where most would have thought.

(1). Normally we would think Jesus would begin in Jerusalem – the very center of Jewish religious service.

(2). It was not only the city where the great Temple stood and where worship to Jehovah was offered by the priests and High Priest, it was also where all the great rabbinical schools were located.

- B. But rather than begin in Jerusalem, Jesus deliberately chose to begin His ministry near His home of Nazareth, in the northern region of Galilee.
1. But why? Why would Jesus deliberately choose the rural regions of Galilee, and not begin His ministry in the center of Jewish religious activity.
- C. When we take a closer look, we can see at least three reasons why Jesus chose to begin His ministry in the region of Galilee.
1. First, Galilee was an area Jesus knew best.
 - a. It was in Galilee that Jesus had grown to manhood – the area where He learned as a school boy and worked as a man in Joseph’s carpenter shop.
 - b. It was also in Galilee that Jesus had first worshipped in a synagogue – his family’s religious roots were here.
 - c. And He could easily speak to the people of Galilee because He had lived their life, and understood their ways, and spoke their speech.
 2. In addition to being an area Jesus knew best, a second reason why Jesus chose to begin in Galilee was because that region had the largest number of Jews concentrated in such a relatively small area.

- a. According to the ancient historian Josephus, Galilee had 204 towns and villages during the time of Jesus, each of which had a population of at least 15,000 – making a total population for the region of more than 3-million.
 - b. Simply put, there was no other part of Palestine where Jesus could have found a greater number of people to preach to in such a compact area, and in such a short amount of time.
3. However, a third reason for beginning in Galilee was that the people in that region were receptive to new teachers and new teachings.
- a. The Southern Province of Judea, where Jerusalem was located, was not as widely traveled by merchants and foreigners during the days of Jesus as was the Northern Province of Galilee.
 - (1). Because the people of Galilee had much more exposure to foreigners, they were also far more receptive to new and innovative ideas than the more conservative people found in Judea.
 - (2). The Galileans were described as an “eager, forward-looking people.”

- (a). Josephus, the famous Jewish historian, says, “They were ever fond of innovations, and were by nature disposed to changes, and delighted in seditions.”
 - (b). Because of this, the people of Galilee were always ready to follow a leader who might begin an insurrection, and were often described as a quick-tempered, quarrelsome-kind of people.
 - (c). The apostle Peter was a fisherman from the region of Galilee, and is a classic example of the impetuous nature of most Galileans.
 - (d). So were James and John (also called “the sons of thunder” perhaps because of thunderously bad tempers). In **Luke 9:54**, James and John wanted Jesus to call down fire from heaven and consume a Samaritan village that had refused to receive Jesus and His disciples.
- b. All in all, the Galileans were a people who were ready and willing to accept change, and that’s the very thing Jesus had come to bring.
- D. So, Jesus knew Galilee would be the best place to begin His campaign and to launch His mission of turning the hearts of men and women back to God.

II. However, any leader who wants to capture the hearts of men and women, and who wants to dramatically change the world he lives in, not only needs to choose the right time and place of his campaign, there is one more thing he must do.

A. He must be able to put his message into one simple but penetrating sentence that people will immediately understand, and which will lodge forever in their hearts.

1. Every great leader has been known for these memorable and unforgettable statements, like:

a. “A house divided against itself cannot stand” – Abraham Lincoln’s Biblical quotation.

b. “I shall return” – General Douglas McArthur.

c. “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country” – John F. Kennedy’s inaugural speech.

d. “I have a dream” – Dr. Martin Luther King.

B. Jesus did the same thing.

1. He came to the people of His day with a simple command and a statement.

a. **Matthew 4:17** – It’s recorded for us in these words, *“From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”*

(1). It's the command "*REPENT!*"

(2). And it's the statement "*FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND.*"

C. Let's take a moment to examine this plea of Jesus by first looking at the command to "*repent,*" then in a following lesson next week we'll examine what Jesus meant by the statement, "*for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*"

BODY:

I. First, there was the imperative command "REPENT."

A. If we are to ever fully understand the Mind of Christ, we first need to fully and completely understand the meaning of the word "REPENT."

1. Why?

a. **Matthew 11:20-24** – Jesus told His hearers that the terrible sin of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum was that they had seen His mighty works and had not repented.

(1). "*Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment*

than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.”

- b. On another occasion, Jesus confronted men and women with the alternative to *“repent or perish.”*
 - (1). In **Luke chapter 13**, Jesus twice says, *“I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:3 and 5).*
- c. Jesus also told His hearers that the sinner who repented would bring joy to the angels of heaven.
 - (1). **Luke 15:7** – After teaching a parable in Luke 15 about a shepherd who leaves 99 sheep safe in the sheepfold while he goes out and finds one sheep that was lost, Jesus said, *“I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”*
 - (2). **Luke 15:10** – After teaching the parable about the woman who sweeps her house until she finds a lost coin, Jesus

said, *“Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*

- d. Even the disciples of Jesus were sent out throughout Palestine to tell people to repent.

(1). **Mark 6:12** – *“So they went out and preached that people should repent.”*

- 2. So, the word “repent” was at the very heart of Jesus’ message.

B. But what does the word mean?

- 1. In the New Testament, the word for “repentance” and “to repent” are similar in that they both contain the same root words.

- a. One root word is “meta” which is translated “after.”

- a. The other root word is the word “nous” (NOOSE), which is translated “mind.”

- 2. Taken together, these two words are literally translated “after the mind,” and suggest the idea of an “AFTERTHOUGHT.”

- a. In classical Greek, writers would often use this word to suggest that a wise man would use “FORETHOUGHT,” but a foolish man would have to use “AFTERTHOUGHT” to fix his mistakes.

(1). In other words, foolish men who had not been careful to think something through BEFORE they acted, had to use

their minds to figure out ways to fix their mistakes AFTER they acted.

- b. Hopefully, an “AFTERTHOUGHT” would eventually result in a “CHANGED THOUGHT.”

(1). This is another way of saying, once the foolish man has had time to think about his mistake, hopefully he will change his thinking to avoid this problem in the future.

- 3. There is another word that is often used in context with the word “repent” – it is the Greek word “**epistrephein**” (e-PIS-tra-fene), which is translated “turn.”

- a. When the people of Lydda heard Peter, they “*turned*” to the Lord (**Acts 9:35**).

- b. In Antioch, a great number believed and “*turned*” to the Lord (**Acts 11:21**).

- c. Paul urged the people of Lystra to “*turn*” from earthly desires and serve the Living God (**Acts 14:15**).

- d. Paul himself was commissioned by the Lord to “*turn*” men from darkness to light (**Acts 26:18**).

- e. Finally, Paul tells King Agrippa how he constantly pleaded with the people to “*repent and turn*” to God (**Acts 26:20**).

- 4. The use of these words together – “*repent and turn*” – suggests the idea of someone who is facing in the wrong direction – away from

God – but through repentance changes his direction and turns around to face in a new direction – toward God.

- C. When we examine the repentance process in greater detail, we learn that there are actually FOUR different elements involved in repentance.
1. First, there must be a realization that our actions have been wrong.
 2. Second, realizing we have been doing wrong produces a genuine sorrow for the wrong we have done.
 - a. **2 Corinthians 7:9-11a** –The apostle Paul wrote, *“Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication!”*
 - b. As we mentioned in a previous lesson, it’s important that we understand this must be sorrow for the WRONG ITSELF, and NOT the CONSEQUENCES of the wrong.

- (1). It's one thing for a convicted felon to grieve over the fact that he has been caught and is now having to reap the consequences of his wrongs by serving time in prison.
 - (2). But it's entirely different for a convicted felon to experience sorrow over the fact that he has committed crimes that not only broke the law but hurt innocent people in the process.
- c. Experiencing grief for the CONSEQUENCES of our sins is NOT the same as grieving over our SINS.
- (3). The godly sorrow we need to feel is over the sin itself.
3. Third, grieving over our sins then results in a changed attitude.
- a. We must see the sinful practices we've committed as something we want to put behind us forever.
 - (1). **Romans 12:9** – we need to *“Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.”*
4. Finally, this change of attitude results in a change of action and conduct.
- a. In other words, there is a final change of life.
 - b. We no longer DO some of the things we once did, or GO TO SOME OF THE PLACES where we once went, or have CLOSE ASSOCIATION with some of the people we once considered our friends.

- D. So, when Jesus says “REPENT,” what is He saying?
1. He’s telling us, “You didn’t exercise enough FORETHOUGHT before you acted – you didn’t think through what the consequences of your actions might be.”
 2. “Therefore, you made the wrong decision – you acted in a way that was not in keeping with GOD’S way, and you sinned.
 3. Now Jesus is telling us, “You need to exercise AFTERTHOUGHT – you need to REPENT.”
 - a. This is done by:
 - (1). First, realizing your actions and attitudes were wrong.
 - (2). Second, by feeling genuine sorrow for the wrong you’ve done, and NOT simply over the fact that you have been caught.
 - (3). Third, by letting that genuine sorrow change your whole attitude – letting it rearrange your thinking and alter your attitudes about your past.
 - (4). Finally, by letting this change of attitude result in a change of conduct – letting it change your whole manner of life.
 4. Remember – genuine repentance ALWAYS begins in the heart and works its way OUTWARD TO OUR ACTIONS.
 - a. In other words, there must first be a change of heart before there can be a change of life.

- b. On the other hand, if there is no change of life, then that's a good indication that there has never been a genuine change of heart.

CONCLUSION:

- I. There is one final thing we need to say about Jesus' call for repentance.
 - A. You and I will never be able to FULLY achieve the kind of repentance that Jesus demands without His help.
 - 1. Until we come to a full and complete realization of the sin in our own lives – until we see the ugliness and sin in our own lives we will never be able to completely repent.
 - B. But how can we come to realization of the sin in our own lives? Let me suggest two ways.
 - 1. First, we need to LOOK AT THE LIFE OF JESUS.
 - a. Take a close look at the sinless, perfect, pure life of Jesus Christ.
 - (1). He represents the very essence of holiness and righteousness.
 - (2). There is a total and complete absence of anything that is even remotely associated with sin.
 - (3). When we look at the life of Jesus, we see everything that is good and virtuous.

b. Now, place your own life beside His – do you see a difference?

(1). If you DON'T see a difference, then may I suggest you read **1 John 1:8, 10** – *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us... If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”*

(2). But if you DO see a difference, how does that make you feel?

(a). I certainly don't believe in “worm theology.” But I DO believe we need to be honest with ourselves and admit that there is a need for change – a need for genuine repentance.

(b). I believe we need to feel genuine godly sorrow over the fact that areas of our lives are NOT what they should be.

2. The second way of coming to a full and complete realization of the sin in our own lives is to LOOK AT THE CROSS.

a. When we look at the cross of Calvary, we see the **consequences** of OUR sins.

