

## **Mt. 4:12-17 (WCF 15:2) “Why Do You Repent?”**

**For the Children:** When you get into trouble for doing wrong, what makes you admit your sin? Is it because you have been caught, and you fear that it will be worse for you if you try to deny it? Is it because you have upset other people, and you don't like to do that? True repentance in the Bible involves being deeply sorry for your sins. It involves a desire to turn away from your sins. It also involves turning to the Lord – repenting because you love the Lord's forgiveness; because you realize that He is your Lord and He hates our sin; and because we do not want anything to keep us from drawing close to Him now and in the next life. **Questions:** What reason did Jesus give for repenting? What does the coming of His kingdom have to do with repentance? Why did Jesus go to call on the people of Galilee to repent?

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### **Introduction:**

#### **First Point: Why the Lord Went to Galilee**

- 1) The Least Likely Place: Galilee might seem like the least likely place for the Lord to commence His public ministry. Why did the Great King not begin in Jerusalem, where the temple was located?
- 2) The Reaction against John the Baptist: The ministry of John the Baptist had stirred up the Jewish leaders. This was not the time for a final confrontation. Hence, when Jesus heard of John's arrest, He withdrew into Galilee (v. 12).
- 3) A Place of Need: The Lord also deliberately went into a place of great poverty, darkness and need (v. 16). This was prophesied in Is. 9:2. The Lord came to fulfill that prophecy (v. 14). The Lord did not come as a worldly king, but to rescue the needy. He came as the Suffering Servant. His power is seen all the more in His ability to save such sinners in this way.
- 4) A Hint of the Gentile Inclusion: Galilee had a mixed population of Jews and Gentiles. The Lord came primarily to begin a minister to Israel (Mt. 15:24). But here He foreshadowed the extension of the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Mt. 28:19).

#### **Second Point: What He Preached in Galilee**

- 1) The Call to Repentance: Jesus' message was not new. His preaching picks up where John left off – with a call to repentance. Compare Mt. 3:2 with 4:17. However, John emphasized that the reason for repentance was the imminence of judgement (Mt. 3:10, 12). Jesus also spoke of judgement, but He added a second reason – the grace and salvation that He was bringing. See Mt. 5:1-12. The fact that Jesus did emphasize repentance was, as for John, in line with OT preaching. See Is. 30:15, Mal. 3:7.
- 2) The Kingdom at Hand: Both John and Jesus said that the Kingdom of God was “at hand” (Mt. 3:2 with 4:17). John said it because he knew that the Messiah was about to begin His work. Jesus said it because He knew that His work meant that “The Kingdom of God has come upon you” (Lk. 11:20). This was the heavenly Kingdom of the future age breaking into the present, evil age. It involved God's rule of His people in this world and the next, despite all Satan's opposition.

#### **Third Point: Why Many Listened in Galilee**

- 1) A Reason That Embraces Other Reasons: Both John and Jesus called on sinners to repent “*because* the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.” This statement embraces a number of reasons for repenting – and motive matters. For the theme of the “kingdom” is a *summary* of various truths preached in the NT (Mt. 3:17, Acts 28:31).
- 2) The Implication of Judgement: The coming of the Kingdom meant that judgement was imminent – both AD 70 and the final judgement. Repentance should not be delayed!
- 3) The Implication of Lordship: The coming of the Kingdom meant the coming of the King. Jesus is Lord, and when He calls for repentance, all should heed His call.
- 4) The Implication of Grace: The coming of the Kingdom also means that the Day of grace and salvation has come. Gratitude for mercy and delight in the blessings of salvation should move us to repent. These themes are drawn to our attention in WCF 15:2.

### **Conclusion:**