

Interview or Interment. Fans or Followers. The consequences of repentance.

John 12:20 And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, Sir, we want to see Jesus. Philip comes and tells Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, 'the hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it remains alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.'

These 'Greeks' were actually Jews living in Greek cities scattered around the Mediterranean at that time. They were referred to as Greeks because they were from Greek cities. As devout Jews however they had made the journey to Jerusalem in order to be present at one of the feasts as prescribed in the Law of Moses. This would have been an expensive and hazardous journey. These were good, serious god-fearing people. So on the face of it, it may look as if Jesus was not giving these good folks the attention they deserved. They were only asking for an interview with Jesus. They were in Jerusalem on religious grounds and as a bonus they found out that this Jesus of Nazareth, the famous Rabbi, healer and miracle worker was there. Who wouldn't want to see Him, if they could?

The Lord Jesus though, isn't interested in having fans, He is looking for followers. He came to call sinners to repentance. To forsake their own lives and become His disciples, learning His life. The message of repentance and remission of sins is the core of the gospel. It was begun by the prophet John, the baptiser, who was preparing the way for the one who was to come after him, Jesus of Nazareth, the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the whole world and baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire.

While repentance does convey the idea of sorrow or regret for sin, it is actually more comprehensive than that. The Greek word used in the New and Old testaments is *metanoia*, a word made up of two words, *meta* – meaning change; and *noia* – meaning mind or thought. It is similar to the word *metamorphosis* – another Greek word being a compound of *meta* – change; and *morphosis* – shape or form.

When a grain a wheat falls into the ground and dies, it actually goes through metamorphosis. It changes from a grain of wheat into a wheat plant. It stops being a seed and changes into a plant. First the stalk, then the blade, then the ear of grain. The original seed is no more.

Similarly, when a caterpillar goes through metamorphosis, changing into a butterfly, the caterpillar effectively dies and is no more. It becomes a chrysalis and stops living as a caterpillar. All of its cells are changed into the butterfly. It is a one way process. Yet a fruitful one. The butterfly cannot go back to being a caterpillar but it can go on to produce more caterpillars. The grain of wheat that becomes a plant cannot reverse the process but can go forward and produce more grains.

Repentance then in the sense of a complete and utter change of mind is actually dying to the self life. It is hating your own worldly life enough to let it completely go.

To serve Jesus we have to stop serving ourselves. We cannot serve two masters! We cannot be a grain of wheat and a plant! We cannot be a caterpillar and a butterfly!

Those devout Greeks who wanted to see Jesus would have had to choose to let go completely of their own plans, even life itself, to follow Jesus. We cannot follow our life plan and follow Jesus. His plan for us is that we die! They probably had firm plans about returning home after the feast.

In case you are wondering how we now can really follow the Lord Jesus after repentance in the above radical sense, we have the promise of the baptism (washing) in the Holy Spirit. In the new covenant which is in the blood of Jesus Christ God has promised that He will remember our sins no more and will write His laws on our hearts by the Holy Spirit of Christ.

John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Counsellor, that he may abide with you forever; the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him: but you know him; for he dwells with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you without guidance: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more; but you see me: because I live, you shall live also. At that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. He that has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me: and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas said to him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world? Jesus answered and said to him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him. He that loves me not keeps not my sayings: and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me. These things have I spoken to you, being present with you. But the Counsellor, the Holy Ghost, who

the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said to you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you: not as the world gives, give I to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Repentance is the grace given response to the good news of Jesus Christ. It is falling into the ground and dying, in order to be then changed by the indwelling Spirit of Christ. It is the beginning of a brand new life in Christ Jesus.

Acts 11:18 Then has God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

Rom 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

Salvation is a miracle, not the mere acceptance of doctrine.

He that has ears to hear, let him listen.

Acts 2:38 'Let every one of you repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus the Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, yes, to as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself.

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