



Matthew 3v1-12: Repent – the King is Coming

In this new series, we're looking at responses to the coming King from Matthew 3 and 4. One of the surprises of the kingdom of heaven is that it comes in two stages. Jesus has come. And yet he is still to come. So we find ourselves in a similar situation to those who first awaited the coming of Christ 2000 years ago.

So what shall we expect of the King when he comes? And how shall we respond?

1) The King is coming to Save

Matthew quotes Isaiah 40. In context, there is hope for Israel beyond exile because God himself is coming. And he's coming to save. This is the message that the one who calls out in the wilderness brings. Matthew says that this figure points ultimately to John the Baptist, crying out in the Judean wilderness. This means that the one to come after John is none other than the Lord God himself. And this is Jesus.

And he's come to save. Baptism is John's visual aid to help us understand the work of Jesus. He will come to bring cleansing, purification and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This is what his work on the cross will do.

2) The King is coming to Judge

And yet he will also judge. Jesus will bring about the Day of the Lord because John is the Elijah to come, predicted by the Old Testament prophet Malachi. Jesus will separate people like the farmer separates wheat from chaff. God is committed to punishing evil and will right every wrong. Hell, though sobering, is a reality we cannot avoid if we are to submit the authority of Jesus.

So, not surprisingly, the call is to 'Repent!' To turn around and follow the King. What does this look like? It involves, like the crowd, confessing our sins. Owning up to our deepest problem. Being honest with God and others. It also involves, unlike the Pharisees, fleeing from misplaced confidence. Our confidence must not be in external religion or moral activity, but simply in the righteousness of our great God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here are a few questions that might get things going, feel free to ignore / adapt / add to for your group:

If people knew that God was coming to them, what kind of things do you think people would expect of God?

How does Isaiah 40 and the symbolism of baptism help us to understand the mission of Jesus?

How does this help us when we feel that God is absent or uninterested in our lives?

How does Malachi and the farmer help us understand the mission of Jesus?

Why must we take hell seriously today?

Why is confession of sin so important? How can we better cultivate relationships in which we confess our sins? In what ways are we tempted to trust in our own righteousness today?

What is the main thing we have learnt from this passage?