

“The Kingdom of Heaven Has Come”

Matthew 3:1–12; Matthew 4:12–17

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ² and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” ³ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.’”^[a]

⁴ John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. ⁶ Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹ “I baptize you with^[b] water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with^[c] the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Jesus Begins to Preach

¹² When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³ Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali— ¹⁴ to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁵ “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles—

¹⁶ the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.”^[1]

¹⁷ From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

As we begin the *Behold the King* series, Matthew introduces us to one central announcement: **“The kingdom of heaven has come near.”** This is the message first proclaimed by John the Baptist ([Matt 3:1–12](#)) and then taken up by Jesus Himself ([Matt 4:12–17](#)). The King has arrived—and where the King is present, the Kingdom is present.

1. The Proclamation: The Kingdom Is Near

John the Baptist appears in the wilderness with a bold call: *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”* His role is to prepare the way. The long-awaited reign of God is breaking into history.

When Jesus begins His public ministry, He proclaims the exact same message. The Kingdom is not merely future; it is arriving in Him. The light has dawned in Galilee ([Matt 4:15–16](#)). What humanity could not reach because of sin—life under God’s rule—God has now brought near in Christ.

The Kingdom of Heaven is, at its simplest, **the reign of God through King Jesus**. It is where Jesus rules and reigns.

2. What Is the Kingdom of Heaven?

The notes highlight three dimensions:

Ethical – The Kingdom shapes how we live. It produces righteousness, heart obedience, and transformed living (seen clearly in Matthew 5 and the Sermon on the Mount).

Experiential – The Kingdom is spiritual and internal. It involves heart change, repentance, childlike faith, and life in the Spirit. It captures hearts, not just behaviour.

Eschatological – The Kingdom will be fully revealed in judgment and restoration. John speaks of the coming separation—wheat and chaff ([Matt 3:10–12](#)). Jesus later speaks of sheep and goats ([Matt 25](#)). There is a future reckoning.

All three are true. The Kingdom is:

- **Here** (Jesus has come)
- **Growing** (like mustard seed and yeast)
- **Not yet fully complete** (final justice and restoration are coming)

This is the tension of Christian living: we live between D-Day and VE Day. The decisive victory has been won at the cross and resurrection, but the final consummation is still ahead. The Lamb wins.

3. How Do You Enter the Kingdom?

The consistent answer in both passages is: **Repent**.

Repentance is not merely regret; it is a turning—away from self-rule and toward King Jesus. John calls for fruit in keeping with repentance. It's not religious performance (like the Pharisees' outward confidence); it's heart surrender.

We cannot bring the Kingdom down or build it ourselves. Jesus brings it near. Our response is repentance, faith, and submission to the King.

4. How Does the Kingdom Work?

The Kingdom:

- **Captures hearts** (treasure hidden in a field)
- **Grows quietly but powerfully** (mustard seed, yeast)
- **Produces fruit** (Matt 3:8)
- **Moves from the kingdom of the world to the Kingdom of Heaven**
- **Ends in justice and judgment** (wheat and chaff, weeds and net)

It advances not primarily through force, but through transformed lives. It spreads as hearts are changed and as people live under Jesus' rule.

5. The Key Questions

The sermon presses two personal questions:

1. **Are you in the Kingdom of Heaven?**
Have you repented and trusted the King?
2. **Is the Kingdom living in you?**
Are you living in the reality that the Kingdom is here—but not yet fully? Does Jesus truly rule your heart?

Kingdom living means playing the game knowing the final result: victory is certain. Even in hardship, temptation, opposition, or suffering—the outcome is secure. The Lamb wins.

Community Group Application Questions

1. What does “the kingdom of heaven has come near” mean in your own words?
2. Why do you think both John and Jesus begin with the same message: “Repent”?
3. How do the images of wheat and chaff ([Matt 3:10–12](#)) shape your understanding of the Kingdom?
4. When you hear the word *repent*, what comes to mind? How would you define it biblically?
5. Is there an area of your life where you are resisting the rule of King Jesus?
6. What “fruit” of repentance can others see in your life right now?
7. What does it look like practically to live knowing the final victory is secure?
8. How should the certainty of Christ’s ultimate victory shape how we handle discouragement, injustice, or suffering?
10. How can our group reflect the reality of the Kingdom in how we love, serve, and witness?