



Peninsula City Church

Taste and See

**“Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is
at hand”**

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Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand

An Introduction

Q. How would you explain, the context and purpose of repentance in the Bible?

We Have all read or heard a message on the following passage,

“From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand’” (Matt 4:17 ESV)

But do we know what is being said here in this passage? Do we know what it means within the context of the Bible and especially the New Testament? Still yet, do we know what the idea is behind the word ‘repent’?

We will succinctly examine the idea behind repentance in an attempt to find out what it all meant. Firstly, we will briefly review the purpose of the concept from the Old Testament context. Then secondly, we will look at what is the use of repentance from a New Testament context.

1. What was the purpose from an Old Testament context?

Q. What did God declare through the idea?

1. The idea in the Old Testament

The notion ‘repent’ in the Old Testament in Hebrew has two words that are used to bring out the meaning. These are; *nâcham* (pronounced naw-kham’ נָחַם) basically meaning, ‘comfort,’ ‘repent,’ ‘relief,’ ‘ease,’ & “to sigh, i.e., breathe strongly; by implication, to be sorry.”¹ The other word is that is used is *shoob* or *shoov* (שׁוּב) mainly means amongst other things ‘turn,’ ‘turn back,’ or ‘return’. The word *shoov*, is used the most in the Old Testament i.e. over 1000 times, whereas *naw-kham’* is used just over 100 times.

The first time that *naw-kham’* was used is in the following verse carrying the idea of relief,

²⁸ “When Lamech had lived 182 years, he fathered a son ²⁹ and called his name Noah, saying, ‘Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed, this one shall bring us relief (*naw-kham’*) from our work and from the painful toil of our hands’” (Gen 5:29 ESV).

It appears as the idea of repent as we have heard it used in the letter of Jeremiah,

“I have paid attention and listened, but they have not spoken rightly; no person relents (*naw-kham’*) of their evil, saying, ‘What have I done?’ Everyone turns to their own course, like a horse plunging headlong into battle” (Jer 8:6 ESV).

Whereas the time that *shoov* was first used in the Bible in the following verse,

“By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return (*shoov*) to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Gen 3:19 ESV).

While it appears as the idea of repent as we have heard it used in the letter of Ezekiel,

²¹ “But if a wicked person turns away (*shoov*) from all their sins that they have committed and keeps all My statutes and does what is just and right, they shall surely live; they shall not die.
¹² None of the transgressions that they have committed shall be remembered against them; for the righteousness that they have done they shall live” (Ezek. 18:21-22 ESV)

¹ “נָחַם - *nâcham* [naw-kham’].” <https://www.messie2vie.fr/bible/strongs/strong-hebrew-H5162-nacham.html> (27th June 2019).

So, the basic idea behind these words in compiling them would be to return to an original place, person, though, or to God as it was in the first place. The result would be one of comfort, ease, or to breathe easy after breathing through repentance strongly. So, it can be a place of healing and wholeness with God and the world around us.

2. Taste and see that the LORD is good!

It is in this place that Israel or an Israelite could spiritual and physically see and taste the goodness of the Lord.

“Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the person who takes refuge in Him! (Ps 34:8 ESV).

The aim behind repentance was a return to the Lord and a place of healing and wholeness. That is, to see God and His blessings from a whole new perspective. It was to see that the Lord is always good. His call and drawing Israel back was because He loved them and wanted them to be in relationship with Him. However, as we now move forward into the New Testament what does it now mean?

2. What is the purpose of repentance from a New Testament context?

Q. Explain the idea of repentance within the New Testament and its application?

1. As we read it now

As time went by, there was a shift in language from Hebrew to Greek in the Old Testament. This was due to the various captivities of Israel by the surrounding nations and the adoption of their languages Greek being one of them. So, when we come to the New Testament it was written in Greek as it was the trade language in the region of the day.

So, the idea of repentance within the Greek New Testament and what it now means will be reviewed. The word ‘repent’ in Greek is the noun *μετάνοια* and the translation is *metánoia*. It is from the,

“Greek, *μετανοεῖτε* (*metanoéite*), literally *μετά*, or *meta* ‘with’, ‘after’, or ‘beyond’, and *νοέω*, *noeó*, or *noia* ‘think’, ‘consider’, ‘realise’.”²

The difference in the use of these words always has to do with the context,

“*Metanoia*” is a compound Koine (common) Greek word, ‘*meta + noia*’ - a preposition and noun. It literally means, ‘after mind.’ It is a ‘change of mind.’ *Metanoéo* is ‘*meta + noeó*’ - a preposition and a verb. It is ‘an after perception - a change in perception... But these Greek words have nothing to do with ‘sin.’ This “*change of mind or perception*” can be about anything - and toward anything. **Context** determines what is abandoned and what new conclusion is embraced.”³

Having briefly given some direction on how it has been used we will now look at some New Testament usages. John the baptiser was the first to use it in the New Testament,

“John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of **repentance** (*metanoías* noun genitive feminine singular common from *metánoia*) for the forgiveness of sins” (Mk 1:4 ESV).

² “Metanoia.” <https://spiritualdrift.com/2016/06/23/metanoia/> (1st July 2019).

³ Calamaio, Robin. “The First Received Prayer (“*Metanoia*” - Repentance, or “*Metanoéo*” - Repent) and the Bible.” An Unpublished paper. 2008), 1.

¹ “In those days John the Baptistiser came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ² **‘Repent!’** (*metánoia*, which an Imperative present active 2nd person plural tense), for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” (Matt 3:1-2 ESV)

Then Jesus came and stated the very same message as John,

“and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **Repent!** (*metanoēite* imperative present active 2nd person plural from *metanoéo*) and believe in the gospel’ (Mk 1:15 ESV)

“From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, **‘Repent!’** (*metanoēite* imperative present active 2nd person plural from *metanoéo* to have an ‘after-thought or change of mind’⁴), for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” (Matt 4:17 ESV).

On the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when Peter had finished preaching the people asked him,

“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, **‘Brothers, what shall we do?’**” (Acts 2:37 ESV).

Then Peter said to them,

“And Peter said to them, **‘Repent!** (*μετανοέω* i.e. *metanoéo* the Imperative aorist active 2nd person plural verb of the noun *metánoia*) and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38 ESV).

Paul also used the verb of the noun *metánoia*,

“The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to **repent** [*metanoein* verb infinitive present active from *metanoéo*]” (Acts 17:30 ESV).

It has been said regarding *metanoein* that it,

“most likely carries the OT prophetic import of *shoov* (שׁוּב) sub meaning ‘to go back again,’ ‘return’ and connotes a prophetic call to, ‘turn to Yahweh with all ones being.’”⁵

Now although this is an interesting idea and may be true, it would appear the writers of the New Testament went even further than even this awareness. They brought out the ide of a new perspective through a change of mine. Or else a return to the way they should be thinking, as in the garden of Eden.

The writers and those recorded calling for repentance, were speaking to everyone present. The reason we know this is that, it is a plural declaration and not to just a single person. They were encouraging those present to change their mind or perspective. The reason for this was to see things from a Kingdom of God view. It has been said that,

“Various views have been held concerning the meaning of the word repentance. Some take it to indicate a change of heart or disposition, others a change of mind or thought, others a change of aim or purpose, and others a change of life or conduct.”⁶

However, it is possible that was all these things happened in repentance. But in each aspect, there is a change to become more aligned with the Kingdom of Heaven.

⁴ Abbott-Smith, G. *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*. (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1986), 287. Or as Trench, Richard C. has said it can be to “know after...after knowledge.” *Synonyms of the New Testament: Studies in the Greek New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 257. While in Liddell and Scott’s, *Greek-English Lexicon* it has “to perceive afterwards.” (Oxford, London: Clarendon Press, 1935), 439

⁵ Guelich, Robert A. *Word Biblical Commentary: Mark 1-8:26*. Vol. 34A. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 45.

⁶ “Repentance.” <https://www.studylight.org/lexicons/girdlestone/repentance.html> (1st July 2019).

2. So why repentance and not regret?

There are some of the things that happened through *metanoia* for all New Testament believers. However, the basic idea a change in perception in some are of life towards a Kingdom outlook. Consequently, the context of *metánoia* needs to be determined by what is being spoken about in the passage or chapter. That is,

“*Metánoia*. ‘*Metá*’ is a preposition which, when compounded with *Noūs*, means ‘after’. *Metánoia* is the After-Mind: perception, knowledge, thought, feeling, and disposition, will, afterwards. But *Metánoia* is a state of mind after experience; the mental condition which has developed itself after an entirely new set of circumstances has encompassed and invaded the consciousness”⁷

There is a word used in the Greek Old Testament that means ‘regret’ or ‘remorse,’ but it was not translated as ‘repentance’ i.e. (*μεταμέλεια*, which is transliterated as *metaméleia*). It was not used in the New Testament, but only in the Septuagint (LXX, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible). It was translated in Hosea 11:8 as repentance, but should it really be ‘regret’,

“How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Adamah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within Me; My compassion (*metaméleia*) [or “my repentance is powerfully excited”] grows warm and tender” (Hos 11:8 ESV).⁸

However, on the use of this word Stanley Porter has observed that,

“The notion of repentance is more variegated than one might first think... It is concerned with far more than simply an attitude of contrition and regret... The concept of repentance is probably best discussed as a complex theological notion grounded in a number of crucial passages in Scripture, in which the human response is one of distinct change of behavior and attitude in relation to God.”⁹

As the discussion regarding repentance persists today, Lambert’s valuable contribution has helped us look at the matter from a more biblical perspective. Thereby, rejecting the use of this word *metaméleia* in the New Testament for repentance.

So, why then was *metánoia* translated as repent? Well, it is highly likely that, the translators of the New Testament into Latin from Greek selected *metánoia* choosing to see it as a similar paraphrase for *metaméleia*. That is,

“‘Repentance’ is a word of classical Latin origin and of Latin theological and ecclesiastical descent. The core of it is not mind, but pain. The note of it is not of emancipation (freedom), but of condemnation. The scope of it is not spiritual, but juridical. The working of it is not joyful, but sorrowful. Its face is turned in horror towards sin, not in rapture towards righteousness. It is not a way to righteousness, but by the way of retreat.”¹⁰

But, was this the best thing to do by the translators from Greek to Latin? It could be argued that *metánoia* is not best translated as repent. Despite the current usage, as seen earlier *metánoia* is more accurately understood as ‘to know *after*’ so it is ...‘afterknowledge.’”¹¹

⁷ Walden, Treadwell. “The Great Meaning of Metanoia an Undeveloped Chapter in the Life and Teaching of Christ a New Edition with a Supplementary Essay.” *American Church Review*, July 1881: 9-10.

⁸ “Hosea.” <https://www.elopos.net/elpenor/greek-texts/septuagint/chapter.asp?book=31&page=11> (1st July 2019).

⁹ Porter, Stanley E. “Penitence and Repentance in the Epistles.” In *Repentance in Christian Theology*. Mark J. Boda & Gordon T. Smith (eds.), (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 149–150.

¹⁰ Walden, “The Great Meaning of Metanoia an Undeveloped Chapter in the Life and Teaching of Christ a New Edition with a Supplementary Essay,” 37. See also, “Repent.” <https://www.etymonline.com/word/repent> (1st July 2019).

¹¹ “Ἰxix. μετανοεῶ, μεταμέλομαι.” <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/trench/section.cfm?sectionID=69> (1st July 2019).

3. Repent once or is it ongoing?

This is an ongoing transformative part of the life of the Christ-follower. The idea that it is from the first time that someone repents (so to speak) until they leave this earth. That is why John could write to the Christ-followers at Ephesus,

“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; **repent** (*metanoēson*¹² verb imperative aorist active 2nd person singular from *metanoéo* come to a changed mind) and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you **repent** (*metanoéo* come to a transformative changed mind or perspective)” (Rev 2:5 ESV).

See also as Paul wrote to the Christ-followers at Corinth and said,¹³

“I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not **repented** (*metanoéo* come to a transformative changed mind or perspective) of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced” (2 Cor 12:21 ESV).

Peter pointed out that the Father wants all to come to the point of a changed mind or perspective

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach **repentance** (*metánoia* i.e. come to a transformative changed mind or perspective)” (2 Pet 3:9 ESV).

4. After some thinking and praying on the matter

After thinking, praying and reading quite a bit about the idea of *metánoia* and its Kingdom perspective I have come to some conclusions at this point. I get that the idea in the New Testament translations can carry the notion of repentance, but there is much more to it than merely this concept. Is this all that Jesus, John the Baptist and the New Testament writers were saying? There must be more to it than just sorrow and pain. In the context of the Bible and especially the New Testament the writers were also describing the idea to have one's eyes open to the Kingdom of Heaven and always being watchful for its growth. In other words, live from a different perspective, which involves lifting your eyes and see, really see the Kingdom of Heaven all around you. In my reading I came across a view that is more inclusive of the Kingdom of Heaven i.e.

“Consider beyond what you may know, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Think differently, for the Kingdom of Heaven has come near. To me, it sounds very similar to Jesus on the mount, You have heard it said...but I say...”¹⁴

So, instead *metánoia* could be seen as a transformative renewal of the mind, heart, or thinking. It is that we need to ‘consider beyond what you may know’ it depends on how and where the Kingdom of Heaven is expanding. We need to think about it as the work of the Holy Spirit in and through His church. Just as it has been stated below,

“I have elsewhere suggested, in a short comment on the word *μετάνοια* (*metánoia*) - which word, I contend, cannot properly be translated ‘repentance’; for it would have been pure cant to suppose that age, or any age, as more under a summons to repentance than any other assignable. I understand by *Metánoia* a revolution of thought - a great intellectual change - in

¹² Use five times in the New Testament and four of these are in the *Letter of the Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Acts 8:22; Rev 2:5,16; 3:3,19. Each of the usages are verb imperative aorist active 2nd person singular from *μετανοέω* i.e. *metanoéo*.

¹³ Moulton, James Hope, & Milligan George. *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and other Non-Literary Sources*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 403.

¹⁴ “Metanoia.” <https://spiritualdrift.com/2016/06/23/metanoia/> (1st July 2019).

the accepting a new centre for all moral truth from Christ; which center it was that subsequently caused all the offense of Christianity to the Roman people.”¹⁵

Consequently, it has been suggested that, the idea behind *metánoia* is more along the lines to “think or consider beyond what you may already know; to think differently.”¹⁶ This is an ongoing part of our life as children of God. Yes, we may do this when we first make our peace with God, but it does not stop there. It has been said long ago that,

“A.W. Pink gave this sober warning, ‘The Christian who has stopped repenting has stopped growing.’”¹⁷

Also, more recently Sinclair Ferguson has said,

“Repentance is a characteristic of the whole life, not the action of a single moment.”¹⁸

Richard Owen Roberts has said on this matter that,

“No, repentance is an ongoing spirit and attitude. We live consistently in repentance, just as we must live consistently in faith.”¹⁹

Some concluding thoughts

So, coming back to the opening question,

Q. How would you explain, the context and purpose of repentance?

We have seen what the gospel writers wrote to the original hearers there and then in their day. It is a revolution of thought. It is considering so much further beyond what we may know and see the value of the ever-present Kingdom of Heaven. It needs to be asked in the here and now, ‘What is the Spirit of God saying to us?’

We need to be continually thinking, considering far beyond what we may already know and think differently. We are children of the Kingdom of Heaven, which is always near. That is why our theme over this season of “taste and see that the LORD is good” (Ps 34:8a ESV) is essential to grasp. We need to be living from this Kingdom of Heaven perspective every day of our lives. It has been said that,

“Repentance is not merely the start of the Christian life; it is the Christian life.”²⁰

So, today ‘Stop and reflect.’ We have seen what the Bible has said to each person in their day. But what has the Holy Spirit been saying to us today? That is, what is the one thing that is standing out to us? We need to apply this otherwise it is merely all academic. Then we need to respond to what the Holy Spirit has been saying to us.

In response, we need to ask through this process:

- What personal application can be found from the passages?
- What is God teaching me today?
- That is, “What is God saying to me?”

¹⁵ De Quincey, Thomas. *The Works of Thomas De Quincey: Essays on Christianity, Paganism, and Superstition*. (Boston, NY: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1877), vol. viii., 222.

¹⁶ “Metanoia.” <https://spiritualdrift.com/2016/06/23/metanoia/> (1st July 2019).

¹⁷ Woods, Len. *Spiritual Life Hacks: Uncommon Solutions to Common Challenges*. (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2019), 67.

¹⁸ Ferguson, B. Sinclair. *The Grace of Repentance*. (Repackaged Edition). (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 14.

¹⁹ Roberts, Richard Owen. *Repentance: The First Word of the Gospel*. (Crossway Books, 2002), 162.

²⁰ Woods, *Spiritual Life Hacks*, 67.

How should I respond to what is being said, or so what?

- What are you going to do about it?
- What do you need to do to respond?
- Pray and respond