



December 2022

A Message of Life Ministries Newsletter

### Christmas Greetings

John 1 says Jesus entered a world that did not know its creator and His own land to a people who largely rejected Him. The world is no better today, but our Savior came to a hopeless world to give a sure hope to believers. Have a blessed Christmas and a prosperous new year in the Lord.

#### A Sign for the House of David

Many interpreters—even some on the more conservative end of the spectrum—struggle with Isaiah 7:13-14:

*Then he said, "Hear now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you [plural] to weary men, but will you [plural] weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you [plural] a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel [God with us]."*

The difficulty is that Isaiah spoke these words in 734 BC, so King Ahaz would not live long enough to know about Jesus being virgin born. The solution is quite simple. The last time Isaiah spoke to Ahaz in this context was in verse 11, which uses singular forms of *you*. Ahaz gave a falsely pious answer (7:12) that led Isaiah to ignore Ahaz.

Starting in verse 13 is an address to the house of David, all of David's descendants. This is not directed to Ahaz. It was neither a sign for him nor for his generation. Both Joseph (Luke 2:4) and Mary (Luke 1:27) were of the house of David. Isaiah 7:13-14 was a sign for David's descendants in the time of Jesus. This was not a sign for Ahaz, but for the house of David (and the house of Israel). Anyone in first century Israel hearing of a virgin-born child should have thought, "Immanuel; God is with us. The Messiah has come."

Our world today is oblivious to His arrival two millennia ago. We must spread the word.

### Jesus BEGAN to Preach Repentance

Confusion over order of events can and often does lead interpreters into theological error. My commentary on John's Gospel will pay close attention to issues of chronology.

Understanding the time relationship between Matthew 4 and John's Gospel is crucial. Many have no idea that John 1 occurred long before Jesus called four fishermen by the sea. Even those who know this often miss an important Matthean detail that deserves explanation.

**Chronology.** John 1–3 were prior to the Baptist's imprisonment. John 3:24 states this directly. Note that John 1:15-36 and 3:22-36 discuss his pre-arrest ministry. By contrast, Matthew 4:12 speaks of Jesus going to Galilee after Antipas arrested the Baptist. Clearly, John 1 (when the Galilean fishermen first met Jesus) happened while John was free. Matthew 4:18-22 (when He called them to be fishers of men) was several months later. Many know that John 1 precedes Matthew 4. So far, so good.

**A Matthean Detail.** Although many recognize the foregoing, a detail from Matthew usually goes under the radar. The same paragraph that mentions Jesus going to Galilee at the time of John's arrest (Matt 4:12) concludes with verse 17:

*From then [upon arriving in Galilee after John's arrest] Jesus **began** to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has drawn near."*

Matthew does not say, "Jesus continued preaching, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has drawn near,'" but that He began proclaiming this after His arrival in Galilee. When—in John's Gospel—did Jesus first arrive in Galilee after John's imprisonment? That was in John 4:43.

(Continued)

(Continued)

Why would Jesus begin preaching repentance at this point—not earlier? Until then the Baptist had carried that message: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has drawn near” (Matt 3:2). Confinement ended John’s national repentance preaching. Deuteronomy 30:8 says that God will not regather Israel (for the Kingdom) until it repents. Both Matthew 3:2 and 4:17 link national repentance to Israel receiving the kingdom, not to receiving eternal life. This matches Deuteronomy.

**Implications.** Surely, no one thinks that Jesus gave a message insufficient for eternal life to either Nicodemus or the Samaritan woman. Matthew 4:17 establishes that He said nothing to them about repentance. Claiming that repentance is implicit makes Matthew a liar. Modern theologians are simply wrong.

What about after Jesus reached Galilee (John 4:43)? Might repentance be implicit in John after that? Certainly not! *Pisteuō* (believe) did not then mutate into faith-plus-repentance. Eternal life is for those who simply believe Jesus for His promise.

#### 2022 Ministry

May 22 Vista Ridge Bib. Fellowship, Lewisville, TX  
May 23-26 Plenary at GES, Denton, TX  
Sept 19-21 Message of Life conf., Knoxville, TN  
Oct 7-9 Trego (WI) Community Church  
Nov 20 Northgate Terrace, Knoxville, TN

John’s brother Joe accompanied us on our ministry road-trip to Trego, Wisconsin—an amazing time together and a chance to visit three of our cousins in Minnesota and Ohio.

John continues working on the commentary. He wrote articles for *Grace in Focus* and for the *Journal*. John’s weekly Bible class supplied many of the 32 new postings at MoL316.com. We continue distributing *Living Waters* and, as usual, brought pallets of them to the GES conference. Writing ministry with the Denver Rescue Mission continued through December. That writing will continue, but it will be for a different organization that will carry the message overseas.



Diane, John, Joe (brother), and Bill Lee



Some attendees of the MoL fall conference



John at Trego (WI) Community Church

#### Prayer

Diane will have a procedure this winter that will keep us close to home. Pray for speedy recovery. Pray for continued progress on the commentary and other writing and for ministry opportunities. Pray for additional avenues of distribution for *Living Waters*. Pray for Jesus’ message of life to spread across the whole globe. Pray for the Lord’s continued finances for this ministry.

#### Lifeline

©2022, Message of Life Ministries  
All Rights Reserved



Website: [www.TheMessageOfLife.com](http://www.TheMessageOfLife.com).

To subscribe for free, e-mail Diane at: [mrslangprof@gmail.com](mailto:mrslangprof@gmail.com) or send contact information to: PO Box 726, Seymour, TN 37865.