

Lesson Three — The Inheritance

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Be sure to begin every day of study with prayer. Pray that the Holy Spirit will be your Guide and Teacher. Take a few moments now to go before the Lord.

OK. Having studied the historical time and setting of the writing of this letter, and having glimpsed to whom it was written, we are now able to better understand its contents. This week we will begin to take the first chapter apart piece by piece. In order to properly grasp the pieces, you must see these pieces in their context. So we will begin by rereading the first chapter from your sheets in the Appendix. Continue to mark them as you gain more insight. Do that now, then begin your assignment below.

Day One — An Inheritance Reserved in Heaven

I Peter 1

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Consider a few questions of the text:

Did you notice the phrase *born again* in verse three? Is Peter writing to people who need to be born again, or who have already been *born again*? Even if you didn't know the historical setting, you can know the answer, without a doubt, from the text itself. Use the text to show that the recipients are born again.

What does it mean to be *born again*? (From your general understanding of Scripture, what does being born again afford someone?)

If in answering the above stated question, you answered with something having to do *with the free gift of eternal life*, great! That is what generally comes to mind when we think of the phrase *born again*. It is the birth from above, a spiritual birth. It is the free gift. The spiritual birth is brought about through God's grace in sending Christ to *die on the cross* for our sins, and through personal faith in Him, one can receive the free gift of eternal life. It is a birth having to do with the spirit — God's Spirit breathing life into man's spirit, causing the man to pass from death to life, on the basis of Christ's finished work at Calvary. A *spiritual birth*.

It is obvious from the text that Peter had no intention of explaining what it means to be *born again*. He only mentions it, then moves beyond it, without offering any explanation. And in doing so, it is obvious that he knows it is completely understood in the minds of his recipients. Peter knew that Paul had previously spent three years with these people in Asia. Peter knew that there was no need to go over these very basic things concerning the gift of salvation. And so...he concerns himself with things beyond the free gift of salvation. And in order for us to understand his intent in this letter correctly, we must not think that he is writing about basic tenets of our faith. Peter has moved beyond these basic tenets in his letter, and if we are to understand it correctly, so should we. And so we shall.

Let me ask the question again, only this time I want you to answer it according to this specific text — What does it mean to be *born again*? According to the immediate text (v. 3), what does being *born again* afford us?

Yes, it has to do with *a hope*. While the free gift has to do eternal life based upon the death of Christ (His shed blood), *the hope*, which this gift affords us, comes on the basis of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. It has to do with *an inheritance* to be obtained in the future (v. 4). Think about the implication of this. What does this imply?

Now list all the things which you can know about this inheritance just from the text of I Peter 1:3-5:

We'll pick up here tomorrow. As we close for today, ask the Lord to help you learn what He wants you to know about this inheritance.

Day Two — Distressed by Trials

Of course you will want to begin your day of study with prayer. After you have prayed, please read the first chapter of I Peter again. (Each time you read the chapter, you will give the Holy Spirit more opportunity to teach you.)

Having done that, let's look at the next portion of chapter one.

I Peter 1

6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

The first two words of this passage ties it inseparably with the previous passage. So we cannot study this second portion without seeing it connected with the previous. Go back into yesterday's homework and read I Peter 1:3-5, making this connection.

"*In this* you greatly rejoice"...*in what* could they greatly rejoice? Write down what Peter was saying. In what should they greatly rejoice (v.5)?

They could rejoice in *a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*; in the *hope* which they have because they have *been born again*. They could rejoice in the fact that they have an inheritance to obtain, and that this inheritance is *imperishable, and undefiled, and will not fade away*. This inheritance is *reserved in heaven for those who are protected by the power of God through their faith*.

Notice that this inheritance has something to do with a future salvation — a salvation which will be revealed at a future time. Peter is not dealing with salvation having to do with the free gift, but rather with salvation having to do with a future inheritance. Can you grasp this? What is the implication here?

It is for this one fact that they should greatly rejoice...the fact that they have a future salvation set before them which has to do with a future *inheritance*, one that was reserved in heaven, an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled and will not fade away...an inheritance kept by the power of God Himself...through their faith! It is for this one fact (!) that they should greatly rejoice...even if their faith is being tested by various trials (*cf.* Heb. 3:6). Do you have any thoughts about this?

From last week's study, do you remember what kind of trials these believers were facing? Write it out.

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But Peter was telling them that even though they faced the possible (even probable) persecution by Nero, they were to greatly rejoice because of this future inheritance. What would be the result of a faith, tested and found worthy (v. 7)?

Putting vv. 8 and 9 together, why would they be able to *greatly rejoice with inexpressible joy*?

From your Scriptural knowledge, when will the revelation of Jesus Christ be?

In turning their attention to their trials, is it the first coming of Christ, or His second coming which Peter is focusing their attention toward?

Why?

Verse nine tells them what will be the outcome of their faith, a faith which is tested and proven firm. According to the passage, what will be the outcome?

The English transliteration of the Greek word for *outcome* is **telos**. Here is the Strong's number and definition for this word:

5056 — telos
from a primary tello (to set out for a definite point or goal); properly, the point aimed at as a limit, i.e. (by implication) the conclusion of an act or state (termination — literally, figuratively or indefinitely), result (immediate, ultimate or prophetic).

Telos has to do with the end in view, and thus, the goal in view.

Keying in this definition, what would you say is the goal of their faith (v. 9)?

This will be a topic covered more thoroughly in the lecture. As you close today, ask the Lord to give you more and more understanding of the goal of our faith. Ask Him how He wants you to apply this to your life.

Day Three — A Future Salvation

So far during this week of study, we have learned about *an inheritance which is reserved for us in heaven*. This inheritance has to do with *a salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last time*. And it is due to this future inheritance, this future salvation, that a believer who is facing various trials in their faith, should rejoice due to the resulting glory and honor which will be theirs at the revelation of Christ. This salvation is referred to as *the salvation of the soul*, and is the goal of the faith of every believer.

Today we are going to learn some interesting (and difficult) things concerning this salvation. Please stop and pray for your own understanding, as well as for the others in your class.

I Peter 1

10 As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, 11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things into which angels long to look.

*As to **this** salvation...* what salvation? Look back at the end of verse nine and write out what salvation this passage is dealing with.

What did the prophets do? What did they seek to know?

Who else longs to look into these things?

WOW! What a thing to comprehend. The prophets of old sought to better understand the various things having to do with this future salvation, which the Spirit of God moved them to pen; and even angels have longed to look into and understand these things. If Peter is dealing with the simple message of salvation through faith, the free gift of God — eternal life, what would be so difficult for the prophets to understand? The fact has already been established that Peter is not dealing with the free gift. He is dealing with the salvation connected to an inheritance which is reserved in heaven — the salvation of the soul. (These are not my words, but the words specifically stated in the text.) Therefore, contextually, it must be understood that the *salvation of the soul*, pertaining only to Christians, has to do with an inheritance which remained a mystery in the Old Testament...a mystery not only to the general population of God's people, but also to the prophets. And now, God has seen fit to reveal the essence of this mystery to the church.

Remember that Paul had extensively instructed the people in the region to whom Peter was writing. He taught them about the mystery of Christ, which had all to do with the inheritance connected to the future salvation.

Let's take a moment and look at this mystery of which Paul was made a minister. Read the passage below carefully and thoughtfully. It is found in his letter to the church at Ephesus, which is a church in Asia.

Ephesians 1

9 He [God] made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him [Jesus] 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, 12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. 13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

What connection do you see in vv. 10 and 11?

In your own words, what is this passage dealing with?

Now, let's jump a little ahead in Ephesians:

Ephesians 3

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles — 2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; 3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, 7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. 8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; 10 in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.

The mystery of Christ is mentioned at the end of verse four. From this passage, list everything you learn about this mystery:

Verses five and nine take you back to what Peter said about the prophets seeking to gain understanding of this mystery. Then in verse nine and ten another bit of information is given. For how long has the mystery been hidden?

And to whom is it now being made known (v. 10)?

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Who are the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places?

And this takes you back to what Peter says about the angels longing to look into it. In your own words, what are the angels longing to look into?

OK. With this information gained from these passages in Ephesians and connecting it with I Peter, what do you understand about the mystery and the inheritance now?

We will discuss this more in the lecture.

Both in person (Acts 20:24ff) and in letter, Paul gave the people to whom Peter was writing, the whole counsel of God's Word — the gospel of the grace of God (the free gift), and the gospel of the kingdom (a salvation having to do with an inheritance connected to the kingdom [Acts 20:25]). Paul instructed them about the gospel of grace, and the gospel of the glories of the kingdom and the related *inheritance to be shared among those who are sanctified* (Acts 20:32). And according to Peter, it is the latter, not the former, into which the prophets made careful search and inquiry, and the angels long to look.

As time permits, for more study into the mystery which is discussed here, you may want to do some careful observation in Ephesians chapters one and three, and Colossians chapters one and two. Passages from these chapters will be the focus of the lecture this week.

Please continue to pray for your progressive understanding. It is important for you to be constantly seeking the Lord in the matter of *rightly dividing* the Scriptures. And PLEASE remember — the very best commentary on Scripture is Scripture itself!

Day Four — Therefore, Gird Your Minds

Yesterday we looked into the fact that this future salvation has to do with a future inheritance. It is this future inheritance about which the prophets sought for understanding, and into which the angels long to look. We have seen that Paul taught these things extensively to the people living in the very region to which Peter's letters are sent.

Having explained these things in his letter, Peter then gives some commands of actions for the recipients to do. Let's look at these specific commands.

I Peter 1

13 Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.” 17 And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. 20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 21 who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Make a list of the things that Peter said they were supposed to do:

Now go back through that list and jot down how you feel this applies to you. In other words, personalize it.

That’s it for today. Remember to keep praying for insight and understanding. Then, here is the application... in all things — OBEY!

Day Five — From Obedience to Purification

Begin today in prayer.

We have seen what Peter tells his readers to do in I Peter 1:13-17. To *gird their minds for action*. To *act as obedient children*. To *be holy as God is holy*. (WOW!) And finally, to remember that we address the

One as Father, *Who will judge each man according to his own works.* Because of this, we are to conduct our lives upon this earth in fear. In *fear*? What would this mean? Are we not to rejoice? Oh yes! We are to rejoice. And in our rejoicing we should constantly have in our sights the joy which is to be revealed at the revelation of Christ Jesus. The fear which should be ours during our stay upon this earth is the fear of *purposely* doing wrong. The fear of *willfully* sinning against God. The fear of *knowingly* falling short of being holy as He is holy, and all of this *without the desire to repent*. The text is not speaking of a kind of fear which comes in being afraid to fully sell out to the Lord, for fear of what He might do to you, or the like. That fear is from the enemy. But rather, the kind of fear which we are to have is the fear to willfully sin and to think that it doesn't matter. It is good to know and understand the difference. ***And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth...***

With this in mind we can continue in I Peter chapter one.

I Peter 1

22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God. 24 For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, 25 BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ABIDES FOREVER." And this is the word which was preached to you.

According to this passage, what part of our being, spirit, soul or body, does obedience to the truth purify?

What does this purification of the soul allow an individual to do?

How is the Word of God described in this passage (v. 23)? What does that mean?

Verse twenty-four is a quotation from Psalm 103. This Psalm is printed out in full in the Appendix, on page 171. Please turn to it and read through it several times.

Paying special attention to verses 15-18 of this Psalm, what does the writer compare to man?

What do you think his intent is in making this comparison?

Looking back at the Psalm, upon whom does the Lord bestow lovingkindness and compassion (v.11, 13, and 17-18)?

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After reading this Psalm several times, does anything, in particular, strike you about it? If so, what?

Please try to read through the first chapter of I Peter several more times between now and the time you meet for class.

See you there.