

1 Peter: Introduction

Lesson 3: A People with a Place to Go

Goal Today:

Our goal in this lesson is that we may be given a deeper insight into the nature of our status as pilgrim people on our way to a destiny secured for us by our gracious God.

Read: 1 Peter 1:3-9

GOD ACTED IN MERCY

The note of us being pilgrim people was sounded already in Peter's salutation. The word there was translated as *strangers* or *exiles* contains also the thought of a people going somewhere, just as the Israelites were pilgrims in the desert on their way to the Promised Land.

We are on our way and not here to stay. We share in that privileged status by virtue of God's "great mercy" (**v. 3**). There was and is nothing half-hearted or stingy about God's love. It abounds so that our cup runs over (see **Psalm 23:5**).

What items are given in **verse 3** that no Jew could or would confess? By this time, remember, Peter was a Christian, confessing Jesus Christ as his Lord, and God as the Father of that Lord Jesus Christ. That God—the only one there is!—had acted out of the abundance of His mercy to turn life around, so to speak, by arranging for our rebirth.

BAPTISM: MEANS OF NEW BIRTH

How did God accomplish all this? “Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” With that act of power God arranged to have all people declared to be righteous because of the obedience of one person, the Christ incarnate (see **Romans 5:19-21**). But, of course, that radically new relationship with God would not be of much benefit to us if there were no way of appropriating it to us individually. The benefits of Jesus Christ’s resurrection become ours when we are (or were) baptized. That is what this reference to new birth means. By the sacrament of Baptism we are taken into the company of God; for it is that means of grace by which faith is created in us.

OUR PROMISED LAND

The turnabout that has taken place by way of Jesus’ resurrection and our Baptism is so great that life has taken on new meaning. We have been born anew to hope.

- Can you find two other words for “hope” in **verses 4 and 5**?

- Read **Ephesians 2:12** to see what the apostle Paul says there on the subject of hope.

People in ancient times believed that history and life itself went around in a circle. Neither had a particular purpose or meaning. Into that kind of hopeless existence, the Gospel burst with its message that God was active in history, having change everything around by raising Jesus from the dead and thereby offering all people His grace.

To such living hope we have been born again. Even death has been overcome. It has, in fact, become the entrance way to eternal life. Look up **1 Corinthians 15:213-28** to see the connection.

Three major concepts about the future comprise the heart of **verses 3-6**. They are *hope*, *inheritance*, and *salvation*. All three derived from ancient Israel's relationship to God as the Lord of history.

Behind the word *hope* is an Old Testament term that means "trust" and is applied to confidence in God for the future on the basis of what He promised and delivered in the past (see **Jeremiah 29:11**). In short, *hope*, as used by the apostle, is not the effervescent outlook expressed in the musical *South Pacific*, which speaks of "being stuck like a dope with a thing called hope." When 1 Peter is referred to as the "epistle of hope," that means it deals with a relationship we have to God in faith—a faith turned to the future!

Inheritance, too, is a word about the future. It is applied in the Old Testament to Canaan as Israel's Promised Land. The apostle uses the term in **verse 4**; but then he goes on to describe the inheritance we are looking forward to as being unlike ancient Canaan since ours is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading because it is "kept in heaven." *How do these three adjectives apply to our heavenly inheritance?*

The word translated as *kept* really means “on deposit.” It assures us that our eternal destiny is waiting for us. Since it is kept in heaven for us, it is not subject to the destruction of warfare (imperishable), the stain of idolatry (undefiled), and the ravages of time (unfading).

There is a third term we must consider, namely, *salvation* (v. 5). While, of course, our own salvation has its source in God’s past actions, the concept has a future sense. Everything needed for our being set free, says the apostle, is ready to be revealed at the last moment. No essential element of our salvation is missing. What we await is the striking of the hour. Then we shall see and experience it fully. In short, salvation also has a future thrust because it is rooted in God’s actions of the past. This is another way of saying that as members of the church, baptized in the name of the Triune God, we live with the constant tension contained in the formula: *already-not yet!*

Share an experience from your own life that has revealed the tension expressed in the formula “already-not yet.”

Discussion:

1. Discuss different meanings of the word *hope*.
2. The church has often been accused of preaching “pie in the sky, by and by.” Comment.
3. It has been said that the problem that haunts people most today is that of meaninglessness. Do you agree?
4. Mention some of the mighty acts of God as related in the Old Testament to show how He keeps His promises.