



Sunday School Lesson for October 5, 2003
Released on: October 3, 2003

Study 1 Peter 1:3-5, 13-21; 2:4-10 Live as God's People
Questions and answers below.

TIME: A.D. 63
PLACE: from Babylon (possibly Rome)

1 Peter 1:3-5, 13-21

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

.....
13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

1 Peter 2:4-10

4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Lesson Background

After our four lessons from the epistle of James, we now turn to the first of two letters by Simon Peter. Not many heroes of the infant church are better known than this man! He was one of the first of Jesus' disciples (John 1:35-42), and was taught intensively through the years of Jesus' earthly ministry. After Jesus died and rose again, Peter was the one who preached on that memorable Day of Pentecost when the church began its tremendous growth (Acts 2:1-41). Later, God chose Peter as the first to carry the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10). We know little about Peter's movements after that, but certainly he remained a tower of strength in the growing church (Galatians 2:9).

Peter probably wrote his first letter in about a.d. 64. That means he had been a Christian for more than thirty years. He wrote from a place he called "Babylon" (1 Peter 5:13), probably a code word for pagan Rome. He wrote to Christians in Asia Minor (1:1), that large landmass south of the Black Sea and north of the east part of the Mediterranean Sea, where modern Turkey is today.

Praise God (1 Peter 1:3-5)

1. How important is the resurrection of Christ? Why (1 Peter 1:3)?

As Peter began this epistle, he praised the Father for the "abundant mercy" that has been bestowed upon unworthy sinners through His grace. The word translated "begotten . . . again" could be rendered "regenerated" or "born anew" and is similar to the language used by Christ when speaking to Nicodemus (John 3:1-7).

Because we have been born anew into God's family, we have a living hope. The hope that we have in Christ is not based on "cunningly devised fables" (II Pet. 1:16); rather, our hope rests in Christ's resurrection from the dead. As the very foundation of the Christian faith, Christ's resurrection assures believers that all the promises of God are true. Jesus' resurrection is a fact of history that was corroborated by eyewitness testimony (1 Cor. 15:19). Through faith in Christ, we can experience the "power of his resurrection" (Phil. 3:10) in lives dedicated to serving Him.

2. What did Peter say concerning our inheritance (v. 4)?

By its very nature, an inheritance is that which is to be received at some point in the future. In this case, the inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading.

An inheritance received in this world cannot meet these conditions. As with Esau's promised inheritance, an earthly inheritance might be traded or stolen (Gen. 25:27-34; 27:34-38).

Since our inheritance is reserved for us in heaven, it is not subject to the kinds of uncertainties facing human heirs. Many people have expected to receive an inheritance, only to discover that their names were removed from a predecessor's will. Because our heavenly Father is faithful and always keeps His word, we can be certain that our inheritance is awaiting in glory.

3. How are we kept by the power of God (v. 5)?

As God's children we are secure in His love (Rom. 8:38-39). The word translated "kept" in I Peter 1:5 could also be translated "protected" or "guarded." Even though it is the power of God that protects us, this is realized only "through faith," for without faith we cannot know or please God (Rom. 1:17; Heb. 11:6).

"Believers are not kept by their own power, but by the power of God. Our faith in Christ has so united us to Him that His power now guards and guides us. We are not kept by our strength, but by His faithfulness" (Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary, Victor):

"Salvation" is here used of our future redemption. Peter said that this salvation is set to be revealed in the last time. The full revelation of our salvation awaits the return of Christ.

Call to Holiness (1 Peter 1:13-16)

The word wherefore that begins our next section means that what Peter has to say next is the logical conclusion of what he has said just before. In 1:6-12 (not in our text), he recognizes the trials his readers are suffering. He also reminds them of the reality of their salvation. This leads him to exhort his readers to do certain things and think certain ways.

4. What is meant by the expression "gird up the loins" (1 Pet. 1:13)?

The expression "gird up the loins" was used in the sense of getting ready or prepared to do some kind of work. Here we are told that we are to prepare our minds for action in Christ's service.

One way this can be done is to "be sober." While "sober" is often used of those not inebriated by alcohol, the word actually has the broader meaning of being self-controlled in all areas of life.

By living prepared, self-controlled lives, we have the hope of eternal life that will be fully realized at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As already seen in verse 5, this is a reference to the coming of our Lord. The Greek word translated "revelation" is *apokalupsis* and literally means an unveiling. Elsewhere, it is translated "coming" (II Cor. 1:7) and "appearing" (I Pet. 1:7).

To be prepared for the return of Christ, we must live as "obedient children" (v. 14). Most of Peter's readers were converts from paganism. He urged them not to live as they had formerly done. At one time, they had lived in ignorance concerning the true God and His righteous standards (Acts 17:30).

5. When children are obedient, it is a testimony to the parents' skill in child-rearing. What needs to be done to teach Christians that God is to receive the glory when a person becomes obedient to His commands?

Peter's message here matches Paul's message that we are God's workmanship (Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:8-10). In your discussion, observe that Christians can feel good about and appreciate their growth, but they should realize that it is God who ultimately deserves all our praise. That lesson can be taught by example—testimonies of the faithful ought to include praise. There should never be boasting of how good a person is on his or her own. The lesson can be taught in the classroom—as it is being done now. How about displaying posters praising God for His continued grace?

6. What is the primary reason given for us to be holy (vs. 15, 16)?

The Greek word for "holy" is related to the words for "sanctify" and "saint." These all speak of separation to God and the kind of behavior that reflects that separation.

The word for "conversation" in verse 15 encompasses more than our speech. It refers rather to our general conduct or behavior. In short, those claiming to follow a holy God must also be holy people!

The quotation "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (v. 16) is found in Leviticus (11:44,45; 19:2; 20:7) and reflects God's expectations not only for the priesthood but for all Israel. To all the people God said "And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine" (20:26).

Call to Reverence (vs. 17-21)

7. Should people live their lives in "fear" of God (v. 17)?

"Reverence" is in the subtitle above to suggest that that word would be an acceptable translation where our text has fear. Wise Solomon concluded a long discussion by saying, "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). That does not mean we ought to try to hide from God, as guilty Adam did (Genesis 3:8). We are not tormented by fear as Adam was. When we call on the Father in prayer, our fear of God is an attitude of reverence and awe.

God shows no "respect of persons," meaning He does not discriminate or show favoritism (Acts 10:34). He evaluates us on the basis of our work for His kingdom, not on the basis of race or ethnic group.

8. How has our redemption been provided (vs. 18, 19)?

Using the language of the ancient slave market, Peter reminded his readers that they were not redeemed "with corruptible things, as silver and gold." Instead, a great price was paid for their redemption through the "precious blood of Christ." It was the eternal Son of God who laid down His life for lost sinners when He offered Himself up as a sacrificial lamb.

The concept that the Messiah was a lamb without blemish or defect is found elsewhere in the Bible (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7; Rev. 7:14; 13:8; Exod. 12:5). Unlike

the animal sacrifices of the old covenant, Christ's sacrifice was a once-for-all offering (Heb.10:12).

The phrase "vain conversation" in I Peter 1:18 refers to the believers' former conduct prior to obeying the gospel. What they had known previously about truth and morality had been "received by tradition from [their] fathers."

9. What does the word "foreordained" (v. 20) mean?

The word translated "foreordained" (1 Pet. 1:20) could be translated "foreknown." It is the Greek word *prognoskd*, which has been carried over into English and means a "forecast" or "prediction." God did not merely predict our redemption, however; He planned it!

Before God began to make the world, He had a plan for the redemption of people whose own actions would make them slaves of sin and doomed to death. God planned to send His own Son to live a sinless life among sinful people, to take upon himself the punishment that all those sinners deserved, and thus to ransom the sinners from sin and death (Mark 10:45). In Peter's time the Redeemer was manifest- was seen and known.

The expression "last times" (1 Pet. 1:20) refers to the age after the arrival of the Messiah (Heb. 1:1-2). The similar expression, "the last times" in 1 Peter 1:5, however, apparently refers to Christ's second coming. Peter, like the other New Testament writers, realized that the Hebrew prophets spoke of two comings of Christ. The first coming provided a sacrifice for sin; the second coming will bring final redemption to the saved and judgment to the lost (Heb. 9:28).

It is through Christ that we have come to know the one true God (1 Peter 1:21). Through Jesus' resurrection, our faith and hope have been validated. The same power that raised Christ is also at work in us (Eph. 1:19-20).

The Living Stone and A Chosen People (1 Peter 2:4-10)

10. How was Christ "disallowed indeed of men" (2:4)?

Here Peter identified Christ as "a living stone. That Christ was "disallowed indeed of men" (I Pet. 2:4) refers to His rejection by the very people He came to save. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11).

In God's eyes, however, Christ was chosen and precious. His divine mission was "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). This He did by offering Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world (John 10:17,18), thus opening the way to heaven for us.

Just as Christ was a living stone, so also God's people are "lively (living) stones" (I Pet. 2:5). God's children are stones that together make up a growing spiritual house.

Unlike the priesthood of the Old Testament, which was drawn only from certain Levitical families, all believers in the New Testament constitute a holy priesthood. In contrast to the animal sacrifices that were at the very heart of the old covenant, God's people now offer up "spiritual sacrifices."

These spiritual sacrifices include such things as prayer and praise of God (Heb. 13:15), doing good and sharing with others (v.16), and presenting one's body to God as "a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1).

These spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God only when offered in the name of Jesus Christ. We do not approach the Father on the merits of our own good works; we come to God through our High Priest, Jesus Christ (John 14:6; I Tim. 2:5).

11. Peter describes God's people as being very special, based on what has been accomplished through the sacrifice of Jesus. What can the church do to awaken all its members to practice the unity-character, purpose, and direction-that Peter describes with the figures of speech in 1 Peter 2:5?

The lively stones (the church) are to be united (one building and one holy nation), serving together (royal priesthood), and unique in character (peculiar people). This is consistent with Christ's prayer before His betrayal in which He prayed for oneness among His followers (John 17:20,21).

Instead of fighting each other, God's will is that believers be united in faith under the authority of Christ. They can do this by loving and caring for the needs of each other, by joining in one mission to proclaim Jesus as Savior, and by being an example (living lives worthy of the high calling of Christ) to those who are still controlled by the world.

12. Our faith is not a blind leap in the dark. Our faith is based on the solidness of Jesus Christ and the historical evidence about Him (vs. 6-8). How can Christians demonstrate in daily life their confidence in this sure foundation (Jesus)?

We begin by recognizing the nature of a cornerstone. For a large building, the cornerstone has to be strong enough to bear the considerable weight of the structure, and placed accurately enough to give direction to the layout. In the church Jesus is that cornerstone, strong and straight enough to support and give direction to His redeemed people.

Christians can live out this fact by singing and worshiping boldly, sharing the message of Christ with confidence, taking risks to help others (some of whom will never appreciate the effort), and sending forth missionaries with the message that can transform both individuals and nations. The old hymn, "The Church's One Foundation" is a great reminder of Who helps us.

A Royal Priesthood

13. What's so special about God's people under the new covenant (vs. 9, 10)?

Here Peter used Old Testament language to refer to God's people under the new covenant. These verses are reminiscent of Exodus 19:5-6, where God said of Israel, "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: . . . and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."

The expression "chosen generation" in I Peter 2:9 can be translated "chosen people." Unlike the chosen people of the old covenant, the chosen people of the new covenant are drawn from all nations (Matt. 28:19; Eph 2:11-22). That God is now using the church to accomplish His purposes (Eph. 3:10), however, does not prevent Israel from still being used in God's plan (Rom. 11:26-32).

While the word "peculiar" is often used today in the sense of being strange or odd, the Greek word behind the term in I Peter 2:9 means "a distinctive possession," as it is translated in Ephesians 1:14. Peter was stressing that we belong to God.

As such, we are to proclaim the praises of the One who has called us out of the darkness of sin and into the marvelous light of salvation.

Prior to accepting Christ as Saviour, these Gentile believers were not a people of any consequence. Now, however, they were the people of God because they had obtained mercy through the "washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

CONCLUSION

Practical Ideas

Part 1 of our lesson is about praising God. When you praise a store or a physician, your praise may bring a new customer to the store or a new patient to the doctor. How many non-Christians have been brought to God by your praise of Him?

Part 2 of our lessons is about being holy and reverent. We have to do some thinking about that. If we make a big show of being holy as the Pharisees did (Matthew 6:1-6; 23:5-12) we may turn people away from us and from God. But Jesus asks us to let people see our good works so they will glorify our Father in Heaven (5:16). Has anyone become more holy and reverent by following your example?

Part 3 of our lesson is about being built into a spiritual house, the church. What are you in that house? Are you a pillar of strength, like James, Cephas (Peter), and John (Galatians 2:9)? Or are you an area of weakness, leaning on the strength of others? Can you be stronger?

PRAYER

Our Father, we never can praise You enough. How matchless are Your power, love, mercy, and grace! Thank You for calling us out of darkness and into Your marvelous light. Grant us wisdom-not the wisdom of the world, but Your wisdom. May we have strength and courage to walk in that wisdom, that light, to behave as Your children in the spiritual house where we live with Your people. In Jesus' name, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Live as children of light!

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week we will see why it is so important to set a good example to a world that is watching. Study 1 Peter 2:11-5:14.

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