

## Part 2

## Born Again for an Inheritance (1:3-4)

- *A burst of praise*

- *Shows who they are and what has happened*

### 1. Born again

- *We have become new people*

- *Undeserved God's great mercy*

### 2. A living hope

- *Confident expectation – not uncertain optimism*

- *Permanent home is heaven – merely temporary residents on earth*

### 3. Born again through the resurrection of Jesus

- *United with Jesus*

- *Christians have more than Old Testament saints – because of the resurrection*

- *The Christian's future hope*

- *Glorified with him*

*'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy has caused us to be born again<sup>1</sup> into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, for an inheritance uncorrupted and undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you...' 1:3-4.*

1:3  
1:4

Peter begins with a burst of praise. As in 1:1–2 he is doing two things at the same time. He wants to praise God, but he also wants these Christians in Roman Asia Minor to have a sense of who they are and what has happened to them.

1. **They have been born again.** When a person becomes a true Christian it is not just a matter of taking up some religion or adding some religious practices to one's life. The very person himself or herself is changed. The Holy Spirit is put within us. We become new people. We are not forcing ourselves to do something or dragging ourselves along to religious meetings. A new life is placed within us. We have new abilities, new inclinations, new directions, new interests. It can be summarised in one phrase: 'born again'.

God has acted 'in great mercy'. We did not deserve this gift. We deserved the exact opposite. God would have been quite just if He had abandoned us altogether. But instead He acted in mercy. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...!'

2. **They have a living hope.** The Christian has been born again 'into a living hope'. We must realise that 'hope' has the sense of 'expectation'. It does not refer to uncertain hope. In modern English if I say I 'hope' to do something it means that I am optimistic about it but I am not absolutely certain. However in the New Testament 'hope' never means 'uncertain optimism'; it means sure and confident expectation. Biblical 'hope' is expectation, prospect, future horizon, anticipation, goal.

When people are 'born again' they realise that this world is not their permanent home. It is rather the place where we get ready for our permanent home. A 'temporary resident' may be very busy but he does not completely settle down. His mind often goes to the place where he really belongs. The Christian expects soon to be somewhere else. He is looking for resurrection and reward, from Jesus and with Jesus, in a new heaven and new earth in which righteousness dwells.

3. **They are born again through the resurrection of Jesus; and they have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus.**

The phrase 'through the resurrection of Jesus Christ' belongs to the whole phrase 'born again for a living hope'. We are born again through the resurrection of Jesus; we have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus.

When a Christian believes in Jesus Christ, he or she is united to Jesus Christ. He is joined on to Jesus. The resurrection power of Jesus is within him. He is 'united with Him in a resurrection like His'. He is spiritually alive and is risen with Christ.

(This might make us ask the question: were Old Testament saints 'born again' if they lived before the resurrection of Jesus? It depends on what you mean by 'born again'. Old Testament believers were made spiritually alive by the Holy Spirit; and they were brought to faith by the Holy Spirit. In this sense they were 'born again'. But for the Christian, 'new birth' has more in it! 'New birth' after the resurrection of Jesus is richer than 'new birth' before the resurrection of Jesus.)

We have a 'living hope' through the resurrection of Jesus. The Christian's future 'hope' is focused on the day when he or she will be raised from the dead. Our hope is not at death (although at death we depart to be with Jesus). Our hope is focused on the Second Coming of Jesus, and the day when we shall be physically raised in glory. But this is a 'living' hope because it has happened to Jesus already and Jesus is alive! Jesus has already been raised from the dead. He already has been crowned with honour. He already has a name that is above every name. We are already raised with him spiritually. Our expectation is to be physically glorified with Him. He is alive.

and we are alive in Christ. He is raised and glorified, and we expect to be raised and glorified with Him. Christians have a living expectation focused on the risen and glorified Lord Jesus Christ.

#### 4. The Christian is destined for an inheritance

• Inheritance is reward

• Inheritance is...

• Obtained by living in the resurrection power of Jesus

• Kept – taste now – more to come

• Guarded for us

• God's protection from ultimate harm

4. **The Christian is destined for an inheritance.** Peter says we have been 'born again for a living hope ... for an inheritance...'. Or we could translate 'God ... has caused us to be born again, for a living hope *"in order that we may get an inheritance uncorrupted and undefiled and unfading..."*'. The clause is not a clause of result ('so that we shall get'); it is a clause of purpose ('in order that we may get').<sup>a</sup>

Our salvation puts us in a position where we are living for inheritance. 'Inheritance' is reward. Often the word is used for our present reaping back the blessings of God's kingdom as the result of living for Jesus. Sometimes (as here) it refers to the future stage of our inheritance, our reward in heaven.

What is the inheritance? 'We do not know what we shall be'<sup>1</sup>, but certainly inheritance includes honour, a name for obedience, a level of physical glory. Certainly it includes enjoyment of the glorified planet earth, the 'new heavens and new earth in which dwells righteousness'. There is variation in glory. Some will be glorified more than others. 'Inheritance' is not simply heaven; it is reward in heaven.

Our inheritance may be obtained by our living in the resurrection power of Jesus. As we live for Jesus we obtain treasure in heaven; it is 'indestructible' (unable to cease to exist), 'undefiled' (unable to lead us into sin) and 'unfading' (unable to deteriorate).

Peter gives praise to God for these great expectations! He says this inheritance is 'kept in heaven for you'<sup>1</sup>, who by the power of God are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time'<sup>2</sup>.

Our inheritance is 'kept'. We only have a taste of it now. There is more to come. It is quite safe since it is in heaven beyond the reach of sin or death or the devil.

But not only is our inheritance guarded for us; we are guarded for it. God's guarding takes place through our faith. And our faith is guarded as well! Peter knew that because Jesus said to him: 'I have prayed for you that your faith does not fail' – and Jesus gets His prayers answered.

When we trust ourselves to God, He gives us total protection. His great power works on our behalf. Nothing can happen to us that is not God's plan for our lives. Even if God temporarily gives Satan a little permission to harass us (as he did in the case of Job) it will do us no ultimate harm. It certainly cannot damage our inheritance. Satan knew God had put a protective fence around Job<sup>1</sup>. Even when the fence was moved to a different point of Job's life, Job was being protected ('Spare his life!' <sup>2</sup>) and eventually 'The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning'<sup>3</sup>. Even if we endure Job-like experiences we are being guarded.

#### Footnote

<sup>a</sup> See W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon...* (University of Chicago, 1979), under *eis*, section 4,f, for *eis* indicating purpose.

<sup>1</sup> 1 John 3:2

<sup>1</sup> 1:4  
<sup>2</sup> 1:5

<sup>1</sup> Job 1:10

<sup>2</sup> Job 2:6  
<sup>3</sup> Job 42:10, 12



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