

AN IMPERISHABLE INHERITANCE

A. Introduction: Forty days after Jesus rose from the dead He and His disciples walked to the Mount of Olives just outside of Jerusalem. As His followers watched He was taken up into Heaven. Two angels appeared with a message from Jesus for His followers: I'll be back. Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-11

1. Jesus is coming back to complete the plan of redemption. Redemption is God's plan to deliver men and the earth from bondage to sin, corruption, and death and restore both to what He always intended.
  - a. God created men and women to become His sons and daughters through faith in Christ and made earth to be home for Himself and His family (Eph 1:4,5; Isa 45:18). Neither mankind, earth, or life on this earth are as God intended. All have been damaged by sin.
  - b. Jesus died on the Cross to pay for sin so it can be removed from all who bow their knee to Him as Savior and Lord. He'll come again to cleanse the earth of corruption and death and make it a fit forever home for Himself and His family. The Bible begins and ends with God on earth with His family. Gen 2; 3; Rev 21:3
2. When we believe on Jesus we receive eternal life (the uncreated life of God) and become literal sons and daughters of God through the new birth, sons with an inheritance. Gal 4:4-7
  - a. Our inheritance as sons of God includes everything we need for this life and the life to come.
    1. In the life to come this means a home in Heaven. It also includes (in connection with the Second Coming of Jesus) being reunited with our physical body raised from the dead (made incorruptible and immortal) as well as returning to live forever on this earth made new.
    2. In this life our inheritance includes access to the provision and power of the unseen kingdom of God to help us as we live our life for Him.
  - b. I Pet 1:3-5; Eph 1:3--Previously we discussed the fact that we have a heavenly inheritance which includes spiritual blessings. The impact of this is lost on us because of misconceptions about what that means and how we access it. Here's what we've said thus far.
    1. We have an inheritance in Heaven. This means we have provision in and from another dimension. There is more to reality than what we perceive with our senses. God is unseen or invisible and He has created both seen things and unseen things (Col 1:15,16). Heaven is God's unseen home (Ps 2:4; Ps 11:4; Psalm 115:3; Psalm 123:1; etc.)
    2. In God's home there are spiritual provisions. Spiritual means invisible. The fact that we can't see it doesn't mean it's not real or less real than what we see. The spiritual preceded and produced the visible when the Invisible God spoke His Word (I Tim 1:17; Heb 11:3; Gen 1:3).

The spiritual or invisible realm can and does affect and change the seen realm.

A. II Kings 6:8-22--Elisha the prophet was unafraid in the face of a much larger enemy force because he knew he was protected by beings in the unseen realm (had spiritual provision).

1. He'd seen these beings on a previous occasion when he witnessed the prophet Elijah taken into Heaven (the unseen dimension) by them. II Kings 2:11,12

2. Elisha was persuaded of the unseen power of the invisible dimension available to him as a righteous man. He knew he had spiritual provision.

B. If the veil that separates the seen and unseen realms were pulled back we'd see that we're citizens of this unseen kingdom with access to its power and provision. Phil 3:20

c. Christianity is supernatural and transformational. The unseen power of God affects and changes the material world as He carries out His plan to have a family of holy, righteous sons and daughters with whom He can dwell forever on this earth made new.

1. We were born again by unseen power from another dimension. Your dead body will be raised from the grave and made incorruptible by power from that realm. God's power will transform the earth and make it new. John 1:12,13; John 3:3,5; Phil 3:20,21; II Pet 3:10-13; etc.

2. Jesus (in His humanity) accessed unseen power and provision in His earth ministry and showed us how sons of God live in this world. Through the Cross and the new birth we've

been made joint heirs with Jesus with access to the same power and provision. Rom 8:15-17

- B. To appreciate and walk in our inheritance, not only must we understand that there is more to reality than what we see, we must understand that there's more to life than just this life.
1. From the moment you come into existence at conception you're an eternal being or someone who's going to live forever. No one ceases to exist at death.
    - A. When your body dies you (the unseen part of you) pass into another dimension (Heaven or Hell) depending on your response to Jesus in this life. For those who know the Lord, there's life after this life, first in the unseen Heaven and then on this earth after it's made new.
      1. This life isn't supposed to be the highlight of your existence because it's only a tiny part. If you live the best life possible and achieve all your dreams old age and death take them away.
      2. Life as it is on this earth is not as it was meant to be because of sin. But all will be made right when Jesus comes again and God's plan of redemption is completed.
      3. To walk in the provision of your inheritance in this life it's vital that you develop an eternal perspective and live with the consciousness that there's more to life than just this life.
    - b. I Pet 1:3-5--Peter wrote that because of Jesus' resurrection we have a living hope or an inheritance reserved for us in Heaven. This refers in part to what Paul said in Eph 1:3--We have access to the power and provision of the unseen realm to help us now. But it also includes the life to come.
      1. This inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. It is "an inheritance which is beyond the reach of change and decay (imperishable), unsullied, and unfading" (Amp).
      2. It's reserved for us. Reserved means to guard from injury by keeping an eye on. "which is kept safe for you in heaven" (Goodspeed).
  2. Peter understood this in terms of something Jesus told him years earlier. The disciples left all to follow Jesus and Peter asked Him what their reward would be. Matt 19:27-29; Mark 10:28-30
    - a. Jesus said: You'll receive over and above what you gave up, some in this life and some in the life to come. ("Hundredfold" is an expression of speech not a promise that if you put a dollar in the offering you'll get ten back. There is no promise of a hundredfold monetary return in scripture.)
      1. In this life you'll have new relationships with brothers and sisters in the family of God. And you'll have provision (food, clothing, and shelter) to replace lands (provision) you gave up.
      2. In the life to come you'll have eternal, everlasting life. Note that Jesus said this reward will come in the regeneration (Matt 19:28). Regeneration in the Greek means new birth. "In the new age--the Messianic rebirth of the world" (Amp).
        - A. The disciples knew from the writings of the prophets that there is coming a regeneration or rebirth of the world--the earth freed from corruption and death and made new (Isa 65:17). Jesus also said that at that time, as His original twelve followers, they'll be given unique positions as judges over the twelve tribes of Israel.
        - B. Based on the prophets' writings the disciples understood eternal life to mean: Your body will be raised from the dead so you can live on earth again. All that you've lost will be restored. And this time, you'll keep it forever. Death can never rob from you again.
      - b. In his epistle Peter was writing to believers who were experiencing increasing pressure for their faith in Christ. He was encouraging them to stay faithful to Jesus because it's worth it in the end.
        1. In that context, he referenced their inheritance telling them: It's safely guarded, ready to be revealed in the last times and God will keep you by His power through faith until then. v5--  
You who are being guarded (garrisoned) by God's power through [your] faith [till you fully inherit that final] salvation that is ready to be revealed [for you] in the last time. (Amp)
          - A. "Last time" is a reference to the Second Coming of Jesus. "Ready to be revealed" speaks to the fact that a plan is being carried out that will be completed. Peter and the first Christians lived with the consciousness that they were part of something that would not only help them in this life but would outlast this life.

B. Peter defined this salvation as the one the prophets wrote and wondered about (v10-12).

As soon as Adam and Eve sinned and brought the curse of corruption and death to mankind and the earth God began to reveal His plan of salvation and redemption (Gen 3:15) and revealed increasing aspects of the plan down through the ages (Acts 3:21).

2. God will keep us by His power (present provision) through our faith until the completion of the plan of redemption when we receive our full, imperishable inheritance (future provision).
3. Many Christians struggle with accessing the provision and power of the unseen kingdom in this life because they lack an eternal perspective and misunderstand the nature of life in a fallen world.
  - a. The fact that we have present power and provision doesn't mean problem-free living, huge salaries at jobs we love, vacation homes and fancy cars. There's nothing wrong with any of that, but no one has a promise of those things in this life (despite what T.V. preachers say).
  - b. Some issues and problems can be resolved in this life. Some you just have to deal with as best you can. The Bible helps us know which is which (more on that next week). It assures us that all will be made right in the life to come to give us hope as we deal with the challenges of this life.
    1. The ultimate stage for the reversals of life's hardships, pains, losses, and injustices is ahead, first in the unseen Heaven and then on the new earth. This doesn't mean there's no help for this life. There most certainly is. But this life is temporary and what's ahead matters most.
    2. When you realize that all loss is temporary, unrealized hopes and dreams are only postponed, and nothing can come against you in this life that's bigger than God, it relieves pressure, quells fear, and gives you peace and hope which lifts you up as you face life's difficulties.
      - A. Consider what Paul wrote to slaves who had become Christians. They were in a circumstance that more than likely wasn't going to change. Paul's instruction to them was not: Believe for a better job. Col 3:22-24
      - B. He urged them to work as though they were serving the Lord, reminding them they have an inheritance (a future) in the life to come where all will be made right. This perspective made it easier for them to deal with the hardships of their lives.
4. Paul wrote to a group of Jewish believers who were experiencing increasing pressure to reject Jesus from Jews who didn't believe in Him. The whole purpose of the letter to the Hebrews is to encourage them to stay faithful to Jesus no matter what happens because it's worth it in the end.
  - a. Heb 10:32-34--Paul reminded them that when they first believed on Jesus, even though they were ridiculed and persecuted for it, they stayed faithful and helped others in the same situation .
    1. They took joyfully the loss of their material possessions. Joyful doesn't mean "feel happy". It comes from a word that means to cheer or encourage yourself with the reasons you have hope.
    2. Their hope came from the fact that they knew they had "a much more solid and lasting treasure in Heaven" (Phillips); "a better property and one which you would keep for ever" (Basic).
  - b. Heb 10:35-37--Then he encouraged them to hold on to their confidence because it carries "a rich reward in the world to come" (Phillips). If you endure (stay faithful) you'll receive the promise.
    1. Promise is a reference to Heb 9:15--Those who acknowledge Jesus as Savior and Lord ... "receive the unending inheritance they have been promised" (Goodspeed).
    2. Paul didn't exhort them to use their faith to make the persecutions stop. He reminded them that the Lord will come to complete the plan of redemption and all will be made right then.

C. Jesus made it clear that if your priorities and perspective about this life and the life to come are right you'll have the provision you need to live this life.

1. Matt 6:25-34--In this well known passage of scripture Jesus assured His followers that they don't have to worry about the necessities of life because they have a Heavenly Father who will take care of them.
  - a. Jesus pointed to the birds and flowers noting that they are fed and dressed because our Heavenly Father cares for them—and we matter to Him more than a bird or a flower. Therefore, He'll take care of you as you "set your heart on his kingdom" (v33, Phillips). Notice that Jesus attributed

visible, physical provision (food and clothing) to an unseen, spiritual source (Almighty God).

b. Jesus made these statements in the context of the big picture and keeping our priorities right.

There's lots in this passage we aren't going to address now, but note these points.

1. Matt 6:9-13--He told His followers to approach God as Father. Desire His will and pray that it be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Look to Him and His kingdom to take care of you

2. Matt 6:19-21--Then He instructs them: Don't lay up treasure on earth. Lay it up in Heaven. Your heart (the seat of your thoughts, feelings, and desires) will be where your treasure is.

A. Jesus wasn't saying it's wrong to have, earn, or save money (even a lot of it). The point is where are your priorities? What is the focus of your life? If all your efforts are aimed at making this life the highlight of your existence your priorities are off you don't see the big picture. This life is temporary and the greater and better part is in the life to come.

B. We live in a sin damaged world where moths and rust corrupt and thieves break through and steal. Recognize what true riches are. True riches are those that can't be taken from you. What does it profit if you gain the whole world and lose your soul? Matt 16:26

2. This is the context in which Jesus tells believers not to worry about having life's necessities.

a. Worry (v25) comes from a word that means distracted. You're distracted when your attention is drawn away from one thing to something else. When Jesus said "Look at the birds" and "Consider the flowers" He was telling us to put forth effort to focus on the way things really are.

1. This is reality as it truly is: God is our Father and He's promised to take care of us as we look to Him. Jesus said: As we keep our priorities and focus right our Father will take care of us.

2. Matt 6:33--But you must make his kingdom and uprightness before him, your greatest care (Goodspeed); Set your heart on his kingdom and his goodness, and all these things will come to you as a matter of course (Phillips).

b. Seeking God's kingdom doesn't mean selling everything you have to be a missionary in a foreign land. If that's the case then the slaves Paul addressed in Col 3:22-24 can't have right priorities or treasure in Heaven. But a slave can be a light of Christ in his circumstance. He can pray for his master and desire that God's kingdom come into his master's heart through the new birth.

D. Conclusion: Paul also wrote (in the same letter): Col 3:1,2--Set your sights on the realities of heaven...Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth (NLT).

1. When we keep our focus on what's to come in the life ahead this perspective gives us hope (Col 1:5).

This hope will make us a light of Christ wherever we are—even if we're a Roman slave who cleans out stables. It'll help us keep the hardships of life in perspective and give us the confidence that God will get us through until He gets us out.

2. Don't be distracted by what you see and feel from reality as it truly is. Focus your attention on God's Word about what He has provided, is providing, and will provide through our imperishable, heavenly inheritance. More next week.