Lesson 12 - The Blessed Hope



In our earlier studies, we discovered that God has already obtained salvation, full and complete, for the entire human race in Jesus Christ. However, this salvation that has been received by every believer through faith in Christ is not experienced by Christians all at once but in three stages. That is why when asked, “Are you saved?” Christians should respond, “I am saved, I am being saved, and I will be saved.”

I am Saved from the Guilt and Punishment of Sin!

The first stage is referred to as justification by faith. This is made effective the moment one believes the gospel and receives Jesus as one's personal Savior (see John 5:24). The immediate blessing of justification by faith is peace with God (Lesson 6, especially Question 22). This experience also results in the new birth in which the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in the believer (Lesson 8, especially Questions 16 and 17).

I am Being Saved from the Power and Slavery to Sin!

While justification by faith changes our status or standing before God from condemnation to death to justification unto eternal life, it does not change the believer's sinful nature. That is why we need the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to make the second stage of salvation possible. This second phase is holy living, commonly

referred to in Scripture as the experience of sanctification. It

is an ongoing process and is realized only as the believer learns to walk in the Spirit (Lesson 9).

I will be Saved from the Nature and Presence of Sin!

But even the experience of sanctification does not bring about any change to the sinful nature itself, which remains innately sinful all the believer's life. This sinful nature is the greatest hindrance to holy living and that is why Christians long to experience the third phase of salvation. This final stage of salvation is glorification. It will take place at the Second Coming of Christ. The Bible refers to this ultimate experience of salvation as "the blessed hope." Let us examine what the Scriptures have to say about this glorious truth.

1. What blessed hope does Jesus give to His disciples? John 14:1, 2

The phrase "You believe in God" or "Trust in God" is in the imperative. This means that Christians are never to doubt God's promise of salvation even as we struggle to live the Christian life in this world.

2. When will this ultimate hope of salvation take place? John 14:3

The Second Coming of Christ is the blessed hope of every Christian. Until then we are sinners saved by grace patiently waiting for Christ's soon return. We are citizens of heaven but still have sinful natures and live in a sinful world.

3. What gives us this blessed hope of salvation? Titus 2:11

Salvation has already been obtained for the entire human race in Christ. The believer's blessed hope of going to heaven is not based on his or her performance but in the truth that Christ is our righteousness.

4. What does this accomplished salvation in Christ teach us to do? Titus 2:12

While our salvation is guaranteed in Christ, this does not give the believer license to sin. The good news of the gospel does not save us only from the guilt and punishment of sin, but also from its power and slavery. Genuine justification by faith creates in believers a hatred for sin and a desire to live holy, upright lives.

5. What must our eyes be focused on while living the Christian life? Titus 2:13

6. What do Christians eagerly wait for while living in this world? Romans 8:22, 23

By “redemption of our body” Paul is referring to our sinful natures, which will be changed from corruption to incorruption only at the Second Coming of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15:51-54).

7. What will Christ do to our bodies when He comes the second time? Philippians 3:20, 21

The blessed hope of our bodies being redeemed from the corruption of sin is part of the blessed hope. Only then will we Christians be made righteous (see Romans 5:19b). Until then we are righteous only by faith in Christ and Him crucified.

8. In view of the above, how is faith described in the book of Hebrews? Hebrews 11:1

In justification by faith we are declared righteous. In sanctification we experience holy living and victory over the sinful desires of the flesh. We thus witness to the righteousness we already have in Christ. It is only at the Second Coming of Christ that we will be made righteous, when “this corruptible has put on incorruption” (1 Corinthians 15:54).

9. In order for us to experience this ultimate salvation what must we do? 2 Timothy 4:7, 8

While Christians may have full assurance of salvation, this does not mean, “Once saved, Always saved.” As long as you have faith in Christ, your salvation is guaranteed; but the moment you turn your back on Christ through unbelief, you are also turning your back to your salvation in Christ.

10. What admonition is given to believers who are weak in faith? Hebrews 10:35

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11. What warning is given to those who draw back from Christ? Hebrews 10:38

God cannot take to heaven those who have deliberately turned their backs on Christ. Hence, His desire is that “none draw back unto perdition” (Hebrews 10:39).

12. Who did Jesus say will be ultimately saved? Matthew 10:22

Because Christians live in a sinful world, the devil will try his level best to make our lives difficult in order to destroy our faith in Christ. But these difficulties are only temporary. That is why we must not focus on the hardships of our present life but on Christ, who will deliver us from all these at His Second Coming.

13. What counsel does Jesus give believers regarding His soon coming? Revelation 3:11

The righteousness that saves us and qualifies us for heaven is always in Christ. That, the devil cannot touch. But the faith that makes that righteousness ours is in us. That, the devil can destroy. We must hold on to that faith at all cost.

14. How is the Second Coming of Christ described by the lost? Revelation 6:17

While the Second Coming1 of Christ is the blessed hope for the Christian1, it is the very opposite to the unbelievers who have rejected the gift of salvation in Christ. To them the Second Coming of Christ is "the great day of His wrath."

15. What will all the nations do when they see Jesus coming in the clouds? Matthew 24:30

Those who will be mourning when they see Jesus coming in glory are the unbelievers. In contrast, the believers1 will rejoice and shout for joy - this is the day we have been waiting for.

16. What will happen to unbelievers who cry "peace and safety"? 1 Thessalonians 5:3

17. In contrast, why will the believers1 not be taken by surprise? 1 Thessalonians 5:4

Today, there is much talk in the political world about "peace and safety" but we Christians must not be deceived by such talk. The Bible is clear that at such a time sudden destruction will take place.

18. In view of the above, what admonition does Jesus give to believers1? Luke 12:40

19. How is Christ's Second Coming described in this text? Revelation 16:15

To come as a thief means that the coming of Christ will be at an unexpected time, even for Christians1. Therefore, we must constantly keep our eyes focused on Jesus Christ.

20. What will Christ's response be to those who claim salvation by works? Matthew 7:22, 23

Unfortunately, many today think they will be saved because they are involved in some kind of Christian ministry. Salvation is by grace alone, received by faith alone. Good works are the inevitable fruits of salvation, but they do not contribute to it (see Ephesians 2:8-10).

1 Many divergent beliefs have been espoused related to the rapture of the saints.

Many believe that Christians will be raptured to heaven prior to a time of trouble. There is evidence from the Scriptures, however, that Christians will have to endure severe hardships prior to Jesus' return (see Daniel 12:1). This evidence must be seriously considered. This subject will be addressed further in Lesson 23.

21. What must Christians endure prior to Christ's Second Advent? Jeremiah 30:7

Jacob represents those whose faith endures to the end. The time of Jacob's trouble is the great tribulation that the last generation of Christians will have to endure before Christ comes. This is the final showdown between the world under Satan and the church under Christ.

22. What did Jesus imply will be tested during the great tribulation? Luke 18:8

During the great tribulation, the supreme test will be the faith of God's people. Can God produce a people whose faith in Christ is unshakable even though they feel forsaken of God? This is what the issue in the great tribulation will be all about (see Isaiah 54:5- 8). An enduring faith will demonstrate, once and for all, that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (see Romans 1:16). Those who endure such a trial and come out victorious are referred to as the 144,000, God's remnant (a subject we will study in Lesson 23).

Dear Believer,

We are living close to that testing time and my prayer is that you may be among the faithful ones. In whatever trials you are facing now or will have to face in the future, always remember that the blessed hope for us Christians is the Second Coming of Christ. Don't ever give up your faith; hold on to the end no matter what circumstances come your way. And remember: "The one who calls you is faithful and will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

Yours truly,

Someone who cares and wants to meet you in heaven!

My Response to Lesson 12

• Recognizing that the blessed hope of the Christian is the Second Coming of Christ, when believers will experience full salvation, is it your desire to hold on to your faith at all cost?

Response: _____

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