

BRYAN STATION BAPTIST CHURCH

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18TH ANNUAL MISSION BIBLE CONFERENCE

As we come closer to the end of this century, the blessings from the spirit-filled messages of our October conference can sustain us. Over 80 ministers of the Word, and many, many others from all over attended our conference this year; and we enjoyed the great preaching. We appreciate such notes as this one: "My family and I attended the Missions Conference last week. I just wanted you to know what a blessing everything was! We were truly challenged and blessed by the preaching from God's Holy Word. In addition, the spirit of the church was wonderful. Thank you as well, for providing the meals. Again, we had a tremendous time, and we thank God for faithful churches like Bryan Station Baptist Church!" Make plans to attend our 19th Conference in 2000, the Lord willing!

THE INHERITANCE OF GOD'S CHILDREN

BY: C. D. COLE

"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, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time," I Peter 1:3-5.

Inheritance is a possession derived by an heir from an ancestor or other person. When property changes hands, the deed is made to the man and his heirs. Much of this world's goods is not owned by men who themselves acquired it by their own toil. It has been acquired through the law that what a man has shall be left to his heirs when he is dead.

Our text speaks about heavenly property. Peter would comfort the poor and sorrowing and discouraged people of Christ by discussing their future blessings as the heirs of God. They had little, if any, of this world's goods, but they were heirs apparent to future and heavenly possessions. They had little or no authority in the affairs of this world, but they were heirs apparent to thrones in the future kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Theirs was the promise that "if we suffer [with Christ], *we shall also reign with him,*" II Timothy 2:12. We will first notice:

THE TITLE TO THIS INHERITANCE

Our title to the heavenly inheritance is by birth, a birth from above. "*Ye must be born again,*" John 3:7. By a natural birth many things are inherited. Some children inherit thrones of kings. They rule over men, not by virtue of their wisdom and fitness for such a place, but because they are the firstborn of kings. Some inherit great wealth. We often hear of million dollar babies, that is, babies who belong to millionaires. Some children inherit an ugly disposition from their par-

ents, while others have a sunny and cheerful disposition handed down by their parents. And some inherit terrible diseases. And all of us have inherited a sinful disposition "*and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others,*" Ephesians 2:3. The first birth gives us nothing in which to glory.

But in the second birth, the supernatural birth of the Spirit, we become the children of God. "*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,*" John 3:3,6. "*And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,*" Romans 8:17. Our birth from above gives us titles to mansions in the skies. "*To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.*" I Peter 1:4. The first or physical birth will not entitle us to any future blessings. To be born only once will mean to die twice: first physically, and then the second death. "*And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death,*" Revelation 20:14.

THE ASSURANCE OF THIS INHERITANCE

The assurance of this inheritance is called a lively or living hope. "*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,*" I Peter 1:3. This means that the inheritance is not yet possessed. We do not hope for that which we already have. Children of the rich, before reaching their majority, do not have possession of the inheritance, but they do look forward to the time when it will be in their actual possession. So the heirs of God have only the earnest or first-fruits of their inheritance, while the greater part of it is reserved for

them in heaven. "*In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory,*" Ephesians 1:13, 14. They cannot squander it while they are in their fleshly minority and in this world where nothing is safe.

1. The living hope means that the inheritance is certain to be received. This hope is an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast. The child of a rich man may hope to receive the wealth of his father some day, but that wealth may be lost before he gets it, and his hope may end in bitter disappointment. The hope of earthly blessings is subject to many vicissitudes, but no misfortune can happen to the inheritance of the child of God. Children of kings have been disappointed in the hope to reign over great kingdoms, because their fathers have had to abdicate and renounce the throne for themselves and their heirs. A late illustration of this is seen in King Edward the Eighth giving up his throne for the love and companionship of a woman, he renounced the throne of England for himself and for his heirs forever.

2. But the hope of the saints is a living hope, which means also that death cannot deprive us of it. It is still a living hope in the very ordeal of death. Solomon says: "*When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth,*" Proverbs 11:7. "*The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death,*" Proverbs 14:32. Death cuts to pieces all other hopes, and turns men out of all other inheritances; but it only serves to fulfill the hope of the child of God. Death is only a messenger sent to bring the children of God home to the possession of their inheritance.

One of the chief errors of God's people is that they are not willing to wait for their inheritance, not will-

ing to wait for the hope laid up for us in heaven. *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,"* Matthew 6:19-21. We put too much emphasis on physical and material things here and now. Esau could not wait for his birthright; he despised it because it was something future, and bartered it for a mess of pottage. *"And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint... And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear unto me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drank, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright,"* Genesis 25:30-34. He satisfied his stomach at the expense of his soul. He traded his glorious inheritance for a temporary snack.

3. This living hope is based upon the resurrection of Christ from the dead. We are begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Our hope was wrapped up in His work of redemption. If His work was success, then our hope cannot die. And the resurrection is proof that the sacrifice He made for sinners was accepted of God. Jesus said, *"because I live, ye shall live also,"* John 14:19. The glorious hope is that *"to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord,"* II Corinthians 5:8.

THE CAUSE OF THIS INHERITANCE IS THE MERCY OF GOD

"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," I Peter 1:3. Merit

has no place in an inheritance. Merit is associated with purchase and prizes, but not with inheritance.

It has been said, "Great sins and great miseries need great mercy, and many sins and many miseries need many mercies." And is not this great mercy to make of Satan's slaves sons of the Most High? *"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure,"* I John 3:1-3. We are children of mercy which means that we were objects of misery before. Mercy is the cause of our being born again. We did nothing to bring about our spiritual birth. In this respect, the spiritual birth is closely analogous to the natural birth. What mercy is this to take firebrands of hell and appoint them to shine as stars in the firmament; to raise up the poor out of the dunghill and set them with princes. *"He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people,"* Psalm 113:7-8. Love, faith and hope are all the result of the new birth and not the cause of it. *"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is [Greek, has been] born of God, and knoweth God,"* I John 4:7. *"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is [Greek, has been] born of God,"* I John 5:1. And in our text it is written that we are born again unto hope.

THE INHERITANCE DESCRIBED

Our inheritance is described by its qualities and as to the certainty of receiving it. *"To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,"* I Peter 1:4. There is nothing in the nature of this inheritance that will be subject to corruption: it cannot be defiled by any-

thing from the outside; and its joy will be everlasting. Heaven will be no disappointment to the child of God. As to its beauty, it is represented by the most precious things of earth, the most precious things the human mind can conceive of: *"And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass,"* Revelation 21:18. Heaven will be a place of freedom, freedom from so many things which have cursed the inhabitants of earth. There will be freedom from bodily pain, poverty, fear, and from sin. Paul triumphed over all the grievous and painful ills of life because of his hope of a better day. He had pinned his faith and hope to One who would not disappoint him, but after the ills and sorrows of life were over, would receive him into glory. How miserable he would have been apart from the good hope through grace!

As to the certainly of our inheritance, *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is,"* I John 3:2. *"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory,"* Colossians 3:4. In all earthly hopes there is an element of unrest and uncertainty. He who hopes to become rich cannot be certain that his hope will be realized. He who hopes for continued good health cannot be certain that he will not soon be smitten with some fatal malady.

For God's saints the heavenly inheritance is now a matter of hope, but in the other world, we will possess it. The hope of the Christian is both sure and steadfast, and it goes with him all the way to glory.