

# The Teaching of 1 Peter 1:3-13

As with pretty much every letter in the New Testament, Peter's letters (penned in the mid AD 60s) were written to Christians who were suffering immense persecution; in fact, the first verse of First Peter specifically mentions that this letter was addressed to Christians in Asiatic churches, the same seven congregations mentioned in the letters found in Revelation chapters 2 & 3. (One of the things intriguing about this is that to one of those groups the Lord mentioned the period of trial that was about to come upon them [3:10, which has the imminent term *mello* for "about to"], while to those same Christians Peter said they were presently experiencing that period of trial [4:12, which is present not past tense in the original], indicating of course that Revelation was penned before First Peter.) So...

Due to what they were enduring at the time, Peter was concerned for these brethren, prompting him to send this letter of encouragement to them in the thick tribulation thrust upon them for their Christianity; 4:16 says, "Let a person not be ashamed since he suffers as a Christian."

In this particular study of First Peter we'll be reflecting for a while upon a singular and (due to a couple of time-related statements provided by Peter) a weighty paragraph at the very outset of the letter; I've entitled this passage (1:3-12) "*Elation In Salvation*," and it may be outlined it as follows: *Even in the Midst of Their Current Circumstances, They Could Experience Elation Due to Salvation's...*

- ~ *Pledge (3): Guaranteed by Christ's Resurrection.*
- ~ *Permanence (4): Stored Up in Heaven.*
- ~ *Power (5): Assured Entrance ... Soon.*
- ~ *Promise (6): Incites Joy Even Amidst Trials.*
- ~ *Products (7-9): Faith (7) and Love (8-9) Produced by Trials.*
- ~ *Presence (10-12): Prophecies Culminated in Their Generation.*

**Verse 3:** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... (Note: Since I'll be considering eleven verses in a short amount of time, I won't be getting deep into each word; in fact, to be a little more clear and save time, these verses will sometimes be somewhat paraphrased.)

You know, the word "hope" is found ca. 150 times in the Bible: It speaks of patient hope, restful hope, good hope, better hope, vain hope, unrealized hope, lost hope, and so on. One of the saddest ones is Proverbs 13:12: "Hope deferred makes the heart sick"; then here in Peter we encounter the ideal thought of a "living hope," a lively versus a sickly or even merely a patient resting hope. I love how Proverbs 13:12 finishes though: "But once hope is fulfilled, it's a tree of life." There it is, that living/lively hope. See, I believe...

Peter purposely chose to call the hope of this passage a "living" hope because (as we'll see as we continue through this context) it was the old, deferred hope of salvation that was coming to life in all its glory at that time in the history of God's plan. Why then? Because that's when it was finally reaching its consummation in Christ. Besides that...

Peter supported this notion by referring his audience to the very fact of their confession, viz. that their Messiah had been raised from among the dead, indicating that this professed Jesus was the firstfruit pledge of their resurrection from the dead as well! ☺

**Verses 4-6a:** ...to an incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance that has been reserved in heaven for you who are being kept under watch by the power of God through faith to salvation ready to be revealed in the last appointed time in which you are rejoicing.

Firstly, we should more concisely notice the layout of verses 3-5, for here's what Peter was saying to his brethren: "By means of our faith and God's power, He has brought us {A} into a living hope, {B} into an incorruptible inheritance, and {C} into a ready-to-be-revealed salvation." Are those three separate things? Nope, for the idea is that each of the three were/are equal to one another: Salvation was the Inheritance for which they had been Hoping for thousands of years! (Remember, he was writing primarily to Hebrews.)

Secondly, it's important to briefly consider the last phrase about the revealing of this salvation: "in the last appointed time."

Most translations merely say "in the last time," but I have it as "in the last appointed time." Why? Because the Greek word for "time" here is *kairos* which, in contradistinction to *chronos*, refers not merely to time in general but to a specific stage or phrase within a *chronos* (or a *chronology*) comprised of multiple events; just as Peter did in Acts 3:19-21 (check out my study on that passage on my website) where he contrasted *chronos* and *kairos*, so he did in this chapter: In verse 20 he alluded to the several *chronos* periods of *kairos* events, referring to their time as being within the last of those *chronos* periods of God's redemptive plan.

Besides *kairos* clearly meaning "appointed time," we have Peter plainly stating which "appointed stage of time" within a *chronology* of stages or events he had in mind—the "last" one, and the Greek word for "last" is *eschatōs*, the term from which we get the word "end" in the phrase "the end times"; in fact, the related word *eschatōs* (the one with the omega "o" instead of the omicron "o" at the end) is found in Mark 5:23 in which it has Jairus saying to Jesus of his daughter that she (depending on the version you're reading) is "at the point of or on the verge of death." Related to this, be sure to keep in mind that John, around the same time, said, "Little children, it is the last hour" (1 John 1:18a).

The next significant term is the Greek word *hetoimos* for our English word "ready." In relation to our verse (1 Pet. 1:5), J. H. Thayer indicated that it's something *at the point of or on the verge of being*; M. R. Vincent went as far as to say that this term is actually even stronger than merely saying "about to be" (which, of course, is what *mello* means and is often employed in relation to this very same topic in other passages, even by Peter himself later in 5:1). So because when Peter wrote this he stated that this salvation was *hetoimos*, that it was about to be revealed in its appointed time, then it would seem pretty dishonest of me to not take Peter to have been referring to the generation in which he and his audience were then living (a conclusion, btw, that'll in fact be supported when we get near the end of this study).

**Verses 6b-8a:** But now for a little while you're being grieved by various trials, for it's necessary in order that the quality of your faith (which, though its being tested by fire, is of much greater value than perishing gold) may be found a cause for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love.

In the intro I mentioned that the seven churches in Revelation 2–3 were included in the recipients of Peter's letters; I brought that up to show that in Revelation 3:10 Jesus indicated that their persecution was about to begin, while in First Peter 4:12 it's indicated that they were currently embroiled in persecution when Peter wrote. I mention this again here because 1:6 supports what I said earlier: 4:12 speaks of "the fiery trial which is trying you" (4:12), while 1:6-7 speak of their "being grieved by various [fiery] trials."

The other thing of interest in this section of our paragraph study is how Peter spoke of this tribulation as being necessary. Why did he say that? Well, the answer to that question could take up at least one entire lesson alone, so we don't have time to delve in-depth into that now. Suffice it to say that the first century Christians (especially Hebrew ones who still had strong ties to the old testament mode of existence and its people) had to endure the pain of transitioning from that old stage of temporary glory as they moved into the new stage of eternal glory (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18 & context); and that transition included persecution from their Hebrew brethren who rejected Jesus as Christ (and Jesus predicted all of this, of course). The point is simply that the betrothed bride of Christ was going through her purification process in preparation for her marriage to the Lord. Oh...

One more thing about verse 7: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" here is equivalent to the manifestation of the hope of the everlasting salvation just mentioned by Peter in verse 5, for, as indicated in Hebrews 9:28, finished salvation was to be—and it was—brought to mankind with the High Priest Jesus at His return from out of the Most Holy Place, implying, of course, that if He still has yet to return from out of the MHP, then salvation has yet to be a consummated fact, meaning that Jesus has sadly still not finished His salvific work. (See much more about this in my book *Hebrews: From Flawed to Flawless Fulfilled!*)

**Verses 8b-9:** You don't see Him now, but due to your faith you're rejoicing with an inexpressible and glorified joy, receiving the end of the faith—the salvation of souls.

The meaning behind this statement would, I believe, be a little better expressed like this: "You don't see Him yet, but your belief that you're presently in the process of actually attaining to the goal of salvation is the cause of the indescribable and triumphant joy you now possess."

Yes, they were enduring tribulation, and being human no doubt were having a lot of difficulty with it; even so, Peter was essentially praising them for their belief that they really were on the verge of receiving the promised salvation of God, for that faith was what was getting them through those tough times. If they were of the mind that their rescue, their deliverance, their salvation wasn't coming anytime soon, Peter could hardly have stated this the way he did. But you ask...

What's the connection between the salvation of souls and their endurance of tribulation? Well, again, we don't have time to go into depth on that in this study, so I'm glad I went into depth on it in another study on Second Thessalonians 1:3-10; you can find it in both written and audio formats on my website (<http://ASiteForTheLord.com/id15.html>).

What I *will* say for now though is that when Jesus returned from out of the MHP with salvation per Hebrews 9:28, He (as indicated in Hebrews 10, in fact) destroyed the first spouse of Deity (the old covenant cultus) that was persecuting the newly betrothed spouse of Deity (a concept in fact Paul wrote some about in Gal. 4:21-31). Well...

Since it fits so well here, let me go ahead and read a tad of Second Thessalonians 1: "We boast of you ... in all your persecutions and tribulations..., which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom ... for which you suffer. It's a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you and to give you ... rest ... when the Lord Jesus is revealed ... to take vengeance on those who don't know God and who don't submit to the gospel..." (vv. 4-8). So...

Like throughout the book of Hebrews, Jesus' finished work of spiritual salvation came simultaneously with the physical salvation of Christ's bride from her persecutors—two birds; one stone! Not that difficult to comprehend, for judgment has always been about separation, separating the acceptors from the rejectors.

**Verses 10-11:** Concerning this salvation, a diligent inquiry and careful search were performed by the prophets who prophesied about the grace meant for you; they were searching for the specific timing [*kairos*] or at least characteristics of time that about which the Spirit of Christ in them was witnessing related to the sufferings of the coming Christ and the glories to follow.

Firstly, we simply must catch the little phrase "for you" in verse 10; by Peter stating that the gift of salvation ("grace" is from *charitos* which means "gift") was for the folks of that time, he was plainly indicating that the prophecies of the prophets were finally finding their fulfillment in their time—it was for them, for that generation nearly 2000 years ago to see and experience for the rest of mankind, making them the hub-generation in regard to salvation for all humanity!

Secondly, the glories that would follow the suffering Christ were, according to this context, the fulfilled hope of the incorruptible inheritance of salvation.

**Verse 12:** To them it was revealed that, not to themselves but to you they were sharing the things that now have been reported to you through the ones who have declared the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven; into these things angels desire to look into.

A clearer rendering for us today might go like this: "To the prophets it was revealed that the information they were sharing wasn't for them in their day but for you in your day; so today [i.e. 2000 years ago], by means of the Holy Spirit in folks, what they were saying back then is the good news that has been declared to you (good news that even angels intensely desire to see come to fruition)."

The gospel—the good news of which Peter wrote in verse 12—was, of course, that about which he had been writing throughout this entire context concerning the return of Christ with the fulfilled hope of the inheritance of everlasting soul-salvation; and this led Peter to pen the urgent words of our last verse in today's study:

**Verse 13:** So, having braced up the loins of your mind and being clear-headed, keep your hope set on the grace being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Peter had already praised them for their faith that had made their hope a "living" one in their lives, so here he encouraged them to retain that till the end—the time when Jesus returned with their rescue from their enemies as well as consummated salvation of the soul.

As we come to the end here, it's important to note more about the timing of when Peter, in this very letter, indicated this return would transpire: In 4:5b he wrote that the Lord "is ready [there's that imminent word again] to judge the living and the dead." And in 4:7a he wrote that "the consummation of all things [all things written by the prophets about which he just wrote in chapter 1] is *at hand*," a phrase defined by Peter himself in verse 17a: "the time has come for the judgment to begin.... What will be the end of those who don't obey the gospel," reminiscent of what we read by Paul in Second Thessalonians 1:8.