

Lesson for September 18, 2005

Book of I John

Chapter 3:1-3

Verse 1

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God”

The Greek word for *bestow* is “didomi” and means to freely give (no strings attached). The emphasis in this verse is the amazing, incomprehensible love of God in making the believer a member of His Royal Family. A “mere mortal” cannot understand this kind of love. The God of the universe making a rebellious sinner a part of His royal family is not easily comprehended. However, this is exactly what God does for a person at salvation.

“*Agape*” (Greek word for love) is God’s constant, non-emotional and unconditional love (though human emotions are often ascribed to God in the Bible in order to assist us in our understanding). *Divine agape love* is not drawn out by any excellency of its object. *Divine agape love* is based on God’s integrity (complete, honest, pure, virtuous love based on truth) and His virtue (strength of character). God loves the believer because the believer possesses the righteousness of God. God loves His own righteousness.

Divine agape love expresses the deep, constant love and interest of a perfect God towards imperfect, and therefore unworthy, objects (unbelieving mankind). Upon faith in Christ, this love and interest has the potential of producing in these now perfect and worthy (positional sanctification) objects (believers) a love towards God. In turn, God’s love is able to produce in the life of the believer virtue-love towards others. Virtue-love is a synonym for *divine agape love*. Virtue-love is love based on the virtue of the one doing the loving. (I John 4:18-21)

The word translated “sons” in this verse is actually the Greek word for child (teknon). Therefore, it should be translated “children of God.” This term is used in the Bible to describe a family relationship. Essentially it has the same meaning as “son of God.” We must look to the Greek language to see the slight (but significant) differences in the two terms. Looking at both words also helps us get a complete meaning of our relationship with God as believers.

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“Huios”, the Greek word for “son” emphasizes *position* and *function*, but the word in Greek for “child”, “teknon”, emphasizes our *family relationship*. This is a slight difference, but one that helps us to understand that not only are we *related* to God through the new birth, we are to *function* as Royal Family after salvation. (John 1:12; Galatians 4:1-7)

As children of God, the Bible tells us that we are now related to Jesus Christ as “joint-heirs.” This means that we share in His inheritance, which we know is going to be fantastic. Because of this unique relationship with our Savior, every believer will enjoy an inheritance beyond imagination. However, for those who reach spiritual maturity, the rewards will be based on sonship (function), not merely being a child of God (relationship). What do I mean by that?

Galatians 4:1-7 gives us the answer. Verse one tells us that we are children of God, that we have an eternal inheritance and that we immediately become Royal Family of God at salvation. This is the relationship of the child to God. In function, however, the child must be cared for by servants and is unable to *function* as a son or daughter. When the child becomes of age and is able to care for himself, he has the potential of functioning as a son or daughter.

It is much like the Jewish ritual of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah when the child “becomes of age.” In other words, at salvation a person is *born a child* of God, but *placed* (adopted) as a *son* of God in union with Christ. It is his union with Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit that provides the supernatural power to function as a son or daughter.

“therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not”

The Greek word for *knoweth* and *knew* is “ginosko” and can be translated *understand*. It is the family relationship between God and the believer that the world does not know (understand). It can only be known by believing in Christ as Savior. If the world rejected the Head of God’s Royal Family, Jesus Christ, it should not surprise us that we will be rejected also. We can conclude that the world does not understand the believer because it does not understand Jesus Christ.

Verse 2

“Behold, 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.”

John was an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ. He saw Christ in His resurrection body and can, therefore, write with authority about the resurrection body. Believers who have died during the Church Age will be resurrected at the Rapture of the Church. Those who are alive at the time of the Rapture will be caught up into the air to meet the Lord. Both will receive a glorified (resurrection) body at this time.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ guarantees the believer not only eternal life, but also a glorified resurrection body. The glorified body of the believer will be like that of Christ. For those Church Age believers who die before the Rapture occurs, their soul and spirit go into the presence of the Lord. At the Rapture, the soul and spirit are returned to the glorified body. (I Corinthians 15:51-57; II Corinthians 5:1-8; Philippians 3:20-21; I Thessalonians 4:13-18)

We can get a glimpse of what our glorified body will be like by looking at Christ's glorified body. First, we will be recognizable like Christ was after His Resurrection. (Luke 24; John 20:26-29) Christ's body could be touched (as Thomas did) because His body had flesh and bones. (Luke 24:39-40) Christ's body retained the scars of crucifixion. (John 20:25-27) He breathed and carried on conversations with a recognizable voice in His resurrection body. (Luke 24; John 20:26) Jesus ate food while in His resurrection body. (Luke 24:30,43) However, His body was unique in that He could walk through closed doors, He was able to disappear and appear, and He could move vertically and horizontally. (Psalms 22:16; Zechariah 12:10; Matthew 28:9-10; Luke 24:17-40; John 20:16-29; Acts 1:9-10)

Verse 3

“And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure.”

This verse is a perfect picture of the Christian Way of Life. By following the example given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ while on earth, we can live in God's power system and bring honor and glory to our Savior. The word in Greek for *hope* is “elpis” and means confident and favorable expectation. The believer's hope is in Christ, which guarantees him a resurrection body like Christ's. With this hope (confident expectation) in mind, the believer is to purify himself. To purify oneself (“hagnizo” in Greek) means to cleanse from defilement. What is it that defiles the believer? We could mention many things specifically, but suffice it to say, we are defiled by the world system in which we live. It is the thinking of Satan's world system with its human viewpoint that defiles the mind of the believer. It is the defilement of Satan's world system that the Lord Jesus Christ was able to avoid throughout His life on earth (“even as He is pure”). Though you and I cannot live a sinless life, we can learn to “sin less” by thinking divine viewpoint, which will greatly reduce the effects of the contamination from this world system.

Satan, his demons and his world system attack the believer by attempting to control the believer's thinking. Avoiding this defilement can be done only by the utilization of Bible doctrine stored and circulating in the soul of the believer. This is the same way that Jesus Christ overcame Satan, his demons and his world system. Jesus Christ was continually controlled by (filled with) the Holy Spirit, which enabled Him to live in sinless perfection for 33 years. One cannot truly study the Bible without realizing that the control of the mind is the objective of Satan. The control of the believer's mind is also God's objective. In both cases, however, a person's personal volition makes the decision as to who will win the battle of control.