

Basic Training Bible Ministries

Heirs of the Kingdom



Northern Virginia Conference

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Heirs of the Kingdom

Introduction:

Privilege

“Listen, my beloved brethren: has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” Jam 2:5

“To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.” Act 26:18

Responsibility

“But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the Word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” Mat 13:23

“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” Act 20:32

Accountability

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” 2Co 5:10

“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.” Rev 22:12

Heirs of the Kingdom

Read: Mar 13:33–37

Note the elements of privilege, responsibility, and accountability. It must be emphasized that we are dealing here with discipleship, not justification/salvation. As we shall see, every child of God is an heir. The question before us is this: How much will I inherit, and will it really matter that much?

1. Every child of God by faith in Christ is an heir of God.

Read: Gal 3:26, Gal 3:29, and Gal 4:6–7. Every member of the Royal Family has a share in the Royal Inheritance. Again, the question of our study is, “how much?”

2. The believer’s share in the inheritance cannot be lost or forfeited.

Read: 1Pe 1:3–5. Peter stresses in three words that our inheritance cannot—in any way—be defiled or diminished by our failure or conduct in this life.

3. It is clear, however, that there are rewards to be gained or lost beyond this.

Read: Rom 8:14 and Rom 8:17. Verse 14 speaks of those “being led” by the Spirit as “adult sons” (*huioi*), and verse 17 shows a distinction between heirs and “*joint heirs with Christ.*” One is unconditional, based on sonship; the other is conditional based on conduct.

Illustration: Luk 15:11–32. The parable of the prodigal illustrates three levels of inheritance: The firstborn, the prodigal as son, and the repentant son. It reinforces also the truth; “*many who are first will be last, and the last first*” (Mat 19:30).

I. The Promise of the King

Read: Luk 19:11–26. Jesus speaks here as the King, but always in deference to His Father. It is good to keep both in mind as we consider eternal rewards. God is our heavenly Father, but Christ is our coming King and the Bridegroom. Don’t confuse our reward from the Father for faith, and that of the King for faithfulness.

A. The promise of eternal reward is consistent from ancient times.

Gen 15:1; Rut 2:12; Psa 19:11; Isa 40:10; Isa 62:11. These promises are all spoken to believers, and relate not to what they believe, but rather to how they behave. The word “*reward*” in Psa 19:11 is *eqeb*, meaning “equitable compensation.”

B. In Jesus’ first major discourse, He stressed the potential of winning reward.

Mat 5:12, Mat 6:4, Mat 6:6, Mat 6:18, Mat 10:40–42, Mat 16:27, and Mat 25:14–30. Notice a difference in these rewards. For persecution there is “*great*” reward, but also rewards for our motives in giving, prayer, and fasting (a lost spiritual discipline, 2Co 6:6, 2Co 11:27).

C. It is clear that different actions reveal distinct responsibility and unique rewards.

Mat 10:40–42, Mat 16:27. From the reward of a prophet to the act of giving a cup of cold water to a child, each provides the believer opportunity for reward, “*each according to his works.*” It is true that, “What we do in time echoes in eternity.”

Applications:

1. Read Rom 4:3–5. The emphasis here is the freeness of justification by faith. However, we often pass over the “*wages*” part, which is *ho misthos*, one of three key N.T. words for eternal reward:
 - a. *Misthos* (Mat 5:12, Mat 5:46, Mat 6:2, Mat 6:5, Mat 6:16) is simply “wages or payment for work done.”
 - b. *Apodidomi* (Mat 6:4, Mat 6:6, Mat 6:18, Mat 16:27) means to “give back, give equitable return.”
 - c. *Thesaurus* (Mat 6:19–21; Mar 10:21) speaks of “treasure in the fullest sense.”

2. Most (if not all) passages used to imply loss of eternal salvation (as distinguished from temporal deliverance) are reward passages. We cannot lose our so great salvation, but we can lose our potential eternal reward!
3. Paul, in 1Co 9:17–18, suggests three possibilities regarding our life purpose:
 - a. First, faithful service with right motive equals eternal reward.
 - b. Next, faithful service minus highest motivation, means loss of reward but not loss of service (more on this later, but our service may continue in eternity).
 - c. Finally, failure to fulfill one’s commission, will result both in loss of eternal reward as well as loss of the privilege of serving in eternity (cf. Luk 19:24).

In a recent letter I received from a pastor in Papua New Guinea, he had written, “*The Christians in my church have been challenged by your powerful teaching on eternal rewards. I would like you to make [copies] so that I will teach it to our churches on the plateau. This is a new teaching [that] pastors [here] never taught.*”

II. The King’s Commission

Read: Mat 25:14–15; Mar 13:32–37. The main point I call your attention to here is found in the two phrases “*to each according to his own ability*” and “*to each his [own] work.*” Every believer has been given a royal commission involving both a task to accomplish and the enablement to achieve it. This means we are without excuses!

- A. Jesus laid down a fundamental and non-negotiable principle of discipleship. “*He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.*” This statement from Mat 10:39 declares the inevitable choice of both gain or loss. His point here, for disciples only, is that all will gain something, and all will lose something. The question is that of what and where? If we choose to lay down our life (loss) we will gain it. If we choose to seek and find our life, it will be lost.
- B. Paul, in Phi 3:7–14, declares his personal choice. First we see the life he chose to “lose” in Phi 3:4–6 (note parallels to Mat 6:1, Mat 6:5, and Mat 6:16), then the life he “gained” in Mat 6:8–11. Which would you prefer? Not until Mat 6:14 does he even bring in the idea of reward.
- C. In 1Co 12:4–7, we see that each and every believer must honestly make this choice:
 1. Every believer is given a gift, involving a ministry, with expected results.
 2. Then note that our commission involves each member of the Trinity.
 3. Finally our responsibility is to bring benefit to the rest of the Body of Christ. It is worth pointing out that our gifts, and their accompanying ministry, are a matter of God’s sovereign choice, not our own (vv. 11, 18). But take heart because ...

- D. The plan of God for your life is perfectly designed with not only your best interest in mind, but also every hope, dream, and desire of your heart. Psa 37:4 “*Delight yourself also in the Lord* [i.e., lay down your life] *and He shall give you the desires of your heart.*” That is, your true life will be found in His perfect plan.

Rom 12:1–2 “*Present your bodies a living sacrifice* [lay down your life] *that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*” That is the finding of your true life as intended by God from the beginning.

Applications:

1. We must not confuse the issues of sonship and discipleship. This confusion seems to have predominated throughout most of Church history.
2. I recently heard a sermon in which the pastor first railed, “If you are not consistently in the Word, you are not a Christian,” then went on later to speak of his own frailty and how often he fails in his own Christian life. How confusing!
3. If you are a child of God by faith in Christ your basic inheritance as a son of God is secure (1Pe 1:3–5). However, you have a commission from the King of kings and failure to fulfill it (Col 4:17) will mean loss of both eternal reward, as well as eternal opportunities for service in the kingdom. **Yes, how we live does make a difference!**

III. Claiming the Victory

Read: Heb 11:1, Heb 11:6. If we are to win eternal reward, we will have to live by faith. It is a wonderful thing to believe in Jesus Christ and enter eternal life. The work of regeneration is a gift of God, received by faith. But the attainment of reward is not a gift, but rather remuneration, received by faithfulness.

- A. Faith is the substance (*hupostasis*) of the eternal life. The word means “essential essence,” and is so used of Christ in Heb 1:3 (doctrine of hypostatic union).
- B. At the same time, faith gives “*evidence*” of unseen realities (Heb 11:1). The newest believer who is assured of his/her salvation is a living proof of the kingdom of God. The word *elengchos* was used in ancient Greece for a legal document.
- C. The journey of faith begins when we believe the promise of God through Jesus Christ, and continues in the conviction that He will reward us for seeking Him.
- D. God, by His very nature (justice), is a “*rewarder*” of those who do well (Heb 11:6). The word used here is *misthapodidotes*, or “one who repays or gives a return.”

The Illustration of Claiming the Victory, Heb 11:24–27

In the life of Moses, summarized here, we see five decisions that changed the course of history and won great renown for Moses for all eternity:

1. The decision to “lose his life” so as to gain it, Heb 11:24. The word for “*refused*” is from *arneomai*, which means “reject, repudiate” as if to thrust away from oneself.
2. The decision to choose the godly route, and endure the accompanying afflictions, Heb 11:25. I use the word “godly” as defined in 1Ti 3:16, to be “Christ-like,” since conformity to Jesus Christ is the ultimate goal for every believer.
3. Adoption of a worldview fixed on eternal realities, including eternal reward, Heb 11:26. The word “esteem” is from *hegeomai*, a reasoned and calculated conclusion.
4. The decision to “fix his eyes on Jesus” (Heb 12:2) and forsake his great potential for selfish comfort in Egypt. Moses learned to “abide in Christ.”
5. A decision to live in the reality of the cross, which was 1,500 years away. The Passover anticipated the crucifixion of Christ, the Lamb of God.

Applications:

1. There is an old saying, “If you sow a thought, you reap an act. Sow that act and you reap a habit. Sow the habit, and you will reap your character. Then, sow the character and you reap destiny.”
2. The sovereignty of God and the decisions of men interact to form history. The power of decision is part of the “likeness” of God, and is our greatest power.
3. The Bible reveals three paths that are available to the believer:
 - a. The upward path of growth and obedience—leading to reward, 2Pe 1:5–11.
 - b. The downward path of carnality and reversion—bringing cursing, Eph 4:17–19.
 - c. The recovery path of repentance—the road less taken, Jam 4:5–10.
4. Life is a constant flow of five factors—from one to another:
Attitude → Priority → Decision → Action → Result
5. We choose either a life of cursing or blessing (Deu 11:26, Deu 30:19). How we invest our time, money, and effort does matter.

Pro 4:23 “*Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.*”

IV. The Return of the King

Read: Rev 19:11–16, Rev 22:12–13. It is difficult to even imagine the splendor and the grandeur of our Lord in His glory. Consider the fact that when John, the closest disciple to Jesus during His time on earth, saw Him revealed in His glory, fainted as a dead man, Rev 1:17.

- A. According to Joh 14:3, Jesus Christ is—at this moment—preparing our heavenly home. Consider a few facts related to your existence once there:
 - 1. How you are dressed will depend on your obedience while here, Rev 19:8.
 - 2. How your home will be furnished will depend on your spiritual growth and personal conduct in wisdom here on earth, Pro 24:3–4, Pro 24:12.
 - 3. What you have available in the way of heavenly currency will depend largely on how you spend your money now, Mat 6:21; Luk 12:33–34, Luk 12:16, Luk 16:10–13.
 - 4. The position you hold in the kingdom will depend on your faithfulness with the spiritual assets you have now, Mat 25:14–29; Luk 19:11–26.
 - 5. Your service throughout eternity will be determined how well you serve the Lord in your present spiritual responsibility, 1Co 4:1–2; 2Ti 4:7–8.
- B. When Christ returns for His Church, each one of us will give a personal account before the Lord at His Bema Seat (like the victory stand at the Olympics), Rom 14:10; 2Co 5:10–11.
- C. At this time there is the possibility of great rejoicing or great lamentation; 1Jo 2:28–29; 2Pe 1:10–11 (illustrated by Esau, Heb 12:14–17).
- D. Our works will be evaluated in perfect justice; those that are acceptable will be rewarded, and those that fail will be burned, 1Co 3:10–15. The issue here is not sin, but rather diligence versus slothfulness. It will reveal either our love for Christ, or our love for ourselves.

Applications:

- 1. For the sake of illustration, there are five categories of rewardable works:
 - a. The helper, Mat 10:40–42; Mar 9:41 (the cup of cold water)
 - b. The mystic, Mat 6:5–15 (private works like giving, prayer, and fasting)
 - c. The worker, 1Co 4:1–2 (faithfulness in serving over a period of time)
 - d. The hero/victor, Mat 5:10–12; Mar 10:28–31 (give all, suffer much, overcome)
 - e. The friend of God, Joh 14:21–23; Rev 2:17, Rev 2:25–29 (intimacy with Christ).
- 2. Eternal reward will involve seven eternal benefits:
 - a. Personal fulfillment, Mat 25:21, Mat 25:23; 2Ti 4:7 (“well done ... I kept the faith”)
 - b. Personal renown, 1Jo 2:17; Rev 3:5, Rev 3:12 (a pillar/memorial in the temple).

- c. Authority, Mat 24:45–47; Mat 25:21, Mat 25:23; Rev 2:26–27, Rev 2:3:21 (right to rule).
- d. Opportunity, Mat 6:19–21; Luk 18:22, Luk 18:28–31 (uses of your treasure).
- e. Privileges/enjoyment, Mat 25:21, Mat 25:23; Rev 2:7 (eat of the tree of life).
- f. Intimacy, Joh 14:21, Joh 14:23; Rev 2:17 (hidden manna, white stone, new name).
- g. Glory, Dan 12:3; Rom 8:18; 1Pe 4:12–13; Joh 17:22–24 (Christ’s reflection).

VI. Reward or Loss in the Kingdom

Read: Gal 5:19–21. This passage has been a stumbling-block to many believers because it has been taught as a salvation passage, which it is not. Let’s get it right.

- A. Look at the context (Gal 5:1–18). Paul is rebuking them for their carnality (Gal 5:1–7), for following false teachings (Gal 5:8–12), and for infighting among them (Gal 5:13–15).
- B. Note that he sets before them their two options, carnality or spirituality (Gal 5:16–18), much as he does in Rom 8:5–8, the “sister epistle” to Galatians.
- C. He then illustrates the contrast between the works of the flesh (Gal 5:19–21) and the works of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–24).
- D. The key idea here is found in Gal 5:16, “*Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*” We have to choose which we will do.
- E. Some have attempted to explain away the fact that we all fail in some of these areas by taking the present participle of the word “*practice*” in Gal 5:21 to mean, “to keep on constantly doing.” However, even a fornicator does not always keep on doing the act of fornication. So, how often, how much involvement is required?
- F. The key is found in the word “*inherit*,” Gal 5:21. The issue here is not salvation, but eternal reward. All the while any one of us are involved in these things, we are forfeiting blessings here and now, and eternal reward. Note that we forfeit “*the kingdom of God.*”

Thy Kingdom Come

1. Rom 14:17 is helpful here, “*For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking [personal pleasures], but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*” These blessings are the evidence of the kingdom here and now, and a prelude to the reward to be received and enjoyed in eternity.

2. In Col 3:23–24, Paul reminds us that how we live today will inevitably affect eternity, for *“knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance.”* He goes on to warn of the consequences of carnality when he says, *“he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.”*
3. With a right understanding of how our current conduct affects our eternal existence, we are much more motivated to pray what is called “The Lord’s Prayer” (Mat 6:9–13) with greater meaning and understanding. This also explains the issue of forgiveness which Jesus emphasizes (Mat 6:14–15), of which James expounds (Jam 2:8–13), since James is, in fact, built on the Sermon on the Mount.

Applications:

1. When we bring the issue of eternal reward into our thinking and our Bible study, many difficult passages and thorny issues begin to make sense.
2. We are also convicted with the tremendous gravity and significance of our lives in the here and now.
3. Only the right understanding regarding eternal rewards can explain to us in ways relevant to our daily lives why *“Many who are first shall be last, and the last first.”*

Heirs of the Kingdom: A Conclusion

Read: Rev 5:8–10. A Kingdom of Priests

1. There is a textual variant here, the earlier manuscripts read “them” and “they” instead of “us” and “we” in Rev 5:9–10.
2. However, take note the parallel here with Rev 1:6. It seems best to maintain the consistency of the use of “us” and “we” throughout the book. These are saints of the Church Age.
3. This is also consistent with 1Pe 2:5–9, in which we are called *“a royal priesthood,”* this being after the order of Melchizedek (Gen 14:18–20; Heb 5:1–10, Heb 7:1–19).
4. Every Church-Age believer will share in the collective inheritance of the Royal Family, and in the status and privilege of the Bride of Christ (Rev 21:9–21).
5. However, this does not diminish the fact that each one of us will have a personal status based on our individual conduct and obedience during our life-time.

Keep Your Eye on the Goal

Mat 6:22 *“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good [single-minded/clear] your whole body will be full of light.”*

1. Keep your eye fixed on our blessed hope, Tit 2:13.
2. Keep your eye on what God has entrusted to you, Mar 13:33–34.
3. Keep your eye on the objective of being unashamed when He comes, 1Jo 2:28.
4. Keep your eye on the reality and value of eternal treasures, 2Ti 4:8.
5. Keep your eye on the prize of your high calling in Christ, Phi 3:14.