**The books of Hebrews, James, and 1, 2 Peter all deal with the salvation to be revealed, the *salvation of the soul*; and these epistles, as all of the other epistles (which also deal with this same subject), must be interpreted within this same framework. The *warnings* in Hebrews and *works* in James have to do with the same thing as the text in** [**1 Peter 1:3-5**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.3-5&t=NKJV) **— a “*just recompense of reward*” to be realized in the coming age.**

**Hope, Inheritance, Salvation**

**By Arlen Chitwood of** [**Lamp Broadcast**](http://lampbroadcast.org/)

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

*to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved* [‘preserved’] *in heaven for you,*

*who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* ([1 Peter 1:3-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.3-5&t=NKJV))

Peter in his epistles, as James in his epistle (or any of the other writers in their epistles), directs his message to t*he regenerate*, not to the unregenerate. Peter’s message is for the “elect,” those who have *believed* on the Lord Jesus Christ, those *in a position* to receive the Word of God into their saved human spirits, those who have been called “*out of darkness into His marvelous light*,” those who have “*obtained mercy*,” those who are “*sojourners and pilgrims*” on the earth, those who have “*obtained like precious faith with us*” ([1 Peter 1:2-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.2-3&t=NKJV), [23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.23&t=NKJV); [2:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.1-2&t=NKJV), [9-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.9-11&t=NKJV); [2 Peter 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+1.1&t=NKJV)).

The epistles of 1, 2 Peter have been written to encourage Christians, who are being tried and tested, by holding up before them prizes, rewards, compensations. The subject matter in these epistles, set forth at the very beginning, concerns *a present “living hope,” a future “inheritance,”* and *a future “salvation”*; and *encouragement for proper conduct in trials and tests* is derived from a “*knowledge*” of God’s revelation concerning these things (*cf.* [1 Peter 1:2-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.2-9&t=NKJV); [2 Peter 1:2-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+1.2-8&t=NKJV)).

**A PRESENT, LIVING HOPE**

Christians have been “*begotten*” from above to “*a living hope*” through “the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Christ lives, and Christians will live with Him. But this fact is not the object of one’s hope. *Hope* is described as “living” because of Christ’s resurrection, but a Christian’s hope lies in things beyond His resurrection.

And these things are revealed in the text to be an “inheritance” and a “salvation.”

“Hope,” “inheritance,” and “salvation” are inseparably linked in Scripture. It is only because we are saved (past, salvation of the spirit) that we can possess a “hope.” And this hope looks ahead to the reception of *an inheritance* within *a salvation* (future, salvation of the soul) to be revealed.

Christians are commanded,

*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”* ([1 Peter 3:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+3.15&t=NKJV))

Since this hope pertains to a future inheritance and salvation, one’s “reason” for this hope must also be futuristic in scope. Thus, to respond in accordance with [1 Peter 3:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+3.15&t=NKJV), Christians *must* be knowledgeable concerning scriptural teachings pertaining to present and future aspects of salvation (*ref.* Chapter 1, [Salvation of the Soul](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/salvation-of-the-soul.php)), for their hope is inseparably linked with the salvation of their souls.

*The Christians’ hope* is a subject found numerous places throughout the Pauline and general epistles (Hebrews being included in the general epistles). Two of the best books to help Christians understand exactly what is involved in *the hope that they possess* are the books of Titus and Hebrews. Both books deal with the same subject matter as 1, 2 Peter, or any of the other epistles.

1) “HOPE” IN TITUS

The epistle of Titus centers on the Christians’ relationship to both “hope” and “the coming age,” for it is in the coming age that *the hope of our calling* will be realized. *Hope* in [Titus 2:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+2.13&t=NKJV) is called “*that blessed hope*” and is further described in this verse as the “*appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ*” ([Titus 2:13 ASV](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+2.13&t=ASV)).

The structure of the Greek text shows that the “*appearing of the glory*” is *a further description of that referred to by “blessed hope”* (through both “*blessed hope*” and “*appearing*” being governed by one article, with the words connected by the conjunction, *kai* [and]). Christians are the ones who possess this hope, as they are the ones who are to be partakers of Christ’s glory when it is revealed. In this respect, *participation in the coming glory of Christ* (not the rapture, as is commonly taught) *will be the realization of the Christians’ present hope, for one cannot be separated from the other.*

The word hope is also used in this same framework within its two other appearances in [Titus 1:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+1.2&t=NKJV); [3:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+3.7&t=NKJV). In [Titus 1:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+1.1-2&t=NKJV), *hope* is associated with a “*mature knowledge of the truth* [‘acknowledging’ ([Titus 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+1.1&t=NKJV)) is *epignosis* (mature knowledge) in the Greek text],” and with “*eternal* [Greek: *aionios*] *life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began*” ([Titus 1:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+1.2&t=NKJV)). Then, in [Titus 3:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+3.7&t=NKJV), this “*hope*” is reserved for the justified alone, and it has to do with a future inheritance:

*that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal* [*aionios*] *life.*

The Greek word *aionios* appearing in [Titus 1:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+1.2&t=NKJV); [3:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+3.7&t=NKJV), translated “*eternal*” in most English versions, does not itself mean “eternal.” The Greek language actually contains no word for “eternal.” *Aionios* can be, and many times is, used in the sense of “eternal”; but this meaning is derived from its textual usage, not from the word itself. *Aionios* refers to “a period of time,” usually thought of as “an age.”

The only way the Greek language can express “eternal,” apart from textual considerations, is by using the noun form of *aionios* (*aion*) in the plural (“ages” [*e.g.*, [Luke 1:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+1.33&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 13:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+13.8&t=NKJV)]), or by using aion twice in the plural (“to the ‘ages [*aionas*]’ of the ‘ages [*aionon*]’” [*e.g.*, [Revelation 1:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.6&t=NKJV), [18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.18&t=NKJV); [4:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.9&t=NKJV), [10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.10&t=NKJV); [5:13-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.13-14&t=NKJV); [7:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+7.12&t=NKJV); [10:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+10.6&t=NKJV); [11:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+11.15&t=NKJV); [14:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14.11&t=NKJV); [15:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+15.7&t=NKJV); [19:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.3&t=NKJV); [20:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.10&t=NKJV); [22:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.5&t=NKJV)]). A person using the Greek language thinks in the sense of “ages,” with eternity being thought of in the sense of “endless ages,” *i.e.*, “*aeons*,” or “the *aeons* of the *aeons*.”

*Aionios life* in [Titus 1:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+1.2&t=NKJV); [3:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+3.7&t=NKJV) — *a hope* associated with *an inheritance* set before the believer — must be understood contextually to mean “age-lasting,” referring to the coming age, the Messianic Era. “Eternal life” cannot be in view at all. Neither “hope” nor “inheritance” is used pertaining to eternal life that Christians presently possess; but both words are used numerous times concerning Christians and their relationship to the coming kingdom (with its glory), which is what is in view in the book of Titus. *The hope* (*the blessed hope*) set before every Christian is simply that he/she may, at the judgment seat of Christ, be found qualified to occupy one of the numerous, proffered positions with Christ in His kingdom. A Christian — already in possession of eternal life — may or may not realize this hope, for such depends entirely upon one’s faithfulness during the present pilgrim walk.

2) “HOPE” IN HEBREWS

In [Hebrews 6:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.11-12&t=NKJV) a Christian’s *hope* is associated with “*faith*,” “*patience* [‘patient endurance’; a lengthy waiting during the pilgrim walk for postponed promises],” and “the inheritance” set before Christians. This hope is to be held with “*diligence*” until “*the end*,” with a “*full assurance*” that the hope of one’s calling will be realized. “The end [Greek: *telos*]” in this passage is the same “*end*” set forth in [1 Peter 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.9&t=NKJV): “*receiving the end* [Greek: *telos*] *of your faith -- the salvation of your souls*.” *The end* in both instances has to do with “*faith*” brought to perfection, brought to maturity, brought to its goal, by “*works*” (*cf.* [James 2:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.22&t=NKJV)).

In [Hebrews 6:18-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.18-20&t=NKJV) “*the hope*” set before Christians is stated to be “*an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil.*” Christ Himself presently resides beyond the veil in the Holy of Holies; but His future ministry, “*after the order of Melchizedek*,” rather than His present ministry (after the order of Aaron), is in view in [Hebrews 6:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.20&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Hebrews 5:6-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+5.6-11&t=NKJV).

An anchor, firmly secured, will moor a ship that it might withstand the movements of currents, winds, etc., and remain in a certain place; and the anchor of our souls, firmly secured in the very presence of Christ beyond the veil, provides protection from the onslaught of the enemy in order that we might be “*steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*” ([1 Corinthians 15:58](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.58&t=NKJV)).

The salvation of our souls is in view; and just as a ship in mooring is continually being drawn toward the place where its anchor lies, we are continually being drawn toward the place where our anchor lies — to Christ and His Melchizedek priesthood.

The book of Hebrews is built around five major warnings; and, prior to the writer’s comments concerning “*hope*” in chapter six, he had previously introduced the Christians’ “*hope*” in the second warning ([Hebrews 3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3&t=NKJV); [4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4&t=NKJV)) by showing the relationship between *hope* and *faithfulness.* The central portion of the second warning, introducing “*hope*,” is [Hebrews 3:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3.6&t=NKJV):

*but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.*

This hope within the text has to do with *the house of Christ*; and within the context (chapters 3, 4), in order to teach Christians the deep things of God in this realm, the Spirit of God draws a parallel between *the house of Christ* (present) and *the house of Moses* (past).

This parallel constitutes a type-antitype treatment of Israelites under the leadership of Moses with Christians under the leadership of Christ. The experiences of the Israelites under Moses have their counterpart in the experiences of Christians under Christ. And all these things have been “*written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come*” ([1 Corinthians 10:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+10.6&t=NKJV), [11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+10.11&t=NKJV)).

Christians are presently members of the house of Christ in the same sense that those who appropriated the blood of the paschal lambs in Egypt during the days of Moses were members of Moses’ house. *An earthly inheritance* lay before the Israelites under Moses, and *a heavenly inheritance* lies before Christians under Christ.

By unfaithfulness to their calling, the majority of Israelites within the accountable generation under Moses were overthrown (cut off from the house of Moses); and by unfaithfulness to their calling, the majority of Christians under Christ will also be overthrown (cut off from the house of Christ).

Neither the type nor the antitype has to do with eternal verities. *The faithless Israelites were overthrown on the right side of the blood in the type, and thus it will be for faithless Christians in the antitype.*

*For many are called* [as the entire accountable generation under Moses], *but few are chosen* [*lit.*, “called out,” as Caleb and Joshua]. ([Matthew 22:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.14&t=NKJV))

The key words in [Hebrews 3:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3.6&t=NKJV) pertaining to *hope* are “*confidence*” and “*rejoicing*.” The Greek word translated “*confidence*” (*parresia*) has to do with being “bold,” or “courageous”; and the Greek word translated “*rejoicing*” (*kauchema*) has to do with “the object of boasting,” “a thing of pride.”

Christians are to be *bold, courageous* as they journey toward their heavenly inheritance; and they are *to exult in the hope set before them*. They are to display this hope as the very object of the salvation that they possess in such a manner that the One who secured this hope for them will receive the praise, honor, and glory.

**A FUTURE INHERITANCE**

The future inheritance of the saints ([1 Peter 1:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.4&t=NKJV)), mentioned numerous times in Scripture, must be understood from the standpoint of the inheritance surrounding the birthright, having to do with firstborn sons. The word translated “birthright” in the New Testament is from the Greek word *prototokia*, a plural noun that should be properly rendered, “the rights of the firstborn.” And the rights of firstborn sons consist of *a plurality of rights, which are inherited rights.*

The rights of firstborn sons in the Jewish economy in the Old Testament consisted of three things:

1) *Ruler* of the household under and for the father.

2) *Priest* of the family.

3) The reception of *a double portion* of the father’s estate.

Every Jewish firstborn son was in line to receive this trifold inheritance; but, according to that which God has revealed in His Word, this inheritance was *forfeitable*. The positional standing as a firstborn son did not itself guarantee that the inheritance would be received. A firstborn son, through rebellious actions, *could forfeit the rights of primogeniture.*

Two classic examples of the forfeiture of the rights belonging to firstborn sons are given in the book of Genesis, the book wherein the roots of all biblical doctrine lie. One is the account of Esau, and the other is the account of Reuben.

1) ESAU AND THE BIRTHRIGHT

Esau, the firstborn of Isaac, forfeited his birthright to his younger brother, Jacob. Esau forfeited his birthright to satisfy a fleshly gratification. He sold his birthright to his younger brother, Jacob, for a single meal ([Genesis 25:27-34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+25.27-34&t=NKJV)).

Since the rights of the firstborn had ultimately been promised to Jacob ([Genesis 25:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+25.23&t=NKJV)), some doubt that Esau ever actually possessed these rights. However, Esau was no pretender to the rights of the firstborn. The Greek word translated “*sold*” in [Hebrews 12:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.16&t=NKJV) (referring to Esau and the birthright) is inflected in a tense implying that the article sold belonged to Esau alone, and he was fully aware of his actions when he sold his birthright to Jacob.

In [Genesis 25:34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+25.34&t=NKJV) we read that Esau “*despised his birthright.*” The Greek word in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament translated “*despised*” implies that Esau regarded the birthright as a paltry, a mere trifle. Esau regarded the birthright as practically worthless, and sold his rights as firstborn with the thought in mind that what he was selling was of no real value.

It was only later, at a time when it was too late, that Esau realized the value of that which he had sold. Though the forfeiture of the birthright did not affect Esau’s sonship, it did affect forever *blessings surrounding his relationship to Isaac as firstborn.*

After Jacob had been blessed as the firstborn in the family, Esau, apparently for the first time, realized the value of that which he had forfeited. Esau then tried to retrieve the birthright, but the Scripture records that “*he found no place for repentance*” ([Hebrews 12:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.17&t=NKJV)).

After Esau realized the value of the birthright and the finality of that which had occurred, he pleaded with his father, Isaac, *to change his mind* and bless him also. Esau cried out to Isaac:

*Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me -- me also, O my father!* ([Genesis 27:38a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+27.38a&t=NKJV))

And it is recorded,

*And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.* ([Genesis 27:38b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+27.38b&t=NKJV))

(The way in which [Genesis 27:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+27.38&t=NKJV) is worded in the Hebrew text shows that Esau was literally beside himself with grief at this time, apparently from not only coming into a full realization of the value of that which he had forfeited but from realizing the finality of his previous actions as well.)

The word “repentance” means to change one’s mind. Esau sought to effect a change of mind on the part of his father, but “he found no place for repentance,” *i.e.*, Esau was unable to get his father to change his mind.

In this respect, in the light of that which Esau was seeking to accomplish, the American Standard Version of the Bible (ASV, 1901 ed.) has possibly the most accurate rendering of [Hebrews 12:17 ASV](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.17&t=ASV) to be found in any of the translations presently available. This verse in the American Standard Version reads,

*For ye know that even when he afterward desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place for a change of mind in his father, though he sought it diligently with tears.*

Isaac could not change his mind. The birthright had been forfeited, the blessing had been bestowed upon Jacob, and the rights belonging to the firstborn were now beyond Esau’s grasp forever.

2) REUBEN AND THE BIRTHRIGHT

Reuben, as Esau, was in direct line to inherit the rights of primogeniture; but because of one grave sin committed during his life, Reuben forfeited these rights. Reuben’s sin, resulting in the forfeiture of his birthright, was sexual impropriety of a nature that dishonored and shamed his father:

*“Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine”* ([Genesis 35:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+35.22&t=NKJV)).

Because of this one sin, years later when Jacob called his twelve sons into his presence (shortly before his death) to relate that which would befall not only them but their descendants “*in the last days*,” Reuben heard the words:

*Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power.*

*Unstable as water, you shall not excel, because you went up to your father’s bed; then you defiled it -- he went up to my couch.* ([Genesis 49:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+49.3-4&t=NKJV))

Not only did Reuben himself not excel, as Jacob prophesied, but the tribe of Reuben did not excel. Reuben’s forfeiture of the rights of the firstborn affected not only himself but his descendants as well. No judge or prophet ever came out of the tribe of Reuben.

That which Reuben lost, he lost forever. But he himself remained a son of Jacob and was blessed in measure, *but not as the firstborn.*

Reuben’s birthright was divided among three of his brothers.

*The tribal rulership* was bestowed upon “Judah.

*The priestly office* was bestowed upon “Levi.”

*The double portion* of the father’s estate was given to “Joseph.”

The tribe of “Judah” became *the kingly* line; the tribe of “Levi” became *the priestly* line; and the tribe of “Joseph” received *the double portion* through Joseph’s two sons, “Ephraim” and “Manasseh,” who each received a full inheritance ([1 Chronicles 5:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Chronicles+5.1-2&t=NKJV)).

During the Messianic Era the status created by Reuben’s sin will still abide. The King will be of the house of Judah ([Revelation 5:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.5&t=NKJV)); the priests will be of the house of Levi ([Ezekiel 44:15-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+44.15-16&t=NKJV); [48:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+48.11&t=NKJV)); and the double portion will be held by the house of Joseph, through Ephraim and Manasseh ([Ezekiel 47:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+47.13&t=NKJV); [48:4-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+48.4-5&t=NKJV)).

3) CHRISTIANS AND THE BIRTHRIGHT

Every Christian is presently a “child” of God, or “son,” as seen in [Hebrews 12:5-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.5-8&t=NKJV), *awaiting the adoption, to be followed by the reception of the inheritance belonging to firstborn sons*. As in the Old Testament, this inheritance consists of three things:

1) A position as *ruler*.

2) A position as *priest.*

3) The reception of *a double portion* of the Father’s estate.

The position of ruler has to do with occupying a position of “*power over the nations*” with Christ during the coming age ([Revelation 2:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV)). God’s original purpose for the creation of man in the beginning involved *rulership over the earth* ([Genesis 1:26-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26-28&t=NKJV)). And following the complete redemption of man (spirit, soul, and body) and the removal of the earth from its present position (under a curse), this purpose will be realized.

*Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion* [let them rule] . . . .” ([Genesis 1:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26&t=NKJV))

*For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable* [without a change of mind]. ([Romans 11:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.29&t=NKJV))

God will not change His mind concerning the reason He brought the earth out of its ruined state and called man into existence in Genesis chapter one. Redeemed individuals from the lineage of the first Adam will, in the coming age, with the last Adam, rule over a restored, inhabited earth.

The position of *priest* has to do with a combined kingly-priestly function that will be exercised by Christians at the same time they are given “*power over the nations*.”

Christians are presently “priests,” but are not presently “kings and priests.” This position is reserved for the coming age (*cf.* [1 Peter 2:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.9&t=NKJV); [Revelation 5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.10&t=NKJV)). Our present ministry as priests, as Christ’s present ministry as High Priest, is connected with the tabernacle in heaven (*cf.* [Hebrews 9:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+9.11-12&t=NKJV); [10:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.19-20&t=NKJV); [1 John 1:5-2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.5-2.2&t=NKJV)). But this status of existing conditions will continue only until the end of the present dispensation.

During the coming dispensation (the Messianic Era) Christ’s ministry on behalf of Christians will no longer be connected with the tabernacle. He will, prior to that time, come out of the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle, judge Christians, and subsequently appear to Israel on earth as the great King-Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

And the Christians’ ministry at that time will also no longer be connected with the tabernacle. Christians in that day will appear with Christ in glory. They will appear in the position of “kings and priests” with the great “King-Priest” and will rule with Him during the day of His power.

*The reception of a double portion of the estate* can only have to do with the dual sphere of the kingdom which is to be inherited — *both heavenly and earthly.* Christians are to rule from the heavens over the earth as joint-heirs with Christ. Occupying such positions really means possessing an inheritance that is associated with both the heavens and the earth. God has promised His Son,

*Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations* [the Gentiles] *for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.* ([Psalm 2:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+2.8&t=NKJV))

This earthly inheritance and possession is open only to God’s Son and those who rule from the heavens as “joint-heirs” with Him. Thus, *a rule from the heavens over the earth* will incorporate this double portion.

Every Christian is in line to receive the inheritance belonging to the firstborn; but, according to that which is revealed in Scripture, this inheritance is *forfeitable*. The positional standing of Christians “*in Christ”* places all Christians in a position wherein God can deal with them in relation to the inheritance awaiting firstborn sons, but this positional standing does not itself guarantee that this inheritance will be received.

A Christian, presently in line to inherit as a firstborn son, by rebellious actions, can, as firstborn sons in the Old Testament, forfeit the rights of primogeniture.

(God’s present dealings with Christians in relation to the rights of the firstborn is with a view to Christians being adopted yet future, adopted into a firstborn standing.)

The fifth and last of the five major warnings to Christians in [Hebrews 12:14-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.14-17&t=NKJV) concerns the account of Esau and the forfeiture of his rights as firstborn. This warning has been placed in the book of Hebrews in a type-antitype arrangement, as the wilderness journey of the Israelites in chapters three and four, to sternly remind and warn Christians that the things that befell Old Testament saints can also befall New Testament saints.

And this warning, having to do with the rights of the firstborn, deals with *the central issue* that all of the previous warnings have to do with in the final analysis.

*Esau*, Isaac’s firstborn son, was in line to receive the rights belonging to the firstborn, but he, due to his disobedience, was rejected. Esau was denied the rights of primogeniture — his rightful inheritance within the family.

*The Israelites in the wilderness* — forming God’s firstborn son ([Exodus 4:22-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+4.22-23&t=NKJV)) — were in line to go in, conquer, and take possession of the land. They were in line to realize their earthly inheritance. But the entire accountable generation, twenty years old and above, save Caleb and Joshua, was overthrown in the wilderness, short of the goal of their calling.

And *Christians* on their pilgrim journey, with a heavenly inheritance in connection with the rights of the firstborn in view, can, through disobedience, also be overthrown and be denied their inheritance “*reserved in heaven*.” This is seen in both the type dealing with Esau and the type dealing with the Israelites under Moses, together forming the foundational material for all five of the major warnings in Hebrews.

*“To deny the parallel is to overthrow inspiration: to ignore the parallel is to silence Scripture: to admit the parallel is to disclose a momentous peril to the believer in Christ.”*  — D. M. Panton

**A FUTURE SALVATION**

The underlying theme throughout the epistles of Peter involves our present *hope*, which is centered in the salvation to be revealed, wherein Christians will realize the inheritance “*reserved in heaven*” for firstborn sons. During our present pilgrim walk, anticipating “*that blessed hope*” set before us, we are being “*kept* [guarded] *by the power of God through faith*” for the purpose of realizing the salvation of our souls and occupying positions as joint-heirs with God’s Son during the coming age. The entire program of God for Christians today moves toward this end.

As *the living hope* possessed by Christians and *the inheritance “reserved in heaven”* for Christians have their respective counterparts within teachings drawn from the five major warnings in Hebrews, *so does the salvation “to be revealed in the last time.”* [Hebrews 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.14&t=NKJV) speaks of a future salvation that is so intimately associated with the inheritance of the saints that “*salvation*” itself is said to be inherited; and [Hebrews 2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.3&t=NKJV) calls this future salvation, “*so great a salvation*.”

It is the greatest thing God has ever designed for redeemed man, for it consists of the recipients exercising power and authority from the heavens over the earth with God’s Son when He rules as “*King of kings, and Lord of lords*.” By coming into possession of this *future* salvation, Christians will realize the very purpose for their *present* salvation — *the goal of their calling, the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls.*

However, the first warning in Hebrews, as the other warnings in this book, gives two sides to the overall picture; and the lessons at the very beginning, as in subsequent warnings, are drawn from Old Testament history. The object lesson beginning these warnings surrounds the experiences of the Israelites in the wilderness:

*For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,*

*how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation . . . ?* ([Hebrews 2:2-3a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.2-3a&t=NKJV))

The “*just recompense of reward*” is receiving *exactly what an individual deserves*. *All of the Israelites* who left Egypt under Moses were saved ([1 Corinthians 10:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+10.1-4&t=NKJV)). *All of these Israelites* had availed themselves of the substitutionary atonement in Egypt by means of the death of the paschal lambs. The death of the firstborn was past and could never be their lot, for the paschal lambs had previously died in their stead.

The danger that the Israelites faced was not that of being returned to Egypt and being removed from the safety of the blood. *Such an act was an utter impossibility, for the firstborn had died* (*via a substitute*), *and God was satisfied.*

Rather, the danger that the Israelites faced lay in the fact that *they could be overthrown in the wilderness and not realize the purpose for their deliverance from Egypt.* By means of *obedience* they could realize this purpose, but by means of their *disobedience* they would fail to realize this purpose. In either instance, they would receive a “*just recompense of reward*” — receiving exactly what they deserved, *based upon faithfulness or unfaithfulness to their calling*, whether positive or negative.

The same is true for Christians today. *All Christians* have availed themselves of the substitutionary death of the Passover Lamb. The death of the firstborn is past and can never be their lot, for the Passover Lamb has already died in their stead.

The danger that Christians face is not that of being removed from the safety of the blood. *Such an act is an utter impossibility, for the firstborn has died* (*via a Substitute*); *and God, as in the type, is satisfied.*

Rather, the danger that Christians face is the same as that which the Israelites under Moses faced: Christians can be overthrown in their present position and fail to realize the purpose for their salvation.

By *obedience*, which involves a “*living*” faith — connected with faithfulness in carrying out the works that the Lord has outlined for one’s life — an individual will realize this purpose. But by *disobedience*, which involves a “dead” faith — connected with unfaithfulness in carrying out *the works* that the Lord has outlined for one’s life — an individual will fail to realize this purpose.

In either instance, Christians will receive “*a just recompense of reward.*” They will receive wages *exactly commensurate with services rendered as household servants in the Lord’s house*, receiving exactly what one deserves in this respect, *based upon faithfulness or unfaithfulness to their calling*, whether positive or negative.

The “*so great a salvation*” in [Hebrews 2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.3&t=NKJV), synonymous with the salvation to be inherited in [Hebrews 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.14&t=NKJV), is, within the context, associated with *the inhabited earth* to come:

*“For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak* [*lit.*, ‘concerning which we are speaking’], *in subjection to angels”* ([Hebrews 2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.5&t=NKJV)).

Angels occupy positions of power over the nations during the present age. But, during the coming age, angels will not occupy these positions. Satan and his angels will be removed from their positions of power at the end of the present age; and Christ, with His “*companions*,” His “*co-heirs*” (*cf*. [Hebrews 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.9&t=NKJV); [3:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3.14&t=NKJV)), will exercise power over the nations during the coming age.

The writer of Hebrews clearly states that this coming inhabited earth under the rule of man is what the preceding verses are dealing with. *The inherited salvation* ([Hebrews 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.14&t=NKJV)), *the so great a salvation* ([Hebrews 2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.3&t=NKJV)), has to do with the coming age when *a new order of rulers — a new order of sons* ([Hebrews 2:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.9-10&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Romans 8:18-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.18-19&t=NKJV)) — will be crowned and exercise regal power and authority over the earth.

The books of Hebrews, James, and 1, 2 Peter all deal with the salvation to be revealed, the salvation of the soul; and these epistles, as all of the other epistles (which also deal with this same subject), must be interpreted within this same framework. The *warnings* in Hebrews and *works* in James have to do with the same thing as the text in [1 Peter 1:3-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.3-5&t=NKJV) — a “*just recompense of reward*” to be realized in the coming age.