

## **CHRIST THE STARTING POINT**

### **2. WHAT DO ANGELS STUDY?**

#### **1 PETER 1:10**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The basic premise of this module “Christ the Starting Point” is that the New Testament is the best interpreter of the Old Testament. Therefore, we must study the New Testament to find the only reliable principles of Old Testament interpretation. We began this process in our first lecture “Spiritual heartburn”. We now come to 1 Peter 1:10-12 and ask what principles of Old Testament interpretation does it teach us.

In his commentary on 1 Peter, John Brown entitles the chapter dealing with 1 Peter 1:10-12, “The final happiness of Christians the subject of Old Testament prediction, New Testament revelation, and Angelic study.” Salvation was predicted by the prophets, announced by the apostles, and analysed by angels. Let us consider these in turn.

### **I. PREDICTED BY PROPHETS**

Peter taught that Old Testament prophets made predictions, studied the predictions, then understood the predictions. Let’s investigate these three stages of prophetic experience.

#### **1. The prophets predicted**

The “Spirit of Christ” was in the Old Testament prophets (v.11). This term is used interchangeably with “Spirit of God” in Romans 8:9. In Acts 16:7 “the Spirit of Jesus” is the same as “The Holy Spirit” (v.6). So, like the New Testament Apostles, the Old Testament prophets were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

We should not, therefore, be surprised to read that, like the New Testament Apostles, the Old Testament prophets were focused on “salvation” (v.10), and “prophesied of the grace that should come” (v.10). And indeed, not only did they preach salvation by grace, but they also preached the way this would be accomplished – by a suffering Messiah (v.11).

#### **DISCUSSION: THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST**

Selwyn argues that “the sufferings of Christ” in 1 Peter 1:11 refer to the sufferings of Christians as they become more like Christ. He translates it “the sufferings of the Christward road”.<sup>1</sup>

In his commentary on 1 Peter, Wayne Grudem argues against this for the following reasons:<sup>2</sup>

1. The first-century Greek readers would not have understood the phrase in this way.
2. The New Testament speaks of suffering like Christ, following after Christ, etc., but it never speaks of suffering *toward* Christ.
3. The idea of sufferings making the sufferers move towards Christ is not in the text.

<sup>1</sup> E G Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London: Macmillan, 1949), 263.

<sup>2</sup> W Grudem, *Commentary on 1 Peter* (Leicester: IVP, 1995), 69-70.

4. If the sufferings refer to the sufferings of the Christians to whom Peter is writing, then the “glories” of verse 11 must be *after* the sufferings are completed, which is inconsistent with the ongoing sufferings Peter predicts (1 Peter.4:14).

In the present passage, however, even as the testifying spirit is specifically the “spirit of Christ,” so the testimony is of sufferings intended specifically for him.<sup>3</sup>

**Conclusion: The phrase describes the sufferings intended for (or destined for) Christ.**

So, through the prophets, the Spirit of Christ “testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (v.11). The Spirit took the things of Christ and showed them to the prophets (cf: Jn.16:15). Regarding the Scriptural location of these predictions, Wayne Grudem wrote:

If we are to look for examples of this predicting activity, we may in fact look through the whole of the Old Testament, for the New Testament authors can sometimes speak of the whole of the Old Testament as the writings of 'the prophets' (see Lk. 24:27; also Acts 2:30 on David as a prophet). In this sense the predictions of the sufferings of the Messiah begin with the prediction of the 'seed' of the woman who would be bruised in the heel by the serpent (Gn. 3:15), and continue through much of the Old Testament writings...Yet all these verses are only a beginning, for they do not include the 'acted-out prophecies' seen in the historical events of the Old Testament, where in the lives of people like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Jonah, and often the nation of Israel generally, God brought to pass events which foreshadowed a pattern of life that would be later followed by 'one greater than Solomon', one who was David's greater Son.<sup>4</sup>

### **PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION**

- Like the New Testament Apostles, all the Old Testament prophets were inspired by the Spirit of Christ.
- Like the New Testament Apostles, all the Old Testament prophets spoke and wrote about Christ's sufferings and subsequent glory.
- Like the New Testament Apostles, all the Old Testament prophets preached a message of salvation by grace alone.

## **2. The prophets studied**

It was not always immediately or entirely clear to the prophets what their predictions meant. Therefore, they “enquired and searched diligently” into the salvation they prophesied (v.10). Specifically, they searched “what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow” (v.11). The words used for “enquire” and “search” here indicate an active and earnest pursuit of the meaning of their own and of previous prophecies (eg. Daniel 9:2). They are Christ-centred enquiries:

<sup>3</sup> J R Michaels, 1998. *Vol. 49. Word Biblical Commentary : 1 Peter* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System.

<sup>4</sup> W Grudem, *Commentary on 1 Peter* (Leicester: IVP, 1995), 70.

Even though the prophets' ministry was long before the fact, Peter depicts them as pointing not to an undefined messianic figure but specifically to Jesus Christ. "Christ" is a name to Peter rather than a title, and he writes as if the prophets viewed matters in the same way.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> J R Michaels, 1998. *Vol. 49: Word Biblical Commentary : 1 Peter* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System.

## DISCUSSION: “TIME AND CIRCUMSTANCES” OR “PERSON AND TIME”

τίνα ἢ ποῖον καιρὸν  
*tina e poion kairon*

There has been much debate over the best way to translate and understand this phrase. Here are some sample translations:

RSV and NSAB: *what person or time*

NIV: *the time and circumstances*

AV: *what, or what manner of time.*

The first word, *tina*, can mean either 'who?' or 'what?' depending on the context.

The second word is *e*, 'or'.

The fourth word is *kairon*, 'time'.

The third word, *poion*, is the key to translating this whole phrase and can mean either 'what?' or 'what kind of?', with the former being the slightly more frequent New Testament translation. Let us consider the two options:

(a) *poion* = 'What?'

If we translate *poios* as 'what', then the last two words *poion kairon* are translated 'what time?' This would then permit us to translate the first word, *tina*, as 'who?' The whole phrase is then translated as 'who or what time?'

The following arguments favor this translation.

i. To translate *tina* as 'what' would give us a tautology 'what time or what time?'

ii. The other four New Testament occurrences of *poios* with a term referring to time use it in the sense 'what?' or 'which one?' not 'what kind of?' (Mt. 24:42; Mt.24:43; Lk.12:39; Rev. 3:3).

iii. There is extra-biblical support for the 'what?' translation.

iv. The ordinary way for a first-century speaker to ask 'what time?' was *poios kairos*, not *tis kairos*.

v The 'who?' question would be of more significance for Old Testament prophets than the 'when?' question.

(b) *poion* = 'What kind of?'

If we translate *poios* as 'what kind of?' then *poion kairon* mean 'what kind of time?' This allows the first word *tina* also to modify 'time' and mean simply 'what time?'. The whole phrase would then be translated 'what time or what kind of time?' or as the NIV puts it 'the time and circumstances'. This translation would suggest that the prophets did not puzzle so much over 'who'

the person was, but only over the time the person would appear.

The following arguments favour the 'What time and circumstances' translation.

i. Kaiser argues that we cannot dissociate *tina* from *kairon* and render it 'in reference to *whom*,' but rather that both *tina* and *poion* should be left to modify *kairon*. This tautological usage, where *tis* = *poios* and both mean 'what' is seen also in Acts 7:49, and is used for emphasis.

ii. The context of 1 Peter 1:10-12 corroborates the view that the prophets' question was only about time rather than the persons and the time. From 1 Peter 1:10-12 Kaiser outlines five things which the prophets were certain of:

They knew they were predicting that: (1) the Messiah would come; (2) the Messiah would suffer; (3) the Messiah would be glorified (in kingly splendor); (4) the order of events 2 and 3 was that the suffering came first, and then the glorious period followed; and (5) this message had been revealed to the prophets not only for their own day, but also for a future generation such as the church of Peter's audience (v. 12). What then were the prophets all stirred up about in their searching and inquiring? It was the question of *time*...Therefore, 1 Peter 1:10-12 does not teach that these men were curious, yet often ignorant as to exact impact or meaning of what they wrote and predicted. Theirs was not a search for the *meaning* of what they wrote; it was an inquiry into the *temporal* aspects of the *subject*, which went beyond what they wrote.<sup>6</sup>

There are Old Testament examples of prophets asking the 'When?' question (Daniel 9; 12:5-13; Hab.2:1-4).

iii. The rejection of the 'Who?' translation does not imply that the prophets had comprehensive and complete knowledge of Christ.

There is, of course, a sense in which we now do understand the predictions of the prophets and apostles better than they did. Consider the difference between a man who visits a country and describes it and one who writes about it only from the perspective of extensive studies, but who never personally visited that country.<sup>7</sup>

They were already certain of the redemption about to come. They did not, like us, fully *see*, but they *desired* to see the one and the same Christ whom we fully see in spirit. Calvin said, "As Simeon was anxiously desiring previously, and tranquil in peace only when he had seen Christ, so all the Old Testament saints saw Christ only hidden, and as it were absent—absent not in power and grace, but inasmuch as He was not yet manifested in the flesh."<sup>8</sup>

iv. This translation is more effective in defeating the liberal argument that the prophets 'wrote better than they knew'.

<sup>6</sup> W C Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 20.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>8</sup> Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, 1997. *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* (Logos: Electronic Edition).

**Conclusion: The prophets knew more than enough to answer the “Who?” question and so their major enquiry surrounded the “When?” question. They also, at times, considered the “How?” question – what events and features would characterize the Messiah’s day.**

Wayne Grudem commented:

Since we now know the answers to “Who?” (Jesus) and “What time?” (Jesus' lifetime and the subsequent church age), we should read the Old Testament prophets eagerly, expecting that our hearts will often be stirred to praise when there we discover, as a central theme, the sufferings of our Savior on our behalf and the glories of the resultant kingdom of which we even now are members.<sup>9</sup>

### **PRINCIPLE OF INTERPRETATION**

- The Old Testament prophets knew “who” they were predicting, their ignorance being largely concerning the timing of His coming.
- The real meaning of prophecy always lies in the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup>

### **3. They understood**

Having predicted and then researched the meaning of their predictions, the prophets subsequently came to an understanding about their predictions. They learned that “not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven” (v.11). They would have gradually grown in understanding of the Messiah they were looking for, but Peter tells us that they especially came to understand that their predictions would be better understood by, and therefore would be more useful to, those who lived in Messiah’s day than to themselves.

The prophetic predictions were not without relevance for the original hearers, for they would give comfort and hope to those who looked forward in faith, but primarily they were given to minister to...New Covenant believers.<sup>11</sup>

God revealed to the prophets that their divinely given messages were not so much for their own times but for the Church in the future. By explicit divine revelation they recognised that many of their prophecies would make sense to their readers only once they had happened.

The power and grace of Christ's redemption are present in the Old Testament long before he is born. At the same time, Old Testament believers look forward to the coming of Christ, when they will receive "far more light." In the meantime, God gave many promises of the coming Messiah and raised up types that prefigured him.<sup>12</sup>

This does not mean that the Old Testament presents only the broad, general characteristics of Christ’s person and work and that the New Testament fills in the details.

<sup>9</sup> W Grudem, *Commentary on 1 Peter* (Leicester: IVP, 1995), 71.

<sup>10</sup> G Goldsworthy, *According to Plan* (Illinois: IVP, 2002). 50.

<sup>11</sup> W Grudem, *Commentary on 1 Peter* (Leicester: IVP, 1995), 71.

<sup>12</sup> S Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 136.

While the New Testament is more detailed in some respects, the Old Testament is more detailed in other respects. For example, nowhere in the New Testament are we given such insight into the emotions and feelings of the Lord Jesus during his sufferings, as we are in Psalm 22 and 69. Likewise, Isaiah 53 contains considerable detail.

So, it is not lack of detail which is taught here but a lack of full understanding. And that lack was not due to a lack of spirituality or holiness, but simply because many of the predicted events could not be understood until they happened. Even the disciples of Christ had limited understanding of the person and work of Christ until after his resurrection.

### **PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION**

- There is an essential continuity between the Christ-centred salvation message of the Old Testament and that of the New.
- We can expect to find the sufferings and glories of Jesus Christ in Old Testament prophecies.
- Searching for and finding Christ is still the key that unlocks the Old Testament.<sup>13</sup>
- We may legitimately preach Christ from the Old Testament, even where the prophet did not fully understand all that he was writing.

### **APPLICATION**

1. Do we study Scripture looking for Christ as earnestly as Old Covenant believers did? "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Lk.12:48). We have been given far more Scripture, and far more opportunity to study and understand it. Much greater diligence and zeal in prayerful study of the Scriptures is, therefore, required of us.

2. As ministers of the Gospel we have opportunity to not only minister to our generation but to those that are yet to come.

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<sup>13</sup> M Barrett, *Beginning at Moses* (Ambassador - Emerald: Greenville, 2001 ) 23.

## **II. ANNOUNCED BY APOSTLES**

The same “things” that were predicted, studied, and, in a measure, understood by the prophets, “are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven” (v.11).

There prophets ministered the same “things” which the apostles “now reported”. The Old Testament “things” and the New Testament “reports” were identical in substance. The major difference, apart from the clothes the truths were dressed up in, is that, since Pentecost, the New Testament “reports” are accompanied by a greater measure of the “Holy Spirit sent down from heaven” which gave the preaching greater power and so better enlightened the minds of the hearers (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:33).

### **PRINCIPLE OF INTERPRETATION**

**While the Old and New Testament have the same Gospel message, there is a difference in the efficacy due to the greater measure of the Holy Spirit.**

## **III. ANALYSED BY ANGELS**

The things which were predicted by the prophets and announced by the Apostles are analysed by angels: “Which things the angels desire to look into” (v.12).

ἐπιθυμῶ *epithumeo* means “desire” or “long” and is used of strong desires both for good and for evil. Here it is the sinless longings of angels that are being revealed.

παρακύπτω *parakupto* means to “peek or peep into a situation from the vantage point of an outsider, usually one who is not seen by those being watched”.<sup>14</sup> Here then we have unseen and curious heavenly observers who bend down to take a closer look at something.

And what is it that they want to analyse? They have a great range of possible subjects. But they all uniformly choose one – the salvation of sinners. They know more about this subject than any living person and yet still want to learn even more – as the present tense of the verb makes clear. How do they learn? It is “by the Church” that the “principalities and powers in heavenly places” come to know “the manifold wisdom of God” in salvation (Eph.3:10).

We have no doubt that they know all that is revealed in the Bible on this subject; and from their higher faculties, and their more diligent study, and their juster and more extended views of the divine perfections, and of what constitutes the happiness of intelligent creatures, they understand what is revealed there much better than we do. But still they are not satisfied, they are desirous to understand these wondrous divine declarations more completely, and they are looking forward with intense desire to the period when fulfillment shall develop the full extent of their meaning.<sup>15</sup>

Their interest in this subject stems not from their own need of salvation – they have no need. Neither does their interest stem from interest in the plight of fallen angels – they have no remedy. Rather, they care about what God cares about.

<sup>14</sup> W Grudem, *Commentary on 1 Peter* (Leicester: IVP, 1995), 73.

<sup>15</sup> J Brown, *Commentary on 1 Peter* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, ) 91-92.



This is no more academic angelic analysis. It is intensely practical. Consider how the angels demonstrate their practical interest in salvation:

- i. They brought messages of warning and love from God to men (e.g. Abram, Isaac, Lot, Jacob)
- ii. Twenty thousand, even thousands of angels were present when the law was proclaimed (Ps.68:17).
- iii. At Christ's birth they gladly chorused, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Lk.2:14).
- iv. They watched over the Saviour throughout his life and announced his resurrection – He is not here, he is risen (Lk.24:6)
- v. They watch over and minister to sinners who are yet to be saved (Heb.1:14)
- vi. They share God's joy over sinners repenting (Lk.15:10)
- vii. They study the ongoing sanctification/preservation/upholding of the Lord's people (Ps.34).
- viii. They are involved in our death – Lazarus was carried by the angels – Bunyan's pilgrim was met by shining Ones.

#### **APPLICATION**

1. If the mighty intelligences of Angels need disciplined study to study and enquire, how much more we. As the next verse states in application: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind..." (1 Pet.1:13).

2. Angels learn from our response to affliction:

Angels learn much by visiting God's people. They know nothing of suffering themselves. but they learn from the patience and joyfulness of suffering believers. When the sick one enters heaven. some of the angels will say, "O here is my teacher come!"

3. Let the interest of angels encourage you in the midst of suffering for Christ's sake. Did you know that you are being followed, observed and studied? Not by some private detective, but by angels who have a continued intense interest in your salvation. It is their study.

Though the world may think such Christians insignificant and worthy of pity or scorn, angels – who see ultimate reality from God's perspective – find them to be objects of intense interest, for they know that these struggling believers are actually the recipients of God's greatest blessings and honored participants in a great drama at the focal point of universal history. We too may rightly think of our Christian lives as no less privileged and no less interesting to holy angels than the lives of Peter's readers.<sup>16</sup>

4. Angels will continue their analysis when we get to heaven. They

<sup>16</sup> W Grudem, *Commentary on 1 Peter* (Leicester: IVP, 1995), 73.

cannot sing some of our songs. They cannot sing, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev.1:5). We shall continue to be their teachers in glory as they cluster round to hear our experiences of saving grace.