

FIRST PETER

Lesson 5

The Prophets and Our Salvation

1 Peter 1:10-12

What relationship does the Old Testament have to the New Testament? Is Christ found only in the New Covenant or was He also known in the Old Covenant? There are many Christians today who overlook the Old Testament, dismissing it as obsolete. Even those who admit it is important spend the majority of their time studying the New Testament. We must understand the Old Testament is for us today. It speaks of Christ, and if we look for Him there, we shall find Him.

In 1 Peter 1:10-12 Peter will direct our attention to the past in which salvation was prophesied by the prophets. Some have outlined 1 Peter 1:3-12 as: the portrayal of salvation (1:3-5), the problem of salvation (1:6-9), and the prophecy of salvation (1:10-12). Others have outlined this section as: the hope of salvation in the future (1:3-5), the joy of salvation in the present (1:6-9), and the prophecy of salvation in the past (1:10-12).

Our purpose in this study is to concentrate on 1 Peter 1:10-12 and attempt to understand the amount of revelation the Old Testament prophets had concerning the salvation that we now have in Christ.

PROPHECY OF GRACE (1:10)

“As to this salvation”

Whenever Peter mentioned salvation in 1 Peter 1: 5, 9, new thoughts were triggered in his mind. Once again the concept of salvation causes his mind to go back to the Old Testament and the prophets who had knowledge of this salvation.

First Peter 1:5, 9 refers to future salvation, but verse 10 seems to cover every aspect of salvation—past, present and future.

“The prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you”

Some have tried to make “prophets” refer to New Testament prophets, but the obvious reference is to the Old Testament prophets. These men foretold “the grace that would come,” a reference to the favor which would be shown to Christians in the dispensation of grace or the gospel age, the fulfillment of all that was prophesied about Christ and our “so great” salvation in Him.

“Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scripture.” (Rom. 1:1-2).

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:11-12).

Christians in the age of grace, or the church age, are in a position far superior to that of the Old Testament prophets. Today Christians have the full light of the gospel. Old Testament saints were saved by grace through faith in the Messiah to come, but they lived in the Old Testament age of types and shadows. The prophets saw the salvation we possess today only at a distance and then only dimly. They prophesied of this great display of grace when the fullness of salvation in Christ would come, but they did not understand all they knew about it.

“made careful search and inquiry”

The prophets scrutinized the revelation made to them which was put down in writing. They gave intelligent research and concentrated study, prayer and meditation to their own prophecies about the salvation which every Christian now possesses. They did not thoroughly understand all their revelation; therefore, they had to be diligent students of the Word to get the meaning of their own prophecies. The prophets not only studied their own prophecies, they also studied the prophecies of other prophets. *“In the first year of his reign, I Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years” (Dan. 9:2).*

The prophets in their own generation were the only ones who were oriented in time and with reference to eternity because they were biblically grounded. The lesson we learn from this is that those who know Scripture and apply it are the truly oriented people in this world, but they will also be looked upon as odd by the world in the same way that the prophets were ridiculed in their respective generations. If the prophets needed to study the Word, how much more do we need to study it!

The main reason the Apostle Peter wrote this letter was to encourage the Asian Christians who were going through severe social persecution. Just as the unbelieving Israelites persecuted the prophets, so Christians will be persecuted in this world. *“Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5:12).* Peter wants these Christians to highly value their great salvation so they will be encouraged and be able to endure their trials with patience.

We in the age of grace, or the church, or the gospel age (whatever we want to call it) are a very unthankful people and take our salvation for granted. Men of old were willing to sweat blood to know something of the salvation we now experience in full.

“For truly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (Matt. 13:17).

“For I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them” (Luke 10:24).

If we Christians could only get the same love for Scripture as did the prophets.

PREDICTIONS ABOUT CHRIST (1:11)

“ seeking to know what person or time”

This is a very difficult translation and no one can be dogmatic as to its precise meaning. It may mean “when and under what circumstances” or “who and under what circumstances.” The rendering of the New American Standard Bible is probably correct when it says, “what person or time.” The prophets diligently inquired as to what person was being spoken of in their prophecies. They sought to know all they could about the Messiah, who He would be, what His character would be, and the nature of the work He would perform. The prophets also sought to know when these things would happen and under what circumstances (the conditions of the world) they would come.

These prophets were not necessarily learned theologians who were pursuing scholarly investigations. They were men filled with the Holy Spirit who had a desire for the arrival of this great period of grace. They longed for nothing more than to see this period even though they saw it dimly and only in part.

“The Spirit of Christ within them was indicating”

This verse says the Spirit of Christ was in the prophets, the actual Spirit of the preincarnate Christ. This may refer to the actual Spirit of Christ or the Holy Spirit who is one with Christ in the Trinity. *“But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him” (Rom. 8:9b).*

Somehow Christ, in Spirit, was in the Old Testament prophets. These men were controlled by the Spirit of Christ and, as they, studied their written prophecies, things were made increasingly clear. The word “indicating” means “to make clear.” These prophets, in progressive revelation, became clearer on the death and exaltation of Messiah and the new period of grace.

“as He predicted the sufferings of Christ.”

It was the Spirit of Christ who enabled these prophets to make their predictions. Peter says the Old Testament speaks of Christ.

“For David says of Him (Christ), ‘I was always beholding the Lord in my presence; for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken’” (Acts 2:25).

“You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me . . . Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote of Me” (John 5:29, 45, 46).

“And some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see. And he said to them, ‘O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was is not

necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?’ And beginning with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” (Luke 24:24-27).

We must remember that the only Scriptures the early Christians had were from the Old Testament, and in these Scriptures they found Christ.

Jesus Christ was clearly revealed in the Tabernacle. There is a very close relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Here are some prophecies which would tell us much about the Messiah: place of birth (Mic. 5:2), supernatural birth (Isa. 7:14), eternal sonship (Psa. 2:7), savior (Isa. 53:5-6, 12), prophet (Deut. 18:15), priest (Psa. 110:4), king (2 Sam. 7:12-16, Isa. 2:1-4), betrayal (Psa. 41:9), falsely accused (Psa. 35:11), spat upon (Isa. 50:6), no broken bones (Psa. 22:17), pierced (Psa. 22:16-17), die with the wicked (Isa. 53:9), sacrifice for sin (Isa. 53:5-6, 12) and buried in a rich man’s tomb (Isa. 53:9).

The Bible had over three hundred prophecies fulfilled literally, and there are hundreds more to be fulfilled concerning the Second Advent of Christ. These fulfillments of prophecy are no accident. The Bible will stand the test of time.

“and the glories to follow.”

The prophets saw that there would be glory which would be the result of His suffering, but they did not clearly see what it would be. They may have had some broad outlines on the resurrection, ascension, second coming and His reign upon the throne of David, but the details and logical order were not clear to them.

“I have set the Lord continually before me; because He is at my right hand. I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely. For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol; neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to see the pit” (Psa. 16:8-11).

The prophets saw that Messiah would suffer (Psa. 22; Isa. 53) and reign (Psa. 2, 16, 110), but they did not understand all they knew about it. They could not grasp how this reigning Messiah could suffer. This was a mystery to them and it was hidden until the First Advent of Christ. The issue of a suffering-reigning Messiah was so confusing that some Jewish rabbis thought there were two Messiahs, one a suffering Messiah and the other a glorified Messiah. The prophets most certainly did not see the two thousand years which have intervened between the First and Second Advents.

The Old Testament spoke of Christ in one of the manuscripts of the Book of Acts there is a scribal note added to the text. It obviously does not belong in the New Testament, but it may have been written by one who knew how the Apostle Paul taught. Luke says that is was the custom of Paul to reason with the Jews in the synagogue, and the scribe added, “. . . arguing from the Scriptures, inserting the name of Jesus.” That may well have been how Paul taught in the synagogues. He would take the scroll of Isaiah, for example, and read it. As he came to the name “Yahweh,” he would insert “Jesus.” You can imagine the commotion this would have stirred up in the synagogue. Perhaps we should all read the Old Testament this way, and it would revolutionize our thinking about the Old Testament.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE CHURCH (1:12a)

“It was revealed to them”

The prophets, after much laborious study, received some positive, concrete answers. Some things they never understood, but in other things they received some answers.

The prophets were in much the same position we are today as we attempt to discover future events. We see some things clearly about the Second Advent of Christ and other things are very fuzzy. We should not be dogmatic on future prophecy because some things we will not understand until they happen or we can look back on them. This does not mean, however, that we should not teach future prophecy concerning the fact of Christ’s return and the circumstances surrounding it as we understand it.

“that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things.”

After much study, the prophets concluded that this salvation in Christ and the period of grace was not for them but for others in another period. They were only stewards and administrators of the salvation others would enjoy. The full benefit of those things which they wrote were for future ages. These prophecies were prepared for the church, for you and me as Christians, who have the full revelation of Christ and His salvation.

“which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.”

This salvation, written about in the Old Testament and known only partially by the prophets, was preached unto us by the Apostles and other gospelizers (good news spreaders). This kind of preaching was made possible when the Holy Spirit was sent down from heaven on the Day of Pentecost to give Christians power to witness for Christ. *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8)*. Christians in the age of grace became benefactors of the gospel which was known by the Old Testament prophets.

The early Christian preachers used the Old Testament Scriptures to back up the gospel they were preaching. Look for Christ in the Old Testament and it becomes a living book.

PERCEPTION OF THE ANGELS (1:12b)

“things into which angels long to look.”

This salvation is not only valuable because it was prophesied by the Old Testament prophets, but it is valuable because angels long to know something of it. The angels stoop down or stretch their necks to get a close glimpse of the salvation God has bestowed on His church. They learn about God’s grace, mercy, love and forgiveness from observing us. They stoop down and stare intently at our lives to learn about the salvation we Christians possess.

“To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the

administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; in order that the manifold wisdom of God right now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” (Eph. 3:8-10).

“For I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men” (1 Cor. 4:9).

“Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels” (1 Cor. 11:10).

“In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10).

Angels are not only learning about God’s saving grace and mercy in our salvation, they are learning about God’s sanctifying grace and mercy. They are observing how we respond to suffering as Christians, for suffering is a definite part of our salvation process. So remember, the next time you groan and complain about some minor suffering that the angels are learning about God from you. You are a witness to angels concerning God’s grace and mercy.

CONCLUSION

The Lord has a very important lesson for us who are Christians to learn from 1 Peter 1:10-12. The main thought in this letter is suffering. God wants us to realize that Jesus Himself set the example in suffering. Glory comes only through suffering. Our Lord Jesus was the forerunner. It was because of the glory set before Him that he endured pain. And all the sons and daughters go the same way. There is no glory apart from suffering. There is no crown apart from the cross. Jesus suffered, and we His servants are no better. Christ was glorified after suffering, and we His servants will also be glorified after we have suffered.

These verses have something to say to you who are not Christians also. Hundreds of prophecies were literally fulfilled by Christ in His First Advent. There are still hundreds of prophecies yet to be fulfilled concerning the Second Advent. They will be just as literally fulfilled. Are you ready to meet Christ if He should return today? He will come in His Second Advent, not as a Savior but as the severe Judge of those who have not received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in this life. Christ will judge all men for their sin and He will also judge men who have persecuted Christians in this life, causing them to suffer.

“For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed-- for our testimony to you was believed” (2 Thess. 1:6-10).