

Review

Peter has just written to the church about having faith in the midst of their various trials. He said that the outcome of our faith is the salvation of our souls. Now, he is about to tell us something fascinating about this salvation that we are going to obtain...

1:10-12 The Prophets

This salvation, which to us is so obvious and understandable, was not so obvious and understandable to the generations before Christ. It was a total mystery. Paul the apostle frequently wrote about how the church and the gospel were a mystery in times past (Rom. 16:25; 1Cor. 2:7; Eph. 3:3-4; etc.). He described this mystery as...

Col. 1:26 ...the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints

But what we often don't think about is the fact that it was a mystery even to the prophets who wrote about it!

You know who the prophets are. Men like Elijah, Isaiah, David, Zechariah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc. These were the people that God used to communicate His Word to mankind.

Searches And Inquiries

The prophets wrote incredibly detailed descriptions of future events and people not yet born. They prophesied of the grace that would come to us, but they didn't know Who the Christ was, or when He would show up. They knew that they were writing of the Messiah, but they didn't have any more information than what they wrote down.

They themselves searched, inquired, and wanted to know. But they didn't understand any more about their own writings than anyone else did. It's not like they were saying, "God told me the whole story, but I'm going to write down just a few cloudy sentences, so that me and God are the only ones who know!"

Jesus told us this same thing. He told the disciples how blessed they were to be in the generation which saw the Messianic prophecies

beginning to be fulfilled, because, He said...

Luke 10:23-24 ...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."

Philip understood this, for when He first encountered Jesus,

John 1:45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote - Jesus of Nazareth..."

What Person Or Time

The prophets wished to see these things. Many of them earnestly searched and studied their own writings, as well as the writings of the other prophets. They were...

1Pet. 1:11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating...

They discovered from the writings that He would be a descendant of David (Jer. 23:5). They understood that He would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). They knew He would be a humble king, riding on a donkey (Zech. 9:9). But no matter how hard they searched, they never could see when He was coming, or Who He was.

Now, with hindsight, it is easy for us to read the Old Testament and see the gospel,

Rom. 1:2-3 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh

In fact, you can't really read the Old Testament without seeing it, because...

Acts 10:43 "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."

But it's always easier once you know, isn't it? It's like when an artist draws a picture that has hidden faces in it. For the longest time, you never see them. But once you do, then that becomes the most obvious

thing about the drawing.

The first guys to really get a complete picture of what God had been hinting at for all those years through the prophets was a couple of Jesus' disciples.

After Jesus had been crucified and buried, the disciples lost hope. Even three days later, when reports started coming in about seeing Jesus risen from the dead, a couple of the disciples said, "We're leaving. We're going back home." The two of them set out for the village of Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem.

As they were walking along, Jesus came up to them. They didn't recognize Him, and He said, "Hey guys, what are you talking about?" They said, "Haven't you heard what's been happening in Jerusalem this week? We thought that we'd found the Messiah - almost everybody thought He was the Messiah. But then the chief priests and rulers killed Him.

Luke 24:25-27 And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

These two were the first guys to really get the whole picture shown to them.

The Sufferings And The Glories

Now, it wasn't like the other disciples hadn't had the opportunity to see. Certainly, Jesus told them time and again about what the prophets had written about Him. But their hangup always seemed to be that He kept telling them about His suffering.

Luke 18:31-34 Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated

and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again.” But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.

The prophets had written not only of the Messiah's glories, but also had predicted His sufferings. After realizing this, Simon Peter was able to preach,

Acts 3:18 “But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

But before understanding this, it was a complete mystery to him and the others. In fact, when Jesus was arrested, He...

Matt. 26:55-56 ...said to the crowds, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets.” Then all the disciples left Him and fled.

Even that had been foretold by the prophets. Zechariah had written,

**Zech. 13:7 “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man, My Associate,” Declares the LORD of hosts.
“Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered...”**

Again, Zechariah knew that God had said this and wrote it down. But no matter how carefully he searched and diligently he inquired, Zechariah had no idea that this meant Jesus Christ would be betrayed, arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, and that His disciples would all run away.

The Spirit Of Christ

This was a mystery to them even when they were moved by the Spirit of Christ. There were times when the prophets wrote from Jesus' first person perspective, and still didn't have the whole story. Remember

that David wrote Psalm 22:

Psa. 22:1 My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?...

Psa. 22:7-8 All who see me sneer at me; They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, "Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him."

Psa. 22:12-18 Many bulls have surrounded me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me. They open wide their mouth at me, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

From our perspective, it's hard not to see the events of the crucifixion in every word. But David, although He was being moved by the Spirit of Christ, didn't know anything more than what he was writing.

They Were Serving You

One thing that many of the prophets did conclude is that they weren't writing for themselves, or even for their time period. It was revealed to them that they were writing to us - to the age that we call the church, even though they didn't know who we would be.

Jon Courson describes it as the prophets seeing two mountains - Mount Calvary and the Mount of Olives. They saw the suffering of Christ on Calvary. They saw the Glorious Appearing of Christ on Olivete. They knew there was a valley in between the two mountains, but from their vantage point, they couldn't see what was in the valley. That valley contained two thousand years of the church age. They realized they were writing to us in this valley. I think that's pretty awesome!

Angels Long To Look

Then, Peter gives us one more amazing detail: the gospel that has been preached to us wasn't just a mystery to the prophets. It was also a mystery to the angels in heaven! They were in the same boat! In the same way that the prophets wrote things down, not knowing the whole story, angels would be dispatched as messengers, knowing only their message, but not the complete story.

We see an example of this in Daniel 12. Daniel sees two angels, one on each side of the Tigris River. Then, another angel hovering over the waters of the river gives a prophecy about the last days. One of the angels on the river bank asked the hovering angel,

Dan. 12:6 ..."How long will it be until the end of these wonders?"

The angel wanted to know the details - he was as curious as any man would be!

Even to this day, the angels don't know everything. They don't know God's whole plans, and they must watch us to see God's wisdom in action. Paul said that...

Eph. 3:10 ...the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.

We are educating the angels about God's wisdom! They watch us mess up horribly, and they think, "What's God going to do with this terrible trouble?" Then, when God works those things out together for good, the angels say in amazement, "Wow, God! Your wisdom amazes us more every day! We never saw that coming!"

They see a sinful man headed down a path of destruction and damnation. Then, when they least expect it, God saves them! No wonder Jesus said,

Luke 15:10 "...I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."