

A Problem That Was Not Solved But Is Solved

1 Peter 1:9-12, Psalms 16:10, Zechariah 9:9, Zechariah 14:9, Exodus 34:6-7, John 14:16-17, Matthew 16:3, 2 Timothy 2:15, Daniel 9:2-3, Psalms 91:11-12, Romans 15:4, 2 Timothy 3:16, Romans 5:3-5, Titus 2:13, 2 Peter 1:20-21

Slide 1

Have you ever pondered over something puzzling, but you weren't able to solve it?

Perhaps it wasn't for you to solve, only to know a few small threads of it. Maybe the solution lay in the future, possibly for someone else to solve.

Science is a lot like that. Scientists in the past discovered certain things and later other scientists built on their findings. This is especially true in astronomy and medicine.

Galileo used a very primitive telescope by modern standards and with it discovered four moons of Jupiter. Later, more improved and powerful telescopes, found a whole lot more.

In fact, space missions to Jupiter have found that as of 2023, it actually has a total of 95 moons.

That's what the situation was like for the Old Testament prophets as they wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

They wrote as God directed, revealing and declaring things that were new and unknown to them. New concepts and events that, in some cases, didn't make sense to them at the time they were written.

When writing these things, I'm sure they had questions. Questions like:

- Who was the Servant coming who would suffer? (Isaiah 52 and 53).
- Who was the One who would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey's colt? (Zechariah 9:9).
- Who was the Holy One whose soul would not be kept in hell or would see any corruption? (Psalm 16:10)
- Who was He (The LORD) about whom Zechariah wrote who would be King over the whole earth? (Zechariah 14:9)
- Who was the One Ezekiel wrote about being a shepherd? (Ezekiel 34:23-24)

Which brings us to Peter and what he wrote in his first letter.

Slide 2

Mysteries seem to captivate people's attention. That's why there's so much interest in intriguing figments of the imagination such as Bigfoot and all his worldwide relatives that go by different names.

Today the focus has shifted to UFOs and possible alien visitors from space. Yet, many of these mysteries that intrigue people are no more than a passing thought.

Very few individuals dedicate their lives to solving these perplexing mysteries since much of it is pseudo-science and conspiracy theories.

Now, don't think I'm suggesting there was anything shadowy about the writings of the Old Testament, I'm not. But there was an element of the unknown among some of the prophets. Peter raises the matter this way:

1 Peter 1:9-11, *“For you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.”*

Verse 10 clarifies that it was the matter of man’s salvation that was the preoccupation of the prophets.

Even though these inspired men wrote under the Mosaic Law, they were conscious that what they were writing had a future and wide-ranging application.

Verse 10 also speaks of *“the grace that was to come.”* Now this is a powerful statement considering that the prophets were under Law and operated by Law.

Yet, the Spirit of God within them made them aware of a future grace that would be shed on mankind. Even further, they prophesied that coming grace.

What catches my attention is Peter’s comment about how the prophets made careful search and inquiry. Every word here speaks volumes.

“Greatest care” reveals the thoroughness of their dedication, sifting through their content and the writings of others, piece by piece.

Then *“searched.”* As they studied their own writings, plus other prophetic revelations, they attempted to nail down the exact time and place that God has selected for the revelation of His grace.

In Old Testament times the Jews were under Law and because of that, many theologians and commentators tend to think grace didn’t operate in those times, but it did.

There's no better illustration of grace in the Old Testament than the story of David and Mephibosheth, where the latter was taken out of a place of nothingness and allowed to sit at the king's table.

He didn't deserve that, but grace was extended to him from David so that he became as one of the king's sons.

Also, there are verses that are just as beautiful, even in the context of Law, like this one when God was speaking to Moses.

Exodus 34:6, "And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin."

Slide 3

Peter explained that the prophets, who prophesied of the grace that would come, tried to understand but they couldn't.

This is the marvel of the Bible. Men, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, prophesied of things to come but they didn't understand those things.

But that did not keep them from trying to understand them. They searched for confirming scripture and information about their present time and from past history to see what might be in the process of fulfillment.

The person of Christ was always in the writings of Old Testament prophets, but they didn't know Him. They didn't know Who it was to come.

They all had varied comments to share, as God gave them utterance, but they didn't comprehend the Person or His ministry. It was like trying to look into a shadowy mirror.

The expression Peter used in verse 11 is most important – *“the Spirit of Christ in them.”* This is a special mark of divinity.

We all know the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but here the Holy Spirit is termed as *“the Spirit of Christ,”* and there’s nothing wrong with that. As Jesus said:

John 14:16-17, *“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*

The Spirit of Truth is the same Person as *the Spirit of Christ* Who is the Holy Spirit in the Trinity. These Old Testament prophets were inspired to write as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance, but they didn’t fully understand.

What would have occupied their mind was the times in which they were living, just like it is for us when we read about the signs of the return of Jesus.

They looked at their generation to see what clues might shed light on their careful search and inquiry. They examined what was happening in their time and each successive wave of prophets did the same.

It’s critically essential that all believers carefully study what’s currently happening around them. The Bible call this *“the signs of the times.”*

Also, in verse 11 we have more details of the content of their search which is *“sufferings of the Messiah.”* Remember we’re deep in the B.C. years, yet prophets were speaking of the Person Who would come and His consequential sufferings.

We know that Isaiah wrote more on this than any other prophet and he lived around 700 B.C. Can you picture the prophets who followed him, poring over his writings trying to decipher chapters 52 and 53.

“How? When?” they would ask. *“Who is the One so bruised and when is it to be?”* Their attitude in carefully examining and discerning the scriptures should be an example for us.

Lazy Christians won't do this, but I think we're obligated to search and to examine the signs of our times.

Jesus chastised the people of His time for being unable to discern the signs – Matthew 16:3, *“And in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.”*

Today, events are happening fast. It's as if we're almost at the end of the Church age. We need to be aware of things. The Rapture is right on our doorstep.

We must examine what's happening in order to discern God's will about the One coming just like the Old Testament prophets did.

Also, we mustn't forget what Paul impressed on Timothy – 2 Timothy 2:15, *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”*

Handling accurately the Word of Truth means we must understand what God's Word is saying to our current generation about what's to come.

Slide 4

We are to study Biblical prophecy as the Old Testament prophets did. In fact Daniel is a good example. Daniel labored over the writings of a former prophet to discern the correct judgment of truth:

Daniel 9:2-3, "In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes."

Now it would be something if all of God's children fasted with sackcloth and ashes to determine what the true discernment of His Holy Word is, but do we approach the Scriptures with the same sustained dedication as Daniel?

Do we pore over them, so they become one complete integrated revelation of the grace of God, not merely a mismatch of 66 books of diverse writings?

Do we even have enough interest to know what the Bible says? Are we prepared to wait before God to understand the things that lie in the future. All the Old Testament writers did exactly that?

In 1 Peter 1:11, Peter said that these Old Testament prophets continually tried *"to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing."*

But Peter also gives us another glorious statement when he mentions the *"sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow."*

It was one thing for them to write about the sufferings, but they also wrote of the glories that would follow that suffering.

For us today, it's easy to understand the sufferings of Christ on the cross followed by the resurrection and the fruits of His redemption.

We know of His ascension and the glory that now attends Him, but for them back then, we can only admire them in their endeavors to ascertain the truth and their persistence in the scriptures.

Slide 5

Then Peter throws us into service in verse 12.

1 Peter 1:12, "It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things."

We must understand that the Old Testament prophets were actually serving us, not themselves, as they faithfully wrote under inspiration and as they made careful search and inquiry.

As these inspired prophets made careful search, they left behind the richest of legacies in their writings. In fact, this is the only verse that indicates that God gave the prophets insight into their ministry.

The purpose was to serve the body of believers, namely us who are members of the Body of Christ. Their stewardship was to serve future believers.

Even though they didn't understand much of the revealed inspiration given to them, they knew it had a purpose because God revealed it to them.

In the course of time, the Holy Spirit took the inspired Word, given in the past, and opened it up with great illumination to those in the future as those prophecies began coming to pass.

Isn't that wonderful? We may never have considered that concept before, but it was a gracious ministry by the Holy Spirit Who prepared His word in times past through His faithful prophets.

Just to end the thoughts on verse 12, Peter mentions that the angels longed to look into these things. What does that suggest?

First, it tells us that angels were created with some inquisitiveness. They wanted to know more about these centuries of unfolding of the will of the LORD.

Secondly, it suggests that angels do not know the future but operate in the continuous present. Angelic beings are wonderful creations who assist us all the time.

Psalm 91:11-12, *"For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."*

Slide 6

Conclusion

Paul, in his letter to the Romans, complements what Peter wrote in Romans 15:4, *"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope."*

Did you catch that? The prophets were serving not themselves but us. This was God's plan. This is why we must value Old Testament Scriptures.

It's absolutely reprehensible when pastors and ministers don't preach from the Old Testament. After all, it was written for our instruction.

Never forget that the Old Testament scriptures were the scriptures of the early church during most of the first century.

Paul followed up on the matter of instruction from the Old Testament scriptures in one of his letters to Timothy:

2 Timothy 3:16, *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”* Paul’s reference to *“all scripture”* meant the Old Testament.

Then Paul tells us, in Romans 15:4, that the end result of these Old Testament writings was hope; hope obtained through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures.

It might seem unusual, at first reading, that perseverance (that means being steadfast in trial and persecution) would bring about hope since many people lose hope in difficult times, but the Christian develops hope.

This is connected to what Paul wrote in Romans 5.

Romans 5:3-5, *“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”*

What a sweet resource has been left by these wonderful men of old who made careful search, leaving us the inspired Scriptures for our encouragement, building hope which Peter calls a *“living hope.”*

Hope is alive. We live in hope. Sadly though, many churches have neglected this blessed hope of the New Testament, the coming of the Jesus.

Titus 2:13, *“While we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”*

1 Peter 1:12, *“It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.”*

There’s no longer any mystery regarding the Person, time, or place that the prophets wrote, as God’s time of revelation had come at the appointed time.

“The things” mentioned in verse 12 have become the fabric of the Gospel record and are cemented there by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

The prophetic ministry of the Major and Minor Prophets lives on. We thank these men for their dedicated service and faithfulness to God.

If any mystery remains, it’s the contemplation of the end of verse 12 where it says that *“Even angels long to look into these things.”*

2 Peter 1:20-21, *“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*