

1 P E T E R

A V E R S E B Y V E R S E S T U D Y T H R O U G H P E T E R ' S E P I S T L E

SESSION OBJECTIVE: 1 PETER 1:10-12

To understand how the person and work of Jesus Christ was foretold in the Old Testament.

Retrospect or Hindsight?

You use the words more than likely, but what is the difference, if any, between hindsight and retrospect? We like to say things like, “Everything, in retrospect, is obvious,” or, “Hindsight is 2020.” But what is the difference? Retrospect simply means, “a survey or review of a past course of events or period of time.” Hindsight, on the other hand, means, “understanding of a situation or event only after it has happened or developed.” When we look back at some past event, we are using retrospect. When we understand the significance of that past event because of our present access to new data, we are using hindsight. In 1 Peter 1:10, Peter tells us that the prophets of the Old Testament wrote things that they themselves did not understand, but that with hindsight, we can see the significance because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Hindsight provides us the ability to know the fullness of God’s Old Testament prophetic writings. Passages that seemed to have a historical fulfillment, but became even more clear in Christ (something we call *typology*) is only clear because we see their writings with hindsight.

The Old Prophets

Peter writes about how the Gospel was prophesied in times past. Below is a brief breakdown of this passage.

CONCERNING SALVATION

Peter has just spent the first 9 verses unfolding God’s triune participation in the work of salvation (1 Pet. 1:2), as well as the fact that God has caused us to be born again (1 Pet. 1:3), and that though our future might

include pain and hardship, our ultimate hope is not in vain because Christ has conquered sin and death and will come back to make all things new in the final eschaton (1 Pet. 1:6-7). There is a present sense to our salvation, and a future sense as well. Now, Peter turns to the past. This salvation which we enjoy and which will come to its fullest fruition in the end began being proclaimed long before Jesus was born of a virgin.

WHICH PROPHETS?

One question that arises is, “which prophets did Peter have in mind?” Some scholars have attempted to argue that these were New Testament prophets, but this should be rejected for various reasons. One, the role of the prophet in the New Testament was markedly different than the role of the prophet in the Old Testament, and Peter’s words clearly yield an Old Testament understanding. Secondly, New Testament prophets knew the time of salvation was at hand. It makes little sense that they would have struggled to understand this, as Peter indicates.

On the contrary, Peter’s description here favors the Old Testament prophets. That they, “search and inquired carefully,” indicates that they did not fully understand what they were writing, but that they certainly tried to understand it. We see Daniel doing this, for example (Dan. 8:15; 12:8). Peter writes, “It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you” (1 Pet. 1:12). In other words, God revealed to the prophets that their ministry was ultimately not geared towards the people of their time, but for a future people. That is not to say that they did not believe in what they were prophesying; they were confident that God would bring to pass that which He revealed to them (Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:17; Deut. 18:15; Dan. 9:24–27; Joel 2:28; Hab. 2:1–3). However, they did not fully understand what this Messiah and His salvation would look like. That kind of clarity is given to us on this side of the cross. In this sense, we have a better understanding of God’s full redemptive plan than the Old Testament saints had, because we have access to the testimony of Jesus’ ministry and resurrection (hello, hindsight!).

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

How is it that the prophets of the Old Testament could speak so clearly regarding the coming Messiah? Their words were not their own, but they spoke by, “the Spirit of Christ in them” (1 Pet. 1:11). If there were any questions about the pre-incarnate nature of Jesus, this verse ought to put those doubts to rest. Jesus not only existed before creation, but His sacrifice was already made before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Jesus Himself said, “Before Abraham was, I AM (taking the covenant name of God for Himself)” (Jn. 8:58). In fact, it was Christ Himself who created the heavens and the earth (Col. 1:16; Jn. 1:3). With that in mind, it is not too difficult then to understand how the Spirit of Christ could fill the prophets with words regarding the Messiah’s coming.

One question might be, “Is there any difference between the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of God, or the Holy Spirit?” The answer, according to Paul, is that the two are one and the same: “You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him” (Rom. 8:9). Here, Paul uses *the Spirit of God* and *the Spirit of Christ* interchangeably. Jesus says regarding the Holy Spirit, “Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you” (Jn. 14:17). In Jesus’ words, if the Holy Spirit dwells in you, Jesus dwells in you. Coming back to Peter, Peter is saying that it was the Spirit of Christ that gave the words to the prophets of old to write, and that we are benefitted by their writings as we hear the Gospel being preached to us by the same Holy Spirit.

SUFFERING AND GLORY

Peter says that the prophets, carried by the Spirit of Christ, specifically, “predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.” As it turns out, this is a pattern that is common in the New Testament regarding Jesus. Jesus will suffer, and then be given glory. Luke 24:26 reads, “Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” Acts 26:22-23 says, “To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.” This pattern is predictable given what we know about one of the most popular Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53, often referred to as *The Suffering Servant*, depicts Jesus suffering victoriously. In fact, it is Jesus’ suffering and subsequent glory that gives us hope in our own struggles.

A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES

While not at all a comprehensive list, here are some Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

1. The Messiah would bring forth a new covenant (Jer. 31:31). This was fulfilled in Matthew 26:28 and Hebrew 12:24.
2. The Messiah would be forsaken, but ultimately vindicated (Ps. 22:1-31). This was fulfilled in Matthew 27:46 and Hebrews 2:11-12.
3. The Messiah would be rejected at the chief cornerstone (Ps. 118:22). This was fulfilled in Mark 12:10-11 and Acts 4:11-12.
4. The Messiah would bring good news to the poor, bind up the brokenhearted, and set captives free (Is. 61:1-2). This was fulfilled in Luke 4:16-21.
5. The Messiah would be born of a virgin (Is. 7:14). This was fulfilled in Matthew 1:22-23.
6. The Messiah would bear our sins and suffer in our place (Is. 53:10-13). This was fulfilled in Hebrews 9:28.
7. The Messiah would be preceded by Elijah the prophet (Mal. 4:5-6). This was fulfilled in Matthew 11:13-14.
8. The Messiah would be pierced (Zech. 12:10). This was fulfilled in Revelation 1:7.
9. The Messiah would come riding on a donkey (Zech. 9:9). This was fulfilled in Matthew 21:1-7.
10. The Messiah would be called out of Egypt like God’s Son (Hos. 11:1). This was fulfilled in Matthew 2:13-15.
11. The Messiah would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12–13). This was fulfilled in Matthew 26:14–15
12. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). This was fulfilled in Matthew 2:1-6.
13. The Messiah would hold the scepter as a ruler (Gen. 49:10). This was fulfilled in Matthew 2:6.

While there are many more, the point is sufficiently made: Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecies that, at the time they were given, were not understood.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read 1 Peter 1:10. What are were the Old Testament prophecies concerning?

2. Read 1 Peter 1:10. What prophets does Peter likely have in mind here? What does it mean that they, “searched and inquired carefully?”

Day Two

1. Read Daniel 8:15 and 12:8. What is Daniel seeking to do in these passages, and how does this connect with what Peter is saying?

2. Read 1 Peter 1:11. What does the, “person or time” refer to?

Day Three

1. Read 1 Peter 1:11. Who is the Spirit of Christ? (Hint: See above notes)

2. Read 1 Peter 1:12. Who were the prophets of the Old Testament serving? Who were they not serving?

Day Four

1. Read 1 Peter 1:12. What does it mean that angels long to look into the things spoken of by these prophets?

2. How has Peter spoken of our salvation in terms of past, present, future? Write your answer in your own words.

Week 4 Discussion: Fulfillment and Faith

A simple definition of faith is, “Taking God at His Word.” God, in His Word, has said a lot of things concerning the Messiah, and then we have seen in the New Testament how Jesus fulfills those prophecies. Therefore fulfillment prophecies in a very real sense help us have faith that Jesus is who He says He is. Talk as a group about the fulfillment passages at the end of this study, and how they make you feel.

1. Icebreaker: Were any of these fulfillment passages new to you? If so, which ones? What was your reaction when reading them for the first time?
2. Why do these fulfillment passages matter?
3. How important is it to you that Jesus fulfills these prophecies?
4. Is it easy to take God at His Word when His Word is made clear? Why or why not?
5. How does studying the Old Testament help you understand the New Testament? Did the Old Testament matter to the New Testament authors? How do you know?

6. Are there any fulfillment passages that you struggle with? If so, which ones and why?

Takeaways:

1. Salvation is was spoken of by the Old Testament prophets even though they didn't fully understand it.
2. The Old Testament prophets were carried along by the Spirit of Christ.

PRAYER REQUESTS: