

The Searching Prophets

(1 Peter 1:10-12)

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Have you ever searched for something but could not find it? How about your car keys? You may have searched and searched for them and still could not remember or figure out what you did with them. In this study we want to discuss what the prophets of old searched or inquired about during the days and times in which they lived.

1 Peter 1:10-12 records:

“Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching 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. Unto whom it was revealed, 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; which things the angels desire to look into.”

Peter had been speaking about the believer’s final salvation, which deals with the future aspect of the believer’s deliverance – the redemption and glorification of their human body. Listen to what Peter says about the believer’s future hope within the framework of this passage.

1 Peter 1:5

“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

1 Peter 1:9

“Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

Peter has in view the final aspect of our salvation, which involves the glorification, or magnificence of the new body that we will receive someday when we are either raptured or resurrected at the coming of Christ. Our salvation has an eschatological feature attached to it. The believer’s final salvation is glorification, which will take place at the coming of Christ in the air for believers (Romans 8:18; 23). This is the same hope that Paul possessed (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

“O that will be glory for me,
Glory for me, glory for me.
When by His grace I shall look on His face,
That will be glory, glory for me.”

With this thought of our final salvation in view (glorification) Peter now turns his attention to the Old Testament prophets to explain how they inquired and searched about this salvation.

1 Peter 1:10 says:

“Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.”

Of course, this relates back to what Peter had just previously said about salvation or the end of our salvation, which was glorification. The text seems to suggest that the Old Testament prophets from Moses to Malachi were actually interested in their own glorification or final salvation. In other words, they looked forward to their own final salvation when they too would receive their resurrected and glorified body at the coming of Christ. However, it is very clear that the Old Testament saints and prophets will not receive their glorified body until the end of the tribulation days when Jesus returns to earth (Daniel 12:2; Isaiah 26:19; Job 19:25-26; Revelation 11:18). Nevertheless, Peter says that the prophets were interested about their own glorification or final salvation. It was the Old Testament prophets as a class of individuals that conducted an exhaustive inquiry and search into their own writings to try and discover something about their final salvation which was rooted in their bodily resurrection and glorification.

The Old Testament saints had a hope of a glorious future and new body like us today who know the Lord. However, they were not sure when or what time this would occur. They “inquired” (investigated) and “searched diligently” (explored) to find out the answer to when they would receive their glorified body or final salvation. The word “inquired” pictures an attitude of zealous consideration and reflection. The Greek construction for “searched diligently” was used of a dog sniffing out something with his nose. It implied intense and diligent searching. They were searching for the scriptures that would provide the answers to their questions. Like Daniel, they devoted themselves to diligent study, searching and reflection upon the sacred writings (Daniel 9:1-3). They scrutinized earlier Scriptures and carefully searched their own prophecies for answers in regards to their own glorification.

The prophecies taught that their final salvation would take place at the return of Christ to earth but they still could not pinpoint when this return would occur since they saw two Messiahs in their writings – the suffering Messiah and kingly Messiah. These prophets sought diligently and carefully their own Spirit-guided writings to try and discover the exact timing of when their glorification would occur. Amazingly, the prophets predicted the future but they could not understand when their final salvation or glorification would take place in this prophetic program.

The Search Is On

What were they searching for and what were they so diligently investigating? Since Christ would come as a Suffering Messiah (Isaiah 53) and coming King in great power and glory (Isaiah 63:1-5), they were obviously investigating and searching for the answer concerning which Messiah would appear on the scene first. Would it be the suffering One and then the Kingly Messiah? Or would it be the kingly Messiah and then the suffering One. The timing of Messiah's appearance would make a difference in relationship to their own glorification or final salvation. The Old Testament picture was not clear concerning the timing of Christ's death and return in glory. Therefore, the prophets were confused about when their salvation or glorification would take place. So they investigated and searched the Old Testament prophecies for the answers concerning which Messiah would appear and when they would experience their glory or final salvation with Him.

Two Mountain Peaks

The Old Testament prophets saw two mountain peaks – Mount Calvary (sacrificial Lamb and the cross – Psalm 22) and Mount of Olives (return of Christ in glory as King - Zech. 14:4). But they could not make the connection between these two events. They could only see the two mountain peaks from a distance, which represent two comings of Christ into the world. They saw the incarnation and subsequent death of the Messiah. But they also saw the coming glory of Messiah as King. From a distance two mountain peaks can look very close together or side by side and somewhat blended together. But as you get closer to those mountains you will discover that they are really far apart with a large amount of distance between the two. As the Old Testament prophets looked at the two mountain peaks of Christ's comings, His suffering and glory, it appeared that they were close together. In fact, some of the prophecies contained both mountain peaks or comings in the same prophetic stroke of the pen (Isaiah 9:6-7; 61:2). The prophets looked into the future and saw the suffering of Christ and the glory of Christ as two mountain peaks, which appeared to be right together. It's no wonder that the prophets were confused. They looked at the mountains from a distance but could not see the large gap of time (sacred secret of the church age) between the two mountains of Christ's suffering and kingdom.

Frederick Zollicoffer Browne summarized this mountain analogy well when he said: "Of the two mountain peaks of prophecy, so to speak, in the line of vision of Isaiah and the other prophets of Israel, the lower peak, and the one nearer to the prophets, was the one upon whose top was a cross. In the vision of the 9th chapter, Isaiah's eye swept over and beyond this first peak to the top of the second and more distant mountain. There he saw a throne, and concerning the One who was to sit upon that throne, said: "The government shall be upon his shoulder." The prophet did not see and therefore did not speak of the valley of the New Testament Church and of the

Dispensation of Grace which is between the two mountains, and which is visible to us as we see it from the side, as it were, in the full light of the New Testament revelation.”

So what was the problem? The problem was this. The prophets could not fully understand the connection between the two mountain peaks. How could a Messiah suffer and die and also be a ruling or reigning king? They could not understand why they would write about the death of the suffering Messiah and at the same time write about the glory of the kingly Messiah. ***The ignorance of the human authors was an ignorance, not of the subject matter concerning the coming sacrifice and future kingdom glory, but of the times when these prophecies would be fulfilled.*** The text says that the prophets were curious about “what manner of time” (1 Peter 1:11) these events would take place. The prophets were searching for what phase or program the Messiah would initiate when He first comes and the time factor connected with that program. It seems that the prophets understood what they wrote about in connection with the coming Redeemer and coming kingdom but not the timing of these events or when they would take place and what would separate these two events? They wondered what would transpire in between these events that could make these two events possible? Furthermore, which Messiah would come first – a King or Lamb? Which order would they take place and how would they fit together in God’s plan? In addition, what would be the exact timing of these events, particularly the coming of the King, so that the prophets could gauge when their final salvation or glorification would take place?

Robert Johnstone even reflects upon the questions, contradictions and confusion of the prophets concerning Messiah’s salvation work when he says:

“Many of the facts revealed to them respecting Messiah and His work were so strange in themselves, and especially in their combination, that marvel was natural as to what class of circumstances could bring about the realization of such predictions as that the Christ was to be “cut off out of the land of the living” – and to “prolong His days,” - “to be forsaken,” “bruised,” “put to grief” by Jehovah – and to be His “elect,” in whom His soul delighted,” – and other similar seeming mutual contradictions.”

The prophets knew of the Messiah’s death and resurrection and coming kingdom glory. But how all of the saving and prophetic plan would fit together was a puzzling question to them. When would His death take place? When would His resurrection take place? At what point would the Messiah establish the kingdom? Would it be before His death and resurrection or after these things have occurred? How could both these pictures of the suffering and reigning Messiah be possible if there was only one future Messiah? *The problem of the prophets was to relate the dual aspect of Messiah’s role to one person.*

The prophets might read Isaiah's prophecy in chapter 53 and wonder when these events would take place in the sequence of God's future program and how they would be tied together in relationship to Messiah's coming into the world? At what point in time would this remnant of Jews accept the Messiah? Would it be prior to the Messiah's death or after His suffering? Would it take place following the establishment of the kingdom? The prophets were puzzled about many things and the apparent time gaps and the unexplainable problems that the Old Testament prophecies revealed.

Little did they realize that an entire age of at least 2,000 years would transpire between the suffering of Messiah and the glory of Messiah in His earthly reign (Ephesians 3:3-10). They were unaware that a secret departure or rapture of church age saints would occur before the kingdom would arrive on earth (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). They did not know that the Messiah's coming would be divided into two phases separated by thousands of years – His birth and sacrificial coming and then later His return. Nor did they contemplate that the Messiah would return for His saints in the rapture and then seven years later He would return with His saints in His revelation appearance to earth. None of these time elements were revealed to the prophets of old and because of this there were many unanswered questions.

A Lost Ear

Peter is here testifying to the perplexity of the prophets over the seeming paradox in the prophetic writings concerning His suffering and His glory. I don't think Peter was being too hard on the prophets simply because in his earlier days of ministry with Christ he could not understand the nature of the Messiah's role and the timing of the Messiah's kingly glory. This is why Peter pulled out the sword and cut off the right ear of the servant of the high priest who was trying to take Jesus away. John 18:10-11 gives us the account as the soldiers come to arrest Jesus. This action would begin the persecution and eventually the pangs of the cross of Christ.

“Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”

Peter was a better fisherman than a swordsman! No doubt he was aiming for the head but hit the ear. Apparently Peter must have thought that Jesus was going to bring in His kingdom. He had kingdom fever. This is why He was ready to fight for the Lord. Peter's military adventure suggests that he was confused in regards to Messiah's role. Peter failed to see that Messiah's *cross* had to precede His *crown*. Christ needed to suffer before He could reign. In spite of constant teaching about His approaching death (3:14; 8:28; 12:32-33; cf. Luke 9:22) the disciples did not understand its exact timing. Like the Emmaus disciples, they were not considering all that the Old Testament prophets did teach in regards to the suffering of the Messiah (Luke 24:25). Like many

of the people of Christ's day, they seemed to have a one-track mind about the Messiah coming to set up His earthly kingdom. The people were more interested in their freedom from Rome than their freedom from sin's bondage.

Which Messiah?

John 6:14-15 records:

"Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone."

The people at large could not see the significance of the Savior's death, when He first arrived on the scene. They could not see past the military Messiah concept. Their expectation of the Messiah was one-sided. The sacrificial and lowly Jesus simply did not conform to the crowd's messianic expectations. This seems to be true in connection with the disciple's understanding of Christ's role as King. They had tunnel vision and only wanted to see what they wanted to see concerning the Old Testament revelation of His kingly glory. Edersheim tells us that the Jews constantly neglected the prophecies of the suffering Messiah and emphasized those telling of His majestic Kingship. The people were looking for a reigning Messiah and not a suffering Messiah. You will remember that when Jesus came riding in on colt the people also shouted that Jesus was their long awaited King of Israel. Who can forget this account?

John 12:12-16

"On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed *is* the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and *that* they had done these things unto him."

What didn't the disciples understand about the actions of the people presenting Jesus as King? It would seem that they were somewhat confused to the role of the Messiah. Even the Jewish theologians were not clear in their minds concerning the sufferings of the Messiah and the glorious kingdom that the prophets announced. Some teachers actually held that there were two Messiahs, one who would suffer and one who would reign. So with the events of Christ's kingly entrance into Jerusalem, the disciples did not understand how Jesus could be king and bring in the kingdom after He had already shared with them about His death and dying (John 2:19, 3:14). The disciples did not fully understand all the actions of Jesus and all the words that Jesus taught them. It

would not be until after His resurrection that their eyes would begin to really see and understand all that he had taught them and when Jesus had actually planned to rule as the coming King. These are the things, which they understood more fully after Christ's resurrection from the dead and as a result of the Spirit's teaching ministry.

As Peter was writing his epistle he could easily identify and understand what the Old Testament prophets were going through. He could write his own epistle knowing how they were trying to put the pieces of the puzzle together concerning the timing of Messiah's suffering and glory. He had similar struggles about this timing and role of Messiah even when the Messiah was in his presence. As Peter wrote he was probably thinking back to that incident with the sword. Even Peter did not have all the pieces together about the nature of Messiah's role during those days of ministry with the Lord. He could sympathize with the Old Testament prophets.

Dr. C. I. Scofield has summarized the problem concerning the two lines of prophecy about the Messiah in the following way:

“Whoever carefully considers Old Testament prophecies must be struck by two contrasting, and seemingly contradictory, lines of prediction concerning the coming Messiah. One body of prediction speaks of Him as coming in weakness and humiliation, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, a root out of dry ground, having no form nor comeliness nor beauty that He should be desired. His visage is to be marred, His hands and feet pierced. He is to be forsaken of man and of God, and to make His grave with the wicked. See Isa 53, entire; Isa 7:14; Ps 22:1–18; Dan 9:26; Zech 13:6, 7; Mark 14:27. The other line of prophecy foretells a splendid and resistless sovereign, purging the earth with awful judgments, regathering dispersed Israel, restoring the throne of David in more than Solomon's splendor and introducing a reign of profound peace and perfect righteousness. See Isa 11:1, 2, 10–12; Deut 30:1–7; Isa 9:6, 7; Isa 24:21–23; Isa 40:9–11; Jer 23:5–8; Dan 7:13–14; Micah 5:2; Matt 1:1; 2:2 ; Luke 1:31–33.”

Not knowing which Messiah would appear on the scene made the timing of the Old Testament prophet's glorification or final salvation impossible to answer. There were many questions that could not be answered by the Old Testament prophecies alone. This is why there needed to be additional progressive revelation given in New Testament writings to unfold God's plan and timing concerning these events of Messiah's career. Many prophets writing about future events could not fully grasp all the details related to the end-time events. Only a later generation could piece the entire prophetic puzzle together in regards to the meaning and timing of Messiah's mission as additional progressive revelation was given about end-time events (See Daniel 12:4; 8-9). God spoke through Daniel to later generations that would understand more fully what Daniel wrote on the scroll. Daniel's prophecies would be more readable, understandable and relevant to those living during the end-times. In a similar way, the

Old Testament prophets did not understand the full chronological implications of their writings. The timing of Messiah's mission and the moral climate that would surround Christ's return to earth were not made known in the Old Testament revelation. Therefore, the prophets could not predict when their final salvation would come to fruition. They did not know the details and timing of these prophetic scenes. The Old Testament prophets were not given the details of prophetic chronology like we are today with the completed canon of Scripture.

Alan Macrae said:

"Since no part of God's revelation is ever incorrect, it becomes possible in the light of later revelations to go back to earlier ones and to see far more of the truth that they suggest than could be understood when they were first given. This fact is plainly taught in 1 Peter 1:10–12."

The Valley

Little did the prophets realize that a great valley existed between these two mountain peaks of Christ's coming. Between the two comings of Christ would occur a sacred secret of time known as the "dispensation of the grace of God" (church age) where Jews and Gentiles would be united together in the body of Christ – the New Testament church (Ephesians 3:1-13). This era of time has been going on for nearly two millenia.

Ephesians 3:5 states:

"Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men (saints of the past dispensation), as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets (New Testament prophets) by the Spirit."

Colossians 1:25-26

"Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; *Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints."

Ephesians 5:32

"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Romans 16:25

"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began."

In the New Testament a mystery is a truth not previously revealed, but now made known to the sons of men through the apostles and prophets of the New Testament. It is a truth that man could never have arrived at by his own intelligence but which God has graciously deigned to make known. These verses clearly teach that the truth of the

church was not known in the Old Testament period. It had been hidden from past ages and generations of people. This is because the church had not previously existed. Therefore, it is wrong to speak of the church as having begun with Adam or Abraham. The church began on the Day of Pentecost, and the truth about the church was revealed to the New Testament prophets and apostles as Scripture declares (Ephesians 3:5). There were no apostles in the Old Testament. Therefore, the apostles and prophets mentioned must be New Testament in their ministry. The church in the New Testament is not the same as Israel in the Old. It is something that never previously existed. It is new truth for a new age revealed by apostles and prophets who were living on New Testament ground.

In any event, it was this time period of the church that was unknown to the prophets and people of old and which caused them to be unsure about the timing of their own glorification and final salvation with the arrival of the kingdom. They could only see the mountain peaks but not the valley between or this era of time that has been going on for some 2,000 years now. And yet Peter says that they were “searching” and “investigating” (1 Peter 1:10) about this curious time factor which was not made known to them. The great separation of time that would transpire between Christ’s passion and glory was a mystery to them, which they could not see or understand. The event of Pentecost or the building of the Body of Christ (church) was not revealed to them in their prophecies. But they kept trying to search for the answers in their prophetic writings to no avail. This is because God did not reveal to the Old Testament prophets the valley that would exist between the two mountain peaks of Christ’s suffering and glory. The Old Testament prophets were trying to find the answers but they could not find the answers about this great parenthesis of time between the sufferings of Christ and His glory with their subsequent final salvation or glorification.

Jesus told His own disciples in Matthew 13:17:

“For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

Luke 10:24 records:

“For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.”

The Mysteries of the Kingdom

What are those things that Jesus revealed in the mystery parables about the kingdom (Matt. 13:11) which the Old Testament prophets, righteous men and kings desired to see and know? *The mysteries about the kingdom involve something not previously revealed about the nature of the messianic kingdom.* Evidently they refer to those key points about the earthly messianic kingdom that were not revealed to the Old

Testament saints. Things such as the *timing* of the kingdom's establishment upon earth and the *preparation* for the kingdom's arrival as well as what the *moral climate* will be upon earth when the kingdom finally arrives. It's these secret things about the earthly kingdom that Jesus revealed to His disciples. They were the sacred secrets about the establishment of the kingdom, which were not made known to those people living in the past generation.

Jesus was going to talk about what would take place prior to the kingdom's arrival on earth before the kingdom will finally be established. He is going to reveal the spiritual state of many people in the world before the kingdom arrives on earth. Many will reject the message of the kingdom as the parable of the sower reveals (13:3-8; 18-23). The world will be a mixture of good and evil as the parable of the wheat and tares unfold (Matt. 13:24-30). There will also be an unnatural and alarming growth of evil that will seemingly dominate everything as depicted in the parable of the mustard seed (Matt. 13:31-32). In time the evil nature of this intervening time, prior to the kingdom's arrival, will culminate into a leavened or evil monstrosity that defies God and all that is righteous (Matt. 13:33).

The inter-advent period of time that these parables represent would also result in the Messiah dying for the entire world, represented by the field (vs. 38) so that He might purchase a hidden treasure in this field. It's significant that Israel was likened to God's treasure (Exodus 19:5; Psalm 135:4). That Israel was a treasure to God was no secret to the Old Scriptures and prophets. So Israel as God's special treasure is not the secret being promoted in this parable. The secrecy about this parable is that Israel would be God's hidden treasure among the Gentile world and no longer be recognized as God's precious treasure. This is why the treasure of God's Israel or beloved people is explained as being hidden in the field. Today we see how the vast majority of mankind has lost sight of Israel as God's special and chosen people. But it would be this special treasure that Christ ("a man") would die for which would result in their redemption as typified by their past freedom from Egyptian bondage (Matt. 13:44). This redemption no doubt prophetically envisions Israel's salvation and restoration to the land at the arrival of the Messiah's return to establish the kingdom. This will be when He officially offers and grants this redemption price to His national people (Zechariah 12:10; 13:1). It's at this time that Israel will once again be displayed as God's treasure on earth.

The pearl of great price would naturally and prophetically speak of the church that Jesus would die for and purchase with His own blood (Matt. 13:45-46). The whole teaching and age of the church was a sacred secret unknown to past generations (Eph. 3:5). A pearl is formed by being joined to another living organism. Thus, the church is formed by being joined or linked to Christ's mystical body. But Christ, who is represented by this "merchant man," would die upon the cross securing the salvation of His church or precious bride (Eph. 5:25). This precious pearl would be formed by her

link to Him and His saving benefits. Likewise, the church would continue to grow in size as new people were added to Christ's body (Eph. 2:21).

God's earthly or national people and His New Testament bride were like a valuable treasure and costly pearl to the Messiah's heart. And the secrecy of Israel's hidden status as God's precious treasure in the world during this interim period and the formation of the church were not revealed to the Old Testament prophets.

In conclusion, the mystery form of the kingdom teaching would involve treasured teachings that are both new and old as revealed in the parable of the householder who bought out of his vault of safekeeping treasures that are both new and old (Matt. 13:51-52). The old treasures refer to those things that the Old Testament prophets previously heard about the messianic kingdom. The new treasures refer to those teachings that were new to the disciples concerning the spiritual climate and condition of the world prior to the establishment of the kingdom while the kingdom program is temporarily set aside or postponed.

These parables answer the prophet's searching questions concerning what would happen between Messiah's suffering and His kingly glory or between His cross and crown. They reveal what would take place in that large unknown valley which stretched between the two mountain peaks of Mount Calvary and the Mount of Olives. The prophets were not given Scriptures that would explain to them these secret trues and the course of events that would elapse before Christ's kingdom and their own glorification. They diligently searched their own writings for answers concerning the timing of their glorification or final salvation but could not make any conclusions as to when it would occur. Only when the secret trues in the inter-advent period are unlocked and properly understood could one have a proper understanding concerning the timing of Christ death, coming kingdom and the final salvation of Old Testament prophets and saints. The secret parables gave the answers that the searching prophets were looking for throughout the past centuries. This is because these secret events in this great parenthesis of time would give much needed details about how Christ would die upon the cross before His kingdom arrives and exactly what would occur prior to Christ's kingdom arrival. The parables revealed about the kingdom's postponement and the long period of time that would elapse before the glorification of the prophets could take place. *The timing of the prophet's own glorification could only be discovered by knowing what would take place in the sequence of events revealed in the mystery parables.* Of course, this information was withheld from the searching prophets of old.

In short, the mystery teachings about the kingdom of heaven covers that interim period of time between our Lord's rejection of His kingdom offer and His return to earth. The mystery period about the kingdom deals with that time period on earth when the kingdom is postponed and clarifies what will take place in this time period and what will

exist on earth prior to the kingdom's arrival. These parables reveal new truths about what would be occurring on planet earth prior to the kingdom's establishment, during the postponement period of the kingdom. These are truths that the searching prophets could not find. They did not know about the hidden treasure in the field or the pearl of great price. They were not told about the interim or interadvent period of time that would exist prior to the kingdom's arrival. This is what the prophets of long ago were diligently searching for and seeking to discover in their writings. They wanted to know at what time the kingdom would be arriving on earth and what the moral climate of the world would be like before it arrives so that they could come to a proper conclusion in regards to their final salvation. In essence, Jesus let the secret out in these parables. He unfolded to the disciples and you and me today those events that would transpire prior to the kingdom's arrival, which were not known by the prophets. The prophets searched to find out these things but could not discover the sacred secrets hidden in the valley between the two mountains (Mt. Calvary and Mt. of Olives) since they were left to another generation of believers.

Still Confused

It's interesting that even after Christ's death and resurrection the disciples themselves were still confused about this interim time period that would elapse before the kingdom's arrival. This is why they were asking if Jesus was about to restore His kingdom.

Acts 1:6

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"

Warren Wiersbe said:

"If the *disciples* were not clear about God's program, certainly the Old Testament *prophets* could be excused!"

In fact, the Lord was aware that in time the Holy Spirit would reveal to the disciple's deeper insight and understanding about the timing of the kingdom and the events that would unfold prior to its arrival on earth. This would come through the Spirit's illuminating and revelatory ministry to the disciple as they recorded later Scripture and were given fuller understanding about the truths that Jesus shared with them during His earthly ministry.

Acts 1:7

"And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

Some covenant theologians who reject the idea of a literal kingdom conclude from the Lord's response that the apostles had a false concept about a future literal kingdom to be established on earth. But this is a wrong assumption. Christ did not accuse them of this. The fact is, Christ taught the coming of an earthly, literal kingdom (Matt. 19:28; Luke 19:11-27; 22:28-30). Acts 1:3 confers that the Lord instructed the disciples about the "things pertaining to the kingdom of God" and gave them the right impression as to its character and future coming.

The kingdom of God is clearly the time that is coming, commonly called the Millennium, when God will burst into human history in a spectacular way to establish His rule on earth. This is what is meant by the term "kingdom of God" even as Jesus used this expression during His earthly ministry (see Matt. 19:24; 21:31; Mark 1:15; 9:47 Luke 9:27; 22:18; John 3:5). Though this topic was the subject of much of the Lord's teaching and preaching before the Cross, He saw fit to discuss it further during His 40 days of post-resurrection ministry (Acts 1:3). There were probably many things that Jesus wanted to reiterate and talk about concerning the exact timing of the kingdom's arrival and those events that would take place in the world in connection with the coming kingdom. It would be these teachings about the kingdom, presented during Christ's 40-day post-resurrection ministry, which the Holy Spirit would later use to bring clarification and new understanding about the timetable of the kingdom's arrival.

In Acts 1:7 the Lord did *not* correct them for expecting His literal reign on earth. Such a hope was completely justified in light of what Jesus taught. He simply told them they could not know when His kingdom would come ("times or the seasons"). It was information that the Spirit's post-Pentecost ministry would clarify to them. The expression "times or the seasons" is used in the Bible to refer to various events foretold by God that are yet to come to pass in connection with the nation of Israel and those events surrounding the kingdom's arrival to earth. Being of Jewish background, the disciples would understand the expression to refer to the crucial days prior to the establishment of Christ's thousand-year reign on earth. These are times, which deal with the climate of a society, and what will be taking place prior to Christ's coming.

What Jesus was talking about in Acts 1:7 was the *time* of the coming of the kingdom. The Greek word for "times" (*chronos*) basically describes duration of a certain time and no doubt relates to the duration of time that would elapse before the kingdom's arrival. The understanding of a postponement in the Lord's kingdom program would be expressed by this word. The word for "seasons" (*kairos*) can refer to both length of times and kinds of times. The Greek scholar, Thayer, comments on this word ("kairous") when saying that it involves: "A measure of time, a larger or smaller portion of time, hence; a fixed and definite time, the time when things are brought to crisis, the decisive epoch waited for to what time brings, the state of the times, and the things and events of time." In this setting it no doubt expresses the kind of events associated with the kingdom's arrival on earth. As we are about to see, these times and seasons are

similar to “what” time the prophets were searching for in connection with the kingdom’s arrival (1 Peter 1:11). They wanted to know the exact timing of the kingdom’s arrival in order to figure out when their glorification would take place. They were also concerned about “what manner of time” (what kind or sort or time) would precede the coming of Christ and usher in the kingdom and their final salvation. The prophets were trying to discover the exact time and circumstances surrounding Messiah’s coming.

Similarly, Jesus is saying that until He returns to the Father and the Spirit comes on Pentecost, His own disciples would not fully understand the length or duration or time that would exist before the kingdom arrives. Neither would they understand about the kinds of times or those critical periods of events within earth’s history that would precede the kingdom. These are the “times or the seasons” which the Father had set by His own power or authority (Acts 1:7). Later, through progressive revelation, more understanding would be made available concerning those various details revolving around God’s divine dealings with Israel in relationship to the coming kingdom.

The Times and the Seasons

Paul later writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:1:

“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.”

It’s very interesting that in the process of progressive revelation the disciples and you and me today would be able to understand and fully grasp about the “times and the seasons” which would precede the kingdom’s arrival on earth. Paul’s statement suggests that the later revelation given to New Testament believers should have brought understanding about these times and seasons. We know by completed revelation and the clear teaching of the Spirit of God that there will be an intervening time period before the kingdom’s arrival (church age). We also know all about those end-time prophetic events and climactic situations that the world will face prior to the kingdom’s arrival (Revelation 6-19). These are things that even the disciples could not full grasp until the later revelation and illumination would come through the Spirit’s ministry.

Jesus is simply saying in Acts 1:7 that it would not be until after Christ’s return to the Father and the post-Pentecost teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit that the disciples would begin to piece the puzzle together in regards to the exact timing of the kingdom’s arrival. After Pentecost they would begin to understand about the duration of time that would exist before the kingdom would arrive and those apocalyptic world events that would exist prior to the kingdom’s arrival. After Pentecost the Spirit would begin to show them about the “things to come” in regards to the perfect timing of Christ’s death, the interim period and when the kingdom would arrive.

Jesus said in John 16:13:

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”

It would take the illumination of the Spirit’s ministry to give the disciples a full understanding of the Messiah’s mystery parables, which He shared with them during His earthly ministry. I know that the disciples responded to Jesus by saying that they understood what Jesus said in these parables but this certainly was not the case (Matt. 13:51). There is almost a sense of understood humor revealed in the disciple’s response to Christ’s question. They were not in any position to fully grasp all of these things at this point of time.

As we have already discovered, the mystery parables related to the inter-advent period of time that would elapse between Christ’s suffering and glory. It would not be until the Spirit arrived on Pentecost that many of these things that Jesus spoke about would be made clear to the disciples. Through the Spirit’s illuminating ministry they would begin to understand how the nature and exact timing of the Messiah’s dual roles. They would understand that Christ had to first to die upon the cross before His kingdom could arrive. Many people would be saved through Christ’s sacrificial death so that at a later time they could enter this glorious kingdom rule of the Messiah. Not until after Christ’s ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell them would they be guided to understand the exact time and arrival of the kingdom following the church age. The teaching ministry of the Spirit would begin to clarify what the prophets of old were searching for and begin to fill in the gap of time and the order of the ages.

It would not be until after Pentecost that the disciples could piece the puzzle together and share it with us in the epistles. It’s only in the epistles that we understand about the great interim period of the church that would exist between the suffering of the Messiah and His coming glory as King. In some way Peter could personally identify with the searching prophets of the Old Testament era as they spent centuries trying to figure out the nature and timing of Messiah’s role when He comes into the world.

Looking Ahead

1 Peter 1:10

“Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.”

Peter goes on to say that the prophets of the Old Testament economy looked ahead and prophesied about the “grace that should come unto you.” ***The prophets knew that through grace they would receive their final salvation or glorification. But they also knew that this grace manifestation was something far off in the future***

that would be fulfilled in the actual death of the Messiah. The prophets knew that they were writing about something that would come about in the distant future – “the grace that should come unto you” or unto the believers in this present dispensation. And they knew that it would be through this specific manifestation of grace that final salvation or glory would eventually reach their own bodies, which were long dead and decayed.

The Old Testament prophets did not know about the present dispensational feature of the church dispensation and the parenthesis of time, known as the church age, which would elapse between the sufferings and the glory of the Messiah (Eph. 3:5; 5:32; Col. 1:25-26). However, they were aware that the sufferings of Christ or the actual fulfillment of the future death of the Messiah would take place and effect a future generation of believers in a specific way. *The prophets understood that the manifestation of the Messiah’s grace would be fully displayed and magnified and completed in the person and work of the actual Messiah.* They also understood that it would be through this personal grace manifestation that their own final salvation would eventually come to their bodies. *It makes good sense to understand that this manifestation of grace to a future generation or people (“unto you”) speaks of the personal appearance and manifestation of the Messiah upon the cross.* This is the grace that would be showered upon the future generation living today.

The prophets spoke of the gracious provision of the coming Messiah upon the cross and they understood that His sacrifice would have great blessing for a future generation (“for unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that preach the gospel” – vs. 12). The Gospel reports in our own day and time are about the finished transaction and historical facts of the sufferings of Christ and His gracious provision upon the cross. In one sense, the prophets of old ministered to us by foretelling about this coming manifestation of grace that would be displayed upon the cross. It would be this manifestation of grace that would effect their own final salvation or glorification. ***The actual salvation of a future generation of believers would not effect the prophet’s final salvation but the future display of grace, as seen in the coming Redeemer, would bring the promise of the prophet’s final salvation in connection with their own body.***

Thus, it makes better sense to identify this grace as a personal manifestation of the Messiah and His saving work upon the cross. It would be this “grace to come” that would promise final redemption of the body for all Old Testament believers. And this is what the Old Testament prophets were searching for in their writings. They wanted to know when their final salvation would occur in relationship to their body (“Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently”).

This “grace” no doubt refers to the personal suffering and salvation that the Messiah would provide for the lost human race by His gracious provision upon the cross. Grace

is actually personified in the personal work of Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11) who came as the Lamb of God (John 1:29). This is the personal manifestation of grace that would come unto the people. The Old Testament prophecies surely pointed to the magnificent display of grace that would be found in the suffering Messiah who is personified as the coming sacrificial Lamb. It seems that this is the grace that Peter has in mind since in the very next verse (vs. 11) he continues the thought about the “sufferings of Christ” and His glory. Grace is personified as the person and work of Christ.

Further support can be seen that this “grace” refers to Christ or the personal Messiah since the indefinite pronoun (“What”) when used with searching (“searching out”) in verse eleven points to a definite period of time, almost a date to be fixed, when the Messiah would arrive. This is what the prophets were searching for in their Old Testament writings. They were trying to discover the exact or definite timing of Messiah’s coming in regards to His suffering and glorious return as King. Only when they discover about these details could the prophets find the answers to their own final glorification. But they could not discover from their Old Testament writings the timing of these future events or when these events would occur. As a result, the prophets could not know when their glorification would take place. Indeed, grace is not merely a synonym for salvation but a specific and personal manifestation of grace that would be unfolded to a future generation and bring the promise of a future and final salvation to a generation of Old Testament believers that have already passed away. This manifestation of grace would be found in the finished work of the prophesied Messiah.

Jesus said in Luke 24:25-27:

“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”

Peter seems to suggest that this grace which the prophets wrote about was a particular grace destined for the saints who were now saved by grace in the present dispensation (“the grace that should come unto you”). This mention of grace signifies that believers in the present economy of the church age have something unique and for them alone when it comes to the grace of God. They would be *direct recipients* of the grace of God as seen in the actual death of the Messiah and be able to look back upon a completed redemption upon the cross.

Kenneth Wuest said:

“It was revealed to them (the prophets) that this truth concerning the particular grace that was destined for believers of this age, was not for them but for those of this dispensation.”

Apparently the grace has reference to the actual death of Jesus Christ which each believer can look back upon as a completed and accomplished fact. We can look back and understand that the Christ or Messiah has died for us and that the sacrifice of Christ was finally made. Grace as revealed in the New Testament economy is unique because it involves a *completed sacrifice* and the *actual fulfillment* to all the Old Testament sacrifices to which it pointed. In this way the Old Testament prophets prophesied of the particular grace that would come unto another generation of believers outside their own time frame. They spoke about the Messiah and His suffering and in one sense prophesied about a Christ that would actually come and die in order to save believers and make complete salvation and provision upon the cross. This speaks of “the grace that should come unto you.” It is a completed demonstration of God’s grace as found in the actual saving sacrifice of Christ upon the cross.

The Meaning of Prophecies

1 Peter 1:11

“Searching 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.”

We are once again introduced to the searching prophets. The prophets were interesting people. The prophetic writings that they recorded down became like a textbook to them. They began to search out and try to find out the meaning of what they wrote in connection with the time frame of Messiah’s coming to earth and their glorification or final salvation. *It should be noted that the process spoken about is the reversal of normal communications.* Normally the one doing the speaking or writing would know exactly what they were writing about. But in this case the prophets recorded their message and then with great care and diligence began studying and searching their own writings for the meaning of the prophetic message. The word “searching” (“ereunao”) means to examine or investigate. It is a present participle. They were constantly “seeking out” or “searching out” their own writings so as to find answers. They were repeatedly returning to their prophecies to try and solve the problems that were created by them. The prophets wanted to know the answer concerning which role the Messiah would take on when He comes to earth. They wanted to know about the timing of the Messiah’s mission. When would He come as King and when would He come as the suffering Messiah? They wanted to know the timing of the cross and the kingdom. This was important to them then since the Redeemer’s return to earth would usher in their own final salvation or glory. In order to discover what time their final salvation (resurrection and glorified body) would take place they needed to try and discover what program (kingdom or cross) the Messiah would initiate when He comes into the world the first time. These prophets were intense about their study as they tried to understand the times. But the prophets of old could not understand how the two comings of Messiah (suffering & glory) would fit

together in God's future plan and what would separate these two events. This made the prophets search their own writings to find the answers.

The Old Testament prophets reached beyond their prophetic gift and they tried to find the answers to the question about the timing of these events and what separated them. As stated earlier, usually a writer has a full understanding of his concepts clearly in his mind and uses his words to communicate a message he fully understands. But the process of the prophets writing down prophetic information was different. Instead of fully understanding the message that they were communicating they had to begin studying and searching their own writings to try and discover what the mission of Messiah would be when He comes into the world and the timetable connected to this mission. Would the Messiah come as a Lamb or a King? Furthermore, the prophets wanted to know what kind of moral condition or climate would be in existence upon planet earth when Messiah returns.

Mason remarks:

"They (the prophets) were aware that they were speaking of a Messiah, but who the man should be who would hold that office (a King or Lamb), or at what period of their history (conditions of their times) he would arise was what they longed to know."

Their basic concern and constant searching ("seeking out") was in relationship to a time which is specified as a specific time by the use of the pronoun ("What" - eis). This was the prophet's basic problem. It was a problem that dealt with time. They were also concerned about "what manner of time" (what kind or sort) would precede the coming of Christ and usher in the kingdom and their final salvation. Simon Kistemaker says, "they were trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Holy Spirit spoke." In other words, they searched for the exact timing ("what time") of the Messiah's coming in relationship to His suffering and kingdom rule. As stated earlier, the indefinite pronoun ("What") when used with searching ("searching out") in verse eleven points to a definite period of time, almost a date to be fixed, when the Messiah would arrive in both His passion and glory. They were searching more literally "unto a specific time." This is what the prophets were searching for in their Old Testament writings. They were trying to discover the exact or definite timing of His coming in regards to His suffering and glorious return as King. But they could not find the timing answer from their own prophecies. Would He return as King before He was sacrificed upon the cross? Or would He come as the sacrifice and later the reigning mighty King? They also wondered what amount of time would elapse between these two contradicting events. This was all a mystery to them.

The prophets also wanted to know about the kind of circumstances ("what manner or kind of time") would be existing on planet earth when their own promised salvation would take place in the glorious return of the Messiah. According to the Greek understanding of this word the general outward circumstances of the time are in view.

In other words, the prophets wondered what conditions would be like on earth before the kingdom would arrive on planet earth. Of course, the wickedness of the earth prior to Christ's return to earth is described in the New Testament revelation as great time of apostasy, wickedness and independence (Jude 14-16; Matthew 24:37-39). Even the disciples as they were gathering understanding wanted to know about the "when" and the "what" surrounding Christ's return to earth.

Matthew 24:3 says:

"And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, **when** shall these things be? and **what shall be** the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

The disciples were interested in when the Messiah would return and what would be taking place in the world during this time prior to His return. Like the Old Testament prophets, they too wanted to understand about the timing of Messiah's mission and the circumstances surrounding the prophecies of Messiah's return. Like the Old Testament prophets, the disciples found it very difficult concerning the meaning and timing of a suffering and then glorified Messiah.

Alan Stibbs writes:

"They (Old Testament prophets) tried by search and investigation to discover more concerning the date and the character of the times thus indicated."

George Cramer said:

"The person of their prophecy (Old Testament prophets) was not enigmatic but the relative time and the religious and cultural climate were not at all obvious."

In other words, these prophets wondered which Messiah would be arrive on the world scene or what role the Messiah would display when He comes into the world. At what point would He die and at what point would He rule in power and kingliness. The prophets knew that their final salvation revolved around the return of Messiah to earth but when this would occur was a mystery to them. They could not picture to which Messiah would appear and what the timing of His program would be. They were trying to discover about this timing issue and what the circumstances of the world might be like before He returns to earth to better gauge the time of their final salvation in accordance with world events. These prophets wondered about what kind of political, religious and moral climate the world would be facing when the Messiah would return and their final salvation would come.

Kenneth Wuest makes a valuable contribution to this difficult section of Scripture:

"What they looked for was as to *what time* or if they could not find that, *what kind of time* would usher in this particular unique salvation. The answer to their question would throw light upon the character of that salvation."

A Ray of Hope

We read about the great prophecy in Genesis 3:15 where the Lord told Adam in a few words how the seed of the serpent would bruise the heel of the Redeemer but how the Redeemer would crush the head of the serpent. There was a ray of hope peering over the horizon of the future ages! However, no date or time was included when this would occur. The same was true about the other great prophecies regarding Messiah's suffering and kingdom. The timing, order and sequence were not made known to the Old Testament prophets. The difference between Old and New Testament prophets was that the Old Testament prophets could not make the distinction between Christ's suffering and glory while the New Testament apostles and prophets were in the position of being able to understand the distinction and the timing of Christ's suffering and coming glory. Like Daniel, the Old Testament prophets were not in the position to understand all the details that they wrote about. Progressive revelation was needed in New Testament writings to fill in the gaps and shed light on end-time events (note Daniel 12:4,9).

In any event, the Old Testament prophets searched their own writings to try and discover when the Messiah would come or when the grace would be manifested to a future generation of people. They wondered what would take place first so that they might zero in on their own future glory or when they will be resurrected and enter into their final salvation of a glorified body.

In Job 19:25-26, the man of God cried out:

“For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth: And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”

All of the prophets were aware this future glory and final salvation from sin and death which would take place in the day of their resurrection. But what they could not figure out was when this glory would be ushered in. Like Martha, they knew that their resurrection would occur on the “last day” in connection with Christ's kingdom glory (John 11:24). The problem was to try and discover at what time this “last day” or kingdom glory would finally arrive. When would they enter into this glory in relationship to Messiah's plan and movements? It was difficult for them to see the order and timing of Messiah's program and when their final salvation would fit into this plan.

Robert Johnstone has written:

“We are here told what were those points with respect to salvation as to which the prophets ‘made diligent inquiry and search.’ The coming of a great Deliverer was made known to them, - not a little also, as the prophetic ages rolled on, with regard to the

glory of His person and nature of His work; but the *time* of the deliverance they were not told.”

This is especially true in relationship to their time of deliverance, when they would enter into their final state of salvation and glorification. When Jesus came to earth, the Jewish teachers were awaiting a conquering Messiah who would defeat Israel’s enemies and establish the glorious kingdom promised to David. They were looking for the promised kingdom as prophesied by the prophets. They thought they had the timetable all figured out. It would seem that they knew something that the searching prophets did not know! But they did not know more than the searching prophets of old. They simply had tunnel vision in regards to the prophecy about His kingdom.

1 Peter 1:11 once again states:

“Searching what (what specific time), or what manner of time (what kind of time or what the world circumstances will be like at Messiah’s return) the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”

Please note that the prophets spoke of both the suffering and the glory of Christ. The plural word “sufferings” could comprehend all the painful experiences that the Messiah passed through during His passion and hanging upon the cross. These sufferings would include such things as hatred by his people, betrayal by his friends, being forsaken by his flock, the thorns, the beating, the blood, the humility, the thirst and the separation from the Father. It’s very interesting that within the grammatical construction the word “glory” is also plural. It is the only time in the New Testament that this plural form of “glories” is seen. It could be rightly translated “glories” which obviously refers to the various stages of our Lord’s triumph and steps of glorification. His triumph is best described as glories! This would include the glory of His resurrection, the glory of His ascension, the glory of His resumption on the Father’s throne (John 17:5; Heb. 1:3; Rev. 3:21) and the culminating glory of His Second Coming when the Old Testament saints would enter their own final salvation or future glory of a resurrected and redeemed body (Matt. 24:27-30 with Daniel 12:2-3). Peter’s readers would be encouraged by this reminder that Christ’s suffering was followed by glory. They too would experience glory after their suffering (1 Peter 5:10).

Harry Ironside wrote this about the searching prophets:

“They wrote as the Spirit directed concerning ‘the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow,’ but they had no way of knowing the exact time when these things were to be fulfilled; nor could they see the long period (this entire present age) that was to elapse between the cross and the glory of the Redeemer.”

It’s also interesting to note that in these passages Peter teaches the doctrine of verbal inspiration (“the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify”). Peter also teaches the

preexistence of Christ since the “Spirit of Christ” was seen in these prophets. The wording of the text indicates that constant interaction between the prophets and the Spirit took place. This is important to understand and sheds light on the accuracy of their prophecies. Please note that it was the Spirit of Christ, rather than the prophets themselves, that was prophesying (see also 2 Peter 1:20-21). The prophets were mouthpieces for God, not inventors of their own ideas. It’s interesting to discover that the Holy Spirit was involved in the Old Testament message (1 Peter 1:11) and the New Testament preachers who shared the message of the Gospel (1 Peter 1:12). Both were empowered and directed by the Spirit to do the work that God called them to do.

D. Edmond Hiebert said:

“The Spirit who used the Old Testament prophets to predict Messiah’s coming also used the New Testament preachers to proclaim the fact of His coming.”

Alan Stibbs also wrote:

“It is these very things which, now that the time of their fulfillment has come, have been announced by preachers of the gospel, who have been empowered to do so by the same Holy Spirit, especially sent from heaven in order to equip them to bear witness.”

The Holy Spirit kept pointing out to the prophets this two-fold message: “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” The words are “kept on pointing out” (force of the imperfect tense of the Greek verb). The prophets message was summed up in the “sufferings and glory” of the Messiah (vs. 11). Luke testifies to this as well.

Luke 24:25-26

“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”

Future Generations

1 Peter 1:12 goes on to say:

“Unto whom it was revealed, 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; which things the angels desire to look into.”

The prophets knew that what they wrote about had to do with another day and coming generation. They wrote about a particular manifestation of grace that would one day be experienced by another generation. Please notice the repeated occurrence of the future generation – (“unto you - vs. 10); (“unto us” - vs. 12) and (“unto you” – vs. 12). Yes, the Old Testament prophets were ministering or “serving” future generations of people who would one-day fall into the blessings which they wrote about in their

prophecies – mainly the blessing of coming salvation through the Redeemer. *In some way the prophets of old “served” the interest of other people who at some unknown future time would benefit from what they prophesied about concerning the Messiah.* The prophets were faithful stewards of God’s grace as they served mankind. They were not serving themselves as the text says (“not unto themselves”) but a future generation. They served all those people who would directly benefit from Messiah’s sacrificial coming. ***The prophets served us in the sense that they were really writing for those who would be living on the other side of the cross and were explaining to us about the glorious salvation that we could receive when the Messiah comes.*** Also, in a secondary sense, their prophecies about the Messiah would be a refreshing reminder to us today of God’s unalterable plan of salvation. We can also benefit from their writings as we see God’s unchanging plan of redemption for lost mankind.

The expression “Unto whom it was revealed” (vs. 12) exegetically relates back to the theme that is on Peter’s mind concerning the glorification and grace that the prophets spoke about during Old Testament times. And it was this theme of final salvation and grace through the coming Redeemer that was revealed unto these Old Testament prophets. It is also this same theme of salvation and grace that the angels desire to investigate and experience.

It was revealed to the Old Testament prophets (“Unto whom it was revealed” – vs. 12) that their ministry would most directly profit those for whom the foretold grace was intended (vs. 10). How this was revealed to them is not stated. Perhaps it was the result of investigating their own writings or by the direct ministry of the Spirit or some supernatural means (see Dan. 10:14). More likely it was a combination of both the Spirit and their study of the Scriptures. This may suggest that the prophets actually knew that the repeated promises of a coming Redeemer would not be fulfilled in their own day and time but in another future generation. It seems that they knew that the promise of the Messiah’s coming would not have a historical fulfillment in their own day. It would have a fulfillment in a future generation who would experience the immediate blessings of salvation through the Messiah.

In other words, the Messianic predictions were not for them but for a future age that would benefit from the Messiah’s actual arrival and experience His saving work directly applied to their lives through His completed sacrificial death upon the cross. The word “minister” means to serve. And Peter was saying that the Old Testament prophets were serving future generation of believers who would be living in a different time period in which they prophesied. This information about serving future generations came to the prophets in a general way as they spoke about the future Messiah. Here are a few examples to demonstrate how the prophets knew about a coming Messiah or Savior and how their prophecies were serving future generations of believers by predicting of this saving Messiah.

Deuteronomy 18:15

“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.”

Peter proclaimed in Acts 2:31:

“He (David) seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.”

Paul said in Galatians 3:8:

“And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.”

Jesus said in John 8:56:

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad.”

Even Balaam said in Numbers 24:17:

“I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.”

The writer of Hebrews tells us this truth concerning the Old Testament saints:

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but **having seen** them afar off, and were **persuaded** of *them*, and **embraced** *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

The old writer Robert Leighton beautifully described how the prophets prophesied about the coming Christ when saying:

“This sweet stream of their doctrine did, as the rivers, make its own banks fertile and pleasant as it ran by, and flowed still forward to after-ages, and by the confluence of more such prophecies, grew greater as it went, till it fell in with the main current of the Gospel in the New Testament, both acted and preached by the Great Prophet himself whom they foretold as *to come*, and recorded by his Apostles and Evangelists, and thus united into one river, clear as crystal.”

Before the Cross

1 Peter 1:12 says:

“... which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.”

The prophets knew more about the coming salvation through the suffering Messiah than we give them credit for in some of our dispensational circles. But they also knew that their prophecies reached far beyond their own times, and even beyond the bounds of their own nation. Their prophecies would have special meaning to a future generation who would be living in the time of their actual fulfillment. They would also have special meaning when added revelation would be given concerning the exact timing of these events in God's sovereign program. ***Peter's point is that the objects of prophetic inquiry in regards to the suffering of the Messiah and His glorious return in power have now been openly proclaimed and understood by the preaching of the apostles and the New Testament teachers and evangelists of the Gospel ("by them").*** The New Testament teachers have announced the message of the Gospel as being fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, they have a new understanding in regards to the timing of Christ's suffering and kingdom glory. In other words, in the present time period in which we live, New Testament preaches and teachers of the Gospel have the privilege of seeing the full picture. They can preach about the Lamb that was already slain and the kingdom glory that will eventually be established following a long interim period of time that has already lasted for some 2,000 years.

In verse twelve Peter once again stresses the need for the post-Pentecost ministry of the Spirit ("Holy Ghost sent down from heaven") to bring this new truth and revelation to people living on New Testament ground. It would take the illuminating or teaching ministry of the Spirit of God to make sense out of the Scriptures and bring understanding to New Testament saints about the timing of Christ's suffering and glory.

The Old Testament prophets who wrote of the coming of salvation (1 Peter 1:10-11) knew it was a future Savior who would come. Thus, they were really writing for those who are on this side of the cross or those who have preached the gospel in the present grace economy in which we now live. The New Testament apostles and preachers of the Gospel have the privilege of proclaiming ("reporting unto you") that the messianic prophecies written by the Old Testament prophets had come to pass in the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. They also have the privilege to gather together all the facts related to the timing and arrival of the earthly kingdom, which would result in the glory of the Old Testament prophets.

How marvelous are these provisions of Christ! How wonderful is the completed salvation through the sacrifice of Christ! The prophetic messages of the prophets of old would give way to the present messages of Gospel preachers reporting about the record of a completed sacrifice and Gospel message.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

This is the fulfillment of the prophet's messages. It is the grand finale of the prophecies dealing with the suffering Savior. *The grace that the prophet's spoke about has come to this generation of believers and today we look into the sacred Scriptures of the New Testament and see it as an accomplished fact instead of a future revelation as the prophets foretold.* How wonderful it is to be standing on this side of the cross! We can see grace fully displayed in the actual death and saving provision of Christ. We have seen and experienced first hand the fulfillment of those repeated messianic promises of a coming Savior, which the prophet's of long ago spoke about but never experienced themselves. They could only hope that it might transpire in their times but somehow they knew that it would only come to pass in the future and benefit another generation far beyond the reaches of their own day.

Hebrews 11:13

“These all died in faith, **not having received the promises**, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

Hebrews 11:39-40

“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, **received not the promise**: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

The Old Testament saints did not live to see the Advent of the long awaited Messiah or to enjoy the immediate and finished blessings that would flow from His present day saving ministry. The saints of olden days did not receive the promised fulfillment about a coming Redeemer but they did receive the securing benefits of His death upon the cross along with all “us” who are alive today and who by faith look back upon an accomplished redemption. *The saints and prophets of old missed the promised fulfillment of the coming Redeemer but not the promise and experience of salvation through the coming Redeemer.* The spirits of Old Testament saints have been made perfect in the presence of the Lord in that heavenly Jerusalem of glory because of the salvation provided through the coming Redeemer (Hebrews 12:23).

Believers today can see grace as an accomplished redemption instead of a searching question in regards to when Messiah will actually manifest this grace. Present day believers are privileged to see grace in its fullest saving wonder through the Messiah's actual death upon the cross. We live in the day when the serpent's head has been crushed by the death of our blessed Redeemer. We no longer must be puzzled concerning which Messiah will appear on the world scene first. We know that in the plan of God it was the suffering Messiah – the "lamb without spot

or blemish" (1 Peter 1:18-19). We now know that the kingdom will arrive after the death of the Lamb of God. Furthermore, we can also know the period of time and world conditions that will exist on earth prior to the kingdom's arrival by what Jesus revealed in the New Testament mystery form about the kingdom. We can know about the timing of the prophet's final salvation. It will occur after the Messiah's death and after an interim period of time known as the mysteries of the kingdom. Peter was speaking about the final salvation of saints when he introduced this section of Scripture about the prophets. The prophets of old did not know the timing of the kingdom's arrival and what length of time would elapse between the suffering of Messiah (Psalm 22; Isa. 53) and the reign of Messiah (Isa. 9:6-7; 11:2-5). Therefore, they could not be sure about their own final salvation or glorification since it was associated with the kingdom's arrival. They could not see which mountain would come first (Mt. Calvary or Mt. of Olives) and what was in between the mountains - the church age and the mysteries of the kingdom which have been going on for nearly two thousand years.

Present day saints know much more than the searching prophets of old could ever find out or discover. We can know what the prophets searched for because we have the answers in New Testament revelation and the exact time when the prophecies regarding Messiah's passion and glory will be fulfilled. God has given us the completed sacrifice and the complete Scriptures to verify His wonderful plan of redemption and the timing of this plan in connection with the future reign of Messiah. Believers today can be grateful for Old Testament prophecies and allow them to provide hope for their lives today. Since the prophecies about Messiah's death and redemption as Savior have been literally fulfilled we can be assured that the other prophecies revolving around His return to earth as King will also be literally fulfilled (Rev. 19:16).

The privilege of living in the age of fulfillment should overwhelm us! We are a privileged people to have the puzzle pieced together in connection with Christ's suffering and future glory as King. We have the privilege of preaching a Gospel of fulfillment in Christ and we can also discover about the great parenthesis of time that would exist between the suffering and glory of the Messiah. The prophets of old could not see the great gulf that existed between the "acceptable year of our LORD and the day of vengeance of our God" (see Isaiah 61:2). Those curious prophets of old could not see this secret period of time that would separate the dual nature of Messiah's program. But they earnestly sought the Scriptures to see if they had missed something or overlooked some important detail that would give them the key that would unlock the door of revelation. Well, the key was not given to the prophets of old but the key to unlock the missing truth or revelation was provided to believers today in the writings of the New Testament epistles. The New Testament epistles have put an end to the searching in that they reveal the secret plan of God's program in relationship to Messiah's suffering and glory. They explain about the gap of time and the timing of these two events.

Regrettably, privilege can often lead to neglect, procrastination and even result in an unthankful heart. There are many Christians today who are not appreciative of the great privilege that they have today when it comes to understanding truth and experiencing the wonder of God's saving program. Perhaps we are not filled with amazement at the grace that has come and our responsibility to share this finished transaction with others.

“I love to tell the story:
More wonderful it seems
Than all the golden fancies
Of all my golden dreams;
I love to tell the story:
It did so much for me;
And that is just the reason
I tell it now to thee.”

Things the Angels Desire

We should have the same searching zeal of the prophets of old as we look into the sacred Scriptures and discover what God has revealed to us and what He has done for us in the present economy or dispensation. There is an old saying that applies to some of our pathetic disinterest in present day truth and in the present day blessings we have been given. It goes like this:

“The present only is thine own,
Then use it well before it be flown.”

This privilege of present-day Gospel preachers and teachers living in the gracious fulfillment of this Gospel era is further emphasized and explained by Peter as he speaks about the angels in verse 12.

1 Peter 1:12 says: “... which things the angels desire to look into.”

These “things” are the “the things which are now reported unto you” which refer to the salvation and grace that the prophets spoke about in bygone days. It was these things regarding the message of salvation and the gracious provision of the coming Redeemer that were on Peter's mind. They are then the “things” related to salvation and grace, which Peter has been talking about in this section. What do angels want to know about in connection with salvation? Apparently angels are interested in learning or should we say experiencing the joy of salvation (vs. 8), the glorification and final redemption of a new body (8-9) and experiencing God's grace in their lives (vs. 10). These are some of the “things” related to salvation that angels want to experience first

hand. They would like to enter into the joy of salvation, the glorification of salvation and the grace of human salvation. Angels will never experience these things but there is a type of longing and curiosity that angels have in regards to the salvation of lost sinners. That is why they are seen to be rejoicing over one sinner that repents.

Luke 15:10

“Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

The word “desire” in 1 Peter 1:12 indicates the intense angelic longing to know experientially these wonderful things related to salvation. It is hard for us to contemplate the interest that angels have in the salvation of a human being. But there must be a constant curiosity that keeps them rejoicing over repenting sinners and a continual longing to know more about grace and salvation. The angelic world is interested in the mystery of human salvation.

The last Greek word in this verse, which is translated “look into,” means graphically to “stoop down with the body bent and look inside.” The same word is used in Luke 24:12 and John 20:5, 11, as Peter, John, and Mary were recorded as stooping down and looking into the empty tomb. The word means, “to look at with head bent forward, to look into with the body bent, to stoop and look into.” Metaphorically it means, “to look carefully into, to inspect curiously.” I can just picture a little boy standing on a chair and bending over while looking into his mother’s cookie jar with great anticipation! The picture tells the story that the angels have always wanted to “look into” the experience of salvation and grace but have never been able to take part in this eternal wonder of the ages.

D. Edmond Hiebert once again says:

“The angels in 1 Peter are pictured as watching the unfolding of the drama of human redemption to understand it more fully. Peter seems to imply that there are angels outside the redemptive realm and cannot understand it in terms of their own experience.”

This stresses the point that although angels are unable to satisfy themselves as to precisely what the salvation experience is all about, we have the present privilege and the real possession and joy that salvation by grace brings into our lives. Angels are not included in God’s plan of salvation. The angels are not participants in the salvation but spectators of it. Thus, the angels can only peer into the glories of salvation from beside it, like the cherubim bending over the Mercy Seat. But man has direct access to God through a substitutionary sacrifice that cleanses him from sin and which provides the wondrous experience of salvation.

Griffith Thomas stated:

“The angels are not superior, but inferior to believers in point of position, privilege and knowledge (Eph. 3:10; 1 Cor. 6:3; Heb. 1:14).”

Paul writing in a context of the mystery about the church and her glorious salvation said in Ephesians 3:10: “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.”

The principalities and powers are of course the holy angels or the hierarchy of heavenly angelic order. The manifold wisdom of God as seen in the context is the truth about the Body of Christ which relates to the New Testament church and the gracious plan of salvation of both Jews and Gentiles. The word “might be known” is passive and is more properly rendered “might be made known.” The preposition “by” speaks of the intermediate agency of the church who reveals to the angels about the experience of this new saving wonder. That is, this truth about salvation is to be made known to the holy angels by means of the instrumentality of the Church or the New Testament people of God who have experienced the wonder of God’s grace in the present dispensation. In one sense, the Church is the teacher of angels! Paul says that the apostles “are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men” (1 Corinthians 4:9).

We know that the angels watch the saints. They must be filled with wonder and amazement at how creatures that were once totally depraved can now be saved by grace and live holy lives that glorify God. It is through God’s gracious provision for the Church that they catch the supreme view about God’s love and grace that takes sinners saved by grace and raises them up to sit in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3; 2:5-6). The supernatural world of angels is eagerly observing God’s program of human redemption.

Someone has said:

“The Church is God’s university for angels.”

Like the angel’s curiosity and interest in salvation and grace, it should not go unnoticed how the Old Testament prophets were deeply interested in the fulfillment of the coming Redeemer’s salvation and His return to earth. There was much excitement and interest in these glorious truths that centered around Messiah’s death, His coming and their final glorification and salvation. Great interest was taken in these promises and their salvation related to these promises. A sense of wonder and awe filled their hearts as they studied the sacred writings.

With this in mind, we might conclude this fascinating study with the words of Howard Ferrin who said:

“Oh, that men today might also bow before Him when they realize that they have received grace through the sufferings of Christ – that this great salvation has come and that they have *experienced* its benefits and now rejoice in its glories. Let us not despise, or treat lightly what the prophets inquired into so diligently ... Let us learn from the prophets then, a lesson of reverence and worship concerning this great salvation which has come to us, and may the doctrine of our salvation through Jesus Christ provoke us to deep study and admiration.”

A chart has been provided on the final page to help you see the prophet’s perspective and bring all the major points of this study together.

The Searching Prophets (I Peter 1:10 - 11)

"Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching 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."

The Old Testament prophets saw two mountain peaks with a huge valley in between. They were searching for the time of their glorification or final salvation and resurrection in connection with the arrival of the kingdom
(Daniel 12:2-3; Isaiah 26:19).

The Old Testament prophets did not know the order of God's program concerning the Messiah and the timing of Messiah's suffering and Kingdom reign. It caused them to search for the correct order of events so they could pinpoint the timing of their glorification or resurrection.

