

1 Peter 1:10–12

Introduction

This morning, we come to the end of this sentence that's the second longest in all the Bible – 178 words beginning in verse 3 and coming to an end now in verse 12. All the glory and riches that we've seen over the last couple of weeks have all come under the umbrella of that first opening clause: “Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abounding mercies...” And we have seen these abounding mercies and marveled at them. And we have been filled with hope and great rejoicing.

In the first section of this sentence, we learned that we have been begotten anew to a living hope. At the end of this section, and in the process of describing our hope, Peter says that by God's power, we are being guarded through faith for a **salvation** ready to be revealed in the last time.

In the second section of this sentence, Peter talks about the rejoicing that is ours today because of this hope, even in the midst of being truly grieved by various trials. And at the end of this section, Peter writes: “though not having seen Him, you love Him, and though not now seeing Him, you believe in Him and you rejoice greatly with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the **salvation** of your souls.”

So the first and the second sections of this one, long opening sentence, **both** end with a reference to our **future** salvation—our salvation that is still **yet to come**, but even **now**, fully **ready to be revealed**. And so, as the first two sections ended, so the third and the final section begins.

I. 1 Peter 1:10–11 — Concerning this **salvation**, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that would come to YOU searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what [time] or what sort of time the Spirit of Christ in them was making known when he witnessed beforehand to the sufferings that would come to Christ and the glories that would follow after these [sufferings].

If the emphasis previously has been on a salvation that is **still future**, the emphasis now is on that **SAME(!)** salvation **already here**: “Concerning **this** [future] salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that would come **to YOU**...” That word “you” is one of the most important words in this final section, and before we're finished this morning, we'll see it three more times. And the point of the “you” is **you now** – not just to “you” one day still in the future, but to you **now** this grace has come.

The **grace** that Peter refers to is just another word for “the **salvation**” that's been the theme of this entire sentence, and which we have seen all along is a salvation **full** of grace and **deeply rooted** in grace. But before this grace and this salvation ever came to us—long before any of us here were ever born—the prophets prophesied about this grace that would come to **you**. Now remember, this is the same salvation that in the first two sections was still **future**, but here this **very same** salvation has already come to us **now** in the **present** as **nothing less** than the **fulfillment** of that great salvation which the prophets had all prophesied about in the **past**. So now what Peter wants us to do is travel back into the past, before this salvation ever came to us, to when the prophets were still prophesying and when all of salvation was still **entirely** future.

When these prophets prophesied, Peter says, they also “searched and inquired carefully...” Peter uses two words that are synonyms in order to emphasize just *how* diligently and *how* earnestly and how zealously the prophets wanted to “*know*.” The NIV says that the prophets “searched intently and with the greatest care.”

So what was it that they **so very much**—that they **so very badly**—wanted to know? Peter answers, they “searched and inquired carefully, inquiring **what time¹ or what sort of time** the Spirit of Christ in them was making known when he witnessed beforehand to the sufferings that would come to Christ and the glories that would follow after these sufferings.” Long ago, the prophets spoke of the sufferings of an Anointed One, the Messiah, and also of the awesome glories that would follow this suffering, but how they longed to know and understand more about these things of which they were prophesying and speaking! When would these things happen? Might they happen within their own lifetimes? In what kind of time and under what sorts of circumstances would these things happen? What would it all look like? How would it all be fulfilled? What did it all mean? These were the questions that the prophets were *all* asking. How could they not? No doubt they inquired of God, and they probably also searched their own writings and the writings of other prophets seeking to gain a better and a deeper understanding. For as much as they did know, there was so much more that they didn’t know. In fact, the more they did know, the more they were aware of all that they didn’t know about the very things of which they themselves were speaking.

But, now, look at how Peter is writing. He’s writing in such a way that he assumes that the very things these prophets so longed to know are the very things that we *do* know. The very things that they searched for so intently and with the greatest care are the very things that we can speak to today with such intimate familiarity. First of all, Peter says that the prophets prophesied about **the grace that would come to us**; it was about *this* grace—*this* salvation—that has come to us *now* that they so earnestly desired to know more.

But then Peter says something amazing. He says that it was the **Spirit of Christ** in the prophets who was witnessing beforehand to the sufferings that would come *to Christ* and the glories which would follow after. In the Bible, we hear numerous times of the Spirit, or the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, but there are only four other places in the entire New Testament where the Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of Christ” (cf. Rom. 8:9), “the Spirit of Jesus” (cf. Acts 16:7), “the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (cf. Phil. 1:19), and “the Spirit of [God’s] Son.” (cf. Gal. 4:6) So what does it mean to say that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit *of Christ*? In some places this might refer to the reality that the Holy Spirit is the one who **produces the character and the likeness of Christ in us**.

¹ The Greek word here is an interrogative pronoun (*tis*) that can also function as an adjective (when it functions as an adjective, it will agree in person, number, and case with the noun it modifies.) If *tis* is functioning here as a masculine singular *pronoun*, then we should translate something like this: “inquiring **which man/person** and which time...” (cf. ESV; NASB; NRSV; NET) However, *tis* does agree in gender, number, and case with the masculine singular accusative noun *kairos* (time). If, then, *tis* is functioning adjectivally, then we should translate: “inquiring which [time] and what sort of time...” (cf. NIV; HCSB; NCV; NLT; YLT; ASV; NKJV; Jobes; Schreiner; Michaels; Davids; Achtemeier)

- Romans 8:9 — 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.
- Galatians 4:6 (cf. Rom. 8:9) — And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

This can’t be Peter’s point, however, because before Christ came, and before the day of Pentecost, it was impossible for the Spirit to be producing in the prophets the likeness of Christ. The Holy Spirit may also be referred to as the “Spirit of Christ” because He is **sent by Christ**. (cf. Acts 2:32-33; Jn. 15:26; 16:7)

- John 16:7 (cf. 15:26) — It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.
- Acts 2:32–33 — This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

Here in 1 Peter, in the very next verse, Peter writes about how the good news was preached to us by the Holy Spirit **sent from heaven**.” So, Peter could be saying that even as the Holy Spirit was sent *from* Christ on the Day of Pentecost to empower the preaching of the Gospel, so also long ago the Holy Spirit was sent from heaven by the *pre-incarnate* Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 10:4; Heb. 11:26) to inspire the message of the prophets. But this leads us right on to a second possibility. The Holy Spirit may *also* be referred to as the “Spirit of Christ” because the Holy Spirit’s work in revelation is to **testify to Christ** – He is the Spirit *of Christ* because His work is to **bear witness to Christ**.

- Revelation 19:10 — The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.
- 1 John 5:7–9 (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3) — There are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son.
- John 15:26 (cf. 16:8-15) — When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

Now here in 1 Peter, we just saw how it was the **good news about Jesus** that was preached **to us by the Holy Spirit** sent from heaven. But even for the Old Testament prophets, what was it that the “Spirit of Christ” was doing?—He was **witnessing beforehand to the sufferings that would come to Christ and the glories which would follow after these sufferings!** So, if we put these last two meanings together, what do we see? We see the pre-incarnate *Christ* sending forth the Holy Spirit to make known to the prophets His own coming, the coming of *Christ*² – including both His sufferings (His being rejected, and mocked, and beaten, and killed) and his glories that would follow (His resurrection from the dead, His ascension, his enthronement in heaven, His present reign, and His future return in power and glory). All of these things the prophets prophesied, but they **couldn’t** know it, and they **couldn’t** see it. Do you realize how intimately familiar **we are** with these things, and most of all with this *person*, Jesus Christ? This is Peter’s point. **We know** what the greatest of the Old Testament Prophets **didn’t know**. *More*

² Peter seems to be using “Christ” here not as a Messianic title, but rather as a *name* for the one he had come to know.

than that, we know what *all* of the Old Testament prophets so earnestly *longed* to know and what they were all searching and inquiring for so carefully. Should this cause us to be smug? Should this cause us to be arrogant? Should we be feeling entitled and complacent? May it never be! Peter goes on to tell us the result of the prophets' careful searching and inquiring:

II. 1 Peter 1:12a — It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but **YOU**, in the things that have **NOW** been announced to **YOU** through those who preached the good news to **YOU** by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven,

Did all the “you’s” just jump off the page at you? Isn’t this one of the most humbling things you or I could ever set our minds to think about? If it had anything to do with our worthiness, I could only feel guilty, and ashamed, and embarrassed. But it doesn’t have anything to do with our worthiness—only God’s amazing grace.

When the prophets searched and inquired about the time and the circumstances of the salvation that the Holy Spirit was making known to them and that they were actually prophesying about, they were told that none of these things would ever happen in their own day, and because of this there was *much* that it would simply be **impossible** for them to ever know or understand. In other words, the things that Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and Daniel, and all the rest of the prophets earnestly longed to know were the very things that **they couldn’t** know.

But now we have a really big problem! If the prophets themselves couldn’t know the full import and meaning of their own words, then **who** were they ultimately serving? Who were they *ultimately* and *primarily* prophesying **for** if not for the people of their own generation? There’s only one possible answer. At the end of the day, they could only, ultimately be prophesying for the benefit of those who **would** fully understand because they would actually **live to see** the grace and the salvation, and the sufferings and the glories that the prophet’s prophesied. One commentator says:

“The prophets ministered mysteries still hidden from them and their own generation; they ministered those marvels to us, as they spoke of the things of Christ... What Peter is eager to point out is that his hearers are the heirs of the full message of the prophets. The least disciple of Christ is in a better position to understand the Old Testament revelation than the greatest prophet before Christ came.” (Clowney)

Peter says it so simply and beautifully: “It was revealed to [the prophets, (when they searched and inquired so carefully)] that they were serving not themselves but **YOU**, in the things that have **NOW** been announced **to YOU** through those who preached the good news **to YOU** by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.” So today, when we read all the “kingdom” prophecies of all the Old Testament prophets, we read them now in the **full light** of Christ who has come and brought to us the prophesied salvation.³

➤ **Amos 9:11–12** — In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, that [Israel] may possess

³ “The content of the gospel preaching which Peter’s readers heard was the declaration of these prophecies and the announcement that they had found their fulfilment in the church.” (Grudem; cf. Davids)

the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name,” declares the LORD who does this.

Acts 15:13–18 — James replied, “Brothers, listen to me. Simeon [Peter] has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, ‘After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.’”

- **Isaiah 54:1–3** — Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married,” says the LORD. “Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities.

Galatians 4:26–28 — But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written, “Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband.” Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

We live, now, in the longed for, long-awaited days of salvation – a salvation that has now been announced to us in all of its glorious detail through the holy apostles and prophets who preached the good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.⁴

Now here’s my question for you: If this salvation was announced to us only **through**⁵ those who actually preached the good news, then who is it that Peter is assuming has done the actual announcing? It must be no one less than God Himself—the infinite Creator of the universe—who has now, in these last days, through His holy Apostles and prophets announced to us salvation.

And what does it mean when Peter says that those who first preached the good news did so “by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven”? Well, first of all, it was the Holy Spirit sent from heaven who **declared to them all the things of Christ.**

- **John 16:13–15** — When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

It was the Holy Spirit who **declared to the Apostles and prophets all the things of Christ**, and it was the Holy Spirit sent from heaven who also **empowered the Apostles and prophets to bear witness to all the things that they had seen and heard.**

⁴ I assume that those who first preached the Gospel to Peter’s readers were inspired Apostles and/or prophets. Peter’s point doesn’t seem to be just the preaching of the Gospel, but the Gospel being made known as the result of divine revelation. (See Scriptures in note 7; cf. Davids)

⁵ *dia* with the genitive (cf. Grudem; Achtemeier; contra “by” in NIV)

- Acts 1:8 —You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.
- Acts 4:29–31 — And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Are you putting this together? The Spirit of Christ who came long ago to the Old Testament prophets and witnessed beforehand to the sufferings and the glories of Christ is now the **same** Holy Spirit revealing and declaring the fulfillment of all these prophecies in Jesus Christ who has now come into the world. And so it’s in light of these things—and in light of the reality that we are **living, now, in** the long-awaited days of salvation—that the prophets were speaking, and are speaking now **to us**, in a way that they could never have spoken to the people who first listened to them preach. The prophets are speaking **to us** in a way that even they themselves were never fully able to appreciate or understand. “It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but **YOU**, in the **things** that have **NOW** been announced to **YOU** through those who preached the good news to **YOU** by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven...”

III. 1 Peter 1:12a — ...things into which angels long to look.

If we’ve been in any way complacent or apathetic to this point, then it’s time **now** to wake up and have our ears and our eyes opened to this unspeakable privilege that is ours. The things into which the prophets searched and inquired so carefully and so diligently and yet were told that in these things they were serving not themselves but **us**— these are also the things that even today the angels in heaven long to look into and to peer into and to see with greater and clearer vision.

The Greek word for “look” is found only four other times in the entire New Testament. In the Gospels it’s used for the disciples “stooping and looking in” to the tomb. (cf. Luke 24:12; Jn. 20:5, 11) James uses this word for “the one who looks intently [NIV; NASB; HCSB; “peers,” NET] into the perfect law, the law of liberty... being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts.” (James 1:25) Not only does this word have the idea of looking at something **intently**, but it often has the idea of someone being on the **outside** looking in (cf. Grudem), peering in, as it were, through a window, always seeking to have the very best view. Can you picture this in your mind?

I don’t know about you, but I’ve never spent much time really thinking about the longings of the angels in heaven. And to think that the things the angels are longing to peer into and the things **they** long to see with better vision are the very things that we here have experienced **firsthand** as the recipients of this GRACE and this SALVATION that God has announced to us. (cf. Eph. 3:10) I love what one commentator says: “The cosmic sweep of God’s redemption is all centered in Christ, whom we know and love. The petty dreams of earth’s little tyrants shrivel before the majesty of the kingdom of God, ministered by prophets and apostles, but now realized for those who know Jesus Christ.” (Clowney)

Conclusion

Brothers and sisters, these verses have been all about the “*now*” – the salvation that is fully here, now, in the present. But now we have to wrap our minds around this: These verses started out by looking backwards to verses 3-9: “Concerning *this* SALVATION...” And so the salvation that is here, now, in verses 10-12 is the **same, identical** salvation that in verses 3-9 is still to come.

Now, how can that be? The **key** to understanding this is to go back into the **past**, before Christ had ever come, to a day when the prophets were still searching and inquiring and longing to know the things that they could never know – and then to see **from that vantage point that now CHRIST has COME**. And *in Christ*, even the future has stormed into the present, so that now even the present is the foretaste and the promise of the future.⁶ This is what explains how Peter can move from his emphasis on future salvation in verses 3-9, to his emphasis on that same salvation being already present here in verses 10-12, and then in light of this move right back to his emphasis on salvation as still future in the very next verse:

- 1 Peter 1:13 — **THEREFORE**, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your **hope** fully on the grace that will be brought to you **at the revelation of Jesus Christ**.

We know what the greatest of the Old Testament Prophets didn’t know. *More than that*, we know what *all* of the Old Testament prophets *longed* to know and what they searched and inquired for so carefully.⁷ Jesus Himself said to His disciples, and so also to us:

- Matthew 13:16–17 (cf. 11:11) — Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

⁶ “Believers in Christ represent the fulfillment of prophecy. They enjoy the great privilege of living in the days when the history of salvation is being fulfilled.” (Schreiner)

⁷ Ephesians 3:4–5 — When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was **not made known to the sons of men in other generations** as it has **now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit**.

Romans 16:25–27 — Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was **kept secret for long ages** but has **now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations**, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Colossians 1:25–27 — ...of which [church] I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery **hidden for ages and generations** but now **revealed to his saints**. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Titus 1:1–3 — Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised **before the ages began** and **at the proper time manifested** in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior.

2 Timothy 1:8–10 — Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus **before the ages began**, and which **now has been manifested** through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

We are the recipients of a salvation that even the angels in heaven are constantly longing to look into and to see with better vision and greater clarity. Should these things cause us to be smug? Should we be arrogant? Should we be feeling entitled and complacent? Certainly not! What does Peter say?

- 1 Peter 1:13 — *Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded*, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, there is no true obedience that is not an obedience ultimately **flowing** from this hope – an obedience that is enabled and empowered by this hope. And so, therefore, the more we recognize our infinite privilege **now**, and the hope that this privilege then awakes in our hearts, the more we'll be **able** to live the lives that we'll see in the coming weeks God has called us to live.

“[Peter] shows his readers, who were suffering... in their society because of Christ, that in fact they were more privileged in the perspective of redemptive history than they could have known—more privileged than either the great prophets of old or the angels above. This provides further motivation for joy even in the midst of suffering. Clearly the gospel message is of great value if it is the focus of attention of the prophets of old and the angels of heaven. Christians should therefore rejoice that they have **obtained** that precious message.” (Jobes; emphasis mine)

We should therefore rejoice that **we** have been made the recipients of this **grace** and this **salvation**.