

The Prophets Who Prophesied

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[0 : 00] I want you to turn in your copy of the Scriptures to 1 Peter chapter 1, and we're going to this morning look at verses 10, 11, and 12 in this chapter.

So just three verses for us to cover this morning, but I think that if we rightly understand what the Apostle Peter is telling us here, these verses will be of great benefit to our lives.

So as you turn there, I want to ask you all to stand with me in honor of God's Word. 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 10 through 12. Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicated when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 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 preach the good news to you, by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Things into which angels long to look. Father, help us now to have a right understanding of your Word, and to adjust our thoughts and our feelings and our behavior to fit, to be in accord with what you've revealed.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You know, I think that one of the most perplexing and difficult problems for Christians, and one of the questions that is often thrown towards the followers of Christ by those who do not believe, is what do you do with the Old Testament?

[1 : 43] I mean, what's the Old Testament all about? Why do we have the Old Testament? Is it something that is a bit of an embarrassment, that we'd rather sort of hide away, so that we don't have to deal with some of the difficult passages found in the Old Testament?

Or is it something else? Is it something greater? What exactly do we do with two-thirds of the Bible? What do we do with this book that we call the Old Testament?

Because I have found oftentimes that many Christians will either ignore the Old Testament altogether, and focus in on the Gospels and the epistles of the New Testament, and occasionally turn over to the Psalms for a little bit of encouragement, a little bit of inspiration, maybe the Proverbs for some guidance, and then jump immediately back to the New Testament before they get too mixed up in anything that Moses might have done, or David might have done, or anyone else.

They want to get too tied up in those sorts of things. So we'll jump back to the New Testament very quickly after we get done with the Psalms and Proverbs. So what do we do? Is that how we're to treat the Old Testament?

Just sort of ignore it to the best of our ability? Or, on the other hand, do we treat the Old Testament as if it is in no way different from the New Testament? And that we try to do everything that we're commanded to do in the Old Testament?

[2 : 59] We try to follow all the customs and all the rules and all the regulations of the Old Testament. Do we follow that particular route? Obviously, it's impossible for us to do that in this day and age. So what do we do with it?

It is, as I said, oftentimes an embarrassment for Christians because we don't know what to do with it, and we're often challenged by non-believers who will quote some portion of the Old Testament, particularly from the law, from Leviticus or Deuteronomy or Exodus.

They'll quote some portion of the law and say, Well, why would you insist on these tenets of morality? Why would you insist that we ought to follow these rules? And you're ignoring all of these commands of the Old Testament.

And a lot of times we don't know how to answer those sorts of questions. We don't really know why we have the Old Testament other than to provide some background for the New Testament.

Some context out of which the New Testament arises. We don't really know what to do with it. And so the Apostle Peter takes a few verses, takes some time here at the beginning of his letter to encourage these persecuted believers by telling them that the Old Testament is a good thing. [4 : 05] And if you understand what the Old Testament is, what the Old Testament is about, and what the Old Testament is intended by God to accomplish, the Old Testament becomes a treasure trove to you.

And so I want us to take a look very briefly this morning at what the Apostle Peter tells us so that we can have a working understanding of how we are supposed to handle the Old Testament and so that we will know what to say to those who challenge us and say, Well, you just pick and choose the parts of the Bible that you like.

You don't believe all of it or you don't apply all of it. I want us to have a ready answer for that sort of challenge as it's presented to us over and over in the culture. So take a look here.

First thing that I want you to notice that Peter says about the Old Testament is that it is inspired by God. You can see that he's speaking about the Old Testament in verse 10.

He says, Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied... Consider that phrase for a moment. He's going to talk about prophets who prophesied.

[5 : 07] Now there's two possibilities. Peter might be referring to the entire Old Testament when he refers to the prophets who prophesied. Because both Jesus and Paul are able to summarize the whole Old Testament and label the Old Testament as the law and the prophets or the prophets and the writings of Moses.

They will oftentimes summarize the Old Testament in those sorts of terms. Of course, the law or the writings of Moses are the first five books of the Old Testament. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

But then they use the term prophets to cover the rest of the Old Testament. It's just sort of a summary term. And then when you consider the fact that Moses was regarded by the Jews as the prophet of all prophets, the preeminent prophet, it would make sense for Peter to simply summarize, to call the Old Testament, the prophets who prophesied.

So Peter may be referring to the entire Old Testament when he uses that phrase. Or Peter might be referring to what we more commonly think of as the Old Testament prophets.

Things like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos. Those books that were written by prophets or that are at least a record of their oral prophecies that they gave that have been written down for us.

[6 : 33] So Peter may be referring to the entire Old Testament or he may be referring to just a large portion of the Old Testament. Now I tend to think that he's probably referring to all of the Old Testament here.

But I can't prove it one way or another. But the point to be made is when Peter speaks of the prophets who prophesied, what he has in mind is the Old Testament, whether in its entirety or a part of it. He has the old, what we call the Old Testament, what the Jews simply regarded as the Scriptures, the Bible.

That's what he has in mind. And listen to how he speaks about the Old Testament. He says that the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time, here it is, the Spirit of Christ in them was indicated when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

He says that the Spirit of Christ within the prophets, he is the one who was speaking through the prophets. In fact, he says specifically that the Spirit was predicting, the Spirit was indicating, the Spirit was making things known through the prophets.

We do not have merely the words of men, even great charismatic leaders. We do not have merely their words to go on.

[7 : 53] What we know is that the words of the prophets of the Old Testament are the very words of the Spirit of God himself. The Old Testament is God's word.

In fact, if you just want to turn over a few pages to the book of 2 Peter, you can see that Peter describes this in more detail, this process by which the Holy Spirit reveals and speaks God's word through the prophets.

2 Peter 1, verse 21. Listen carefully to what Peter says. Peter says that no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

So Peter's very careful to hold together two truths about how God normally, regularly makes his word known to his people. He does it through men, through people.

The prophets were real people, and the writings of the prophets are genuinely theirs. Which is why, oftentimes, the prophetic books are introduced as the word of the Lord that came to so-and-so.

[9 : 03] Or sometimes, these are the words of so-and-so which the Lord spoke to them. So that the words of the prophets are genuinely their words.

It's not as if a message, just a scroll fell down from heaven and Jeremiah scribbled his name at the top of it. Well, I caught it, so I guess it's mine. That's not at all how it works.

These words are genuinely spoken through the prophets. They speak these words. And yet, in speaking these words, they speak the words that the Spirit of God wills them to speak because these things do not come about by the will of man.

In other words, they're not just saying what they want to say. These are not just the opinions of men. These are men speaking things that the Holy Spirit is leading them to say.

Genuinely, authentically, the words of men, and yet genuinely and authentically the words of God as well. That's true not just for the Old Testament. It's true for the New Testament as well. I mean, you can take, for instance, one of Paul's letters.

[10 : 06] Let's say the book of Ephesians. And you can compare the book of Ephesians to the Gospel of John and John's epistles. And you can see very clearly, if you read them side by side, that Paul writes in a very different style from John.

He uses phrases and words differently. It's some things that John doesn't say at all. Paul says all the time. And some of their, if you know any Greek, some of their grammatical constructions are very different in the Greek language.

And so Paul's letters have the imprint of Paul's personality, Paul's writing techniques and ability upon them. And John's gospel and letters have the imprint of John's personality and John's choice of words and John's sort of grammar and style and all those sorts of things.

Everything that we read in the Bible is genuinely and authentically the work of the men that God used to write those things. And yet, everything that they wrote down is also authentically God's Word.

Inspired, breathed out by the Holy Spirit. Hold your place there in 1 Peter. I want you to turn over to 2 Timothy chapter 3, where Paul is speaking initially of the Old Testament scriptures of the Hebrew Bible, and yet we rightly apply what he says to the whole Bible.

[11 : 22] He says in 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 16, that all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

All scripture is breathed out by God. Some of your translations may say inspired by God, but a more literal translation is the scriptures are breathed out by God.

This is the work of God's Spirit in the hearts and the minds of the prophets and the apostles, so that he ensures that what they say is exactly what he intends to say.

And Peter would have us know, at the very outset of his discussion of the prophets who prophesied, that they were prophesying what the Spirit of Christ within them indicated and predicted and led them and told them to prophesy.

Their words are mysteriously and wonderfully also the very words of God himself. And so you can't make any ground or any headway in rightfully understanding the Old Testament if you do not first and foremost approach the Old Testament as the word of God.

[12 : 43] If you approach the Old Testament as a collection of interesting stories, you will never rightly understand what God is revealing about himself in the Old Testament.

If you approach the Old Testament as a set of antiquated, outdated laws and customs, you will never understand what God is revealing about himself in the Old Testament.

If you approach the Old Testament as nothing but a collection of moral tales from which you can dig out some good ethical nuggets, and so you can come up with some good character trades presented in some of the characters of the Bible, and so you have good moral tales.

If that's all you see in the Old Testament as a collection of moral tales like Aesop's fables, you will never fully understand what God intends for you to understand from his word.

You will never understand the Old Testament if you approach it as anything less than the very word of God spoken through his chosen vessels, the prophets themselves.

[13:42] You have to know that. You have to believe that. You have to understand that if you're going to understand this book. You must. That's the starting point for understanding the Scriptures. They are God's word. But there's something else that's, I think, key to understanding the Old Testament. Not only is it the word of God, but the Old Testament is, in fact, the word of God about Christ.

It's not the word of God about everything God did before Jesus came. The Old Testament is the word of God about Christ himself. Take a look how Peter describes this.

He says, first of all, concerning this salvation. What salvation? The one that Christ has accomplished for us, that he's been describing for us, that Christ won for us through his death. We have been sprinkled with his blood through his resurrection. We have the living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So, the salvation to which he's going to say the prophets were talking about, he says, this salvation is accomplished by Christ.

[14:44] That's what they're speaking about concerning this salvation. He says, they prophesied about the grace that was to be yours. They searched. They made careful inquiries concerning what person or time. The Spirit of Christ within them, here it is, was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

The Old Testament, the Spirit of God speaking through the prophets in the Old Testament was indicating to us what Christ would do, what Christ would accomplish, what he would be all about, what the nature of the salvation that he came to effect would be.

The Old Testament is not a collection of stories about Abraham and Moses and David and Solomon and all those others. The Old Testament is a single story about a single figure and his name is Jesus Christ.

That's what the Old Testament is about. If you don't believe me, if you don't believe Peter, if you believe the Apostle Paul. Turn over to Acts, I want you to see this. Paul was arrested and he was put on trial before Herod Agrippa.

Not exactly someone that anyone would want to be on trial before, but on trial before Herod Agrippa towards the end of the book of Acts. In Acts chapter 26, we find the Apostle Paul standing trial before Herod.

[16:09] And this is what he says in verse 19 of Acts chapter 26. He says, Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, the vision that he received on the road to Damascus.

I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

For this reason, the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. He says, But to this day, I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass, that the Christ must suffer, and that by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.

You see what he's saying there? King Agrippa, the Jews have arrested me, and they brought me to your court, but I have said nothing in all of my preaching of the gospel. I have said nothing but what Moses and the prophets said.

I didn't come with a new message. I came with the fulfillment of the old message that they themselves claimed to believe. And Paul didn't get that from himself.

[17:27] Paul didn't create this message. Peter didn't create this message. They received this from Jesus himself. You can leave Acts, and you can turn over to the end of the gospel of Luke.

You know the story, the famous story of Jesus on the road to Emmaus. This is after his resurrection. Two of his disciples have left Jerusalem, and they're headed toward Emmaus, and they are sad and despondent, because they haven't heard news of the resurrection.

They only know that their Savior, their Master, has been crucified, and they are despondent. They are in despair as they walk along this road, and Jesus suddenly comes and appears to them on the road.

And yet they don't recognize him. We don't know why. We don't know how he disguised himself. It was a miraculous disguise, or if it was just dark out and he hid his face. We don't really know how he disguised himself, but they don't recognize him immediately.

And take a look in verse 44. We'll begin there. It says that, Then he said to them, This is Jesus. He says, These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

[18:41] Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. They don't have the New Testament yet. It hasn't been written. Opened their minds to the Scriptures. Opened their minds to understand the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures.

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you're clothed with power from on high. He says he's going to show them everything that the Word of God, that the Scriptures say about me.

Everything Moses wrote about me. So Genesis is about Jesus. Exodus is about Jesus. Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy are about Jesus. Everything that the prophets said about me. Jeremiah and Isaiah are books about Jesus. All the prophets are about Jesus. All the Psalms are about Jesus, he says. I am going to open your minds to understand what the Scriptures say about me.

[19:53] It's all about Christ. All of it. Now I know that that's not always easy for us to see, and easier for us to understand and comprehend all the various ways in which the Old Testament points us to Christ.

I mean, sometimes it's fairly obvious. When Isaiah, in Isaiah chapter 3, predicts of a suffering servant who would bear the sins of God's people, that's not difficult to comprehend.

That's easy to see that, oh, well, that suffering servant has got to be Jesus. I mean, he's the one who dies that kind of death. He's the one who takes upon the sins of his people upon himself. That's not difficult to see.

It's not entirely difficult to see when, as Bill read earlier, Jeremiah predicts the rise of a descendant of David, a righteous branch from the line of David, who will be the righteousness of his people in their place.

It's not difficult to construe and understand how that is pointing toward Christ. That's a fairly direct prediction of a descendant of David, who becomes and lives out the righteousness of his people in their place.

[20:57] That's not complicated. We can see how that points to Christ. Sometimes it's a little bit more difficult than that, but still not difficult entirely. So, all the way back in Genesis chapter 3, when God curses the serpent, he tells the serpent that he would put enmity, that is, there would be war, there would be friction and strife between your seed and the seed of the woman.

And he says that you will bruise his heel, but he will crush your head. That's a little bit more vague. But you can begin to see that in his death upon the cross, yes, Jesus was wounded, and his heel was bruised, and in giving the death blow to Satan upon the cross, Jesus himself suffered for that. It's a little bit more vague, but you can see. So there are those passages that are easier to see, easier to begin to comprehend how they point to Christ, and yet it's not simply those isolated individual passages that point to Christ.

According to Jesus, everything Moses said is about him. Everything the prophets said is about him. So that when you read the Old Testament, you're not simply looking for direct prophecies that point to Christ.

You're looking to see, how does this passage in some way and in some measure point me towards Christ? It may be that there is something that we call typology, in which an earlier person or an event or even sometimes an object represents, points towards some truth about Christ.

[22:31] So Jesus in the New Testament is called the last Adam, the second Adam, so that we know in the Old Testament that Adam in some way points toward Christ. In what way? Well, because Adam is a representative for all humanity.

And when Adam falls, everyone falls in Adam. And Christ is a representative for all those who are in Christ. So that when Christ obeys the law completely, all those in Christ are counted as having obeyed the law completely.

We call that justification. So we can begin to see some of those things. We'll turn to a passage in a minute in which Paul tells us that the rock from which water came in the wilderness, when the

Israelites were wandering through the wilderness with Moses, he struck the rock with his staff and water came out.

Paul tells us the rock was Christ. What does he mean by that? That Jesus was literally a rock? No, he doesn't mean that Jesus was a rock. What he means is that that rock points to Christ.

That just as that rock in the wilderness provided nourishment for God's people, so it is Christ who is our nourishment, our spiritual food and drink. And in many, many ways, the Old Testament points us toward Christ.

[23 : 40] Not in just one simple way of predictive prophecy, but in all sorts of ways. You have prophecy. You have typology. You have all of these things. You have broad patterns that point us to Christ.

You have whole stories that point us to Christ. So that the book of Ruth is not merely a wonderful love story. The book of Ruth is a story about a man who redeems a woman who was not worthy of redemption, who had done nothing.

She was not a Jew. She had no claim upon God's people. And yet here comes Boaz, and he has called her kinsman redeemer, and he redeems her out of the plight that she's in. And in the same way, Christ is now our spiritual brother through faith in him, and he redeems his kinsmen.

He pays a heavy cost as Boaz paid. He pays a heavy price for his people, just as Boaz paid for Ruth. The Song of Solomon is not merely a book, a collection of love poems.

It's not less than that. It is a collection of love poems celebrating all the various aspects of marital love. But it's more than that. It does, in some measure, point us to Christ, who is the bridegroom, and the church who is his bride.

[25 : 00] It does, in some measure, point to that reality. So the Old Testament, in multiple ways, reveals Christ to us.

And I don't have the time to exhaust all the many ways in which the Old Testament helps us to see and love Jesus more. But what I can tell you, from 1 Peter, is I can confidently say to you that if you approach the Old Testament as a book about Jesus, and if you'll approach the Old Testament expecting God to reveal something to you about his Son, you will find the Old Testament not to be old, not to be antiquated, not to be difficult.

You will find the Old Testament to be a treasure trove of reasons to love Jesus more. So the Old Testament is inspired by God. It is a product of the work of God's Spirit through the prophets. It is about Jesus. There's one more thing that I think Peter wants us to see here about the Old Testament, and that is that it is for us. It's written for us.

The Old Testament was not written only for ancient Israel, but the Old Testament was written for us. Take a look. We could note that he just says concerning this salvation, as we already have, that the Old Testament prophets were looking to a salvation that we possess.

[26 : 22] Take a look at it. This salvation is the salvation referred to in verse 9, which he says is the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls, so that the prophets were thinking about and talking about and predicting the salvation that we have by faith in Christ, the salvation that guarantees our inheritance, the salvation that gives us a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus, the salvation by which we are sprinkled with his blood.

That's the salvation that the prophets were speaking of. But there's so much more. Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about what?

About the grace that was to be yours. The word grace, I think, here in this context, is probably just a synonym for salvation. So concerning this salvation, the prophets, that they wanted to know about the salvation that belongs to you people now.

Not merely to the salvation that belonged to Abraham, although it was like ours and he was saved in the same way that we are saved, but these prophets were looking ahead to us, to the church age, to the people who are the people of God in this age, and the prophets were looking to the grace that was to be ours.

There's more. About the grace that was to be given to you, they searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicated when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

[27 : 54] And this is what they learned. They wanted to know, when is this going to happen? That was the essential question the prophets were asking. They knew, maybe not every detail, but they knew the generalities of what would happen.

They knew the Messiah would come from the line of David. They knew that he would die an atoning death in the place of God's people. They knew that he would then receive resurrection glory, and he would share that glory with all of his people.

They knew those things. The prophets knew those things. Not on every detail, but they knew that much. And what they wanted to know was not every detail about that. What they wanted to know so desperately is, when are these things going to happen?

When is the Messiah going to come? When is he going to die and rise and ascend into heaven and receive glory? That's what the prophets wanted to know. And this is what they received in reply to that careful search.

Verse 12, 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 preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

[29 : 05] It was revealed to the prophets. He was not coming during their era. He was not coming during their age. But he was coming during our age.

He was coming during the new covenant era in which we now live. And Jesus was coming for us. And the things that they wanted to know about Christ would be revealed to us.

They were not serving themselves. The Old Testament prophets are serving you. And if you don't think this is a book for you, then you've completely misunderstood everything that the Old Testament prophets were doing.

Even they understood that they were writing for you. They're writing for you. They're just writing for the sake of themselves. Ezekiel's not only writing for his fellow exiles in Babylon.

Oh yeah, he's writing some stuff for them. But he's not only writing for them. He's writing for us. Jeremiah is not merely writing for people around the time of the fall of Jerusalem, although he is writing to them.

[30 : 08] He's writing for us. He's writing things that we need to know, that we need to believe. He's writing for us. And you need to understand that the Old Testament is not a book to be shelved.

It's not a section of your Bible to be turned past so that you can get to the important stuff. The Old Testament is for you. It's for me.

It's for all those who have trusted in Christ and live in this age. It is for us. And it is so good. The message that the prophets brought and the salvation to which they pointed and that they talked about and that they longed to understand when it would happen, it is so good that Peter tells us that the things that the prophets spoke of, these are things, he says at the end of verse 12, into which angels long to look.

These are things that cause heavenly beings of indescribable glory who blaze as a burning fire, who stand in the very presence of God himself.

These beings hear the words of the prophets and they long to know more. The angels themselves long to experience what we experience and to know what we know.

[31 : 42] Do you ever stop to think that there's no redemption for angels? There's not. There are two categories of angels. There are the elect who remain faithful to God and there are those who have fallen.

There's no category in between and there's no moving from fallen to elect. There's no redemption for angels. And Peter says, angels themselves long, long to look into the things that belong to you. And if that's not good news, and if that's not an encouragement to become a people of the whole book, then I don't know what is. We have a treasure that even the angels themselves would long to have, that they would love to more fully understand, that they would love to own as their own, and yet they cannot because these things were written down for us.

And these things have now been announced to us through those who preach the Gospel.

Announced to us through those who preach the Gospel. This great good news, that sinful though we may be, Christ has come and borne the penalty of our sins.

And He's provided the righteousness that we lack so that by faith in Him, all of it is ours. All the inheritance, all the treasures, all the life that lasts forever belongs to us through faith in Jesus.

[33 : 18] That Gospel has been proclaimed to us and that Gospel was looked at and spoken of by the prophets and it is looked upon by the angels as a thing of indescribable beauty that they only wish they could participate in.

And it's yours. Let's pray. If we can't do anything else this morning but simply marvel at the Gospel, that's what I wish we would do, Father.

That's what I pray that we would do. It's important for us to receive instructions on how to do marriage. It's important for us to receive instruction on how to be better parents and how to conduct ourselves as the people of God in the world.

Those are important things that we don't want to neglect. But more than all those things, we want to marvel at the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We want to treasure Jesus Himself spoken of by the prophets, made known to us, crucified for our sins, arisen to give us life, and now ascended at the right hand of His Father, interceding for us and praying for us and pleading His own righteousness for us every moment.

We want to marvel at that. And so I ask that through the message we've heard from Your Word this morning that You would cause us, as a people, as individuals, You would cause us to marvel at the Gospel.

[34 : 59] And I say this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.