

Perplexity of The Prophets

Study Notes on 1Peter 1:10,11 : The place of the Church and Israel in prophecy Here we propose to give some foundational teaching that the Scripture gives us that will help the reader to answer such questions as : What is The place of the Church and Israel in prophecy? Is national Israel to be restored? Is the church “Spiritual Israel”? Or, the “New Israel”? Are the OT prophecies about the restoration of Israel to be fulfilled literally, or are they symbolic or “spiritually” fulfilled in the church?

Chapter 1 : The Sufferings of Christ

1Peter 1:10,11 “Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with greatest care, trying to find out the **time and circumstances** to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the **sufferings of Christ** and the **glories that would follow.**” NIV (I searched various English translations and they all seem to have difficulty in putting vs. 11 clearly. The NIV seems to be best here.)

The Apostle Peter is telling us that the prophets themselves did not always understand the **when** and **the how** of the very things the Holy Spirit had revealed to them.

Those verses tell us that there are **two major categories** of prophecy concerning Christ:

1. **The sufferings of Christ,** and
2. **The glories that would follow**

But the prophets, searching intently, could not understand “*the time and circumstances*” of these two things. **How could the Christ come in power and glory and also suffer?** The prophecies were plain enough, but not the “*time and circumstances.*” Apparently, they saw only one coming of the Messiah. There was nothing in the OT prophecies that would lead anyone to anticipate the Church Age of two thousand years, or more, separating the two comings of Christ!

It is easier for us today because we stand on this side of the cross. The fulfillment of prophecy concerning the first coming of Christ has been made plain to us. But it was not easy for people on the other side of the cross to understand.

Consider (from the NT) Jude 14,15: “*Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone . . .”*”

Although not recorded in Genesis, this prophecy was made before the world-wide flood of Noah, in the days of Genesis chapter 5 verses 21-24, Who, at that time, could recognize this as a prophecy of the second coming of our Lord, not His first coming? Or even realize that there would be two comings? We know now—because we are on this side of the cross—that, at the first coming of Jesus, He did not come with thousands of His holy ones, nor did He come in judgment.

Let us explore first — **THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST : AND THE PERPLEXITY OF THE DISCIPLES**

It was not only the prophets of old who were perplexed, so also were the disciples and followers of Jesus! It appears, from what is recorded for us in the New Testament, that the prophecies concerning the **sufferings of the Christ** were not understood at all until after they had occurred. It appears that none of His followers thought Jesus could die! Nor be raised!

Remember Peter’s great failure to understand in Matthew 16? By the power of God Peter had correctly identified Jesus— “*You are the Christ, the son of the living God.*” But immediately after that, when Jesus began to explain that it was necessary for Him to “*suffer many things . . . and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.*” — Peter rebuked Jesus, “**Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you!**” (vs. 22)

This failure earns a terrible rebuke from the Lord, “**Out of my sight, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.**”(Matt 16:16-23).

Peter, at that time, was focused on the prophecies of the glories of the Christ and it seems he did not understand nor believe the prophecies of the necessary suffering, even unto death, of the Christ

until *after* His resurrection. It was only *after* Jesus was risen from the dead that Peter and all the other believers understood the relationship between the **sufferings of Christ** and the **glories of the Christ**. How could both things be true when they seemed so contradictory?

How could the Messiah suffer? How could He be rejected and killed by Israel; and also rule and reign in glory on David's throne over Israel?

How could He rule the nations with a rod of iron (Psalms 2:8,9); and also be "*despised and rejected by men*" (Isa. 53:3)?

How could He trample the nations in anger and vengeance so that their blood splatters His garments (Isa. 63:1-6); and *also* be "*oppressed and afflicted . . . led like a lamb to the slaughter.*"? - Isa. 53:7 - read that whole chapter)

We have already mentioned the fact that the Disciples and followers of Jesus did not expect Him to die. Let us to examine that in more detail as their unbelief produced some wonderful, heart-stirring evidence of the bodily resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

First of all, we need to understand What was the expectation of the prophets and the people to whom the word was spoken? (We will examine these in more detail in chapter two: "*The Glories of the Christ*").

Obviously, they expected:

- ▶ a. A literal kingdom of Israel here on the earth.
- ▶ b. A son of David to rule over Israel on David's throne.
- ▶ c. Righteous **government**, perfect justice for all.
- ▶ d. This son of David would also rule over all the Gentile nations.
- ▶ e. A time of universal peace with all nations worshipping the Lord.
- ▶ f. There would even be changes in nature with much of the curse being lifted, —
"*the lion will eat straw like the ox.*"

All Jesus' followers believed that He would accomplish all this. There is absolutely no hint or suggestion that this kingdom would be **only** a "*spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men.*" Certainly the kingdom would be spiritual, but it would *also* be social, political, and economic. It would govern every aspect of man's existence.

But when He died, their hope died with Him. This is expressed by the two on the way to Emmaus early that resurrection morning — "***we had hoped that he was the one who was going redeem Israel.***" (vs.21 of Luke 24:13-27). Jesus did not rebuke them for failing to understand, He rebuked them for failing to believe all that the prophets have spoken! —vs 25.

The Apostle Thomas is often referred to as "Doubting Thomas." But the New Testament tells us that the other apostles, also did not believe! It appears that they did not believe that Jesus could be killed. And then, after His death, did not expect Him to be raised from the dead. Notice again the two disciples that Jesus appeared to after His resurrection in Lk.24:13-27. Verse 20 reveals that when Jesus died, their hope died with Him! "***We had hoped .***"

The women who went to the tomb early that Sunday morning, did not go to see a risen Jesus. They went to anoint a cold dead corpse—Lk.24:1-ff; Mk.16:1-3. Notice John's comments on this in John 20:9. "*They still did not understand from the Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead*"

The Apostles did not believe the first eye witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus until *after* Jesus Himself appeared to them - John 20:19-20; Luke 24:36-49.

John 20:19 tells us that the Apostles were hiding in an upper room "*with the doors locked for fear of the Jews.*" And Luke 24:36-43 tells us what happened on the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together in that locked room — Jesus suddenly stood among them. He did not knock for admittance, He just suddenly appeared and stood among them. Just as light can pass through solid glass, so also the resurrection body can pass through solid walls without any

damage. — “They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. **It is I myself!** Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” You cannot physically touch a spirit, or ghost, and no impostor could have raw visible wounds in His hands and feet

40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence.”

You can be sure that they watched in amazement as He chewed and swallowed that food. They knew that a ghost cannot eat! 44 He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: **Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.**”

This was not just a one-time event. He met with them many times over a period of **40 DAYS!**—Acts 1:3. And appeared to an assembly of more than 500 at once! —1 Cor 15:6.

THE PERPLEXITY OF THE EUNUCH: The four Gospels close with the glory of the Resurrection and Acts opens with the first Gospel message, establishment of the church with three thousand souls converted to the risen Lord. One of that early group, Philip, the evangelist, is sent by the Holy Spirit to the Ethiopian eunuch. **Acts 8 :32-35** “The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. 33 In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.”

34 The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?”

35 **Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus**

TO SUMMARIZE: The relationship between prophecies of the Sufferings of the Christ and the Glories of the Christ had not been understood by the prophet themselves, and as we have seen, the Apostles and followers of Jesus had also failed to understand and believe until **after** the marvel of the bodily resurrection of Jesus,

And now, some FORTY YEARS later, John gives this testimony of what it took to convince them of the bodily resurrection of Jesus “*That which was from the beginning, which **we have heard**, which we have **seen with our eyes**, which we have **looked upon**, and our **hands have handled**, of the Word of life.*” 1John 1:1 (KJV) Let us break that down:

Four steps, or stages, to complete acceptance and recognition.

1. “Which we have heard,” He spoke to them. They heard His voice, not as in a vision or dream or hallucination. Many of them at the same time - Repeatedly over a period of 40 days - Acts 1:3. And to more than 500 at the same time - 1Cor. 15:5,6.
2. “Which we have seen with our eyes” They saw Him, just as we might see a person from a few feet away.
3. “which we have looked upon.” The Greek word here means “**to look closely at,**” **close examination**, just as a Dermatologist would carefully examine his patient.
4. “Our hands have handled.” The NIV fails us here, it says “*touched.*” The KJ and ASV are much better. They accurately render it “our hands have handled.” Not just touching with your fingertips, but grasping, squeezing something with your hand. The Greek word means “to manipulate, i.e. verify by contact,”

WE CAN UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS TODAY, ONLY BECAUSE WE ARE ON THIS SIDE OF THE CROSS.

**AND WE PROCLAIM IN JESUS CHRIST
THE RESURRECTION OUT FROM AMONG THE DEAD**