

Perplexity of The Prophets

Study Notes on 1Peter 1:10,11 : The place of the Church and Israel in prophecy

Chapter Two : The Glories of the Christ

In the first chapter we explored the fact that the disciples and followers of Jesus were just as perplexed as the OT prophets concerning the relationship between the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glories of the Christ. They understood well enough the prophecies of the glories. It was the sufferings they failed to believe. It was only after they had seen Jesus raised from the dead they began to understand those prophecies. It was the wonderful fact of the bodily resurrection of Jesus that changed them from fearful souls—John 20:19—to courageous messengers of the Good News.

If you did not read that chapter about the sufferings, it would be helpful to do so before reading this chapter

Now we want to explore THE GLORIES OF THE CHRIST : The prophesies concerning the Glories were far more extensive and numerous. The glories are tied in and integral with the coming kingdom of God. What did the people in Jesus day and the Apostles themselves expect?

Israel had lost their kingdom and had been oppressed and ruled over by various Gentile nations for the past 400 years and were now suffering under the Romans. The prophecies of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel were taught in their Synagogues.

Obviously, they expected:

- ▶ a. A literal kingdom of Israel here on the earth. — Jer 30:3; Amos 9:14,15; and many more.
- ▶ b. A son of David to rule over Israel on David's throne. — Jer 23:5,6; Lk 1:30-33.
- ▶ c. Righteous government, perfect justice for all. — Isa 9:6,7; Dan 2:44
- ▶ d. This son of David would also rule over all the Gentile nations. — **Dan 7:27**
- ▶ e. A time of universal peace with all nations worshipping the Lord. — **Isa 2:1-4; 11:1-9**
- ▶ f. There would even be changes in nature with much of the curse being lifted, — *"the lion will eat straw like the ox."* — Isa 11:6-9.

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.

The main question is: Were these prophecies to be taken at face value, literally and grammatically concerning the Nation of Israel? Or to be understood as symbolic, figurative, allegorical, spiritual, of the Church as "*Spiritual Israel* or the "*New Israel*"?

We saw that the Apostles and the followers of Jesus completely misunderstood the prophecies of the Sufferings of the Messiah. Did they also misunderstand the Glories? **Most Bible historians say that the Apostles and the early Christians believed in the literal fulfillment of those expectations enumerated above.** Yet, some emphatically teach that the Disciples failed to understand the nature of the prophesied kingdom of God. **Examples:**

In his book "Until The Coming of Messiah and His Kingdom," Robert Shank quotes from a number of Church historians, who were themselves antimillennial, who nevertheless said that Premillennialism was the accepted teaching of the Church in the days of the Apostles and for centuries after !

One such antimillennial historian, Bp Russell, admitted that the early church was premillennial, but he rejected the premillennial belief, calling it a "Rabbinical fable" and asserting that the Apostles and the early Christians failed to understand the symbolism of the OT prophecies concerning Israel and the Kingdom!

Remember the Disciples question in Acts 1:6? Their hope was revived with the resurrection of Jesus. Acts 1:3 ". . . *He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God*" and they asked Him, "*Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?*"

Examine almost any Bible Commentary written by one who holds to the amillennial view and you will find the following kind of statement in reference to the Apostles question in Acts 1:6:

Matthew Henry : "They thought Christ would restore the kingdom to Israel, that is, that he would make the nation of the Jews as great and considerable among the nations as it was in the days of David and Solomon, . . . whereas Christ came to set up his own kingdom, and that a kingdom of heaven, **not to restore the kingdom to Israel, an earthly kingdom.**" (emphasis mine).

Barnes : "The apostles had entertained the common opinions of the Jews about the temporal dominion of the Messiah. They expected that he would reign as a prince and conqueror, and would free them from the bondage of the Romans. Many instances where this expectation is referred to occur in the gospels, ***notwithstanding all the efforts which the Lord Jesus made to explain to them the true nature of his kingdom.***"— (emphasis mine)

Concerning that last statement by Barnes: Where are "all the efforts" that the Lord Jesus is supposed to have made to correct this alleged false expectation? **Let us examine the record:**

1. John the Baptist and Jesus both preached "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." (Matt 3:2 and 4:17) What did they preach? What did they mean by the "*kingdom of heaven?*" **What did the people understand if not the things we have already explained?**

2. What did their converts understand? Many, many, many thousands of the people repented and were baptized in anticipation of the coming kingdom! **Consider these scriptures:**

Mark 1:5 *'The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him (John). Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.'* - Also Matt 3:1-6.

John 4:1-2 *"The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, 2 although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples."*

3. The apostles were with Jesus for three years and heard what He preached. He knows all things, so, if God was not going to restore the kingdom to Israel; If God was going to take all those wonderful kingdom promises away from Israel and transfer them to the Church (which did not even exist at that time), why did He not explain that to the people? Is God a deceiver? The amillennial teaching seems to make him so! **Where is it recorded that Jesus preached something different from what the people expected ?**

4. Jesus sent out the twelve to preach the kingdom of heaven — Matt 10:1, ff. **What did they preach?** The amillennialists are fond of saying that the disciples of Jesus did not understand the nature of the kingdom. **If so, they must have preached a falsehood.** If so, why did Jesus fail to correct them? What did their hearers understand and believe? Those people were not ignorant of the Scriptures. The Scriptures, the prophecies about the kingdom, were often read to them when they met in their synagogues and they were looking for the Messiah to come and restore the Kingdom to Israel. That is why they repented and were baptized - Matt 3:1-6.

5. Jesus also sent seventy-two others to preach the kingdom—Luke 10:1-10 ff. **What did they understand and preach?** The amillennial theory seems to be saying that Jesus sent them out to preach a woeful misunderstanding!

New Testament Expectations Confirm Old Testament Expectations

1. Notice the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary concerning the child she was to bear. (Luke 1:32,33). *"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the **house of Jacob** forever; His kingdom will never end."* (1984 NIV).

The "**house of Jacob**" is not the Church. The Church had not yet come into existence. The house of Jacob was already in existence. The "house of Jacob" can only refer to the physical, genetic descendants of the man Jacob. (The 2011 NIV actually translates "*the house of Jacob*" as "*Jacob's descendants*"). That unbreakable promise was first given in 2Sam 7:11-16:

2Sam 7:11-16 *"The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: 12 . . . I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. . . . and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever . . . Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."* Thereafter, the OT records numerous prophetic descriptions of the glories of that king and his kingdom. **Examples :**

Isaiah 9:6-7 *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this."

Isaiah 11:1-12. *"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; . . . The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him . . . 4 with righteousness He will judge the needy. . . He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth; with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked...6 The wolf will live with the lamb...7 and the lion will eat straw like the ox...9...the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. . . **and His place of rest will be glorious.***

11 In that day the Lord will reach out His hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of His people (from the nations listed) . . .12 He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; He will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth."

Psalms 2:6-9 *"I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill. 7 I will proclaim the decree of the Lord: He said to me, You are my Son; today I have become your Father. 8 Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. 9 You will rule them with an iron sceptre; you will dash them to pieces like pottery"*

The Expectation of the disciples is revealed by the two on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-27). They said, *"We had hoped that He (Jesus) was the one who was going to redeem Israel."* By 'redeem' they meant political and social as well as spiritual redemption. Jesus did not rebuke them for believing that. He rebuked them for failing to believe *"all that the prophets have spoken,"* i.e., the prophecies concerning his suffering.

Expectations of the Apostles themselves : Matt. 9:28 *"I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."* They obviously had this in mind when they asked, *"Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"*

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THE APOSTLES:

John 16:13 *"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.*

After His resurrection, Jesus *"appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God."* (Acts 1:3) At the beginning of these forty days, He did two things for the disciples :

- (1) *"He breathed on them the Holy Spirit."* (John 20:22).
- (2) He *"opened their minds so that they could understand the Scriptures."* (Luke 24:45)

After giving the Apostles those supernatural gifts, the greatest Teacher this world has ever known teaches them over a period of forty days concerning the kingdom of God.

On the day of Pentecost they received the complete fullness of the promised Holy Spirit who would *guide them into all truth*. To accuse the Apostles and early church of misunderstanding the true nature of the prophecies and of following a "Rabbinical fable," is to deny that the Holy Spirit would guide the Apostles into *all truth*

There is no need for us to be perplexed today. We can rejoice in the salvation purchased for us through the Sufferings of Christ, and, as we serve Him, we look forward to the Glories when He comes again!

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