



## The First Letter of Peter Bible Study Session 3 1 Peter 1:10-12



*Study By  
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### Greek NT

10 Περί ἧς σωτηρίας ἐξεζήτησαν καὶ ἐξηραύνησαν προφηταὶ οἱ περὶ τῆς εἰς ὑμᾶς χάριτος προφητεύσαντες, 11 ἐραυνῶντες εἰς τίνα ἢ ποῖον καιρὸν ἐδήλου τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ προμαρτυρόμενον τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα καὶ τὰς μετὰ ταῦτα δόξας· 12 οἷς ἀπεκαλύφθη ὅτι οὐχ ἑαυτοῖς ὑμῖν δὲ διηκόνουν αὐτά, ἀ νῦν ἀνηγγέλη ὑμῖν διὰ τῶν εὐαγγελισαμένων ὑμᾶς πνεύματι ἁγίῳ ἀποσταλέντι ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ, εἰς ἃ ἐπιθυμοῦσιν ἄγγελοι παρακύψαι.

### Gute Nachricht Bibel

10 Nach dieser Rettung schauten schon die Propheten aus. Sie haben euch angekündigt, welches Gnadengeschenk Gott euch zugedacht hat, 11 und sie haben eifrig gesucht und geforscht, um herauszufinden, wann und wie dies alles eintreffen sollte. Der Geist, den wir durch Christus empfangen haben, war schon in ihnen wirksam und zeigte ihnen im Voraus die Leiden, die Christus erdulden musste, und die Herrlichkeit, die ihm daraufhin zuteil wurde.

12 Gott ließ sie erkennen, dass sie ihre Offenbarungen nicht für sich selbst empfangen hatten, sondern für euch, denen dies alles jetzt verkündet worden ist. Die Boten der Guten Nachricht haben es euch bekannt gemacht, ausgerüstet mit dem Heiligen Geist, den Gott ihnen vom Himmel gesandt hat. Sogar die Engel brennen darauf, etwas davon zu erfahren.

### NRSV

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours made careful search and inquiry, 11 inquiring about the person or time that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated when it testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look!

### NLT

10 This salvation was something the prophets wanted to know more about. They prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you, even though they had many questions as to what it all could mean. 11 They wondered what the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward. They wondered when and to whom all this would happen. 12 They were told that these things would not happen during their lifetime, but many years later, during yours. And now this Good News has been announced by those who preached to you in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.

### Quick Links to the Study

- I. [Context](#)
  - a. [Historical](#)
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### Introduction to Study.

This passage has numerous issues connected to it. What is its literary role? Perhaps this is the most important issue, since the answer to this question has impact on the answers to the other questions. The literary function of 1:10-12 most likely is that of the conclusion to the Proem of the letter begun in 1:3. Grammatically it does stand as a continuation of the sentence begun in 1:3.<sup>1</sup> The doctrinal theme in 1:3-12 moves from new birth

<sup>1</sup>This is in spite of the punctuation of both the Nestle-Aland 27th edition and the UBS 4th rev ed Greek New Testaments, which arbitrarily insert periods after verses nine and eleven. This is done more as a reflection of modern sentence structure in German and English, than as a reflection of the natural colon thought structure of the Greek text.

to inheritance to salvation. Salvation, σωτηρία, is introduced in verse 5, repeated in verse 9, and made the central topic of vv. 10-12.<sup>2</sup> The series of Greek relative clauses link all these together. In addition, however, these verses carry the reader from the prayer of blessing to opening the body of the letter. Thus, these have an important transition role to play in the letter. In this role they function similar to Roman 1:16-17 in this letter of Paul, by laying a conceptual foundation for the letter body.

The theme of the preciousness of salvation as a topic of prophetic inquiry is unique. The connection of the Old Testament prophets to God's salvation in Christ is not explored in the letter body. To be sure, imagery of the children of Israel found in the Hebrew Bible is reapplied to the believing community as the new people of God. The insights of Psalm 118, Isaiah 28 and 53 serve as the main connections to the Old Testament.

Consequently the passage sparks our interest and encourages us forward in understanding what it has to say.

## I. Context and Background<sup>3</sup>

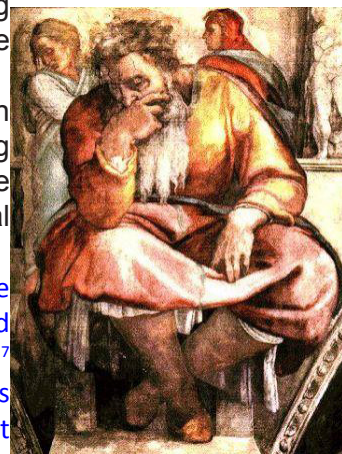
As mentioned above, background issues play an important role in understanding this text, especially the literary background.

### a. Historical

The historical issues in this text are not as pivotal in shaping the meaning of the passage as are some of the other issues. But it is important to give some attention to these matters.

**External History.** The history of the copying of the text provides indication of a very stable text for these verses. Four variations in wording surface among the various manuscripts, and non of them shift any meaning in the text. Note the observations of J. Ramsey Michaels here with the notes attached to his personal translation of the passage:<sup>4</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Concerning this salvation, prophets — those who prophesied of the grace to be given you — made diligent and careful inquiry. <sup>11</sup>They inquired<sup>5</sup> into the time and circumstances which the spirit of Christ<sup>6</sup> among them was indicating as he predicted<sup>7</sup> the sufferings intended for Christ and the glorious events that would follow. <sup>12</sup>It was revealed to them that their ministry in regard to all this was not for their own benefit but for yours. And now it has been announced to you through those who brought you the gospel with<sup>8</sup>d the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. On these things angels desire to look.



<sup>2</sup>In verse 5, σωτηρία is 'ready to be revealed;' in verse 9, it is the goal of faith that brings deliverance to one's very life; and in verses 10-12 this salvation was the object an prophetic inquiry.

<sup>3</sup>Serious study of the Bible requires careful analysis of the background and setting of the scripture passage. Failure to do this leads to interpretive garbage and possibly to heresy. Detailed study of the background doesn't always answer all the questions, but it certainly gets us further along toward correct understanding of both the historical and contemporary meanings of a text. This serious examination of both the historical and literary background of every passage will be presented in summary form with each of the studies.

<sup>4</sup>J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 38.

<sup>5</sup>ἔραυνῶντες here and ἐξηραύνησαν in v 10 are late spellings of ἐρευνῶντες and ἐξηρεύνησαν respectively (BAGD, 274, 306; cf. BDF §30.4).

<sup>6</sup>The omission of Χριστοῦ by B ("the Spirit that was among them") probably represents the effort of a single scribe to avoid the questions raised by the apparent abrupt reference to the preexistent Christ.

<sup>7</sup>The verb προμαρτύρεσθαι is found only here in the NT and is not attested either in the LXX or in classical Greek. The same is true of the verb προμαρτυρεῖν, reflected in προμαρτυροῦμενον, a variant reading found in P72 A P and some other witnesses. BGD (708) cites one occurrence of each in very late (eighth century A.D.) papyri. It is doubtful that there is any real difference in meaning between the two. Hort's attempt (53-54) to assign to προμαρτυροῦμενον a more subtle meaning than "predict" or "foretell" (i.e., on the analogy of μαρτύρεσθαι, which he interprets as calling God to witness) cannot be judged successful.

<sup>8</sup>The preposition ἐν with "Holy Spirit" is missing in some important MSS (e.g., P72 A B Ψ 33 and others). The omission is in agreement with Peter's style (cf. 3:18; 4:6), but there is little difference in meaning; in either case the Spirit is being designated as the

The variations reflect both changing patterns of spellings of Greek words over time, as well as spelling differences among differing dialects of ancient Greek. As such these kinds of variations are common not only with ancient texts that were copied and re-copied over a period of centuries, but also one can note the same thing with subsequent editions of various translations of the Bible. The wording of the two original editions of the King James Version of the English Bible published in 1611 were not only different from one another, but that form of English is barely readable to a modern English speaking person. Presently over a dozen different versions of the KJV are in circulation in the English speaking world, and no two of them have the exact same wording.

The conclusion: we have a confident text in verses 10-12 from which to derive a solid interpretation.

**Internal History.** The time and place markers inside vv. 10-12 revolve around the efforts of the prophets (in the past) to understand the (yet to come) salvation provided by God. One of the intriguing phrases is “the Spirit of Christ within them” (τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ) because it alludes to Christ’s Spirit being in the prophets centuries before Christ was born in the flesh, and thus raises the question of the pre-existence of Christ. But this is more a theological question than a historical one, and thus will be treated in the exegesis below. And this is the case for most of the historical issues here, since they have a heavy theological tone and are not pure history concerns.

**b. Literary**

What kind of a text are we looking at here? Literary analysis is important to our understanding.

**Literary Form (Genre).** Verses 10-12 are made up of some inter connected Greek relative clauses, as the Block Diagram below illustrates. Together these do not comprise an independent sentence, but instead are modifiers of the word ‘salvation, in verse 9. Consequently verses 3-12 together form a single sentence in the original Greek text. In light of this, verses 10-12 are best considered as a part of the Proem in the letter. As the final sub-unit of the Proem the text also serves as a transition to the letter body by calling attention to the importance of the salvation provided by God in Christ. This will set up much of the discussion in the letter body in 1:13-5:14.

The tendency of some commentators to label this as an *Exordium* in the pattern of ancient Greek and Latin rhetoric is mistaken, and ignores the epistolary nature of First Peter.<sup>9</sup> The letter is not an ancient speech of persuasion, nor a baptismal tractate, as many of those using the label claim.

**Literary Context.** As is charted on the right, the Proem in an ancient letter followed the Praescriptio and preceded the letter body. Given the prayer nature of the Proem it traditionally took the tone of a positive affirmation of the letter recipients by the sender through invoking the blessings of deity upon the recipients.

This is certainly the case here where Peter lifts his voice in praise to God for the blessings of salvation given to his readers by God.

**Outline of Contents in First Peter:**

**Praescriptio: 1:1-2**

- *Superscriptio, 1:1a*
- *Adscriptio, 1:1b-2a*
- *Salutatio, 1:2b*

**Proem: 1:3-12**

- *Core, 1:3a*
- *Expansion, 1:3b-12*

**Body: 1:13-5:11**

- *Holy living 1:13-2:10*
  - *Ideals 1:13-25*
  - *Privileges 2:1-10*
- *Obligations 2:11-3:12*
  - *Civic 2:11-17*
  - *Haustafeln 2:18-3:7*
  - *Social 3:8-12*
- *Persecution 3:13-5:11*
  - *Encouragement 3:13-4:11*
  - *Explanation 4:12-19*
  - *Proper Conduct 5:1-11*

**Conclusio: 5:12-14**

- *Sender Verification, 5:12*
- *Greetings, 5:13-14a*
- *Benedictio, 5:14b*

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power that makes the proclamation effective. The simple dative is probably original, with the ἐν added by later scribes to conform to common NT usage (BDF §195).

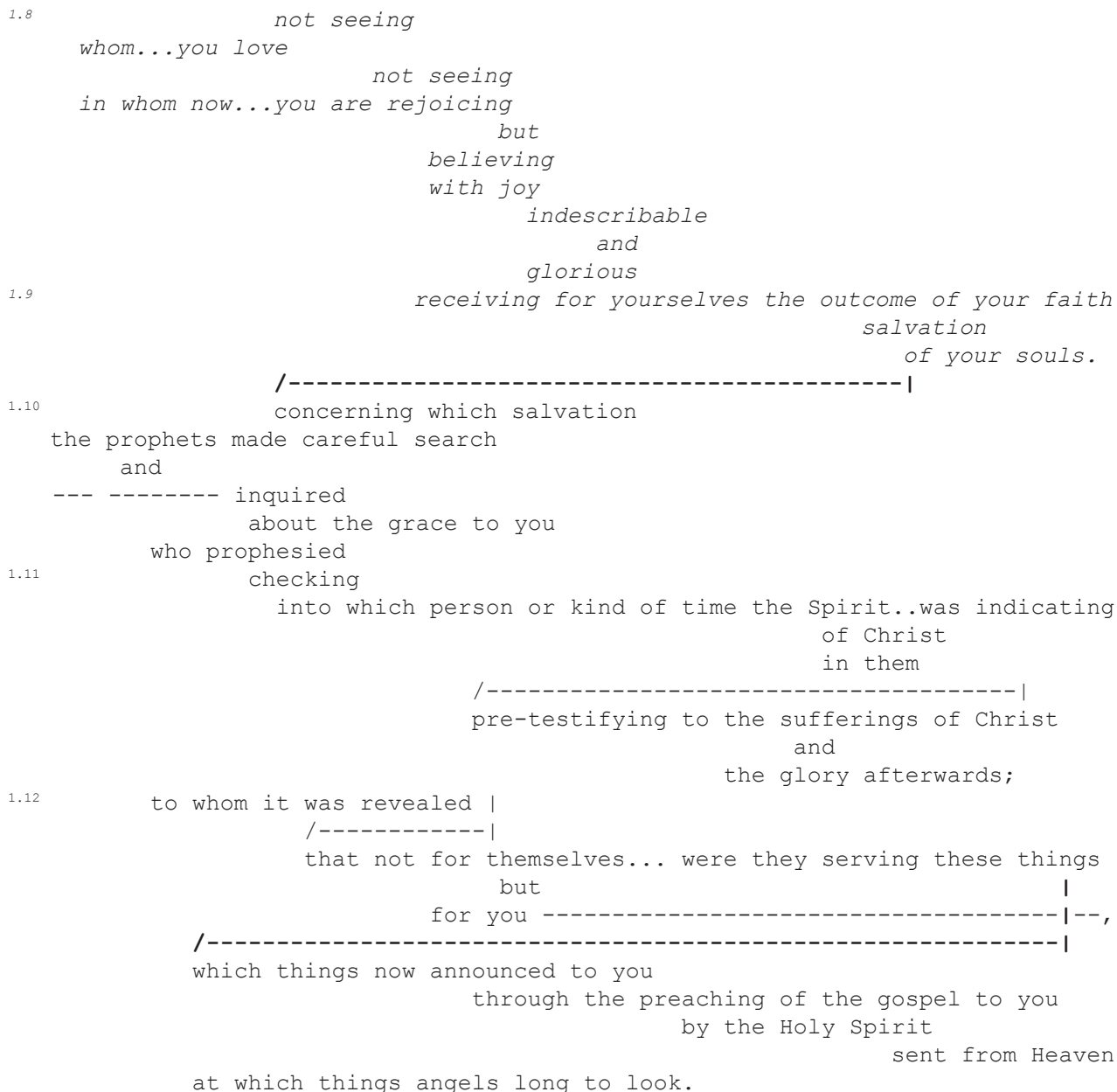
<sup>9</sup>Reflective further of the absence of understanding of writing patterns of letters in the ancient world are the comments of John H. Elliott “The body of the letter opens (1:3–12), as it closes (5:10–11), on a worshipful note of blessing and praise.” [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 329.] At least Elliott picked up on the prayer nature of the text in 1:3-12, but by failing to grasp the role of the letter Proem he missed important points being made by Peter.

Peter Davids, who works in literary analysis of ancient texts, reflects a better appraisal in his observations: “Peter begins his letter with the customary thanks to God (which in pagan letters would be thanks to the gods) for the well-being of the recipients, but, like that of Paul, who uses the identical wording in 2 Cor. 1:3 and Eph. 1:3, his content is distinctively Jewish and Christian.” [Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 50-51.]

And by his praise he calls upon his readers to praise God as well, and indeed affirms that they are already doing just that.

The expansion elements, vv. 3b-12, elaborate details of the salvation provided by God in terms of new birth, inheritance, and salvation. Verses 10-12 come as the third segment and contain the dominate focus on salvation.<sup>10</sup>

**Literary Structure.** The block diagram below highlights the internal structure of the ideas contained in these verses. Verses 10-12 flow out of a relative clause connection to ‘salvation’ in verse 9.



<sup>10</sup>These three verses constitute the last of the three parts (vv. 3–5, 6–9, 10–12) into which the opening section of the letter is divided. These verses now focus directly on the salvation that was mentioned at the end of each of the two earlier sections (vv. 5b, 9), thus serving as both conclusion and climax to this portion of the letter.<sup>4</sup> If the first part had major emphasis on the future results of God’s act of begetting believers anew (especially inheritance and salvation), and the second part put emphasis on the present results (suffering, love, and joy), this part lays the emphasis on the past, in which the rudiments of this salvation were discerned, specifically through the intervention of the divine Spirit (πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ, v. 11; πνεῦμα ἁγίου, v. 12).<sup>5</sup> In that way, the readers are comforted by the assurance that their salvation is surely in the hands of God, since it is part of the divine plan that had long ago been set (e.g., 1:20), and that is now at the point of its fulfillment.” [Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *1 Peter : A Commentary on First Peter, Hermeneia--a critical and historical commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996), 105.]

Careful analysis of the series of relative clauses in these verses will reveal a twofold emphasis.<sup>11</sup> First, verses ten and eleven focus on what the prophets did. Then verse twelve centers on what God did for the prophets. The clue here is the shift from active voice verbs ('made careful search'; 'inquired'; 'prophesied' to the passive voice verb 'it was revealed.' Thus the thought structure is built on prophets seeking God and His response to them.

## II. Message

The outline of the passage is built around the above twofold pattern of thought flow in these statements. At the heart lies the principle of seeking to know God's will and then being given revelation of that divine will.

### a. The prophets deeply wanted to know God's plan, vv. 10-11

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours made careful search and inquiry, 11 inquiring about the person or time that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated when it testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory.

10 Περι ἧς σωτηρίας ἐξεζήτησαν καὶ ἐξηραύνησαν προφῆται οἱ περὶ τῆς εἰς ὑμᾶς χάριτος προφητεύσαντες, 11 ἐραυνῶντες εἰς τίνα ἢ ποῖον καιρὸν ἐδήλου τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ προμαρτυρούμενον τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα καὶ τὰς μετὰ ταῦτα δόξας·

## Notes:

**The salvation searched for.** What was it that the prophets<sup>12</sup> sought? ἧς σωτηρίας was the object of their quest. The relative pronoun ἧς (*hēs*) links σωτηρίας back to σωτηρίαν in verse nine: ὑμῶν σωτηρίαν ψυχῶν ("the salvation of your souls"), which is seen as τὸ τέλος τῆς πίστεως ("the outcome of your faith").<sup>13</sup> In verse nine this salvation is seen as ultimate deliverance from eternal damnation as the result of one's faith commitment to Christ.

Now in verses 10-11 additional descriptors are added to the term σωτηρία. First, this salvation is the grace of God prophesied by the prophets: οἱ περὶ τῆς εἰς ὑμᾶς χάριτος προφητεύσαντες. God's grace is His mercy and compassion expressed in concrete action in behalf of believers. That this grace was for the benefit of these later Jewish and non-Jewish believers is made clear by the prepositional phrase εἰς ὑμᾶς set up clearly as an adjective modifier of τῆς... χάριτος (this grace). The repetition of the preposition περὶ here with χάριτος (grace) and also with σωτηρία (salvation) in v. 9 make it clear that God's grace and God's salvation are inseparably linked. The reference to God's grace -- τὴν φερομένην ὑμῖν χάριν ἐν ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ -- in v. 13 that is being brought to the believers at the revelation of Jesus Christ underscores the action of God in providing and implementing salvation for believers. The emphasis here then is on the eschatological realization of this salvation at the Second Coming of Jesus. Believers will experience this salvation, not by

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<sup>11</sup>This plays off of an informal chiasmus structure built into these statements, as outlined by J. Ramsey Michaels [vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 39]:

- a. Inquiries of prophets *in the past*  
(ἐξεμήτησαν καὶ ἐξηραύνησαν ... ἐραυνῶντες, vv 10–11).
- b. Divine revelation to prophets *in the past*  
(οἱ ἀπεκαλύφθη, v 12a).
- b'. Divine announcement to Christians *in the present*  
(ἃ νῦν ἀνηγγέλη ὑμῖν v 12b).
- a'. Inquiries of angels *in the present*  
(ἐπιθυμοῦσιν, v12c).

<sup>12</sup>"The 'prophets' (*prophētai*) mentioned here are the spokespersons of God of the OT. However, their 'prophesying' (*prophēteusantes*) is characterized here not as addressing the critical word of God to Israel's present circumstances, as was the prophets' primary function. Rather, it is claimed that they diligently 'searched' ('sought out,' *exezētēsan*) and 'investigated' (*exēraunēsān*, occurring only here in the NT) 'concerning' (*peri*) something yet to occur in the future. The verb *exeraunaō* occurs only here in the NT and combined with *exezētēsan* illustrates the author's rhetorical sensitivity for assonance; see also 5:2–3 and 5:10. The combination of both compound verbs also occurs in 1 Macc 9:26 regarding foreign authorities who tracked down the friends of Judas Maccabeus." [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 345.]

<sup>13</sup>"For relative pronouns, see 1:5a, 6a, 8a, 12a, 12c, 21; 2:4a, 22a, 23a, 24a, 24d; 3:2, 4b, 6b, 19a, 20d, 21a, 22a; 4:4a, 5a, 11d; 5:9b, 11a; for link-words, see the GENERAL INTRODUCTION, 3.2. Style." [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 345.]

their goodness or accomplishments, but rather solely by God's grace.

Additionally, this salvation centers on revealing (ἐδήλου) by the Spirit of Christ (τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ) -- by means of pre-testimony (προμαρτυρόμενον) -- the sufferings of Christ (τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα) and also the subsequent glory (καὶ τὰς μετὰ ταῦτα δόξας<sup>14</sup>). The reason God will show mercy to believers in final judgment is based upon what Christ accomplished in His sufferings and subsequent triumphs climaxed in the ascension.

The working of the divine Spirit in the ministries of the Old Testament prophets is not unusual, but the identification of that Spirit as the Spirit of Christ in the prophets (τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ) is unusual. One should note that the reference Χριστοῦ can be taken as the Spirit 'belonging to Christ' or the Spirit 'giving information about Christ.' Also as 1 Cor. 10:4 and Heb. 11:26 suggest, the distinction between 'Spirit of Christ' and Christ Himself is virtually non-existent. God was working through His Spirit to reveal His plan to these prophets.

One should also note that the Imperfect tense of the Greek verb ἐδήλου (showing) underscores that this revelation was an ongoing process that was not completed in the lifetime of these prophets. What was revealed (ἀπεκαλύφθη) is defined in verse 12 and was only partial disclosure rather than complete.

One of the challenges from these statements that leaps out at me is the concern of the prophets to understand what God was up to in their world and in the coming days. In their devotion to God they passionately sought to understand His will and to learn as much as possible about it. Our modern world lives mostly in complete disinterest in God or His desires for people. Added to that is the uncomfortable levels of disinterest by people calling themselves Christian. Large masses of so-called Christians possess a scary ignorance of the Bible and of the things of God. It's no wonder that our world is full of religious charlatans who deceive people and pervert the message of the Gospel. The example of the prophets in their quest to understand God's salvation is challenging to us who possess the full revelation of God in scripture.

**The search.** The verbal expressions describing the actions of the prophets is interesting. Regarding this salvation they ἐξεζήτησαν καὶ ἐξηραύνησαν ("made careful search and inquiry") while they were ἐραυνῶντες εἰς τίνα ἢ ποῖον καιρὸν ("inquiring about the person or time that...").<sup>15</sup> The cumulative effect of these verbs is to emphasize an intensive search by the prophets.

Peter does not give specific examples of individual prophets and how they made their search. Very likely this was done intentionally in order to make the point of the spiritual principle, rather than to stress Jewish prophetic history.<sup>16</sup> This principle of the unitary nature of God's people across time and race is more impor-

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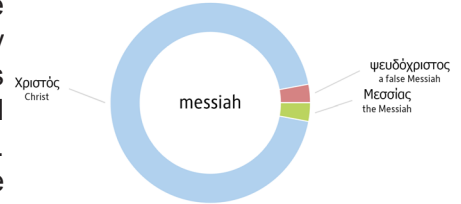
<sup>14</sup>“δόξας here are ‘triumphs’ or ‘glorious deeds’ (the plural concretizes an abstract noun, BDF §142). In particular they are the glorious deeds of Jesus Christ or of God on his behalf — in either case ‘glorious events’ associated with Jesus (cf. Exod 15:11 LXX; Wisd Sol 18:24; a different concretizing usage is found in Jude 8 and 2 Pet 2:10, where δόξαι refers to ‘glorious beings’ or angels). The closest parallel to τὰς μετὰ ταῦτα δόξας in 1 Peter is probably τὰς ἀρετὰς, the ‘praises’ or ‘mighty deeds’ of God as the ‘one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light’ (1 Pet 2:9; cf. the linking of δόξα and ἀρετή in relation to the ‘one who called us’ in 2 Pet 1:3). The ‘glorious events’ that followed Christ’s sufferings can perhaps be identified as his resurrection from the dead (1:3; 3:21; cf. 1:21, ‘gave him glory’), his journey to heaven (3:22) in the course of which he ‘made a proclamation to the imprisoned spirits who were disobedient long ago’ (3:19), and his enthronement ‘at the right hand of God ... with angels and authorities and powers in submission to him’ (3:22). One way of regarding 3:18–22, in fact, is as a recital of some of the ‘glorious events’ to which v 11 alludes.” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 45.]

<sup>15</sup>“That the two compound verbs, similar in form and meaning, are used for their rhetorical effect and are not clearly distinguishable in meaning is shown by the fact that the single verb ἐραυνῶντες in v 11 serves to recapitulate them both. The same two verbs are linked in Ps 118[119]:2 LXX with reference to ‘searching out’ the testimonies of the Lord and ‘seeking out’ the Lord himself with one’s whole heart; at several other points in that psalm (although not elsewhere in the LXX) they seem to be used interchangeably by the translator to render the Hebrew verb נָצַר.” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 39–40.]

<sup>16</sup>“Why is he [Peter] so vague about something of which he could easily have spoken more concretely? The literary technique of using deliberately vague language to refer to something quite specific can be found in the midrashic summary of biblical history from Adam to Moses in the book of Wisdom; see especially Wisd Sol 10:1–11:1, with references to ‘an unrighteous man’ (Cain), ‘a righteous man’ (e.g., Lot, Jacob, Joseph), ‘a holy people’ (Israel), ‘a nation of oppressors’ (Egypt), ‘a servant of the Lord’ or ‘a holy prophet’ (Moses). The same technique is found occasionally in the NT: e.g., Heb 11:35–38 (women ... others ... still others); 1 Pet 3:20 (‘a few—eight souls in all’); 4:6 (‘some who are dead’); 2 Pet 1:21 (‘people spoke from God’); 2:4 (‘angels who sinned’). Sometimes what is left indefinite is defined in the context or associated with figures who are named, sometimes not. The effect of

tant.

The details these prophets looked for are described as εἰς τίνα ἢ ποῖον καιρὸν (“inquiring about the person or time that...”). This Greek phrase τίνα ἢ ποῖον καιρὸν can be understood in more than one way.<sup>17</sup> As Archeia and Nida point out, “translated literally, the Greek is: They inquired into which (or into whom) and what kind of time was indicated by the spirit of Christ in them when they were predicting the sufferings of (or into) Christ and the glories afterward. The Greek expression *eis tina* may be understood either as referring to a time (with *tina* understood as a neuter pronoun) or as referring to a person (with *tina* understood as a masculine pronoun).”<sup>18</sup> Translations and commentators remain divided over the gender of the Greek pronoun τίνα. The essential meaning is similar either way: the prophets were trying to identify the person the Spirit was showing to them as well as the circumstances of his suffering, or else they were trying to identify exactly when (τίνα) and under what circumstances (ποῖον) the Messiah (Χριστὸν) would suffer. Their focus was on God’s anointed deliverer, the Messiah,<sup>19</sup> and that He would have to suffer before gaining triumph over the enemies of God.



These prophets sought answers to their questions about how God was going to provide ‘salvation’, i.e., deliverance, to His people. They were certain that He was going to do so, but exactly how and when remained a mystery to them. But as the Spirit provided them details they continued seeking all the information they could gain. So intense was their concern to know God’s will. Oh that we might be that interested today!

The point of Peter in these words is summed up well by Michaels:<sup>20</sup>

Although Peter centers his attention on present-day believers only in β´ (ὑμῖν, v 12b), his use of εἰς ὑμᾶς in v 10 and the οὐχ ἑαυτοῖς δέ of v 12a indicate that his concern throughout is to assure his readers that they belong to the age of fulfillment even though they are still waiting for their salvation. Ancient Jewish prophets and contemporary Gentile believers are coparticipants in one great redemptive plan.

### **b. God revealed some parts of His plan to them, v. 12**

12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look!

12 οἷς ἀπεκαλύφθη ὅτι οὐχ ἑαυτοῖς ὑμῖν δὲ διηκόνουν αὐτά, ἀ νῦν ἀνηγγέλη ὑμῖν διὰ τῶν εὐαγγελισαμένων ὑμᾶς<sup>21</sup> πνεύματι ἁγίῳ ἀποσταλέντι ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ, εἰς ἃ ἐπιθυμοῦσιν ἄγγελοι παρακῦψαι.

In response to their quest, God provided some answers to the prophets. Through their passionate inquiries the prophets learned primarily that the revelation from God through the Holy Spirit was not for their benefit but for later believers in Christ Jesus. The details of the Gospel message (αὐτά, ἀ νῦν ἀνηγγέλη ὑμῖν) were announced to these believers through Christian preachers (διὰ τῶν εὐαγγελισαμένων ὑμᾶς) in ancient Anatolia where the readers of this letter lived. The prophets were not privileged to receive these details.

The such a style is to allow full scope either to the reader’s knowledge of biblical and postbiblical history or to their imaginations. To Peter in the present context it scarcely matters whether or not his readers are familiar with particular examples of the ‘diligent and careful inquiry’ of which he speaks. They know what prophets are, and all they need beyond this is to understand that these prophets ‘prophesied of the grace to be given you.’ The fact that the prophets were Jewish while Peter’s readers are Gentiles is irrelevant. The biblical Jewish past is the readers’ past; the Jewish prophets ministered to them no less than to the people of their own time. All are members together of one community of faith, spanning many centuries.” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 40.]

<sup>17</sup>Compare the following translations: TEV: when the time would be and how it would come; LBA: qué persona o tiempo; NLT: when and to whom all this would happen; NRSV: the person or time; RSV, ESV, NASB: what person or time; KJV, NKJV: what, or what manner of time; ASV: what [time] or what manner of time; BBE: what sort of time; HCSB: what time or what circumstances; NIV: when; Wey: the time; Message: who and when; TNIV: the time and circumstances.

<sup>18</sup>Daniel C. Arichea and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the First Letter from Peter*, UBS handbook series; Helps for translators (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 28.

<sup>19</sup>Remember that in Greek ‘Christ’ means ‘Messiah’ through the common base meaning of ‘the anointed one.’

<sup>20</sup>J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 39.

<sup>21</sup>ὑμᾶς WH Treg ] + ἐν NIV RP. The text variation centers around the presence or absence of the preposition ἐν (by) with πνεύματι ἁγίῳ (Holy Spirit). The meaning remains the same; the internal issue is stylistic. The external weight of mss evidence favors omitting it. Later copyists sought to make the phrase conform to the more common pattern of the preposition used with the reference to the Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit made this preaching possible (πνεύματι ἁγίῳ ἀποσταλέντι ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ). This Gospel message was of such interest that the angels of God long to get a look at it (εἰς ἃ ἐπιθυμοῦσιν ἄγγελοι παρακύψαι). Quite interesting!

**God's limited revelation to the prophets:** οἷς ἀπεκαλύφθη ὅτι οὐχ ἑαυτοῖς ὑμῖν δὲ διηκόνουν αὐτά. God's response to the intensive searching for details centered in letting the prophets know that God's full revelation of salvation would benefit subsequent generations of believers in Jesus Christ.<sup>22</sup> The key concept here is διηκόνου. <sup>23</sup> The 'these things' (αὐτά) was not to be serving (imperfect Gk. tense verb) the prophets personally. Peter declares instead that they would be serving 'you' (ὑμῖν), his readers in the first century.

The challenge to us today from this is to realize that God's call to ministry upon even believers will often

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<sup>22</sup>“They did know, however, that their prophecy would be fulfilled in a distant age (Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:17; Deut. 18:15; Dan. 9:24–27; Joel 2:28; Hab. 2:1–3); that is, says Peter, they realized that they ministered 28 to you, those on whom that age of fulfillment has dawned.” [Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 64.]

<sup>23</sup>“διακονέω (s. two next entries) impf. διηκόνουν; fut. διακονήσω; 1 aor. διηκόνησα; pf. inf. δεδηκονηκέναι (AssMos Fgm. k, Denis p. 67); aor. pass. διηκονήθη, for augm. s. B-D-F §69, 4; W-S. §12, 6; Mlt-H. 192 (Soph., Hdt. et al.; rare in ins, pap; never in LXX, but in Philo, Joseph.) gener. to render service in a variety of ways either at someone's behest or voluntarily and freq. with suggestion of movement.

**1. to function as an intermediary, act as go-between/agent, be at one's service w. intermediary function either expressed or implied** (lead tablet Sb 4947, 2 διακόνησόν μοι; in lover's petition 'serve as intermediary [medium] for me' PWarr 21, 4; 8; Lucian, Cont. 1 of Hermes as messenger for Zeus; Theophr. Char. 2, 9 fetch things; Just., D. 79, 2; cp. the role of Repentance JosAs 15:7) *w. dat. of pers. and acc. of thing οὐχ ἑαυτοῖς ὑμῖν δὲ διηκόνουν αὐτά they were not acting as agents in their own behalf but for yours in the things 1 Pt 1:12 (for a service consisting in the delivery of a message cp. Jos., Ant. 6, 298).* For a similar contrast, and with suggestion of an intermediary's mission: οὐκ ἤλθεν διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι came not to be served, but to serve Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45 (i.e. the Human One [Son of Man] came to carry out an assignment not to benefit himself but others [by giving his life in ransom]; cp. Mt 4:11; par. Mk 1:13 [service rendered by divine messengers]). Of Jesus carrying out his mission [ἀ]νῆλθε[ν δια]κονῶν AcPI BMM verso 13f.—Phlm 13 suggests that Onesimus can be used by Paul on assignment in behalf of the gospel. πορεύομαι ... διακονῶν τοῖς ἁγίοις on an errand to God's people (REB) Ro 15:25 (s. 3).—Of delivery of an object: χάρις διακονουμένη ὑφ' ἡμῶν gift that we are transmitting (a ref. to the collection for whose delivery they have accepted responsibility) 2 Cor 8:19; cp. vs. 20. In imagery, ἐπιστολὴ Χριστοῦ διακονηθεῖσα ὑφ' ἡμῶν a letter of Christ, delivered by us 2 Cor 3:3 (WBaird, Letters of Recommendation: JBL 80, '61, 190).

**2. to perform obligations, without focus on intermediary function**

*a. of unspecified services perform duties, render assistance, serve τινί someone* (Demosth. 9, 43; UPZ 18, 23 [163 B.C.]; δαίμοσι δ. Orig., C. Cels. 2, 51, 38) Mt 8:15; Mk 1:31; Lk 4:39; GJs 6:3; διακονοῦσαι αὐτῷ being at his service Mt 27:55; cp. Mk 15:41. διακόνει μοι serve me Hs 8, 4, 1, cp. 2; J 12:26; Ac 19:22. Also εἰς ἑαυτοὺς αὐτὸ δ. serve one another w. it 1 Pt 4:10. W. acc. of thing ὅσα διηκόνησεν what services he rendered 2 Ti 1:18; cp. Hs 2:10. Abs. (POxy 275, 10 [I A.D.]) 1 Pt 4:11. Pass. (Jos., Ant. 10, 242); ἀπλῶς δ. complete a service in simplicity of heart Hm 2:6.

*b. of attention at meals wait on someone (τινί) at table* (Menand., Fgm. 272; Pyrgion [Hellenistic times]: 467 Fgm. 1 Jac. [a communal meal in Crete]; Diod S 4, 36, 2; 5, 28, 4; Philo, Vi. Cont. 70; TestJob 12:1 al.; Jos., Ant. 11, 163; 166) Lk 12:37; 17:8. Abs. 10:40; J 12:2; GJs 6:3. In imagery ὡς ὁ διακονῶν waiter Lk 22:26f.

**3. to meet an immediate need, help w. dat.** (Iren. 1, pr. 3 [Harv. I 7, 1]) πότε οὐ διηκονήσαμέν σοι; when did we not help you? Mt 25:44 (but s. 4, Collins). ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων helped to support them w. their means Lk 8:3 (KTorjesen, When Women Were Priests '93, 53ff); the saints Ro 15:25 (JO'Rourke, CBQ 29, '67, 116–18; but s. 1); Hb 6:10.

**4. to carry out official duties, minister, in cultic context** (of holy service at the altar Jos., Ant. 3, 155; cp. PGM 36, 304 and 335 παρὰ θεοῖς δ.) of διάκονοι 1 Ti 3:10; καλῶς δ. vs. 13. ἀγνῶς καὶ σεμνῶς Hv 3, 5, 1. Opp. κακῶς Hs 9, 26, 2. Collins (s. below) p. 65 argues for placement of Mt 25:44 in this classification: those consigned to perdition plead their total dedication to the Lord's interests.

**5. Ac 6:2 poses a special problem: care for, take care of** w. dat. of thing τραπέζαις look after tables can be understood of serving food at tables (cp. βούλομαι ... διακονῆσαι τοῖς πτωχοῖς σήμερον ἐν τῇ σῆ τραπέζῃ TestJob 12:1), but it is improbable that some widows would be deprived of food at a communal meal. The term διακονία vs. 1 more probably refers to administrative responsibility (s. διακονία 5), one of whose aspects is concern for widows without specifying the kind of assistance that is allotted. Vs. 2 may contain wordplay involving the phrase τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, w. λόγος designating a ledger entry, in which case τράπεζα, which is also a banker's term (s. L-S-J-M s.v. II), may here denote accounts (s. τράπεζα 1c).—WBrandt, Dienst u. Dienen im NT '31; ESchweizer, D. Leben des Herrn in d. Gemeinde u. ihren Diensten '46; PBoulton, Διακονέω and Its Cognates in the 4 Gospels: TU 73, '59, 415–22. JCollins, Diakonia '90.—DELG s.v. διάκονος. M-M. TW.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 229-30.]

serve the benefit of others more than that of believers themselves. With the modern western mind set of “what’s in it for me?” this calling of God to sacrificial service to bring spiritual benefit to other people is challenging. And for the prophets those who would benefit from their prophecies of a future deliverance of God were not people these prophets knew, and included were non-Jews as well as covenant Israel. Yet the ancient men of God faithfully carried out their mission of proclaiming God’s deliverance in a distant future.

What Peter emphasizes here is but one aspect of the ministry of the prophets in ancient Israel. The revelation given to them by God did include details of God’s plan to both punish (e.g., the ‘Day of the Lord’ theme<sup>24</sup>) and redeem (e.g., the ‘remnant’ concept<sup>25</sup>) the Israelites during the time of the Old Testament. They were called up to prepare ancient Israel for God’s demands upon His covenant people.

**God’s full revelation to the believers:** αὐτά, ἃ νῦν ἀνηγγέλη ὑμῖν διὰ τῶν εὐαγγελισσαμένων ὑμᾶς πνεύματι ἁγίῳ ἀποσταλέντι ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ. Peter now spells out what ‘these things’ (αὐτά) meant. Clearly he understood the fuller revelation of God to be the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This fuller revelation was brought to the readers of this letter by Christian preachers under the leadership of the Holy Spirit sent by God from Heaven.

The leadership of the Holy Spirit in the ministries of both the prophets (cf. v. 11) and the Christian preachers (cf. v. 12) becomes the common source of divine origin for what both proclaimers of God’s revelation were doing, even though separated in time by several centuries. As such this common source insures continuity of message and the divine origin of the message.

The identity of the Christian preachers (τῶν εὐαγγελισσαμένων ὑμᾶς) who initially brought<sup>26</sup> the message of salvation in Christ to these readers is not given. It does allude to the Christian missionaries who evangelized this region at the beginning. We are not privileged to know the names of those who carried out this important ministry. In typical fashion, Peter did not consider it important to give specific historical details. Instead, he stressed what ultimately matters the most: that these individuals carried out their evangelization faithfully following the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Thus the result was the conversion of numbers of Jews and Gentiles in the northeastern Mediterranean world to Christ. And this was done through proclamation of the apostolic gospel message that had originated at Jerusalem from the Twelve.

Again, another challenge emerges from these words. These unknown Christian missionaries faithfully carried out their responsibility without fame or recognition by others. Their important work is what we remember today about them, not their names and background. In a day of egotistical TV preachers more interested in viewer ratings than in the Gospel, the example of the ancient missionaries challenges us. Assuming that many, if not most of them, were still living when Peter sent this letter to Asia Minor, many of them probably were able to read this tribute to their ministry. The satisfaction to them from Peter’s words was a reminder that they stood in a centuries old line of faithful servants of Almighty God who carried out their calling under the leadership of the Spirit of God. This provided them affirmation that any sacrifices in that ministry were worth while. And that on the Day of Final Judgment God would acknowledge their work as they witnessed the passage into Heaven of those won to Christ. May we be willing to serve without ‘fame and fortune’ just as these did!

**The angels longing to know this revelation:** εἰς ἃ ἐπιθυμοῦσιν ἄγγελοι παρακύψαι. The final relative clause again goes back to ‘these things’ via the relative pronoun ἃ.<sup>27</sup> The believers who have heard and

<sup>24</sup>For details see the online “Day of the Lord, God, Christ, the,” article in the *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* online.

<sup>25</sup>For details see the online “Remnant,” article in the *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* online.

<sup>26</sup>Note the Aorist tense of the Greek participle εὐαγγελισσαμένων, denoting completed action.

<sup>27</sup>Finally Peter adds that these facts about Christ’s suffering and the subsequent glories of his kingdom are things into which angels long to look. The word long (*epithymeō*) is used in the New Testament to speak of very strong desires, both good and evil. Here (as in Matt. 13:17; Luke 17:22; 22:15; etc.) it refers to the positive desire of sinless angels. The verb is in the present tense and cannot be restricted to a longing which the angels had before Christ came, or before the first sermon at Pentecost allowed them to hear the full Christian gospel. Peter rather says that even as he writes angels are still longing to look into these things and learn more about them. The longing must therefore include a holy curiosity to watch and delight in the glories of Christ’s kingdom as they find ever fuller realization in the lives of individual Christians throughout the history of the church (cf. Eph. 3:8–10).

The word *parakypō*, ‘to look’, is very appropriate here, for it means to peek or peep into a situation from the vantage point of an outsider, usually one who is not seen by those being watched (see Gen. 26:8, Abimelech looking out of his window; 1 Chr. 15:29, Michal watching David out of the window; the word is used of angels peering from heaven in 1 Enoch 9:1). These verses show that the word has no necessary nuance of ‘stooping’ to look at something (although it can be used that way) or of stealing just a quick glance, as some have assumed by looking at only one or two instances of its usage (see also Prov. 7:6; Song 2:9).

responded to the preaching of the Gospel are privileged beyond even the angels in Heaven.<sup>28</sup> The continuing passion of the angels to understand what God is doing through the message of salvation highlights the indescribable importance of this message. Believers experience its dynamic in life changing ways. But angels must watch as outside spectators (παρακύψαι) to what is happening.

Finally, we sense privilege here for us as believers. Typically the life of angels is held up as the idea to strive for by humans. But Peter turns that thinking on its head by asserting privileges to believers that make angels envious.

In 1:3-12 we encounter Peter's prayer for the believers in Asia Minor in the middle of the first century AD. What a prayer! With the expanding theme of new birth, inheritance, and salvation rolled into one experience that has been made available to believers in Christ, we can easily understand Peter's 'blessing' God in eloquent praise and thanksgiving.

Now Peter is ready to begin elaborating on the implications of this majestic theme of divine deliverance in the body proper of the letter starting in 1:13 and continuing down through 5:11. Studying this material will indeed be rich and rewarding!

Here are some questions to reflect upon in light of this passage:

1. How often do I praise God for His deliverance of me from sin and death?
2. Do I really understand just what God has done for me in Christ Jesus?
3. How are new birth, inheritance, and salvation linked together as one central idea?
4. How do these above concepts of God's deliverance relate to Jesus Christ?
5. Am I willing to carry out ministry with the same anonymity as those who preached the gospel to these first readers of this letter?
6. How are angels involved in God's deliverance?

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[Wayne A. Grudem, vol. 17, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 77-78.]

<sup>28</sup>“There are two possible ways to interpret this. One is to assume that the angels are ignorant of what the prophets are talking about, and would very much like to acquire some understanding of it; their ignorance is then contrasted with the knowledge of the Christians to whom this message is already made known. Another way is to put emphasis on the angels' intense, perhaps envious, interest in God's plan for his people. Either way, the message comes out clear that the angels are in some ways inferior to the Christian, and that what God is doing for his people is so great that even angels wonder in awe and amazement.” [Daniel C. Arichea and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the First Letter from Peter*, UBS handbook series; Helps for translators (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 31.]