

As always it is a great joy of my heart to be able to minister the Word of God to you. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter 1:10-12. Before we look at the text, let me say that I've entitled this sermon, "God's Revelation of the Salvation Message." This is a fascinating text, and one that I'm not sure I've ever heard preached before. I found it to minister to my heart in a very special way. In this world in which we live, most of the news seems to be bad news; difficult and heartbreaking news. There is no greater or better news than that good news of salvation. I'm reminded of the angelic announcement of the Savior's birth. You will remember the angel of the Lord came and stood before the terrified shepherds. The glory of the Lord shone around them, the brilliance of His Shekinah. The angel said, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:9-11.)

Indeed the good news of salvation and that promise of a Savior that would someday deliver us all from the consequences of sin is a tapestry that we find woven through all of Scripture. We can go back to the beginning and see the Promise of the Lamb beginning in Genesis 3:15, what is sometimes called the *protoevangelium*, meaning "the first good news." That was the text that describes that the great offspring of the woman, namely Christ Jesus, would someday defeat Satan. That wonderful story began to take shape in Genesis 4 in the story of Abel and Cain. Abel, unlike Cain, obeyed God and brought Him a sacrifice that was acceptable to Him. In that story we began to see the need for the shedding of blood to make atonement for sin. In fact, Abel's sacrifice was a picture of a sacrifice that would someday come.

God later revealed an even more graphic illustration that showed the need of a more perfect sacrifice that would make atonement for sin: a Lamb, that someday God Himself would need to supply. We read that story in Genesis 22, in the test of Abraham's faith when he was asked to sacrifice his son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah. As you know, God stayed his hand and provided a substitute sacrifice. Many years later, the Promise of the Lamb can be seen in the Passover Lamb. We see in Exodus 12 that marvelous picture of redemption when God poured out His judgment upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians in the killing of the first-born. You will remember that the people had to take into their family an unblemished male lamb. They had to love that lamb and kill it at twilight, at the same time that Christ was killed later on. They took the blood and put it on the lintel and the doorpost so that the angel of death would Passover. The blood of the lamb secured their homes. Those who had placed their faith in Him would be spared.

As we look through the history of Scripture, indeed we first see the Promise of the Lamb, then the Passover Lamb, and thirdly the Presentation of the Lamb. After 400 years of divine silence, only the scathing condemnation of Malachi the prophet rang in the ears of the people, telling them that because of their idolatry, because of their disobedience, the glory has departed. *Ichabod*, the glory has gone. They remembered that. For 400 years they saw nothing of the presence of God. Then suddenly a messenger came to announce the coming of the Lamb, the Presentation of the Lamb. In Matthew 3:1 we read that, "John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" And later in John 1:29, John saw Jesus coming and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

The Promise of the Lamb, the Passover Lamb, the Presentation of the Lamb, these will ultimately find their fulfillment in the Praise of the Lamb. We can find that in many passages, especially in the book of Revelation. In chapter 5:1-14 there is a magnificent crescendo of praise that is directed toward the

Lord Jesus Christ at the time of the consummation of redemptive history; when the saints and the angels join together in future worship and the Lord Jesus Christ is about to set into motion the final judgment upon the world and the deliverance of those whom He has chosen. We read in that text that the angels and the redeemed will join together and sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." Those will be the very words that we will someday sing in the presence of the Lamb.

Later on in Revelation we finally see the Power of the Lamb. In Revelation 16 we see a description of the Satanic kingdom and the religious and political Babylon coming together. The nations join in an alliance, and join kingdoms with the Antichrist in a counterfeit trinity with Satan, Antichrist and the False Prophet. Ultimately we see the great battle of Armageddon. In Revelation 17:14 we understand more of the Power of the Lamb when we read, "These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."

When we grasp all of these glorious motifs of the Lamb of God, we finally can end up contemplating the awesome reality of the Preeminence of the Lamb. When we read Revelation 21, we read of the New Jerusalem. That capitol city of heaven descends from the heavens and the eternal state begins. We read of that time when we will all bask in the resplendent light of His glory forever and forever. These themes are but a fraction of the grand and glorious story of our undeserved salvation. I want to give you the big picture to get you thinking of this message of salvation that we have in this book, which is the infallible record of the Word of the living God. Here we read of a message of that inscrutable mystery of sovereign grace that is bestowed upon those whom God has chosen in eternity past.

Because of this, in quick review, when we come to 1 Peter now, we see Peter near the end of his days, about to be crucified himself as a martyr for Christ. He's ministering to these saints who are being tortured in ways that we can't even imagine. Beginning in the first nine verses we've studied so far, we've learned how the inspired apostle comes to the persecuted spiritual aliens of the first century. He gives them the triumphant hope of their election, that they are chosen, sanctified, sealed and blessed. In verse 3 he goes on and breaks forth in a great doxology of hope, praising God and encouraging them to praise God, for the source of their hope, the Father who drew them, and the power of their hope in the regeneration that has caused this miraculous transformation in their hearts and minds. The promise of their hope, that they have an eternal inheritance that is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away. And even the certainty of that hope, helping them to understand that we all have an inheritance that is reserved, literally guarded in heaven, and we have a salvation that is protected by the very power of God.

Then, as if that weren't enough, these marvelous doctrinal truths cause the hearts of the redeemed to rejoice with inexpressible joy as he describes the reality that we have a salvation that is secure, a faith that is proven, a commendation that is inevitable, a love that is unseen and a deliverance that is in progress. These are the things we've learned thus far. Now, Peter comes back down to earth, if you will, from this joyful doxology of praise and hope. He reminds his readers of the history of God's revelation of the salvation message. We read this beginning in verse 10 of 1 Peter. He says, "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He

predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.”

Here we see three activities of that glorious process of divine revelation, each of which work together in the synergy of divine providence, that ultimately resulted in the message of salvation that we find in the Word of God, in the Bible. A message that is so exceedingly magnificent and glorious that when we contemplate upon it, it causes our hearts to literally transcend the difficulties of life, of which there are many. Here the Holy Spirit gives encouragement to the spiritual aliens that journey upon this fallen earth by describing, literally, the pathway of the gospel message of salvation. He does this from three perspectives that we want to look at. We will see firstly the prophets who searched, secondly the Holy Spirit who revealed, and thirdly the apostles who preached.

First, let me draw your attention to the prophets who searched, beginning in verses 10-11. He says, “As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.” From the very beginning, every man and every woman, from Adam and Eve on, who have placed their faith in a merciful God who alone could save them through grace alone, has been intrigued with the promises of salvation. It's fascinating, as we read here and in other texts, that the inspired prophets, from Moses to Malachi, recorded many things pertaining to the “who” and the “when” of the coming of the Messiah Savior that they did not understand. Although they had received the gift of salvation by grace through faith, as we did, they did so without ever fully understanding or witnessing the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They did not fully understand all the implications of who the Messiah would be. They had no understanding, no grasp of the life of Christ, what would happen precisely in His death, resurrection, ascension and so on. Therefore, they longed to know more. Jesus clearly acknowledged this when He said to His disciples in Matthew 13:17, “Truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men,” referring to the men of the Old Testament, “desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.” This is clearly evident as we look at the great prophets of the Old Testament. Let me give you a sampling. You can go back to Noah. You see very quickly that Noah understood the grace of the Lord. In Genesis 6:8 he “found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” He placed his faith in a Savior that He would never see—until he died. But he did not understand the person, the work of Christ. Little did he know that the ark that he was preparing was a foreshadow of coming judgment, something that would symbolize a coming Savior.

We can read the writings of Moses. He wrote also of grace and the message of salvation when he recorded the Law. In fact, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he described the grace of God, the salvation of God, even in the details of Israel's rebellion. In Deuteronomy 32:15 he says that they “forsook God who made (them), and scorned the Rock of (their) salvation.” So he spoke of the message of the Savior and of salvation. Later he described the fruition of God's saving purposes in verse 43 when he said, “Rejoice, O nations, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance on His adversaries, and will atone for His land and His people.” But you see, he did not understand the specifics of that salvation message.

Look at the prophet Isaiah. He prophesied the virgin birth of Christ. He even spoke of Him as Immanuel, God with us. He spoke of His incarnation. He spoke of a coming Savior who would be able to physically heal the deaf and the blind. He spoke of His baptism and His transfiguration. He spoke of the fact that He would be beaten with a rod and spat upon. He even spoke of His silence during all the phases of His trial. He spoke of the details of His suffering and His death. He spoke of how someday He would be an innocent, sacrificial Lamb of God. He even made mention of aspects of the resurrection and the triumphal entry, but he never understood how it all fit together. He never understood the particulars, but he longed to do so, as they all did.

In fact, in Luke 4, Jesus even read a portion of Isaiah's prophecy concerning Himself to the Jews in His hometown synagogue. At that time He told them that He was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. Let me read that to you, from Isaiah 61:1-2. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord." We can even read of the Psalmist's general understanding of the salvation message. He prophesied of Christ's crucifixion in Psalm 22. In Psalm 16 we read about the holy One who would not succumb to decay, and indeed therefore, we know that Christ rose from the dead. The Psalmist didn't understand all of that. In Psalm 2 he predicted His coming kingdom upon earth when He will reign and rule with a rod of iron.

Likewise we can read of Jonah. Jonah understood the saving grace of God. He understood the salvation message. In fact, he prayed that God would not extend His mercy to the exceedingly wicked Ninevites. It was frankly for that reason that he fled to Tarshish, rather than going to them with the salvation message. In fact, in Jonah 4:2 we read, "I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity." He understood the basic message but not the particulars. He longed to do so, as they all did.

Go to the story of Hosea. He understood the general message of salvation. He was asked to marry a woman that was unfaithful. Gomer was her name. In that text we find a stunning metaphor describing sin and judgment and the undeserved forgiveness of God's saving love. Even the last Old Testament prophet, John the Baptist, was uncertain about Jesus. Yet he was passionate to know for sure that Jesus was the One that they had long awaited. We read of this in Matthew 11:2-3. "When John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to Him, 'Are you the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?'" To which Jesus responded in verses 4-5, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

All through the Old Testament the prophets wrote about the principles of saving grace, but with no understanding of the specifics, of the who, the when, the how. In fact, the writer of Hebrews tells us in 11:13 that, "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance." Because much of the salvation message was a mystery to them, with a culmination to be revealed someday yet future, in a time of redemptive history that was way beyond them, because of this, Peter tells us beginning in verse 10 that, "they made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow."

As I reflected upon this text, I think it's important to remind us that if the Old Testament prophets who could not see all we have seen made such careful search and inquiry, all of us on this side of the cross should have even more of a passion to look back and to see so clearly what has happened and what has been revealed to us in the New Testament. We have the specifics of the gospel message. I rejoice that many of you join with me in a love to make careful search and inquiry ourselves as we look into the person of Jesus Christ. I never tire of the subject of Christ and the salvation message. I know many of you join me. I long to look now into the marvels of His second coming, of which we have but a glimpse.

I would hasten to add that there is no subject of greater importance than the message of salvation. It is the theme that has stirred the hearts of the redeemed down through redemptive history. Therefore, we can echo the doxology of the apostle Paul in Romans 11. After he had contemplated and preached the wonderful message of the justification by faith, he broke forth in a doxology. "Oh the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways."

Charles Spurgeon elaborates on the profundity of this salvation message when he said, "Study Christ; the most excellent of all the sciences in the knowledge of a crucified Saviour. He is most learned in the university of heaven who knows most of Christ. He who hath known most of Him still says that His love surpasseth knowledge. Behold Him, then, with wonder, and behold Him with thankfulness."

Child of God, never lose the wonder of it all. Never allow the glorious story of Christ and Him crucified and all of the particulars of the salvation message to somehow become passé. Continue to marvel at it, as we will see, that even the angels marvel at this mystery of redemption. Never stop adoring the grace of God who would send His Son to be the sacrifice for guilty man. As we look through Scripture, we can never plumb the depths of His glorious plan of redemption. We see it in two primary motifs. First of all, He is intent on redeeming His chosen people, and we see the Lord Jesus Christ depicted as a Lamb and as a Servant. But not only is He intent on redeeming the people, He is intent on restoring the kingdom. When we read those passages, we read that He's not a Lamb or a Servant, but a Lion and a King. As we look at Christ in the Gospels, we see Him in His humiliation. When we look at him in the Revelation we see the unveiling of Christ in His exaltation. In his humiliation He is a Lamb who opened not His mouth, but in His glorification He will be the roaring Lion of the Tribe of Judah. All of prophesy, all of redemptive history points to the ultimate consummation when the Messiah, the Lamb of God, will return in power and great glory. These are the truths that should be the constant fascination of every child of God.

So firstly Peter speaks of the prophets who searched, and secondly of the Holy Spirit who revealed. We read in verse 11, seeking to know what person or time, he says, "...the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you." Revealed is a term *apokalupto*, to unveil, to reveal. We see the derivative of that in the Greek, the *apokalupsis Jesu Christo*, the revelation or unveiling of Jesus Christ. Here in this text we see that this glorious story of salvation was unveiled. It was revealed to them by the Spirit of Christ that was within them. Because of the grammar here, it's in the passive voice, which indicates that they did not do the unveiling but that God did the unveiling. God revealed it to them. And we are reminded that the prophets therefore received direct revelation from God the Holy Spirit, concerning two major themes of salvation here in this text. First of all the

sufferings of Christ and secondly the glories to follow, which would include His resurrection, His ascension, and the glories of the kingdom and so on.

How did they receive this information? We read here that it was from the Spirit of Christ that was within them. Here is the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. You must understand that the Word of Scripture came directly from God who spoke it. However, He used human agents to write it down. I cannot explain this, nor can I explain any of the major doctrines of Scripture. I cannot explain to you how all of that worked. But this is what God has said, so we trust Him. His ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. In 2 Timothy 3:16 we read that, "All Scripture is inspired by God." *Theaneustras*, which means God-breathed. There we have a metaphor of God literally breathing out the words of Scripture.

In fact, as we look in the Old Testament, many times the prophets would say, "Thus says the Lord." Then they would go on and write things down and speak to us, but they were therefore claiming that their words were not actually their words but God's Words. Therefore they were speaking as His messenger with absolute authority. Likewise in the New Testament, in Matthew 1:22 we have Isaiah's words quoted from Isaiah 7:14. There we read, "what the Lord had spoken by the prophet." So here, when we come to Peter's words in this text, we see the emphasis on that inscrutable mystery of divine inspiration whereby God initiated the volition of certain men. He moved upon their wills and He used their personality and their context of life and He caused them to perfectly record precisely what He wanted to say. This is very similar to the miracle of regeneration, when God in His sovereign grace initiates salvation in a person who is dead in his trespasses and sin. It's not man and his free will that initiates salvation, it is God and His grace. We see the same thing in the inspiration of Scripture.

In 2 Peter 1:20-21 Peter says, "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation." Let me pause for a moment. This is a bit technical but I want to be sure you understand this. The term "interpretation" here means "loosing" or "releasing" in the original language. Scripture, therefore, is not a matter of anyone personally or independently "loosing" or "releasing" or coming up with something they want to say. It's not a matter of somebody's own private truth. Peter is not talking about some personal interpretation as we would think about it in the English, as a personal analysis, but rather he's talking about the divine source of Scripture. He goes on to say, "for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will." By the way, it's the same thing. Man is not saved by human will any more than man wrote Scripture by human will. It was all by God's grace, and here we see it was by "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

*Moved*, in the original language, was a term that meant "to be carried along" or to use an old English word, to be "borne along." It was used to describe wind that would catch a sail and cause a vessel to be borne along over the waters. So literally what he's saying here is that God caused, God initiated in the lives of the prophets, He caused them to raise the sails of their human volition. The Holy Spirit then filled those sails and carried them where He wished that vessel to go. Indeed, like every Bible doctrine, it's an inscrutable mystery. It's beyond our understanding. That's what God tells us.

What did the "Spirit of Christ within them" do? Peter tells us that He indicated to them, "as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow." This idea of *indicating* to them is a word that means "to make clear" or "to make plain." In other words to elucidate. What he's saying here is that he made clear to them, as he predicted, which means to testify beforehand. He made clear to them

“as he predicted, the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.” Here we see in the mysteries of indirect, divine communication, the Spirit of God caused these men to pen the very Words of the living God.

As I was reflecting upon this, I was scratching my head with great joy that I cannot fathom this God that I love and worship. I was reminded of Revelation 1:8. There are several other passages that speak to this, but there in that text God says, “‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’” Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. There are twenty-four letters in the Greek alphabet. There are twenty-six in the English. As you think of those few numbers of letters, imagine the infinite number of arrangements of letters that one can make and communicate myriad and myriad of different forms of information.

Literally, in that text, God was saying that, “I have created language with all of these letters in an alphabet. I have done so in order to reveal Myself to you as One who wants to communicate with absolute precision and clarity that which I want you to know.” Therefore, He said, “I am the Alpha and the Omega.” In other words, I am the repository of all information. I am the parameter of all knowledge. There is nothing that can be known outside of Me, nothing is beyond My understanding. Therefore, nothing can sabotage My perfect plan of glorifying Myself in redemption. I am the Alpha and the Omega.” What is astounding to me is that in His infinite wisdom, He perfectly arranged every letter of Scripture into the precise combination of letters to reveal Himself to us. By the way, this is why it is so important that we handle the Word of God with utmost care. Every single word, every single phrase, the grammar, the syntax, everything about it must be studied with great care.

Then what did He do? He takes the arrangement of all these letters and words and reveals it first of all to the prophets and then to the apostles, who are now inspired by the Holy Spirit. Then He gives it to us in the canon of Scripture so that we can understand the glorious message of salvation; so that we can be saved, because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. It's an amazing process. Here in this text Peter indicates that God first revealed to the prophets of the Old Testament these glorious truths—many truths that they didn't even understand fully, that they didn't experience because ultimately that fulfillment would be in a day yet future. In verse 12 it says, “It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves.” In other words, they began to understand, by the power of the Spirit, that they were writing things for a future generation—frankly, for us—on this side of the cross. But this did not stop them from diligent study to investigate what they had been inspired to write, so they could glean every possible tidbit of information pertaining to what was “predicted...the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.”

Peter speaks of the prophets who searched, the Holy Spirit who revealed, and thirdly, the apostles who preached. He says in verse 12, “in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.” What's he referring to? This refers to the marvelous message of salvation, the specifics of the gospel. These were the truths announced to these dear saints, saving truth that transformed their lives. Therefore, by understanding this whole process, it encourages them in the midst of their suffering. These men, the text says, “preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.” This was not only a reference to the apostles, but to many other preachers that were ordained in those days. All were supernaturally empowered by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. I would hasten to add that this is

a divine phenomenon that occurs even to this day, when divinely appointed men—affirmed and ordained by other qualified believers—stand in pulpits all around the world as God's messengers.

In fact, in Ephesians 4:11 we read that the Lord Jesus Christ has been given the authority to assign and gift certain men to be His messengers in the church. We read there that, "He gave some as apostles and some as prophets." By the way, both the apostles' and the prophets' offices ceased with the completion of the New Testament. He goes on to say, "and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers." Pastors and teachers can be translated even better as "teaching shepherds." That is what God has called me to do. We have evangelists now, and we have teaching shepherds. Evangelists would be missionaries and those that primarily present the gospel, church planters and so on. And then you have teaching shepherds that God places in churches to not only teach the Word of God but to shepherd the flock.

Why are we here? He goes on to say, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith." That's doctrinal unity, not some subjective unity, not some ecumenism. It is doctrinal unity that he is concerned about. "...until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine."

So what happens is, the apostles and the prophets of the New Testament period had the same message that the Old Testament prophets had, but in the New Testament they understood the specifics. Then when the New Testament was completed, those offices ceased and God now calls and gifts evangelists and teaching shepherds. All are empowered by the same Holy Spirit. In fact, Paul described the heart of a preacher of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. He says that, "When I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."

Indeed, the message of salvation is like a lion: it merely needs to be released from its cage and you will see its power. It is for that reason that the apostle Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation" (Romans 1:16.) In fact, this Holy Spirit-empowered message of salvation is so exceedingly glorious that Peter doesn't stop here. He goes on and says something that I find very fascinating. He says that it is something that the angels long to look into. Notice there at the end of verse 12, "things into which angels long to look."

Imagine the encouragement this would have been to beleaguered saints of that day, and even to us today. Suffering saints, who now can understand that they personally had received this message of salvation that not only captivated the hearts and the attentions of the Old Testament prophets, and excited the passion of New Testament preachers, but it was also a revelation that literally astonishes the angels. It says here in the text that it is "things into which angels long to look." "Long," in the original language, means to have a consuming passion, a strong desire, an overwhelming impulse. "To look" is a term that means to literally stop, and stoop down and stretch your head forward and look very carefully at something that you believe to be of great importance. The grammar indicates that this



is a continual fascination that the angels have. It's not something that happened long ago and now it's kind of ho-hum. They continue to be utterly fascinated with the message of salvation.

What do you think they're looking at? I can only imagine some of the things. I'm sure they have an undying curiosity to behold fallen creatures who bear the image of God, the One they know so intimately. I think of it like a parent or grandparent when they go to the hospital when a baby is born. What do we do? We go into that room where those babies are lying and we look through the glass. We peer into the face of that child to see whose resemblance that baby might have. "Oh, it looks like Daddy," or whoever. I'm sure the angels do the same thing. They look at us and they say, "My, I see a little resemblance of the Father here. I see the image of God being born out a little. Look over there, look over here." They're fascinated with this, trying to find a glimpse of the character of the triune God being manifested in our sinful state. No doubt they are intrigued with the undeserved mercy and grace of God upon creatures they themselves have been discharged to minister unto. I'm sure they find that a fascination. They undoubtedly care for us with an intense care. I'm sure they're often bewildered at our rebellion against such a holy and righteous and loving God.

In fact, we know in Luke 15 that they literally rejoice and praise God when a sinner is saved. Isn't that a remarkable thing? Imagine the infinite galaxies that the angelic hosts patrol. And yet for them to realize that God has chosen our miniscule planet to lavish His grace upon, not only that, to send His Son to redeem a chosen few for Himself and for His glory. I'm sure they must be thinking to themselves, "My, to think that the Creator of the universe would lavish His love upon this little speck in the solar system. It's utterly inconceivable." And of course they are intrigued with the manifestation of the divine character and His plan of redemption of which they have been a part from the very beginning.

What an astounding thing for the holy angels to consider, that they themselves would never need to be pardoned, for they are the holy angels. And certainly the fallen angels have no possibility of pardon, and yet they can look at us and see that we are guilty of untold sin and yet God in His love chooses to pardon us. And at what a price! At the price of His own Son. How they must marvel at the simultaneous exercise of God's justice and mercy, knowing that this could never happen apart from the atoning work of the God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone could be the propitiation, or the appeasement, or the satisfaction for the divine wrath, for the justice of God. The propitiation of our sin. How they must stand in awe at guilty sinners being pardoned at Christ's expense. As they look at spiritual corpses being transformed into vessels of honor. As they behold a glorious God ransoming a fallen race and then coming along and adopting them as His own children, making them joint heirs with Jesus, the Son. And then to think that the Church becomes this mystical body, the body of Christ of which He is Head. It's little wonder that the Spirit of God would record in Ephesians 3:10 through the apostle Paul, "that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places."

Perhaps their greatest fascination is with the incarnation of Christ. They were there to announce His birth, and they were there to watch Him empty Himself and take upon Himself the form of a bondservant and make Himself in the likeness of man. They were there to minister to Him in times of testing. They were there to announce His empty grave at His resurrection, and to join Him in His glorious ascension.

Speaking of this angelic fascination, that great theologian of days gone by, Albert Barnes, says this. "The work of redemption is worthy of the study of the profoundest minds. Higher talent than any earthly talent has been employed in studying it; for, to the most exalted intellects of heaven, it has been a theme of the deepest interest. No mind on earth is too exalted to be engaged in this study; no intellect here is so profound that it would not find in this study a range of inquiry worthy of itself."

Oh dear child of God, I hope you will never take for granted this glorious message of salvation, one which the prophets searched, the Holy Spirit revealed, and the apostles preached. And in fact, one into which angels continually long to look. May these amazing reminders of the history of the revelation of the salvation message stir our hearts to praise, and motivate us to serve the One that we love, the One who deserves our utmost.

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