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The Glory of Salvation, Part 5

Based upon all that we have seen, it should be no surprise that one of the “proofs” of Christianity is prophecy! For example,¹ there are 660 prophecies in the Bible relating to the coming of the Messiah. Of the 660 prophecies 224 relate to the second coming, leaving 436 relating to the first advent of Christ (300 alone in the Old Testament) — all of which were fulfilled by our Lord when He came to the earth 2,000 years ago!

Now mathematically speaking, the chance that any individual might have lived down to the

present time and fulfilled just eight of the 436 prophecies concerning Christ's first advent is one in 10¹⁷. That is one in 100 quadrillion. To understand the significance of this if one laid 100 Quadrillion silver dollars across the entire state of Texas, they would cover the entire state two feet deep. Then if we marked one of the silver dollars and placed it randomly in the state, the chance that a man free to travel anywhere in the state could select the silver dollar blindfolded (so completely randomly) is the same as one man fulfilling eight of the 436 prophecies in Scripture relating to Christ's first advent.

Yet, Christ fulfilled all 436! On account of the Prophetic Witness alone we can confidently say that there is no way the Bible could be the product of the imagination of man. Only God could have produced it!

And yet, to encourage us even more toward this end, Peter bolsters our confidence in detailing HOW God gave His word to the prophet. In order to encourage God's persecuted people in that the suffering they were enduring was worth it, Peter turned to an explanation of the prophet office/ministry for it was through this office God proclaimed His salvation over 4,000 years ago.

The Mechanics Behind the Prophetic Gift

When Peter wrote of the prophets, he said this:

1 Peter 1:11b, "Seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ..."

In this verse Peter explains how the Prophet was able to fulfill His threefold calling, which included:

- Predicting the future with 100% accuracy, Deuteronomy 18:20-22.
- Doing miracles, Deuteronomy 13:1.
- Proclaiming the word that God gave them, Deuteronomy 13:2-5.

Of the three elements of their ministry, the most important and that for which the other two gifts were given for the sake of validation, was the proclamation of God's word. This is the focus of the prophetic office. When the office was instituted, God told Moses this:

Deuteronomy 18:18: "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him." (cf. Deuteronomy 18:15-19)!

And yet, how did God convey the prophetic message to the prophet? How did the prophet receive and then pass on the revelation given to them? The text tells us.

1 Peter 1:11b, [it was by] "...the Spirit of Christ within them²... indicating/relaying... [the

word of God]”!

First and foremost, this tells us that the prophetic witness was the direct product of God! It was NOT the result of the imagination of a man or the creation of religious people. In fact, so important is this point that God taught it on multiple occasions, one of which in 2 Timothy 3.

2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.”

In the early part of the twentieth century, liberal theologians made much here of the word “inspired” (which in the Latin is translated as “to breathe into” [*inspirare*- made up of the Latin prefix *in* (inside, into) and the verb *spirare* (to breathe)]). Using the Latin, these liberal theologians posited all sorts of theories regarding how God *supposedly* gave His word to the prophet or apostle as the Latin suggests that God “breathed into” the prophet. Yet men, such as B. B. Warfield showed the error of the liberal position in that God’s word was NOT written in Latin, BUT Greek. And in Greek, the word “inspired” is θεόπνευστος (*theopneustos*) literally means “God breathed” or “the breath of God”- which has a very specific connotation in the Bible. In Scripture, God’s “breath” denotes the fulness of divine power. Accordingly, it was by the “breath of God” that these things occurred:

1. The world was created, Psalm 33:6; Proverbs 18:15.
2. It was adorned with beauty, Job 26:13.
3. Man was created, Genesis 1:26.
4. Life came into man, Genesis 2:7; Isaiah 42:5.
5. Man was enabled to be a thinking, moral being, Job 32:8; 33:4.
6. The world is preserved, Job 37:10.
7. The Red Sea parted, Exodus 15:8.
8. God’s chosen ones are protected and preserved, 2 Samuel 22:16.
9. The sinner is regenerated, Ezekiel 37:5-10.
10. Mortals are taken from the world, Job 4:9; 15:30; Isaiah 40:7.
11. The world someday will be destroyed, Job 34:14.
12. Satan will be condemn and destroy, 2 Thessalonians 2:8.
13. The earth will be brought to judgment, Isaiah 30:27, 33; 33:11.
14. Man will rise from the dead, Revelation 11:11.

From these passages, we understand that the “breath of God” in Scripture is synonymous with God’s almighty power! Accordingly, when Paul declared that “all scripture” is the product of the Divine breath (is “God-breathed”) he asserted, with as much energy as could be employed by the Greek language, that Scripture is the product of a specific Divine operation. In other words, to say that God’s word is Inspired does NOT tell us how it came to be, BUT what it is: God’s word! B. B. Warfield wrote of this text:

What it says of Scripture is, not that it is ‘breathed into by God’ or is the product of the Divine ‘inbreathing’ into its human authors, but that it is breathed out by God, ‘God-

breathed,' the product of the creative breath of God. In a word, what is declared by this fundamental passage is simply that the Scriptures are a Divine product, without any indication of how God has operated in producing them. (Warfield 133)

So, God wants us to understand that the prophetic word is nothing less than God's word!

But that raises the question: how did God do it? How did the Lord convey His word to the prophet/apostle? We already have seen that it was NOT from inside their heart in the form of a "burden" or an "impulse" (cf. Jeremiah 23:16). That is how the false prophets spoke. So how is it that the Spirit of God conveyed the word of God to the prophet or apostle? That is the question Peter answered in our text this morning: It was by "the Spirit of Christ WITHIN THEM"! Yet this is subject to some interpretation which no doubt is why Peter returned to this in his second epistle.

2 Peter 1:21, "No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

Clearly the prophetic word did NOT well up in the heart of a man, "it is NOT the product of human will." RATHER, it came by the working of the Spirit of God in the life of the prophet. And what does this mean? While there have been many suggestions as to what this means, three have been most prominent.

The first is known as the Mechanical View. This suggests that the way God gave His word to the prophet was through dictation- like a secretary. In some instances, that was indeed the case- as in the Ten Commandments. However, this view is quickly discounted for two reasons. First, Peter says here that the prophet was "moved by the Holy Spirit" which indicates that in the process of the revelation, the Holy Spirit did more than simply speak God's word to the prophet who then recorded it as a scribe. Rather, the Holy Spirit somehow worked in or at least on them. That explains, secondly, why the books written by specific authors (like Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Paul, John) all bear peculiarities unique to that author- such things as their word choice. Mark loves the word, "Immediately." Matthew favors such words as "fulfilled," "blessed," and "the Kingdom of Heaven." If God dictated His word to these men, each of their books would read the same. But they don't! We see it also in their word order. A characteristic of Paul is that he addresses doctrine and then practice. Every one of his didactic epistles follow this order. There are many more such examples — all of which tell us that God did NOT *dictate* His word to the Inspired writer. What was written clearly came from them!

In light of this, an opposite view was suggested known as Dynamic Inspiration. This says that the writers were inspired men who recorded their own words (not God's word) in the Bible. It was believed that when the word of Paul, for example, is read, the Holy Spirit can transform the read word into God's word by an act of grace. Today this is associated today with Neo-Orthodoxy. The problem with this view is that it contradicts God's word. Again, God told Moses:

Deuteronomy 18:18, "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him."

That is why after Moses received God's word and related it to the people of God, we read of the people of God:

Exodus 24:3b, "...All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!"

They didn't say, "Moses, insofar as the word you spoke to us becomes God's word, we will do!" No! They accepted everything Moses said literally as God's word!

So we cannot derive from 2 Peter 1 *Mechanical Inspiration* or *Dynamic Inspiration*. That leaves the position of Orthodoxy which is known as *Organic Inspiration*. Look at Peter's words again:

2 Peter, 1:20, "No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men **MOVED** by the Holy Spirit..."

The idea here is that from the start the Holy Spirit was the "mover" of these men. He raised them up, determined their education, their home life, their experiences, and the like. All this resulted in the raising up of a man, who by the Spirit's enabling, wrote God's word accurately and without error. Louis Berkhof put it this way:

The proper conception of inspiration holds that the Holy Spirit acted on the writers of the Bible in an organic way, in harmony with the laws of their own inner being, using them just as they were, with their character and temperament, their gifts and talents, their education and culture, their vocabulary and style. The Holy Spirit illumined their minds, aided their memory, prompted them to write, repressed the influence of sin on their writings, and guided them in the expression of their thoughts even to the choice of their words. In no small measure He left free scope to their own activity. They could give the results of their own investigations, write of their own experiences, and put the imprint of their own style and language on their books. (Berkhof 20)

It is this we profess when it comes to God's word. This maintains the teaching of God's word which says that what we have in our hands is nothing less than God's infallible and inerrant word. And yet it also explains how the Holy Spirit "moved" in the life of the prophet/apostle by which they then recorded God's word.

So, from all of this, what's the bottom line?

When Peter says that the prophets received God's word through "the Spirit of Christ within them" he was endeavoring to convey to the people of God that the Salvation proclaimed by the prophets was NOT of human origin or invention; RATHER it truly was and is of God! As such, it is

genuine and true:

- We really are saved by grace!
- We really are reconciled with God in Christ!
- God's plan for us is for our welfare!

Each one of us most certainly can and ought to live with the utmost confidence that "where Jesus is, someday there we shall also be" (John 14:3)! It really is true that awaiting us upon our death is the hope of glory and so life eternal where we shall be conformed to the image of Christ and dwell with Him in His Kingdom forever!

So Christian, come out of the shadows! Faint not and fear not! The grace of God by which you are saved has brought to pass God's eternal plan of redemption — a plan that began in eternity past and will come to completion in eternity future!

Because this is the case, know and understand that anything and everything we undergo on this side of the grave is worth it!

Romans 8:18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

Now, if that isn't the most amazing truth, hold on to your hats! For Peter makes one more important point concerning the intended recipient of the prophetic ministry.

1 Peter 1:12a, "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..."

This blows my mind! Redemptive history to this point had spanned thousands of years, all of which culminated in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, His perfect life, His sacrificial death, His resurrection from the dead, His ascent back into glory, and then the recording and so the giving of His final and finished word which we hold in our hands. How many thousands to this point suffered for God's Kingdom? How many lost their homes? How many dispossessed? How many lived as aliens and strangers as if in a hostile world? And yet, according to Peter, for whom was all this given, accomplished, and provided? You, me, and any and all in Christ living in this final age!

Romans 4:23-24, "Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead."

Romans 15:4a, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction..."

1 Corinthians 10:11, "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

And so, with the coming of Christ the table has been set and a celebration has begun. And little do you realize today, but it is all for you!

In this regard, I want to change your thinking just a bit when it comes to your understanding about where you are and where God is in His redemptive program.

I've shared with you the glorious reality that at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb, Jesus Christ personally is going to welcome you as well as praise you for your work in His name, Peter declares:

1 Peter 1:7, "...the proof of your faith... tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Yet based on the teaching of God's word we cannot help but believe that the party has already begun when Christ first came to the earth! We read in Luke:

Luke 15:10, "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

This, family of God, is speaking of today! Celebration continues to ring out from heaven as God saves an individual! In this regard, can you hear the faint sounds of a party? Paul clearly did.

Romans 5:1-2, "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and [what is it now that characterizes us?] we exult in hope of the glory of God."

The idea of "exulting" speaks of a praise that colors all of life. In and through all things, Paul exulted in all that God had done, was doing, and would do in Christ. Clearly Paul got wind of the celebration and so he joined his heart together with the angels in praising God! And yet it just wasn't Paul. Peter extended this call to everyone in Christ.

Philippians 4:4-5, "[Today... this day... this moment... and in every valley or mountain] Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your forbearing *spirit* be known to all men [In other words, don't hold it in! For...] The Lord is near."

Brothers and sisters, there is a celebration going on which ultimately revolves around the Person and Work of Christ. Yet at that party which has already begun, Christ has deigned as part of the celebration to honor you! No wonder Peter begins this epistle, written to oppressed and persecuted Christians, with these words, "[May] grace and peace be yours in fullest measure!"

References

Berkhof, Louis. *A Summary of Christian Doctrin*. Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1960.

Warfield, Benjamin B. *Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: P & R Publishing, 1948.

End Note(s)

¹ The following is taken from a talk given by Josh McDowell.

² Once again, the jury is out as to whether or not we should take this as “Christ’s Spirit” or the “Holy Spirit driven by Christ.” And honestly in the present context it doesn’t matter.