

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 7 July 2019. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Heavenly Gospel

1 Peter 1:10-16

Back in the early 1500's, an amazing phenomenon began to take place in Europe. For some time, there had been a renewed interest in the ancient languages—including the languages of the Bible (Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic). Universities all over Europe were now teaching not only Latin, but also Hebrew, Classical Greek, and Koine Greek (the Greek of the New Testament). In 1517, the first *printed* edition of the Greek New Testament was published by an outstanding scholar named Erasmus. Many men travelled to the universities with the intention of studying for the Roman Catholic clergy. Others intended to study “the humanities,” so that they could pursue a life of fame and scholarship. However, in the process of studying the Bible in the original languages, something amazing happened: **many of them became students of the Gospel, and their lives forever changed!**

You see, the Bible isn't just “another book.” It is the living Word of God. When men began to study the Bible for themselves, they quickly saw that a relationship with God is not obtained through religion and rituals, as they had been taught, but rather by placing one's faith entirely in Jesus Christ. They quickly saw that the Gospel—the message that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again for our justification—is the only message that can save. All over Europe, men who had set out to be students of ancient languages became students of the Gospel. They placed their personal faith in Jesus Christ; and Christ changed their lives forever. Furthermore, they quickly realized that they had a mandate to spread this message of salvation to others. Fearless Baptist preachers such as Conrad Grebel and George Blaurock, armed with the Word of God, went far and wide to spread the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ; and multitudes were freed from the chains of sin. Though they were stretched on the rack, burned at the stake, drowned, disemboweled, filleted alive, ripped in pieces, beheaded, hanged, and pushed off high cliffs and towers, they would not deny their Saviour.

The early sixteenth century was a turning point in history. The Gospel was “unleashed” with great power. For long periods of history, the Gospel has been suppressed (though never extinguished); and during such times, the students of the Gospel were few, isolated, and persecuted. Nonetheless, the Gospel has always had its students. In fact, even before Christ came to earth, there were many students of the Gospel. In our passage of Scripture this morning, we shall learn about the “students of the Gospel,” both past and present. We will also see the result that the Gospel produces in people's lives.

The title of this message is *The Heavenly Gospel*.

Read 1 Peter 1:10-16.

This morning we shall examine the **students** of the Gospel, and the **results** of the Gospel.

I. The students of the Gospel (v. 12)

In **verse 12**, Peter lists three groups of students of the Gospel. First, there were the **Old Testament prophets**. Peter starts off **verse 12** with the words “*Unto whom it was revealed.*” Who are these people “*to whom*” the Gospel was revealed? The *prophets of the Old Testament*. Back in **verses 10-11**, Peter had just said that the prophets of Old Testament times “*searched diligently*” concerning *how* our salvation would be provided, and *when* it would be provided. They wanted to know how the Messiah would purchase salvation for mankind; and the Holy Spirit answered their questions to varying degrees. Some of the prophets were given a great deal of information about “*sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*”

Take Abraham, for example. God gave Abraham much revelation about the Gospel. Let's see what Abraham knew about the Gospel.

Read Galatians 3:8.

This is an interesting statement, is it not? Paul says that *“the Scripture”* (in other words, God, who is the Author of Scripture) preached the Gospel to Abraham. Now, how can this be? Abraham lived and died about 2,000 years before Jesus was born. In what sense did the LORD *“preach the Gospel”* to Abraham hundreds of years *before* Jesus died, was buried, and rose again? Well, let's see what Jesus had to say about this.

Read John 8:51-56.

Did you catch what Jesus said in **verse 56**? Jesus said that Abraham *“saw” His “day,”* and was *“glad”!* Which “day” in the life of Jesus did Abraham see? It was the “day” that *Jesus* foretold from the beginning of His ministry. In the months before His death, Jesus repeatedly told His disciples that *“he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day”* (Matthew 16:21). The “day” that Abraham saw was the future day when Jesus Christ would be crucified.

Now, *when* did Abraham foresee the day of Jesus' crucifixion? And *how* did he see it? Let's go back to the book of **Genesis** to find the answer.

Read Genesis 22:1-18.

On this important day on Mount Moriah, Abraham understood that a descendant of his (the Messiah) would one day bring the blessing of salvation to all nations. Everything that happened on Mount Moriah was a giant object lesson of salvation. It was a giant prophecy in type. Through this object lesson, God showed Abraham *how* the blessing of salvation would be obtained. God showed to Abraham that the Messiah would die in the place of sinners—just as the ram died in Isaac's place. God also showed Abraham how Messiah would *come back to life*. Just as Isaac, who was *supposed* to be appointed to death that day, arose up off the altar, so Jesus was *actually* appointed to death: and He *actually* rose back to life. In **Hebrews 11:17-19**, the Apostle Paul explained how Abraham received his son Isaac from the dead *“in a figure”* (literally, a “parable”). In other words, Isaac's rising up from off the altar was a “parable,” or picture, of Jesus' actual resurrection from the dead. Did Abraham really *understand* this object lesson? Paul indicates that Abraham *did* understand it!

Many of the Old Testament prophets had a good deal of understanding of the Gospel. In **Acts chapter 2**, Peter said that King David *understood* that he was writing about the Messiah's resurrection from the dead when he wrote **Psalms 16**. David, Isaiah, Zechariah, and many other prophets, prophesied of Christ. They foretold Christ's betrayal by a close friend; the price of His betrayal (30 pieces of silver); the piercing of His hands and feet; the gambling over His garments; His being offered vinegar to drink; the supernatural darkness that would descend over the earth while He was on the cross; the exact *day* of His death (in **Daniel chapter 9**); and hundreds of other details of His suffering, death, and resurrection.

Yet, the Old Testament prophets didn't understand *everything* about the Gospel. God gave them many pieces of the puzzle; but none of them understood every aspect of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. They were given much information; but they did not have the privilege of *seeing the Gospel unfold*. That privilege belonged to another set of Gospel students. That set of students was **the Apostles**.

(Read 1 Peter 1:12 again.) According to this verse, the Gospel was “*revealed*” to the Old Testament prophets; yet, it was *not* revealed “*unto themselves.*” To put it another way, it was revealed to them: yet, it *wasn’t* revealed to them. What does Peter mean by this?

Well, the Greek word for “reveal” is *apokalupto*. This word *apokalupto* literally means “to take off the cover.” In a sense, the Old Testament prophets did have the “cover” of the Gospel removed—to an extent. God revealed to them that the Messiah would suffer and die in some terrible way, and then rise again. God gave the Old Testament prophets enough pieces of the puzzle for them to have a *general idea* of how the Gospel would unfold. Yet, mixed in with the prophecies of Christ’s *sufferings* were the prophecies of His second coming to earth, and His glorious 1,000-year kingdom. These prophecies weren’t put in chronological order, either. Thus, the Old Testament prophets couldn’t really see that there were to be *two* comings of the Messiah to earth—the first one, for the purpose of suffering and dying for our sins, and the second one for the purpose of setting up the Kingdom. To them, it seemed that there was only *one* coming of the Messiah; and thus, it was hard for them to put the pieces of the puzzle together. They didn’t get to witness the *full removal* of “the cover.” They didn’t get to see the actual appearance of the Son of God in human flesh. They didn’t get to see, with their own eyes, the Messiah’s life, sacrificial death, resurrection, and ascension back to heaven. It was the *Apostles* who were given this privilege!

Read 1 John 1:1-3.

When you stop and think about what John is saying in these verses, it is mind-boggling. First, John reminded his readers of the fact that he and the other Apostles had seen, heard, and touched “*the Word of life*” (in other words, the Lord Jesus Christ). Sixty years after Christ had returned to heaven, John was still amazed that he had had the privilege of seeing, hearing, and touching the Son of God in human flesh! However, that wasn’t all that John had to say. In **verse 3**, John states the purpose of his letter. The purpose of his letter was **to declare the Lord Jesus to his readers.** (Read **verse 3** again.) John had had the awesome privilege of personally interacting with the Son of God when He was on earth; and now, he considered it a privilege to tell *others* about this Jesus whom he had known for six decades of his life!

That is exactly what *Peter* is saying here in **1 Peter 1:12**. Not only did he and the other apostles *receive* the truth of the Gospel; they also *declared it to others*. Peter says, “*unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel.*” When Peter says, “*unto us they did minister the things,*” he is talking about himself and the other Apostles. The Old Testament prophets “*ministered*” the truths about the coming Messiah in their writings; and now, the Apostles, who had *personally seen it happen*, were reporting what *they* knew to others! The Apostles couldn’t keep silent about the Gospel: they had to declare it to others, as Jesus had commanded them to do. We shouldn’t keep silent, either. You see, the Gospel has a *mandate* attached to it! Jesus said, “*Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*” (Mark 16:15).

The Apostles were privileged students of the Gospel. They got to *see* the Gospel with their own eyes. They actually *saw* the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, there is an important truth that we must understand about the Apostles. As they proclaimed the Gospel, they did not rely merely upon their *own memory* of what they had seen and heard. They had something infinitely better than their own memory to help them proclaim the Gospel. Let’s see what Peter said about this in his second epistle.

Read 2 Peter 1:15-21.

Look carefully at what Peter is saying. First, Peter reminds his readers that he had been an “*eyewitness*” of Jesus’ majesty. He had seen Jesus’ divine glory on the Mount of Transfiguration; and he had heard the Father speak from heaven. Peter saw Jesus’ glory with

his own eyes, and heard the Father's voice with his own ears. Yet, Peter says that we have a **"more sure word of prophecy"** than this! What is this **"more sure word of prophecy"**? He's talking about the *Scriptures!* For one thing, they had *Old Testament* Scriptures. In the Old Testament, God had prophesied of the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son. Also, at the time when Peter wrote this letter (around A.D. 60), they had about half of the *New Testament* Scriptures; and the New Testament Scriptures reported what Jesus had *already* done. The entire Old Testament, and about half of the New Testament, was available to them; and Peter considered these Scriptures to be **"more sure"** than his own *memory* of Jesus' words and actions. Why? Because the Scriptures had come straight from the mouth of God!

You see, *on their own*, Peter and the other Apostles had only imperfect memory of the things that had happened when Jesus was on earth. However, when the Holy Spirit moved upon them, and gave them God's words by inspiration, they had *perfect* memory of *everything* that they had seen and heard; and they were able to record it in the New Testament Scriptures with perfect accuracy. Jesus had promised the Apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit to them, and that the Holy Spirit would **"bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you"** (John 14:26). Jesus kept that promise! You and I may be sure that what we hold in our hands is the *infallible* Word of God. It is perfect!

The Apostles diligently studied what God had foretold about the Gospel in the Old Testament Scriptures; and they proclaimed that truth to others. Everything that the Apostles taught in the New Testament Scriptures was based upon the *Old* Testament. They were students of the Scriptures. Christian, are *you* a student of Scripture? Do you really understand how important this Book is? If the Apostles bowed to the Word of God, and not to their own fallible senses, then *we* had better bow to the Word of God, too! Like the Apostles, *we* should be students of the Gospel. *We* should desire to know everything that God has revealed to us in His Word. *We* should be hiding God's Word in our hearts, so that we may proclaim the Gospel to people with power and authority!

The Apostles were students of the Old Testament Scriptures, as well as of the New Testament Scriptures (which they themselves wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit). Now that the entire Bible is completed, we should be students of the *entire* Word of God. We should delve into, and strive to understand, every gem of truth that God has given us in both the Old *and* New Testaments. Without it, we have no power or authority to proclaim the Gospel.

You know, it's important to tell people the testimony of your salvation. It is important to tell others of how Christ has changed your life, and given you true peace and joy. However, as you grow in the Lord, you should be moving *beyond* merely telling your personal testimony. What if the person to whom you are witnessing should say, "Well, I'm really happy for you. It's nice that your life has changed; but I know a guy who converted to the Jehovah's Witnesses; and *his* life really changed, too. *He* seems to be happy. How do I know that *your* way is the true one?" What would you say to that? You'd better have the sword of God's Word in your mind, Christian, so that you can use it to show that person the true Gospel!

Brethren, I cannot overstate this truth: If we are to see people saved, then we must be armed with the Word of God! It is the Word of God that is **"quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even unto the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"** (Hebrews 4:12). We also need the *power of the Holy Spirit* as we proclaim the Gospel message. Remember what Peter said? He said that he and the other Apostles had **"preached the gospel...with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven."** The Apostles desperately needed the power of the Holy Spirit; and we need His power, too. The only way that we can have this power is to submit ourselves daily to God. We must die to self, and allow Him to control us.

The Old Testament prophets were students of the Gospel. The New Testament Apostles were students of the Gospel, as well. However, this is not the complete enrolment of students. Peter says that there is one more group of students of the Gospel. Who are they? **The angels!** (Read verse 12 again, emphasizing the last part of the verse.)

The angels are students of the Gospel—and very apt students, at that. Oftentimes, we think of God’s holy angels almost as if they were robots, who merely do their duties, and have no emotions, feelings, or thoughts of their own. Why do we think of the angels in this way? Perhaps it’s because of the influence of our own depraved nature. You see, our old sinful nature says, “Don’t give your will completely to God! Go ahead and keep a compartment of your life for God and church; but keep *this* compartment of your life for yourself. *This* compartment of your life is the ‘real you.’ This is where you make *your* decisions. After all, *you* know what’s best for you. If you give yourself wholly to *God*, and obey everything *God* tells you, you’ll be like a robot. You won’t be able to ‘think for yourself’ anymore.”

Folks, this is wicked thinking! Christians who surrender their will to God are not “robots”; and angels are not “robots,” either. The angels, just like us, have intelligence, emotions, and passion. They, like us, have free will to think, reason, and obey God. The difference between them and us is that their thoughts and passions have never become warped by sin. They think and reason deeply; yet, they continually choose to subject their reasoning to God. They ponder and wonder about things that haven’t been revealed to them: but they *never* question God’s wisdom. They *never* say, “God, why hast thou done so?” The thought never crosses their minds that “God doesn’t know what He’s doing.” They never say, “Well, God’s Word says this, *but I feel* this way.” Their thoughts toward God are always pure, holy, and obedient.

The angels are unbelievably intelligent creatures; and as intelligent creatures, they study God’s plan of redemption with amazement! They have been observing it for 6,000 years. They watched as man rebelled against God in the Garden. They have seen the woe and misery that our sin has brought upon us. They see (no doubt with great pain), just how wicked we really are; and they know, far better than we do, how deserving we are of the Lake of Fire. Yet, they also watched as God provided a way of salvation for us. They saw the plan of redemption unfolding when Jesus was on earth. They watched as their Master, the Creator of all things, wrapped Himself in human flesh, in Mary’s womb. They watched as this tiny Saviour was laid in a manger. They saw Him as He was nailed to a cross: and though they were ready, at one word from Jesus, to destroy the world for the crime that they were committing against their Master, they watched, in amazement, as their Master allowed Himself to die in shame and disgrace. They saw Him arise from the dead; and they saw Him ascend back to His throne in heaven. The angels have seen all this: and they are ever watching and studying.

The angels desire to “**look into**” the Gospel. Though they have never experienced the joy of being redeemed (as we have experienced), they study the Gospel message with amazement. They give aid to Christians as they proclaim the Gospel message, by protecting them from wicked men, and from Satan’s angels. No doubt, *they* would love to proclaim the Gospel to mankind: yet, God has not given that responsibility to them. God has given that responsibility to *us*, the ones who have *experienced* redemption.

By the way, there will be a short time, in the future, when God *will* allow angels to preach the Gospel to men! We are told about this in **Revelation 14**.

Read Revelation 14:6-7.

During the Tribulation period, as God’s servants are being savagely persecuted by the Antichrist, God will allow the angels to preach the Gospel for a short time. I guarantee you that the angels *can’t wait* to preach the Gospel! Yet, this raises an important question: are *we* as zealous about proclaiming the Gospel as the *angels* are? How zealous are you about

studying the Gospel, Christian? Do you love to probe the Scriptures, to learn more about what Christ had done for you? Or do you treat it with a “ho-hum” attitude? Do you say, “Well, I suppose I *have* to read my Bible today. I suppose I *have* to go to church, and sit through another sermon”? How zealous are you about *proclaiming* the Gospel? Do you delight in telling others the “good news” that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures?

II. The result of the Gospel (vv. 13-16)

(Read verses 13 through 16.) In these verses, we see the *result* of the Gospel. What *is* the result? The result of the Gospel is *changed lives*. The result of the Gospel is *godly lives!* When a person repents and believes the Gospel, the risen Saviour comes into that person’s life; and He effects a change in that person’s life. This change from a self-centred life to a Christ-like life will manifest itself in several ways. Here in **verses 13 through 16**, these changes are not merely listed; they are given as *commands*.

Let’s look at these commands. First of all, **we who know Christ are commanded to “gird up the loins of your mind.” (Read verse 13 again.)** What does Peter mean by “girding up the loins of your mind”? Well, in Bible times, men wore robes; but when it came time to do work in the fields, they gathered up their robes between their legs, and tucked them under their belt, to create a sort of “trousers.” They did this so that they would not trip as they were going about their labour in the fields. Likewise, soldiers girded up their loins when it was time to fight in battle. They couldn’t afford to trip! It was the difference between life and death.

So, then, to “gird up the loins of your mind” means to be ready, and to be mentally alert. It means to be prepared to work, and to fight the good fight of faith. This is how Christians should live their lives. We are not to live in pleasure and idleness, but in a state of constant readiness to obey the leading of our Captain, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Read Luke 12:35-36.

Read Ephesians 6:14.

In both these Scriptures, we are commanded to “gird up our loins.” By the way, did you notice what the “belt” is? What is the “belt” into which we must *tuck* the garments of our minds? **It is the belt of truth.** The *truth* from God’s Word is that which gives us soundness of mind, so that we can know how to live. And how can we *know* what the truth is? We must *read* God’s Word. Study this Book, Christian. Meditate on it day and night!

What other command does God give to those who have believed the Gospel? **God commands us to “be sober.” (Read 1 Peter 1:13 again.)** You know, I’ve often seen pictures and illustrations of Jesus smiling from ear to ear, laughing, embracing everyone, and looking as though He just wants to prove to the world that “Even though I’m the Son of God, I can have loads of fun, too.” Yet, is this the way that Jesus was? This certainly isn’t the portrait of Jesus that the *Bible* gives us. Perhaps you are wondering, “Pastor, are you saying that it is wrong to smile and be joyful?” Of course not. Over and over again, God’s Word *commands* us to “rejoice in the Lord.” However, we must realise that we are involved in deadly serious business. *Jesus’* mission on earth was serious. I find it interesting that although we often see Jesus rejoicing, we do not have a single record in Scripture of Jesus’ laughing! We do see many examples of Jesus’ deep love, tenderness, and compassion: and I’m sure that He *did* smile and, perhaps, occasionally laugh, when it was appropriate to do so. However, we do not have a single *record* of Jesus laughing or joking, or “fooling around.” Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be **“a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3)**. Even as a young 12-year-old Jesus said, **“Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”**

We who know Christ as Saviour should be serious about our Father's business, as well. Listen, folks: "party time" is just about over for us Christians in the West. It's time to get "**sober**" about our mission. We have been given so much; yet, instead of using our resources, time, and the modern conveniences that God has given us, to serve the Lord, many Christians instead use their time and resources for their own pleasure and jollity. That is about to end, brethren. Our economy is crumbling. Also, persecution is quickly descending upon Bible-believing Christians. Soon, it will be a crime to speak about the Lord, or against sin. Should the Lord tarry His coming, we will face very dark times. We will soon be jarred back into seeing the *seriousness* of the task that God has given us. Should you be losing sight of the seriousness of your mission, allow Christ to give you a "**sober**" mind once more.

Thirdly, **we who are saved should be living in the hope of Christ's return. (Read verse 13 again.)** At the end of this verse, we see that there is a "**revelation**" (an *apokalupsis*, or "taking off of the cover") that is coming. What is this is the revelation? It is the "**revelation of Jesus Christ.**" It is the day of Christ's appearing. It is the day when Christ will come in the clouds to receive us unto Himself. In **John 14:3** Jesus said, "***If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.***" That word "**receive**" is translated from the Greek verb *paralambano*, which means "to take someone to oneself in a fond embrace." Those of us who are saved have the sure hope that one day, whether we are working, or sleeping, or walking down the street, or lying in the grave, the Lord Jesus Christ *will* appear in the clouds, with a shout. We will be taken out of this world, and will be clothed in immortal bodies; and we will go to the city of gold, to live with our Saviour forever! Christian, are you living in constant expectation of that day? If you have the Lord's coming constantly in view, it will *profoundly* affect the way you live!

This leads us to yet another quality should be manifesting in our lives. **God commands Christians to be obedient and holy. (Read verses 14 and 16 again.)** My friends, the call to salvation is a call to holiness. The whole reason why Christ saved us is that we might now live a life of obedience. He expects us to imitate His holiness. In **Leviticus 11:44** Jehovah said, "***For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy.***" That command still stands to this day!

We who are saved know that we are not saved *by* our works. However, God *has* saved us in order that we might be *able* to perform good works. **(See Ephesians 2:8-10.)** God wants us to be holy, brethren; and the thing that should motivate us to live a holy life is *sincere love* for our Lord, and *thankfulness* for what He has done for us. That is why it is so important to think constantly about Christ's return! As you think about Christ's return, you are reminded that you will one day *see* your Saviour in the flesh! Would you want your Saviour, whom you love so much, to find you doing something *unholy* when He returns? Would you want Him to find you smoking a cigarette, or drinking alcohol? Would we want Him to catch you watching something unholy on the telly, or on your phone; or telling a lie; or gossiping; or thinking an impure thought; or sitting out of a church service, when you could have been there; or doing something that *you* wanted to do, instead of what you knew *God* wanted you to do? Of course you wouldn't. Yet, we so easily forget that Christ is coming back, don't we? We so easily forget that the Judgment Seat of Christ is coming. Listen, brethren: we *will* have to give account of *everything* that we have done in this life, whether it be good or bad. The day of the Judgment Seat of Christ *will* dawn, just as surely as the sun will rise tomorrow morning! Are you awaiting that day with hope, Christian? Or are you stumbling around in sin and self-will? John wrote, "***And every man that hath this hope in him*** (the hope of Christ's return) ***purifieth himself, even as he is pure.***"

Conclusion: The result of the Gospel is changed lives. If you have believed the Gospel, then Christ has already begun a "**good work in you.**" However, He wants to *continue* that "**good work in you.**" Are you letting Him do so, Christian? Are you studying God's Word fervently, so that you will be able to present

it to others? Are you girding up the loins of your mind? Are you being sober about the task that God has given you? Are you longing and hoping for Christ's return? Are you being obedient and holy?

Perhaps you are not saved. Should you not be sure that you are on your way to heaven, I am here to tell you that you cannot earn your salvation. Salvation is obtained by placing your faith in what *Christ* did for you, and not in the good things that you *think* you have done. You must trust solely in Christ's death for your sin, and His resurrection. If you have never asked Christ to save you, please do so today!