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The Central Role of Prophecy in Peter's Sermon

In the last two chapters we have been considering ways of analysing the “application” section of Peter’s sermon—or rather the application section up to the point where Peter starts speaking of God’s covenant with “the fathers” in which he focuses on Abraham in particular.

One interesting feature of this section of Peter’s sermon has been that we have “isolated” two consecutive structures—of 63 words and 62 words both starting and finishing with references to the prophets. This suggests to me the possibility of a fruitful way of analysing this section of Peter’s sermon, and possibly helping with the analysis of the sermon as a whole.

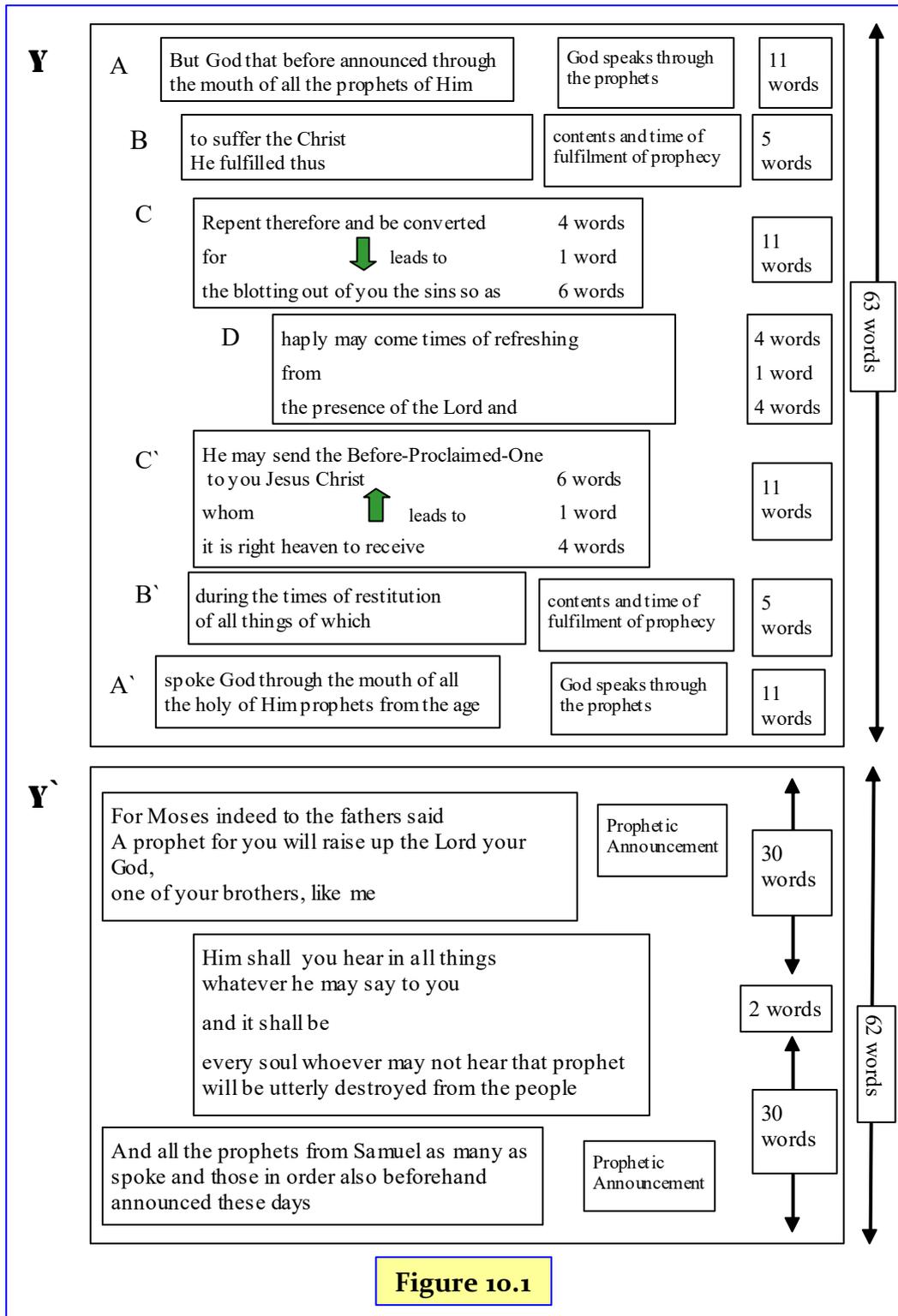
These two structures are shown in i) Figure 9.1 and in ii) the section labelled X’ in Figure 8.2. Together they cover the specific references to prophecy in Peter’s sermon. On the next page, Figure 10.1 is a diagram to represent this (in which I have re-labelled some of the sub-sections).

Putting these two structures together in this way suggests that prophecy actually forms the central section of Peter’s sermon, and thus suggests that we might be able to analyse the sermon as a whole chiastically. Also, considering this central prophecy section as a single unit suggests other ways in which this unit might be analysed. The possible chiastic structure for the whole sermon will be explored in later chapters, but in this chapter, I would like to look at three ways in which we might analyse this central prophecy section.

Initial Notes Peter’s “Prophecy Section” Shown in Figure 10.1

Notes

1) We can compare and contrast the two halves of the section—labelled Y and Y’. As already noted, both halves start and end with references to prophecy. Interestingly, the wording of the start of Y and the end of Y’ are similar—they both use the word “before announced” (*proskategeilan*) (at least they do in the Received Text!) This will be significant when we consider chiastic aspects of the section as a whole.



2) The first half of the section is more “optimistic” than the second. In the

first half, wonderful blessings are promised to those who repent. In the second half however, there is the command/promise about hearing and obeying the Prophet, but there is also the solemn warning of utter destruction for those who will not heed the words of the Prophet.

3) A contrast between the prophetic announcements in the two halves is that in the upper half, in the two references to the prophets, it is God who speaks through their mouth, whereas in the lower half, the prophets speak or announce things without it being specifically pointed out that they are speaking God's words. Also in the lower half, two of the prophets are named—Moses and Samuel.

4) As well as a possible chiastic structure, the two sections also have a "parallel" aspect. In upper half of Y, a good response is presented (repentance and conversion), and in the upper half of Y' a good response is also presented ("Him shall you hear in all things . . ."). In Y, the good response is followed by blessings from God in sending Jesus expressed using both passive and active verbs. However, in Y', the good response is followed by a bad response and the opposite of blessings—utter destruction—is the result—expressed using the single passive verb, "will be utterly destroyed".

5) There are some interesting structural aspects related to the use of subjunctive verbs which articulate the "conditional" nature of the response by God to the people's repentance in Y and the conditional nature of the responses of the people to the words of the Prophet raised up by God in Y'.

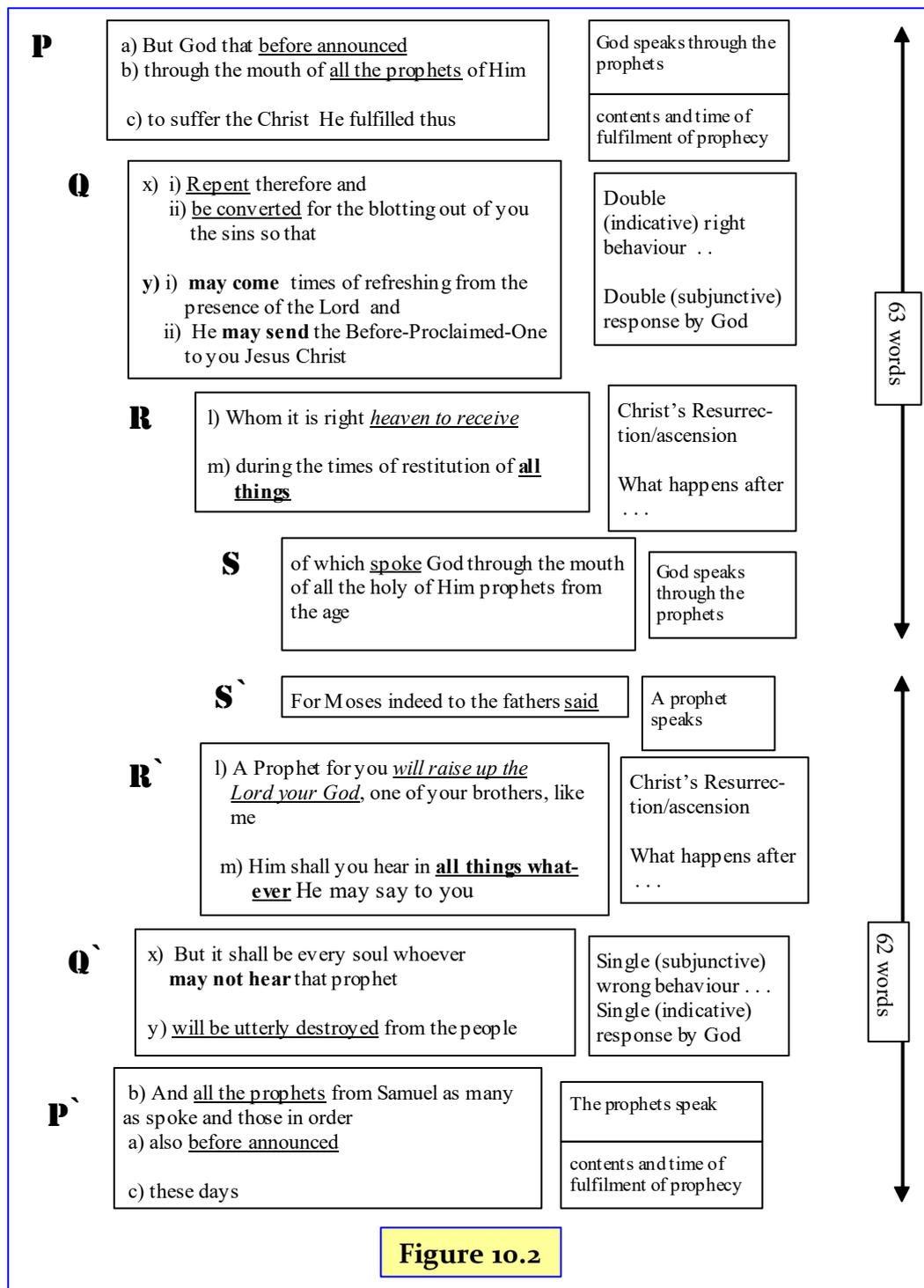
6) It is not easy to present all of these structural features in a single diagram, since there are both chiastic and parallel aspects. However I have attempted to present and discuss these aspects separately in the following two sections of this chapter

First Analysis: A Chiastic Analysis of the "Prophecy Section" of Peter's Sermon

The diagram for the chiastic analysis is presented on the next page (Figure 10:2)

Notes

1) The structure is fairly straightforward. References to "before announcing" and "all the prophets" occur in P and P' whilst in the centre of the chiasm, in S and S' God speaks through the prophets and Moses (the



prophet) speaks.

2) In Q there are two good actions by men (repent and convert) which, if carried out, will result in two “blessing”-type actions (using subjunctive

verbs) by God, whereas in Q, a single bad action by men (“not listening) - using a subjunctive verb - results in a single judgemental action. Although it is not specifically stated that this judgement is by God, both the context, and the corresponding OT passages in Deut. 18:19 and Lev. 23:29 show that this is the case. The blessings are double; the judgement is single—likewise with the actions that produce those blessings and that judgement. (Is. 61:7—“*Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion; instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot; therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion; they shall have everlasting joy*”).

3) R and R' refer to Christ's resurrection/ascension/glorification and the blessings that follow. Thus, in this analysis, the “restitution (*apokastasis*) of all things” in R(m) corresponds to the hearing (and obeying) in all things in R' (m).

This corresponds to the work of John the Baptist who, referred to as Elijah in Matt. 17:11, “restores (*apokathistemi*) all things”; this role in Malachi is described as “turning (*apokathistemi* in the Septuagint) the heart of the father to the son and the heart of a man to his neighbour”. John the Baptist's role (Is. 40:3-4) was to produce the moral reformation of the people to prepare the way for Christ. The restoration of all things in Acts, according to this present analysis, is obedience to Christ, and so includes the moral reformation aspects as a part of the turning to Christ and loyalty to him.

Second Analysis: A Parallel (Panel) Analysis of the “Prophecy Section” of the Sermon

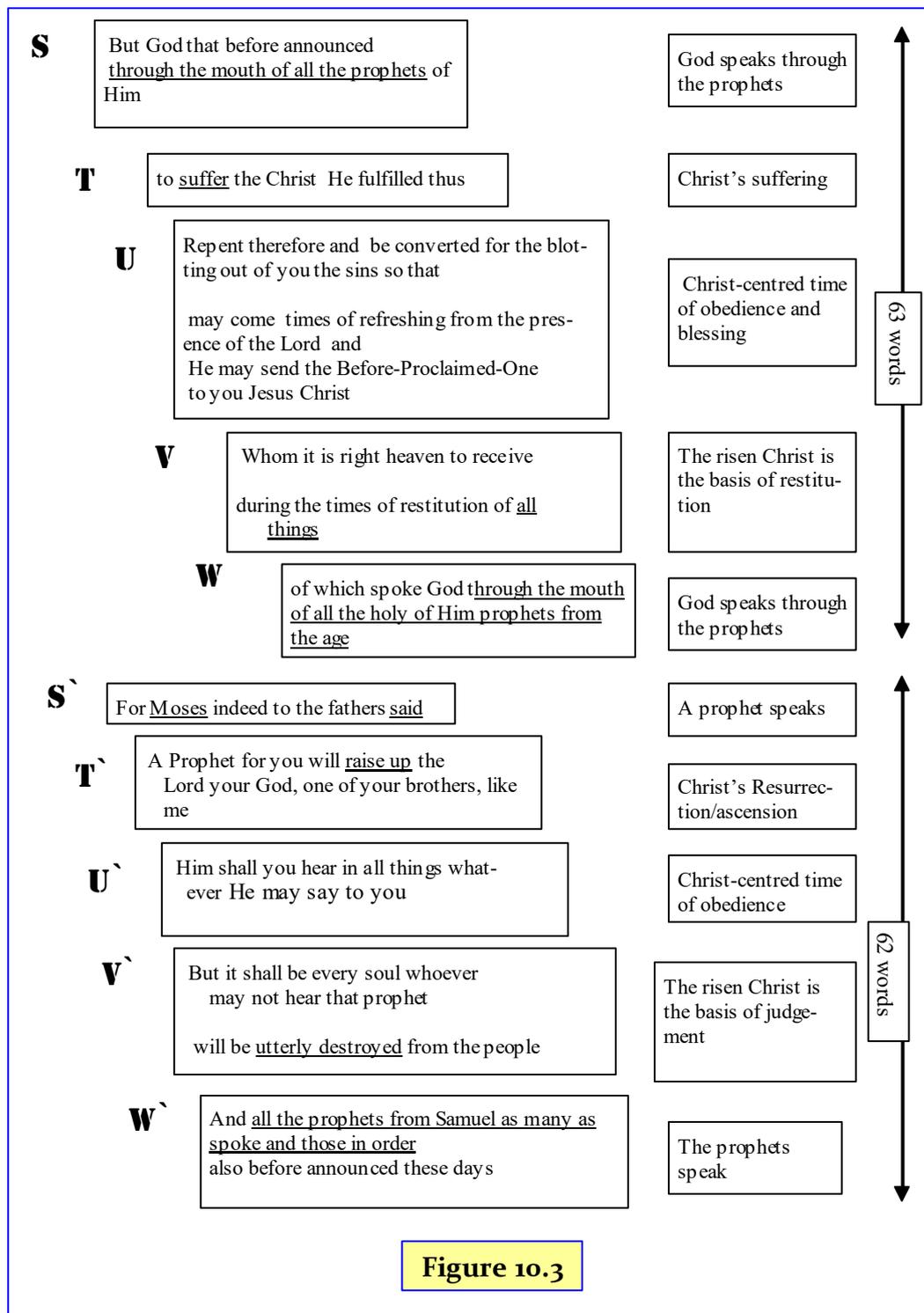
Let us now see if Figure 10:1 can be re-analysed as a parallel (panel) structure. An attempt to do this is shown in Figure 10.3 on the next page.

Notes

1) In this analysis, S and S' correspond as do W and W' since they concern prophecy. A contrast however, is that in S and W, it is God speaking through the mouth of the prophets, whereas in S' and W' the prophets themselves are the ones speaking.

2) T and T' speak of prophesied events concerning Christ: in T it is Christ's suffering and in T' it is His being raised up. God is the Onecontrolling both events.

3) U' complements U since the commands to repent and be converted



in U are shown to be commands of Christ in U'. However, "Him shall you hear . ." in U' is both a command and a promise and the promise of hearing (and obeying) Christ in U' thus can be seen as corresponding to the promises of refreshing and the sending of Christ by God in U. Similarly,

Luke 11:28 : "He (Jesus) replied, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it'".

Conversely, the *inability* to hear is a sign of God's judgement e.g. Is. 6:9-10:
"And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. "

4) In the present analysis, the restitution of all things which follows Christ's being received into heaven and accompanies that continued reception, V, corresponds to the *judgement* on those who will not listen to the risen Prophet, Christ in V'. Thus the "restitution of all thing" has a double aspect—depending on whether we follow the chiasmic or parallel analysis—blessing in one case, and judgement in the other. In this second case, we can perhaps see that the comprehensive nature of "all things" in V is matched by the comprehensive nature of the destruction—"will be *utterly* destroyed".

Third Analysis: A Thematic Analysis of Peter's "Prophecy Section".

The first half of the prophecy section of Peter's sermon, as we have already seen, looks at i) the prophesied suffering of Christ, the consequent requirement to repent and the blessings that flow from that repentance and ii) the prophesied restitution of all things—the latter being consequent upon Christ's reception in heaven which is perhaps to be seen as involving His resurrection, ascension and glorification.

However, the second half of the prophecy section does not repeat this division. Rather, it offers an explanation and development of ii) above - i.e. the restitution of all things as a consequence of the Christ's reception in heaven. We can see that this is the case because of the two little words "indeed" and "for" (*men gar*) at the start of verse 22. These words show that what follows is an emphatic explanation of what has just preceded. Thus, the information about the words of Moses (and also of Samuel etc.) are explanations of the restitution of all things consequent upon Christ's reception in heaven. Unfortunately, as already noted, NA27 omits the word "for": this is a most serious omission, which has had unfortunate consequences for the understanding of Peter's sermon.

This connection between the "reception in heaven" section of the first half

and the entire second half of the “prophecy section” was actually given in Figure 8.2, and leads directly into the third analysis of the prophecy section as shown in Figure 10.4 on the next page:

Notes:

1) In this analysis, the “times of restitution of all things” correspond both to the obedience of those who hear the words of the prophet and also the judgement and destruction from the people of those who will not hear.

2) X and X' both seem to have a “heaven” emphasis: it is as the Christ received or welcomed by heaven that the times of restitution can occur (X) and it is as the raised up Prophet that Christ speaks from heaven to the people in X' (Q') - either for their obedience or destruction. The “tone” of X and X' is thus very solemn, and this is emphasised by the “totality” of the words used—“all things” in X(Q) and X'(Q'), and “every soul”, “whatever”, “whoever” and “utterly” in X'(Q').

3) It seems to me that, in contrast, section W has more of an “earth” emphasis. It is people on earth who repent and whose sins are blotted out, and the times of refreshing and Christ Himself are sent to such people on earth. Now the times of refreshing and Christ are indeed sent from God, but the sentence construction seems to me to emphasise the amazing fact that such blessings come to people on earth when they repent and their sins are blotted out. By contrast, in X'(Q'), it is Christ, as the “raised up Prophet” Who speaks from heaven: He is indeed heard (or not heard) by people on earth, but the emphasis seems to me to be on the heavenly authority of Jesus' words.

4) It seems to me also that this analysis presents us with a possible way of analysing the whole sermon. In this analysis, sections X and X' with their heavenly, prophetic view of the work of the risen Christ are treated as the thematic centre of the sermon. This possibility will be explored in the next couple of chapters, starting off with a re-analysis of the opening section of Peter's sermon which will prepare the ground for the analysis of the whole sermon.

