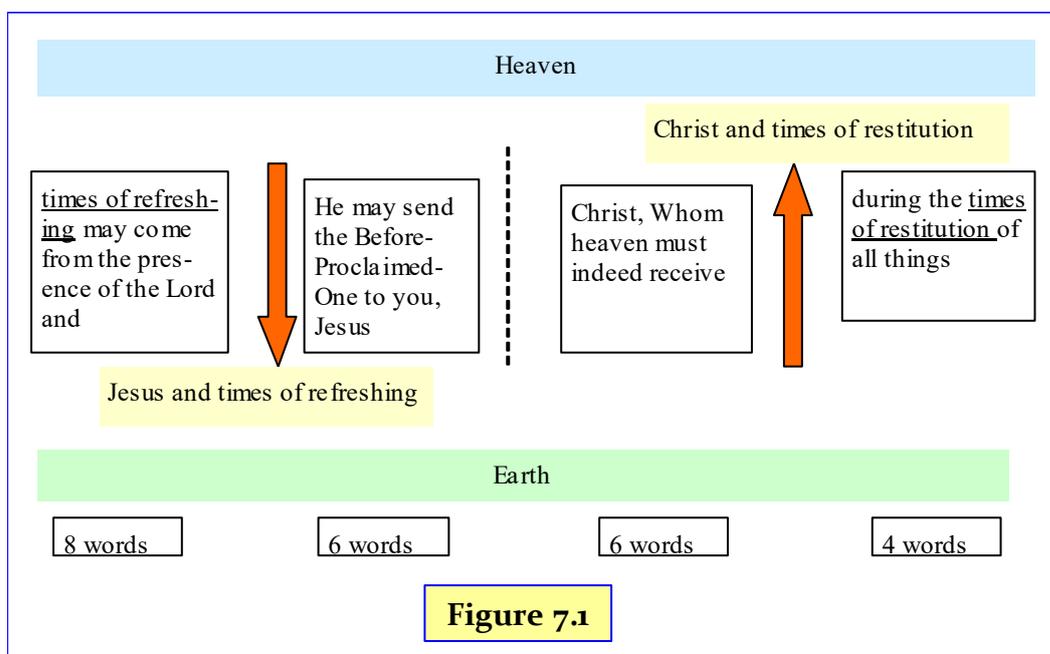


-7-

## A Chiastic Structure Based on “Earth” and “Heaven” in vs. 20-21

In this chapter, I would like to introduce an alternative chiastic analysis which is centred around the junction between verses 20 and 21. There is a transition from “earth based” to “heaven based” themes at this junction.

In this alternative analysis, the descent and ascent of Christ is the centre, and there are references to the times of refreshing and of restitution at the periphery. This analysis is shown below (Figure 7.1) :



In this analysis, Jesus and the times of refreshing simultaneously are associated with the earth, whereas the reception and welcoming of Jesus and the simultaneous times of restitution of all things are associated with heaven. I think that in both cases, there is an initial event followed by a continuation of the conditions created by the event. This seems to me to make the best sense of the plural “times” in both cases. These times have an initial beginning, but then they continue (for a length of time which does not appear to be clearly specified in this text.) An important difference between the times of refreshment and the times of restitution is that in this passage, the times of refreshment specifically make the descent to

earth along with Jesus, but the times of restitution do not specifically make the journey from earth to heaven with Jesus. However, I think that we will see later in the passage (v.22) that the times of restitution actually do consist of precisely this—an “upwards, heavenly movement” of obedience to the risen Christ by men who hear and respond positively to His words. There are deeper theological aspects to this—namely the identification of believers with Christ in His resurrection (e.g. *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek the things which are above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God”* (Col. 3:1)), but these deeper theological aspects are not specifically included in Peter’s sermon.

In this analysis, I have tentatively associated the name Jesus with the “earth” half of the structure, and Christ with the “heaven” half. The name Jesus (Saviour) is thus associated with the blessings of salvation and refreshing, which as we have seen (v. 19) come as a result of repentance and the forgiveness of sins, and the title or name Christ with the Messianic reign and the bringing of men into conformity with that reign (restoration/restitution) - which, as noted above in connection with v. 22, corresponds to obedience. Perhaps we could see here the doctrines, respectively, of justification and sanctification, and the qualities, again respectively, of mercy and truth.

The sending and receiving of Jesus Christ occupy equal numbers of words (six in each case, perhaps corresponding to His humanity) . The “times of refreshing” together with the sending of Christ total 14 words (a double-Sabbath?) whereas the heavenly reign of Christ and the times of restitution total ten words—perhaps suggesting that the kingdom consists in obedience to Christ. (According to E. W. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture*, the number 10 represents the “perfection of divine order”, and we can perhaps think here of the symbolism of this number in the 10 Commandments (e.g. the believing Jews in Jerusalem were fully observant of the Law in Acts 21:20).

The link between mercy/grace/salvation and truth is described in many places in Scripture. In John Ch. 1, light and life perhaps correspond to truth and grace. Ps. 85:10-11 describes a time when,

*“Mercy (hesed) and truth are met together;  
righteousness and peace have kissed each other  
Faithfulness springs up from the ground,  
and righteousness looks down from the sky.”*

and indeed the whole Psalm could act as a commentary on Peter’s sermon.

he lovely qualities described here are those of Christ, the Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11), Who is our Righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30), and our Peace (e.g. Eph. 2:14) and in Whom God's mercy (hesed) was embodied and demonstrated. If we, in our imperfect ways, exhibit any of these qualities, we do so derivatively, or they are graciously attributed to us "imputationally".

Other verses would include Jer. 33:6:

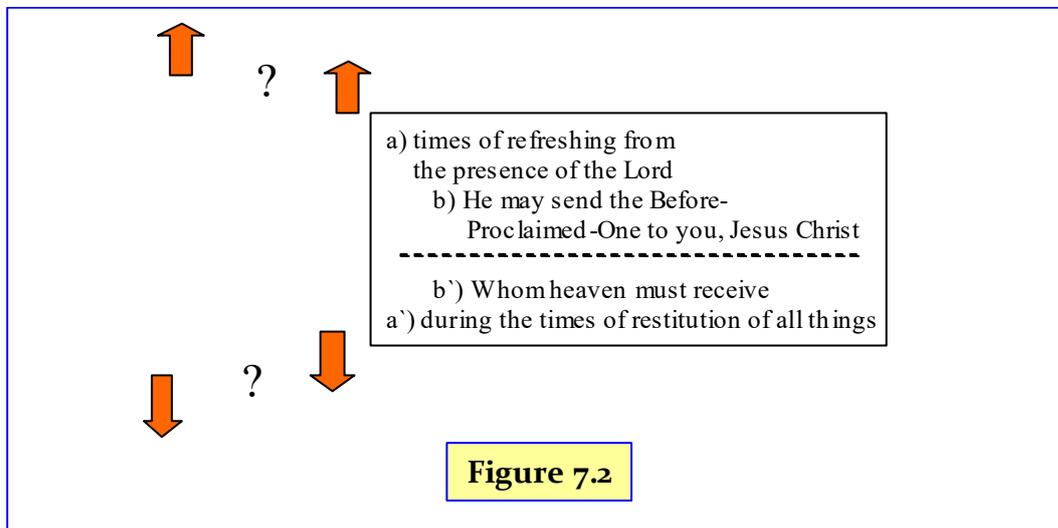
*"Behold, I will bring it (Jerusalem) health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth."*

and Is. 45:8:

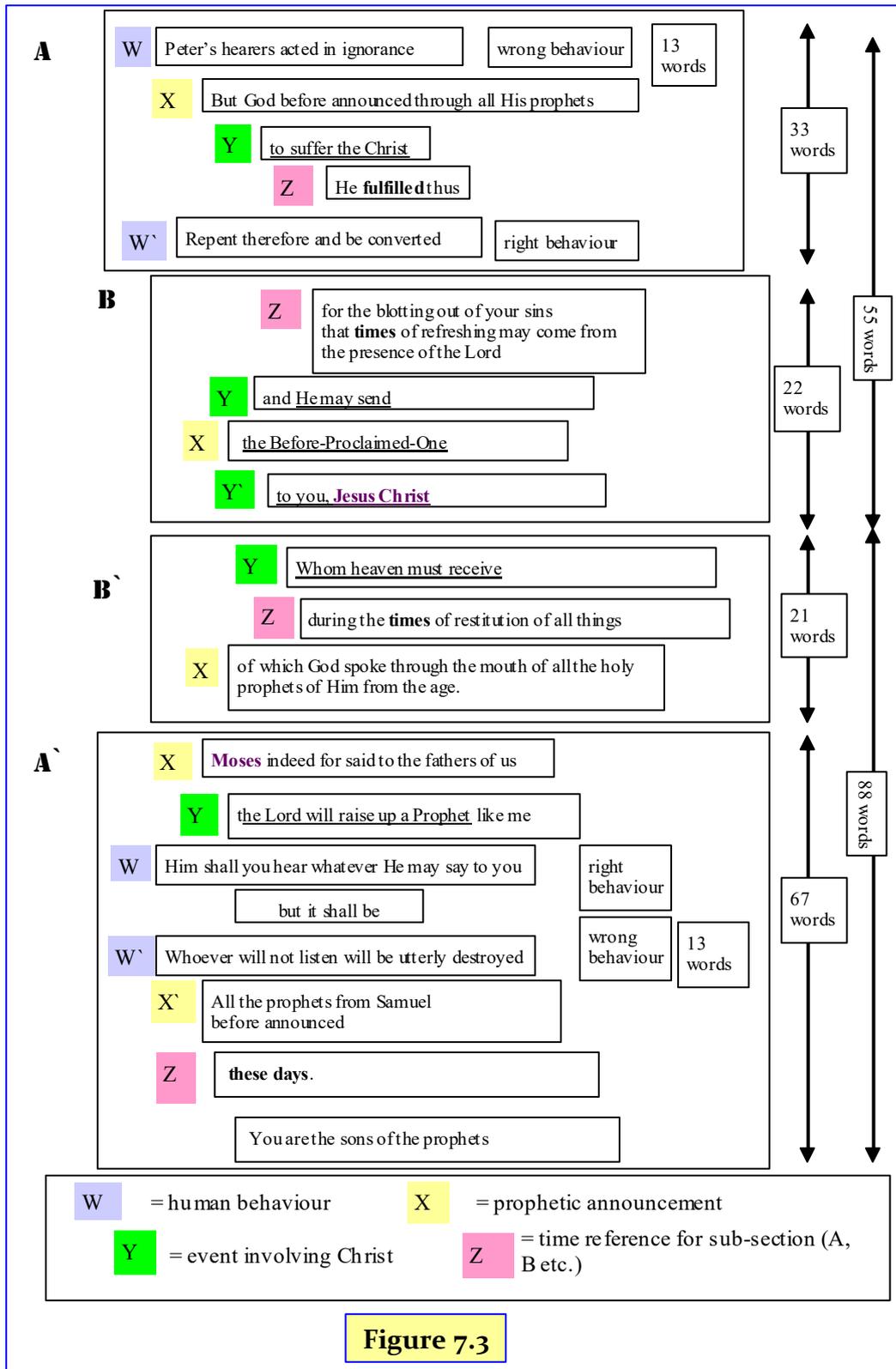
*"Rain down, you heavens, from above, And let the skies pour down righteousness; Let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, And let righteousness spring up together. I, the LORD, have created it."*

An Initial Attempt to Expand this Chiastic Structure . . .

Let us now see if this chiastic structure can be expanded chiastically to include the verses on either side. That is, can we do what it indicated by the question marks in Figure 7.2 below?



After that (Chapter 8) I would like to look briefly at separate chiastic structures to be found on either side of the mid-point of the structure we are currently looking at. However, let's start with an "experimental" initial attempt at the "expanded" structure- Figure 7.3 (next page). [Retrospective note: I would like to point out that this "experimental"



structure is only a "stepping stone" towards a more "considered" analysis.

I’ve included it here to show how, in practice, one might go about the task of chiastic analysis when there is no clear way forwards! Here, I’ve simply tried to categorise the statements in verses 17-25a to see whether a pattern emerges. S. F.]

Notes on Figure 7.3:

1) All four sub-sections refer to something that happened (passively) recently to Christ and which had ongoing significance for the hearers. These events are labelled Y and Y'. In fact, Christ is represented in passive terms throughout Peter’s sermon. In A, Christ suffers, in B He is sent, in B' He is received into heaven and in A' He is raised.

2) All four sub-sections refer to the fact that these events (from Peter and his hearers’ perspective) were announced beforehand. This prophetic pre-announcing is labelled X and X'. In A we read that “God before-announced that Christ would suffer”, in B we read that Jesus Christ is the “Before-Proclaimed-One”, in B' that the times of restoration during which Christ is received in heaven as having been “spoken by God . . .” and in A' that “these days” were “before-announced” by the prophets from Samuel.

On a textual note, this feature of the four sub-sections provides indirect evidence for the correctness of the Received Text in v. 20: the Received Text has “the Before-Proclaimed-One” whereas NA27 etc. has “Before-Appointed-One” - which misses the “speaking beforehand” aspect clearly present in the other three sub-sections.

3) All four sub-sections contain a time-reference to the fulfilment of these prophecies (labelled Z) . In A, the prophecy has been fulfilled (“He fulfilled thus” (Acts 3:18). B and B' refer to the times of refreshing and times of restitution respectively and A' refers to “these days”.

4) There are only two right actions required by men: i) to repent and be converted in A and ii) to listen to all that Jesus speaks in A'. There are also two wrong actions: i) the actions against Christ which were done “in ignorance” in A and ii) the failure to listen to Jesus in A'. (We also note the wrong and right behaviours of A and A' are in chiastic order, and also that the wrong behaviours each have 13 words.)

However, it is a single group of people that are described in A—namely those who sinned but who now repent, whereas in A' there is a division into two groups—the obedient and the disobedient.

5) The “ethical responses” (initial and ongoing) are thus at the periphery of the chiasm (A and A' respectively), but the great blessings (earthly and heavenly) of making the correct ethical responses are at the centre (B and B' respectively).

6) If we accept as reasonable that the “before-proclamation” in v. 20 refers primarily back to the prophecy of the suffering of Christ in v. 18, then we can see that the first half of the structure, namely A-B, looks primarily at the death of Christ, and at the gracious reversal of this and other sins committed by those hearers who repent— not just in the forgiveness of their sins, but beyond that, in blessing them and in sending to them Jesus Christ - the One against Whom they sinned so grievously. The second half of the structure, namely B'-A', looks primarily at the resurrection/ascension of Christ (His reception by heaven and His being raised up) and at the corresponding appropriate response of obedience, and blessings that flow from that response, as well as at the consequences of disobedience).

7) The B sections appear to be balanced by word count, (21 words each with the word “Christ” at the centre). A' appears to be twice as long as A (67 words and 33 words respectively—so this is twice to the nearest word since 67 is an odd number). However, I realise that I have been somewhat selective in a couple of instances in the way I've divided up the passage into sub-sections. The doubling of A' with respect to A, if significant, may reflect the dividing of the people into two groups—the obedient and the disobedient, and the prophecies referred to have both blessings and judgements—certainly in the example of Moses' prophecy. Thus, the times referred to as “these days” (which presumably are the same as the “times of restoration of all things”) include both these aspects, whereas the “times of refreshing” would just refer to the blessings.

8) Regarding the word counts, section B is 20 words followed by the words “Jesus Christ” (which makes the total of 22 words). Jesus Christ is thus identified as the “Before-proclaimed-One” of the preceding clause. Similarly section B' is 21 words long, and the next word is “Moses” (which makes a total of 22 words). Moses is thus identified as one of God's “holy prophets” mentioned in the preceding clause. With this way of dividing up the passage, we have sections of 33, 22, 22 and 66 words—all multiples of 11.

