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## “God Spoke Through the Mouth of His Prophets” - a Chiasm.

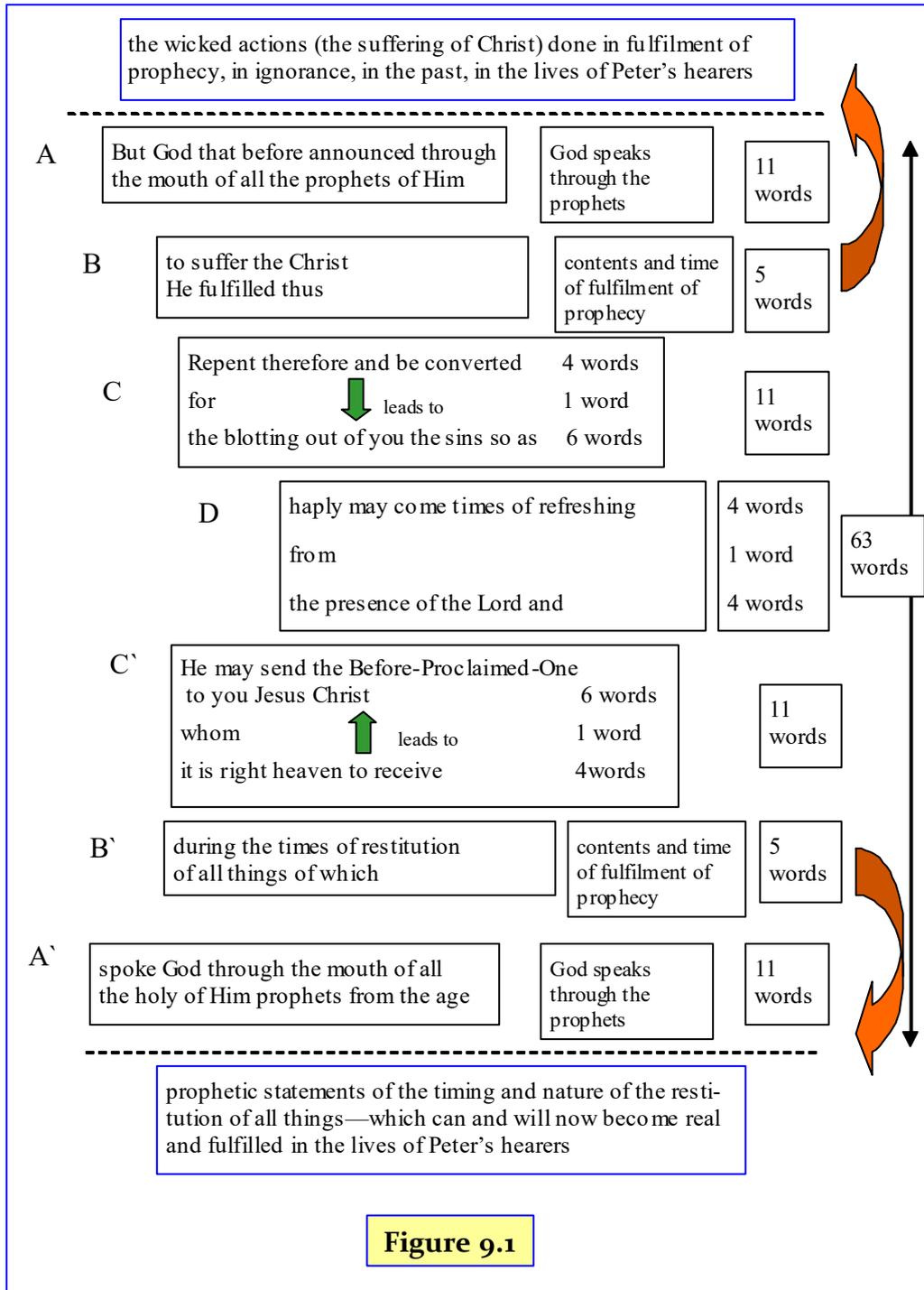
In Acts 3 verses 18 and 21 we are told that God spoke through the mouth of his prophets”. The first thing I would like to note about these two references is that they are not quite the same! A key difference is that in the second of these, Peter has included the word “holy” before the word “prophets”. It is, I suggest, significant—and it may be that the significance is that the first of these refers to the role of the prophets in declaring Christ’s suffering (on earth) at the hands of wicked and unrighteous men and the second of these is associated with the prophets’ role in connection with speaking of Christ in heaven and the times of restoring men to repentance and holiness and of God’s righteous judgements. The word “holy” is only included in the second reference – which could suggest the “empathy” of the prophets with their distinctive prophetic task in each case is thus being indicated by Peter. This is just a suggestion!

A second point about these two references is that the verb for speaking in the first reference is “before announced” which includes both speaking and also the time of speaking; in the second the verb is “spoke” - however in this second case, there is also a prepositional phrase involving time— “from the age” .

Thus these two references to “God speaking through the prophets in connection with the time of speaking” thus form an *inclusio*, and I think that the passage as a whole actually forms a chiasm as shown in the diagram (Figure 9.1) on the next page.

1) The first prophecy has been fulfilled. The fulfilment of the second is still ongoing. This accounts for the chiastic structure in the first (in which the words “fulfilled” and “thus” appear in the lower half of the structure) which is missing from the second.

2) I suggest this difference also accounts for the difference between what precedes the chiasm—namely the account of the “thus” in v. 18—namely the wicked actions of those who caused Christ’s suffering (the contents of the prophecy in the upper half)—and what follows the chiasm—which is a further explanation of the prophecy in the lower half—explaining



that the prophecy can be fulfilled there and then by the appropriate response from the hearers.

3) What lies between the two prophetic announcements in the chiasm (sections C-D-C') is a "Janus" section which looks

“backwards” (negatively) in putting right the wrong relationship between Jesus Christ and the people and the suffering of Christ, and it also looks forward positively to embracing the restitution of all things and the obedience to, and lordship of, Christ.

4) D in particular appears to be a sort of “Janus” section within C-D-C` itself! It looks back to C since times of refreshing correspond to the blotting out of sin, but the “coming from the presence of the Lord” looks forward to C` and the sending of Jesus Christ to the people. The blessings of forgiveness and spiritual refreshment are thus intertwined with the presence of Jesus Christ. This seems to be the same as the sending, blessing and turning from sin described in v. 26, although in v. 26 it is in the context of covenant whereas in our chiasm it is very definitely “encased” within the “category” of prophecy! (Please note v. 25a for these two categories.)

5) Here, repentance leads to blessing (refreshing) and the sending of Jesus Christ. In the “covenant” section, the sending leads to the blessing and repentance! Again we have an intimate intertwining of repentance/forgiveness, blessing and sending of Jesus - with, if one could put it this way, “blessing” being the “glue” or “link” or “common factor” between the repentance/forgiveness and the sending of Jesus.

6) If this analysis is at all correct, then the word count aspects seem accurately worked out, and perhaps thus to corroborate the analysis.

