

## Always Plan A

### 1 Peter 1:10-12

#### Introduction - Lots of Interesting Sections

This morning we come to our next little section of Peter's first letter. There are some really interesting discussions which could be had when we look at these three verses, if only there was time. For instance: How clearly did the prophets know "that they were not serving themselves but you"? Were they given a time frame? How clearly did these prophets understand the gospel? How much of their message apply to their original readers? Also, we could notice how Peter uses the term, 'Spirit of Christ' when speaking about the past prophets because they looked towards the Messiah but then uses 'Holy Spirit' when he speaks of his readers hearing the gospel because the Holy Spirit sanctifies people by applying the gospel to us. Finally, when Peter writes, "Even angels long to look into these things", The present tense is used, as if angels continue to want to look into the gospel better. How is it that angels don't gully grasp the experience of humans and our being able to receive what Christ has done?

There's so many interesting points in these few verses but we've already had communion and it can be hard to stay focused. Instead, we're going to focus on Peter's main point.

#### The Prophets Looked Forward To This

Peter's main point is that, the coming of Christ, the sending of the Messiah, has always been God's Plan A. In our communion service we just said, "We thank you that you called a covenant people to be a light to the nations. Through Moses you taught us to love your law, and in the prophets you cried out for justice. In the fullness of your mercy you become one with us in Jesus Christ, who gave himself up for us on the cross. You make us alive together with him, that we may rejoice in his presence and share his peace." It's very important that we don't think that Abraham and the covenant people were plan A, Moses and the law was plan B, the prophets and their

call for justice were plan C, and it was only at Plan D that Jesus was sent. God has always been working towards and planning for the Messiah to come. Christ was always God's Plan A. The first hint of the gospel appears in our Bibles back in Genesis 3:15 where the son of the woman will crush the serpent's head but Paul looks back further still when he says in Ephesians 1:4, "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." God's rescuing of us by uniting us to Christ was planned before the world was even made.

In a world where people are confronted with much uncertainty and confusion, it's important to remember that God is not surprised by what is going on. Peter's original recipients needed to hear about the certainty of God's plan, and their place in that plan, as they faced injustice and persecution for their faith. Likewise, we need to hear this message at a time when there is disease and restrictions as well as injustice and racial tension.

Peter is assuring those first readers, just as he assures us, you may feel like you're the victim of forces beyond your control but be assured, not only is God in control but you are privileged, you are receiving what others have longed to even see, let alone receive. You are blessed in a way that even angels want to be a part of!

### What Did The Prophets Look For?

That's the primary focus of what Peter is talking about here but I'd like to think just a little more about what the prophets we're looking for. We're told in verses 10 and 11, "the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow."

At one level we're told clearly what the prophets were looking for, they were looking for when the Messiah would suffer and what kind of person this suffering Messiah would be. As someone who emphasises the cross and the need for Jesus to pay for the wrong which I and all people have committed, I find these verses

comforting. Jesus' payment for sin and then his glorious rising is what the prophets we're looking forward to and so was always God's plan A.

However, we don't have to go very far for me to be challenged by these verses. We've already noted that in our communion service we say, "in the prophets you cried out for justice." Listen to how Ezekiel describes an unjust person, regarding as equally bad sins of religion, morality and justice:

He eats at the mountain shrines. He defiles his neighbour's wife. He oppresses the poor and needy. He commits robbery. He does not return what he took in pledge. He looks to the idols. He does detestable things. He lends at interest and takes a profit.

In contrast to this evil behaviour the prophets called for justice and cried out to Yahweh to bring about justice. The reading from Isaiah 9:5-7, which was read at the start of the service, is an example of how the prophets looked to the Messiah to be the One to truly bring about justice:

Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

No, it's not the primary focus of Peter here in these verses but it is inseparable from what the prophets were looking for when they "searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing."

As people who find our identity in Jesus, the Christ, and so wear the name Christians, this characteristic of justice is what should identify us too.

The prophets looked for the Messiah to establish Yahweh's kingdom and that kingdom was going to be a place which would be a source of hope and justice for all nations and races. As people who follow the Messiah and put our hope in Jesus, are

we displaying his values in our lives. Later when we pray the Lord's prayer we will say, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Do we honestly believe that? Are we working for as well as praying for that? How may the Lord be calling you to demonstrate the justice characteristic of the Messiah?

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Peter called upon his readers to have hope that God was not surprised by what they were experiencing but rather God had always been looking towards and planning to send the Christ. Peter's first readers were not just to be comforted by this fact but were to be encouraged that they lived in a privileged position in history, receiving what the prophets had only longed to see.

We, like Peter's first recipients, are to celebrate who Jesus is, what he has done and our connection to him. Though we're currently in difficulties we have a wonderful and amazing hope, one that even angels long to experience.

As people who have the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, the character of Jesus should be our character too. The prophets not only looked forward to a suffering Messiah who would then be glorified, which is the emphasis here in Peter's letter, they also looked for the Messiah to bring about justice for all nations. Just as we should be characterised by our hope in Jesus' suffering for us and his glorious conquering of the grave, a message that is always worth sharing, so we should also be characterised by a hope of seeing justice as we work to declare and demonstrate God's kingdom.

Let's keep this in mind as we come to a time of prayer.