

1 Peter 1:20-21, “A Sensible Savior”

²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Last week we encountered a shocking reality: that we are a ransomed people. We are ransomed from all the potential lives of futility to the definitive life that lives in the hope of God, live lives in holy imitation of God, and live lives in awe and reverence, god-fearing, in this present age.

Our ransom was not silver or gold. Indeed, our ransom was not a WHAT, but our ransom was a WHO. This week we will be looking more at the who, that is Jesus Christ, the perfect offering for the forgiveness of sins and the reconciliation of sinners to God. The amazing Good News of the RANSOM produces a RESPONSE. It produces a response, it doesn't demand a response. We are changed by this act of divine rescue, from captivity to freedom.

Imagine for a moment a hostage crisis; a young is child taken captive; a demand made for payment to the father. Then, after great anxiety and terror seems everywhere, the ransom is paid and the child is released. They are free. Their father's arms surround them, joy and life abound. Where death was feared, love is found. The ransom was paid, to deny the full effectiveness of the payment would be foolish. To act as though still a captive would be madness.

In our case though, it wasn't an earthly captivity that held us, but a captivity to sin and death. It wasn't earthly payments that would help us, but a perfect and holy Christ who would be required. A spotless life, perfect and without blemish, was required for our ransom. And it was paid. We are left not to make up the difference, but to live in reality of that amazing rescue.

Now, in our passage for today we find out the background story of the most amazing rescue mission in the history of the universe that results in our hope, holy lives, and God-fearing conduct. In order to break it down into manageable chunks I want you to think of it like this:

Timeless Savior (The Son was eternal)

Timely Savior (The Son was born in time)

Timeless Purpose (Specific Purpose, Father for the Son for the Father for the Son for you)

Timely Purpose (in your life)

Timeless Savior

Our passage today tells us that Christ was, “foreknown before the foundation of the world.” For the close reader of 1 Peter, a light might go off in their head. The one's who were chosen were also foreknown (v2) – so is this the same kind of foreknown? No. Well, yes in a

way, but not really. We were foreknown before we were. To describe us simply, there was a time when we were not, BUT God foreknew and foreordained the election of us. So our foreknowledge, which was intimate and loving, occurred when we were not. In short: we were known before we were. Got it? Okay, now Christ was foreknown before the foundation of the world. So Christ was made before the world? No. That's an old mistake, a dangerous one, because it lessens Christ divinity as testified to in the whole of the Scriptures. John's opening lines let us get a bigger picture: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. So what does it mean? If you notice, our passage has to do with those who were ransomed by Christ's perfect offering of himself, who is as a lamb without spot or blemish, and in this context he was foreknown. We were foreknown, according to verse 2, by the Father as relates to our election, which included a reference to the sprinkling of blood. The language in verse 19 of a spotless lamb and v2 of a people sprinkled with Christ's blood, both point back to the atonement, wherein people are reconciled to God and their sins are forgiven. So, and this is key, Christ is foreknown not as to his age, but to his place as the ultimate sacrifice for atonement. I think that this is going to be strengthened by the second point, but I want to pause, just briefly on this. The Trinity, that is Father, Son, and Spirit is eternal. The Trinity is not some "plan B" way of knowing God because of the fall. Before all that is, was, God was. God doesn't change because we come along, a reactive God always just a little bit behind his creation – chasing us like an owner whose dog has slipped out of his collar and gone running. No! A thousand times no. God, is loving and foreknowing, and we can rest in that. He is foreknowing and loving in a way that says, before the foundation of the world: The Son will die to ransom his bride. We may squirm at this thought, but there it is – before the foundation of the world. We don't have to understand some kind of philosophical reconciliation of this radical claim, as a matter of fact I suggest you don't try and say anything more than what we find plainly in scripture. Instead I challenge you to make this comforting. Realize that it is good news that the savior was eternally foreknown to save from before the foundation of the world. Know that he is so much more amazing a savior than simply having been there at the right time and the right place by happenstance, but rather he was our amazing savior because he was at the right time and right place because he was destined to be there from before the foundation of the earth. Good News.

Timely Savior

As we've already started moving towards, Jesus was our savior at just the right time and place, he is and was our timely savior. He who was before all that is, the Son, Jesus Christ, was made manifest in the last times. Our timely savior comes at the perfect time, and he is made manifest. I want to stop here for a moment and ask you, what does made manifest mean? It is a construction you see a lot in your Bible, but not much outside of it. When is the last time you said something was made manifest? Other translations render it as he appeared or he was revealed – both good words. He was no longer hidden, but present. That's key here, the eternal Son is made manifest, he is talking, walking, teaching, sharing, laughing, crying, eating, sleeping, praying – and those who met him, whether as a child, as a teacher, or on the cross could touch, tastes, see, hear and smell the eternal savior of humanity. On the cross his blood glistened to the eye, the metallic smell of it in the nose – what is being said here is not simply that he was only visible, but that he was really real and could be sensibly experienced by those around him.

He didn't just appear, but he did appear. And he appeared in the last times – just when we needed him – for his appearance was for our sake. He came, being made manifest, for our sake – our savior came in a sensible way for our sake. We shouldn't kid ourselves as life has gone on these past two thousand years, these are the last times – but don't worry. We have been given some tasks, but not a one of them is to worry. Our perfectly timed savior lets us live these last days not in fear of the unknown last day, but in god-fearing reverence we are to live our lives in hope and in the pursuit of holiness. We don't live in constant fear of the end; we've been freed from those fears. Whether our end comes as the end of the world, or by forgetting to look both ways when crossing the street – we have been freed from fear of death because Christ was made manifest in the last times for our sake. He's done the ransoming already, for us. Our timeless savior is indeed our timely savior. Good news.

Timeless Purpose.

Again, the text, by its very organic construction pushes us forward to the next point. This is a Timeless purpose. In the Nicene creed we confess that he became man “for us and for our salvation” and it is in passages like this that we see our grounds for that so clearly. Christ's being made manifest was a purposeful event. I'm going to call this purpose something a little convoluted... I hope you can follow. It is “the Father for the Son for the Father for the Son for you.” The “for you” part I'm going to save for the end – so right now we're going to say that the timeless purpose is “the Father for the Son for the Father for the Son for you (but leaving the for you to the end).”

The Father's Purpose for the Son – In our passage we have the son coming for the sake of believers who are believers through Christ to believe in God. What we can see, again stepping back to the other use of foreknowledge, in v2 of 1 Peter, we see that it is the Father who is foreknowing of the status of the elect. Somewhere between the two things, the Father's foreknowing and the Son's coming something happens. What happens is our first purpose: the Father purposes to send the Son to earth to save it. The Son goes where the Father sends and does the purpose of the Father.

The Son's Purpose for the Father – The Son's purpose is to do the will of the Father, and explicitly to produce believers who know and believe in the God through the Son. This is a specific God though. Christ didn't come just to make known any god, but explicitly the creator God of the universe, the one who does two things explicitly in response to the Son's faithful service.

The Father's Purpose for the Son (the Faithful Son) – To demonstrate that the Son was indeed the spotless lamb with out blemish, that he indeed did ransom a people and atone all those who believe, the Father raises and glorifies the Son. The raising and glorifying declare that the atonement is complete. Impartial atonement requires repetition in the Old Testament, hence year after year the offering up of spotless lambs – but now, in these last times a spotless lamb has been offered that never needs a repeat offering. The raising from the dead and glorification indicate that the Father has accepted the atoning sacrifice of the Son as complete and so he makes known his satisfaction. The Father's purpose for the faithful Son is to show his satisfaction in the work of the Son.

So here we have the Father's purpose to send the Son, the Son's purpose to make known God, the Father's purpose in making known his satisfaction with the work of his Son. Wow. And guess what, this is still unfolding. It is unfolding in these pews. The reality of this is taking hold of new lives every minute of every day. This cosmically important reality is breaking down barriers and denials, because that is what it does. For as I said just a little bit ago, it is the purpose of the Father for the Son for the Father for the Son for you, and the "for you part" is what I'd like to call the timely purpose.

Timely Purpose

This passage has a little sign for us that is immensely powerful: so that. Did you notice it as we were reading through the passage? "So that your faith and hope are in God." Whenever you get frustrated or lost, words like this are like giant arrows. They point and say, HERE HERE, LOOK >>> THIS IS THE POINT <<<. That is what we find "so that" doing. Why all the purposing, all the big picture "from the foundation of the world" stuff? Simple, so that you and I and every believer in the universe would be rightly set in our faith and hope. The timely purpose of our passage is that the unfolding of cosmic redemption seen in Jesus Christ's being made manifest, ransoming, and being raised from the dead and glorified is so that we are set aright in our faith, that is what we believe, and our hope, that in which we have our confident expectation placed in. So what started as a passage mentioning what was going on before the world began ends with what is going on right now in our hearts. What is shaping what you believe? What is shaping what you hope in? Is it this reality found in the Bible?

We live in a difficult time to talk about belief and hope; they're so individualized and consumerized that the concept of the fact that there is a universal reality in which everyone is wrapped up in seems to be denied. Our world seems to say, your beliefs and hopes for you, and you, and you, and you, and you. Some talk as if there's a marketplace of ideas and religions that compete to sell you the best reality for you. No. This passage breaks into that marketplace of ideas and calls every one of them futile deceptions! One faith, one hope: and it is the one Gospel – the manifestation of the eternal Christ and his atoning death and brings about the redemption (that is the ransoming) of sinners, the saving of the lost, and ultimately the undoing of Sin and an eternal reign of glory. In the now, we are given faith and hope! How do you cling to faith and hope in a world of charlatan faith and hope salesmen? Well, we follow the path of this verse and see who was made visible for us to do just that: Jesus Christ.

So we turn our eyes to Jesus in whom the invisible eternal realities are made visible, in whom salvation has come and victory declared. We turn to him to believe in God and to hope in God.

Conclusion

We are brought back to where this section of commands to Hope, be Holy, and to conduct our lives with godly-fear began, v13 – "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Hope in God, and indeed the subsequent commands culminate in these two verse. We are now given the reality that the whole history of the universe has unfolded in order to enable us to carry out these commands, beginning with the command to

Hope. So that our faith and hope are in God. The Father sent the son, the Son glorified the Father, the Father glorified and raised the Son SO THAT our faith and hope are in God. You can't be a better planner or provider or architect of your life compared to God, who planned that awesome string of purposes to unfold. You see in Jesus Christ what God has done for you and your salvation and this wasn't plan b, but from before the foundation of the world. Everything else that we might seek to believe in or hope in are futile, but God has come to declare in Christ that it need not be futile.

To those who do not know this faith or this hope, investigate it. Take a close look at the Bible and what it says about this world you find yourself in. Don't look at the church and just see her failings, we can't save you, for we're only here to point you to the savior. We're a hospital for recovering sinners who perpetually fall short. You don't see in this passage a command to have hope or faith in "the church," but in God: and particularly to Jesus Christ. Before all that is was, he was, but he became man to ransom a people, a people of faith and hope.

To those who do know Jesus, treasure him. Investigate ever deeper the reality of our faith and hope. Before you believed he was unbelievable, now that you believe he is unbelievably glorious. Fall in love more and more with your savior, for in knowing him intimately and increasingly you will find that faith and hope aren't little check boxes that are once and done, but are never-ending fountains that fill you more than you could ever imagine.

Grant us O Lord an ever-expanding faith and hope in you and to you, the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory unto the ages of ages. Amen.