

1 Peter 1:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

Analysis

Peter details the prophets' specific search focus: timing and manner of Messiah's coming. "Searching what, or what manner of time" (eraunōntes eis tina ē poion kairon, ἐραυνῶντες εἰς τίνα ἢ ποῖον καιρόν) uses eraunaō (search carefully) with two questions: "what" (tina, which specific time) and "what manner" (poion, what kind/character of time). Prophets pondered whether Messiah would come in their lifetime or future generations, and what circumstances would attend His arrival. The phrase "the Spirit of Christ which was in them" (to en autois pneuma Christou, τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ) reveals Old Testament prophecy's divine source—not human speculation but Christ's Spirit inspiring prophetic utterance. This affirms Christ's pre-existence and active role in Old Testament revelation. The Spirit "did signify" (edēlou, ἐδήλου, was making clear) through prophetic word. The content revealed was twofold: "the sufferings of Christ" (ta eis Christon pathēmata, τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα)—the Messiah's rejection, torture, and death (Psalm 22, Isaiah 53); "and the glory that should follow" (tas meta tauta doxas, τὰς μετὰ ταῦτα δόξας)—resurrection, ascension, second coming, and eternal reign. The plural "glories" suggests multiple aspects of Christ's exaltation. Prophets grasped that Messiah would suffer before reigning, but couldn't fully harmonize seemingly contradictory prophecies of suffering servant and conquering king. Only Christ's first and second comings resolve this tension.

Historical Context

Old Testament prophets received inspired visions of Messiah's sufferings (Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, Zechariah 12:10) and glories (Psalm 2, 110, Daniel 7:13-14) but couldn't fully reconcile these contrasting pictures. Jewish interpretation typically expected two Messiahs (Messiah ben Joseph who suffers, Messiah ben David who reigns) or spiritualized suffering texts. Only Jesus's first advent (suffering servant) and promised second advent (conquering king) resolve the prophetic tension. Peter emphasizes that the same Spirit inspiring Old Testament prophets—"the Spirit of Christ"—now indwells believers (Acts 2), creating continuity between covenants. For Jewish Christians tempted to abandon Hebrew Scriptures, Peter affirms they testified to Christ throughout. Church fathers like Justin Martyr and Irenaeus used this verse defending Christianity's Old Testament roots against opponents who saw Christianity as novel innovation. The prophets' inability to fully understand their own Spirit-inspired messages demonstrates Scripture's supernatural origin and depth—requiring Holy Spirit illumination for proper understanding.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing that 'the Spirit of Christ' spoke through Old Testament prophets change how you read and apply Hebrew Scriptures?
2. What does the pattern of 'sufferings... and glories' in Christ's experience teach you about expectations for your own Christian life?

Interlinear Text

ἐρευνῶντες	εἰς	τίνα	ἢ	ποῖον	καιρὸν	ἐδήλου	τὰς
Searching	of	G5101	or	what manner	of time	did signify	which
G2045	G1519		G2228	G4169	G2540	G1213	G3588
ἐν	αὐτοῖς	πνεῦμα	Χριστὸν	προμαρτυρόμενον	τὰς	εἰς	
was in	them	the Spirit	Christ	when it testified beforehand	which	of	
G1722	G846	G4151	G5547	G4303	G3588	G1519	
Χριστὸν	παθήματα	καὶ	τὰς	μετὰ	ταῦτα	δόξας	
Christ	the sufferings	and	which	that should follow	G5023	the glory	
G5547	G3804	G2532	G3588	G3326		G1391	

Additional Cross-References

2 Peter 1:21 (Spirit): For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Romans 8:9 (Spirit): But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Zechariah 14:9 (Parallel theme): And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.

Genesis 3:15 (Parallel theme): And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Genesis 49:10 (Parallel theme): The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

Revelation 19:10 (Spirit): And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Isaiah 49:6 (Parallel theme): And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

John 12:41 (Glory): These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

Luke 24:44 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

Galatians 4:6 (Spirit): And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

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