St Peter the Fisherman – Whitianga
Sunday November 27th 2022

Theme: Advent Week 1

I runga i te ingoa o te papa, te tama, me te wairua tapu.

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

*Amen*

The Four Weeks of Advent:

As Christians, we are essentially New Testament people. Our eyes and lives are focused on Jesus Christ, and who we believe him to be. The Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible, can sometimes seem almost irrelevant in its focus on the history of Israel. It is, however, very important as a significant component of the evidence for our Christian faith. This week, we begin the Christian season of Advent, that 4 week period when we relive the time of waiting for Christ, the promised Messiah, the Saviour, to arrive. We mark that time with candles, as was explained to us in the video two weeks ago.

Today marks the beginning of the first week of Advent.

*The First Week of Advent Candle, also known as the Prophecy Candle*

Advent Candle 1 stands for hope, and specifically the Israelites' hope that the promised Messiah would come. They had been waiting for the Messiah for centuries, wondering what he would look like and what he would do when he arrived. When Jesus was born, that hope was finally fulfilled. How Jesus fitted the prophecies the Israelites had been reading for centuries would become the critical conflict of His ministry – whether He fulfilled them and whether people had been reading them correctly.

*Why Is it the Prophet’s or Prophecy Candle?*

Candle 1 is the prophet’s candle (or “the prophecy candle”) because multiple Old Testament prophets had told people about the Messiah’s coming for a long time. Most scholars conservatively estimate that there are over 300 Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, some going right back to Genesis. The prophecies gave specific details about the Messiah, details like:

(Prophecies slide)

* He would be born to a virgin mother ([Isaiah 7:14](https://www.biblestudytools.com/isaiah/7-14.html))
* He would be born in Bethlehem ([Micah 5:2](https://www.biblestudytools.com/micah/5-2.html))
* He would spend time in Egypt ([Hosea 11:1](https://www.biblestudytools.com/hosea/11-1.html))
* He would come from the house (i.e., the family line) of David ([Ezekiel 37:24](https://www.biblestudytools.com/ezekiel/37-24.html))
* He would start his ministry in Galilee ([Isaiah 9:1-2](https://www.biblestudytools.com/isaiah/passage/?q=isaiah+9:1-2))
* He would be the figure that Daniel referred to as “the Son of Man” ([Daniel 7:13-14](https://www.biblestudytools.com/daniel/passage/?q=daniel+7:13-14))
* He would teach “hidden things, things from of old” ([Psalm 78:1-2](https://www.biblestudytools.com/psalms/passage/?q=psalms+78:1-2))
* He would be holy, a rock that would make people stumble and fall because they didn’t believe in him ([Isaiah 8:14](https://www.biblestudytools.com/isaiah/8-14.html))
* He would be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace ([Isaiah 9:6](https://www.biblestudytools.com/isaiah/9-6.html))
* God would call him, “my son” ([2 Samuel 7:14](https://www.biblestudytools.com/2-samuel/7-14.html)) ([Psalm 2:1-9](https://www.biblestudytools.com/psalms/passage/?q=psalms+2:1-9))
* He would gather the Israelites back together ([Isaiah 11:12](https://www.biblestudytools.com/isaiah/11-12.html))

The fact that the prophecies described God calling the Messiah his son and also that he would be called “mighty God,” became especially important. To be God’s son and be called God himself would mean that the Messiah wasn’t just a new prophet like Elijah or an ordained warrior like David. The Messiah would be a divine figure. Since falsely claiming to be God was blasphemy, anyone claiming to be the Messiah had pretty big shoes to fill.

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*What Was Hopeful about the Messiah?*

As a nation, Israel began as a collection of slaves who had just escaped out of bondage. God’s covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai started by emphasizing that **He** was the one who had freed them ([Exodus 20:1-2](https://www.biblestudytools.com/exodus/passage/?q=exodus+20:1-2)). [Hope](https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/hope/) in coming freedom continued to be important to Israel throughout the centuries. Prophets like Jeremiah told Israelites in exile that their sin had caused people to invade and capture them, but they were to hope in the future when God would bring them back home. The prophecies about the Messiah affirmed that like Moses, David, and other important figures, he would be an instrument of God’s salvation. God would send the Messiah to “bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners" ([Isaiah 61:1](https://www.biblestudytools.com/isaiah/61-1.html)).

Since Israel was controlled by the Roman Empire when Jesus was born, many people expected the Messiah to be a political saviour. They expected the Messiah to raise an army and kick out the foreign invaders. Multiple prophecies described the Messiah as a king, which was taken to mean that he would rule Israel after he had helped it achieve independence. This explains why [King Herod](https://www.christianity.com/jesus/birth-of-jesus/genealogy-and-jewish-heritage/who-was-king-herod.html) was concerned when the Three Maji said the Messiah had been born, and tried to have Jesus killed.

Jesus was indeed the Messiah, but not the one that people expected. He came as a suffering saviour, to die as the ultimate Passover lamb ([Exodus 12:1-51](https://www.biblestudytools.com/exodus/passage/?q=exodus+12:1-51)), a **sacrifice** for people’s sins. He was rejected by those he had come to rescue ([Isaiah 53:3](https://www.biblestudytools.com/isaiah/53-3.html)), and killed by them. However, God’s plan, as is so often the case, was not the same as the Hebrew people’s plan. Jesus was to prove he is the waited Messiah, the Saviour, by rising from the dead, and proving that God has power even over death.

Here is a prayer for the first week of Advent as we remember this theme of hope:

Lord Jesus, so often during this time of year, we are tempted not to focus on you. We have so much to do and prepare for, and the stress is often more challenging than we can bear. Remind us that in the end, our hope is not in the little things we do now. Our hope is in you, the perfect [lamb of God](https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/what-does-it-mean-that-jesus-is-the-lamb-of-god.html), who was prophesied for hundreds of years and came exactly when you were supposed to. You were there before the world was created, you died on earth and came back to life, and now sit at God the Father’s right hand today. Help us remember our inheritance as your followers and that regardless of our circumstances, that inheritance does not change. Show us how to put our hope in you this day and find the long view of reality we need. We ask for these things in your name, Amen.

(video – Advent Hope)