

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, January 22, 2020 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

WHAT TO KNOW TO ...



FOUNDATIONS FOR OUR FAITH – PART 2
2 Peter 1:16-21

“A key to how well you understand other religious faiths and cults is how well you understand your own.” –Fritz Ridenour, “So What’s The Difference”

“¹⁶ For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. ¹⁷ For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ ¹⁸ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; ²⁰ knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” -2 Peter 1:16-21(NKJV)

Background Notes: *based on MacArthur Study Bible notes

- **“cunningly devised fables”** – The word “fables” was used to refer to mythical stories about gods and miracles (i.e. 1 Timothy 1:3-4, 1 Timothy 4:7, 2 Timothy 4:5). Realizing that false leaders and their followers would truly discredit this letter, and that he was probably already being accused of concocting fables and myths in order to get people to follow him so he could amass wealth, power, and prestige as false teachers were motivated to do, Peter gave evidences in the following verses to prove that he wrote the truth of God as a genuinely inspired writer.
- **“made known”** – This word is a somewhat technical term for imparting a new revelation ... something previously hidden, but now revealed.
- **“the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”** – Since there is only one definite article with this phrase, the meaning is, “the powerful coming,” or “the coming in power.” The false teachers who were opposing Peter had tried to debunk the doctrine of the second coming of

Christ (i.e. 2 Peter 3:3-4) about which Peter had spoken and written (i.e. 1 Peter 1:3-7, 13; 1 Peter 4:13)

- “**eyewitnesses of His majesty**” – The “we” that begins this verse refers to the apostles. In one sense, all of the apostles had been eyewitnesses to Christ’s majesty, especially His miracles, resurrection body, and ascension into heaven. Peter, however, is referring to a more specific event which he will describe in the next verse. The kingdom splendor of Christ revealed at this event was intended as a preview of His majesty to be manifested at His second coming (i.e. Matthew 16:28). The Transfiguration was a glimpse of the glory to be unveiled at the final revelation, the apocalypse of Christ (Rev. 1:1). It must be noted that Jesus’ earthly ministry of healing, teaching, and gathering souls into His kingdom was a preview of the character of the earthly kingdom He will establish at His return.
- “**excellent glory**” – A reference to the glory cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration from which God spoke to the inner circle disciples: Peter, James and John (i.e. Matthew 17:5).
- “**This is My beloved Son**” – This means, “This One is in essence with Me.” The Father is thus affirming the deity of Christ (i.e. Matthew 17:5, Luke 9:27-36)
- “**when we were with Him**” – Peter implies that there was no reason to believe the false teachers who denied the majesty and second coming of Christ, since they were not on the Mount of Transfiguration to see the preview of the kingdom and glory of Christ, as were he, James and John.
- “**the prophetic word**” – The “prophetic word” refers not just to the Old Testament major and minor prophets, but to the entire Old Testament. Of course, all of the Old Testament was written by “prophets” in the truest sense, since they spoke and wrote God’s Word, which was the task of a prophet, and they looked forward, in some sense, to the coming Messiah (i.e. Luke 24:27)
- “**confirmed**” – This translation could indicate that the eyewitness account of Christ’s majesty at the Transfiguration confirmed the Scriptures. However, the Greek word order is crucial in that it does not say that. It says, “And we have more sure prophet word.” That original arrangement of the sentence supports the interpretation that Peter is ranking Scripture over experience.
- “**you do well to heed**” – Peter was warning believers that since they would be exposed to false teachers, they must pay careful attention to Scripture.
- “**a light that shines in a dark place**” – The murky darkness of this fallen world keeps people from seeing the truth until the light shines. The light is the lamp of revelation, the Word of God (cf. Ps. 119:105; John 17:17).
- “**the day dawns and the morning star rises**” – These simultaneous images mark the parousia, i.e., the appearing of Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 1:78; Rev. 2:28; 22:16).
- “**the morning star rises in your hearts**” - The second coming will have not only an externally transforming impact on the universe (3:7–13), but also an internally transforming impact on those believers who are alive when Jesus returns, forever removing any of their remaining doubts. The perfect, but limited, revelation of the Scriptures will be replaced with the perfect and complete revelation of Jesus Christ at the second coming (cf. John 14:7–11; 21:25;). Then the Scriptures will have been fulfilled; and believers, made like Christ (1 John 3:1, 2), will have perfect knowledge and all prophecy will be abolished (see notes on 1 Cor. 13:8–12).
- “**knowing this first**” – A call to recognize His truth as priority, namely that Scripture is not of human origin.

- “*prophecy of Scripture*” – I.e., all of Scripture. This refers primarily to all of the OT, and then by implication to all of the NT
- “*private interpretation*” – The Gr. word for “interpretation” has the idea of a “loosing,” as if to say no Scripture is the result of any human being privately, “unting” and “loosing” the truth. Peter’s point is not so much about how to interpret Scripture, but rather how Scripture originated, and what its source was. The false prophets untied and loosed their own ideas. But no part of God’s revelation was unveiled or revealed from a human source or out of the prophet’s unaided understanding (see v. 21).
- “*by the will of man*” – As Scripture is not of human origin, neither is it the result of human will. The emphasis in the phrase is that no part of Scripture was ever at any time produced because men wanted it so. The Bible is not the product of human effort. The prophets, in fact, sometimes wrote what they could not fully understand (1 Pet. 1:10, 11), but were nonetheless faithful to write what God revealed to them.
- “*moved by the Holy Spirit*” - Grammatically, this means that they were continually carried or borne along by the Spirit of God (cf. Luke 1:70; Acts 27:15, 17). The Holy Spirit thus is the divine author and originator, the producer of the Scriptures. In the OT alone, the human writers refer to their writings as the words of God over 3800 times (e.g., Jer. 1:4; cf. 3:2; Rom. 3:2; 1 Cor. 2:10). Though the human writers of Scripture were active rather than passive in the process of writing Scripture, God the Holy Spirit superintended them so that, using their own individual personalities, thought processes, and vocabulary, they composed and recorded without error the exact words God wanted written. The original copies of Scripture are therefore inspired, i.e., God-breathed (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16) and inerrant, i.e., without error (John 10:34, 35; 17:17; Titus 1:2). Peter defined the process of inspiration which created an inerrant original text (cf. Prov. 30:5; 1 Cor. 14:36; 1 Thess. 2:13).

5 Important Background Information for the Book of 2 Peter:

1. **The author of the book of 2 Peter is the APOSTLE PETER, the head and lead spokesman for Jesus’ twelve disciples** - The New Testament had four different names for Peter: Simeon (the Hebrew for Peter’s original name, Acts 15:14, 2 Peter 1:1), Simon (the Greek name for Simeon applied 49 times in the New Testament), Cephas (a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic word for rock [קִפְעָן קηφᾶς]; this is used to play off of πέτρα), Peter (Πέτρος) the leader and spokesman for the early disciples. This is how he is addressed in the greeting emphasizing his authority to speak. The early New Testament Church almost exclusively regarded Peter as the author of the letter. And of course there is the internal evidence supporting Peter’s authorship, the letter claims to be from “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:1), the writer claims to be the readers “fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed” (1 Peter 5:1), the writer identifies “Silas” (Silvanus) as one who helped him to write the letter (1 Peter 5:12; see also Acts 15:22 and 1 Thessalonians 1:1), the writer also sends greetings from Mark (1 Peter 5:13; see Acts 12:12).
2. **The book of 2 Peter (like Paul’s letter to the Galatians) is actually a LETTER, meant to be circulated to multiple early New Testament churches and believers** - Peter is a letter written in normal epistle form and style. The rhetorical and didactic nature of the letter may mean that it was intended to be read aloud to the congregations. It is best to see this letter as a circular type of letter much like Peter’s first letter in its present form which was directed to all the churches in the areas mentioned in northern Asia minor in 1 Peter.

3. The recipient of Peter's second letter were the same recipients of Peter's earlier letter (1 Peter), a group of mostly **GENTILE BELIEVERS/CHRISTIANS** who were now living throughout the five Roman provinces of Asia Minor – This area would be what is today, Turkey. Peter says nothing directly in the salutation to specifically name the recipients of this letter. But according to 2 Peter 3:1-2, “*Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder),² that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior...*” Peter was writing another epistle to the same people to whom he wrote 1 Peter. In his first letter, he spelled out that he was writing “to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Peter 1:1). These provinces were located in an area of Asia Minor, which is modern Turkey. The Christians to whom Peter wrote were mostly Gentiles.
4. **2 Peter is believed to have been written around AD 67-68, just before Peter death** – Tradition holds that both Paul and Peter were victims of persecution under Nero at Rome after the disastrous fire in the city of Rome on July 19 of AD 64. Peter's first letter (1 Peter) was written just after the burning of Rome as persecution broke out against Christians and they were literally scattered across the New Testament world, particularly into the area of Asia Minor. 2 Peter was written sometime later toward the end of Peter's life as he himself faced persecution and martyrdom at the hands of Nero. Consensus is that Peter wrote this second letter from prison in Rome, where he was facing imminent death. Nero died in AD 68, and tradition says that Peter died by crucifixion (upside down) prior to Nero's death. That would put the writing of the letter sometime in AD 67-68 just before his death.
5. **The purpose of 2 Peter was to warn these first century Christians of FALSE TEACHERS who had infiltrated church in the area of Asia Minor** - Unlike his first letter, written to encourage Christians being persecuted and scatter under Nero's brutal and tyrannical rule, 2 Peter was written to warn again and alert these vulnerable believers to the dangers of false religions and false professors that could undermine their own faith and sabotage the early church already reeling from these terrible times of persecution. Since the time of the writing and sending of his first letter, Peter had become increasingly concerned about false teachers who were infiltrating the churches in Asia Minor. Though these false teachers had already caused trouble, Peter expected that their heretical doctrines and immoral life-styles would result in more damage in the future. Thus Peter, in an almost last will and testament, wrote to warn the beloved believers in Christ about the doctrinal dangers they were facing.

Second Peter was written for the purpose of exposing, thwarting, and defeating the invasion of false teachers into the church. Peter intended to instruct Christians in how to defend themselves against these false teachers and their deceptive lies. Dr. John MacArthur calls 2 Peter, “**This book is the most graphic and penetrating exposé of false teachers in Scripture, comparable only to Jude.**” The description of the false teachers is somewhat generic. Peter does not identify some specific false religion, cult, or system of teaching. If anybody in the early church knew the importance of being alert, it had to be the Apostle Peter. Remember he had a tendency in his early years to feel overconfident when danger was near and to overlook the Master's warnings.

CASE STUDY 1: How would you respond?

I have been praying for my neighbor and trying to find and opportunity to share my faith with her. I can tell from conversations that she seems somewhat spiritual. That opportunity finally came the other day. I was having a conversation with her and questions of faith and religion came up. I told her that I was a Christian and followed Christ. She said, “I’m glad that you believe in Jesus and that that works for you, but I’m into Baha’i”? I responded by saying, “But let me tell you how Jesus changed my life.” She listened politely, but still said, “That’s great for you! I’m happy that Jesus helped you like that. But I’ve found great help in the Baha’i Faith. Why should I believe in Jesus?”

The Baha'i faith is one of the newer world religions stemming originally from Shi'ite Islam (Muslim) in Persia (modern-day Iran). However, it has come to achieve a unique status of its own. The Baha'i faith has distinguished itself as a unique world religion because of its size (5 million members), its global scale (236 countries), its practical autonomy from its parent religion of Islam (though there is little blurriness between the two), and for its doctrinal uniqueness, being monotheistic yet inclusive. About Jesus, the Baha'i faith teaches that He was a manifestation of God but not an incarnation. The difference sounds slight but is actually enormous. Baha'is believe God is unknowable; therefore, God cannot incarnate Himself to be present among men. If Jesus is God in the most literal sense, and Jesus is knowable, then God is knowable, and that Baha'i doctrine is exploded. So, Baha'is teach that Jesus was a reflection of God. Just as a person can look at a reflection of the sun in a mirror and say, "There is the sun," so one can look at Jesus and say, "There is God," meaning "There is a reflection of God."

CASE STUDY 2: How would you respond?

I was one of ten seminary students who spent the summer in West Los Angeles, working at the Jesus Christ Light and Power House, a ministry center near the UCLA campus. In the evenings, we often walked around the streets of Westwood where we encountered hordes of enthusiastic young people who invited us to come to meetings where they promised that our lives would be changed. They would give miraculous-sounding testimonies of ways that their lives had been changed. One young woman told me that she needed a car. She pointed to a brand new Corvette and said, “There it is!” Another told me of how she had been alienated from her mother for years, but now they had become close friends. Was Jesus Christ the key to these changed lives? No, not at all. Rather, these enthusiastic witnesses had all begun to chant a Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist chant. I did not attend any of their meetings, but some of my friends who did said that it reminded them of a Campus Crusade College Life meeting, where glowing testimony after testimony told of how lives had been dramatically changed—not by Jesus Christ, but rather by chanting this Buddhist chant. This lead me to ask of my own faith, “How do you know that your faith in Christ is true?” If someone says that chanting a Buddhist mantra works for him, is that equally true? Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Buddhists, and many with other belief systems can point to changed lives. How do we know that biblical Christianity is the *only* truth?

2 Passages that Warn of the Rise of False Religious Groups and Cults:

1. **MATTHEW 24:23-26** – “²³ At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴ For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you ahead of time. ²⁶ “So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it.” In this passage Jesus, Himself, warns us that as His return draws near, there will be an increase in false prophets who will ensnare many in their false teachings.
2. **2 PETER 2:1-3** – “But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. ² Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. ³ In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.” In [2 Peter 2:1-3](#), Peter warns us that false teachers will even arise from within the church.

5 Important and Interesting Facts About False Religions and Cults:

1. Today it is estimated that between **35 & 50 MILLION** people are involved in some form of false religious group or cultic organization in America and on foreign mission fields.
2. It is believed that over **60 MILLION** people dabble in some form of New Age practice or occultic thinking today.
3. One of the fastest growing false religious groups (Mormonism) is considered a “cult” and has exceeded **8 MILLION** in membership.
4. There are more than **2,500** New Age and Occult Bookstores operating in the United States today.
5. Cults and false religious groups are gaining increased respectability and are making great strides towards being accepted into the **MAINSTREAM CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY** (church).

3 Reasons Why False Religious Groups and Cults Prosper: Josh McDowell, “Handbook of Today’s Religions”

1. **The cults PROVIDE ANSWERS** – A major reason the cults are flourishing is that in an unsure world they provide authoritative answer to man’s basic questions: Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?
2. **The cults MEET HUMAN NEEDS** – Cults flourish because they appeal to man’s basic human need. All of us need to be loved, to feel needed, to sense our lives have direction and meaning. Individuals who experience an identity crisis or have emotional problems are particularly susceptible to cults.
3. **The cults MAKE a FAVORABLE IMPRESSION** – If the church fails to carefully and seriously provide spiritual warmth and true exposition of the Word of God, those with spiritual needs will find other avenues of fulfillment. Many cults prey on ignorance, and try to impress the uninformed with pseudo-scholarship. An example is The Way International’s leader, Victor Paul Wierwille, who quotes profusely from Hebrew and Greek sources in an attempt to give the impression of scholarship. Representatives of Jehovah’s Witnesses who go door to door give a similar impression of great learning. To combat this, the believer

must know what he or she believes and why he or she believes it and thus be able to expose the cult's teachings.

INTRODUCTION

What are we getting at and what Peter is getting at in this first chapter of 2 Peter is, what is the foundation of our faith? Does it rest on personal experience: "Jesus changed my life"? While I hope that Jesus has changed your life, as we have already stated, I also hope that you see that your faith needs a more substantial foundation than that. Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Buddhists, and many with other belief systems can point to changed lives. How do we know that biblical Christianity is the *only* truth that will get us right with God and give us eternal life?

In 2 Peter 1:16-21, the apostle gives us a couple of things that ought to make up a sure foundation for a believer's/Christian's faith. Peter lays this foundation before he deals directly (chapter 2) with the false teachers that were plaguing the early church.

Writing to Christians who were being inundated by false teachers spouting dangerous doctrines, Peter, the aged apostle, emphasized the importance of knowing (and living by) the truth. But how does one differentiate between the claims of one person or religious groups and the claims of another? According to our passage, the Old Testament (and by implication the New Testament) Scriptures are completely authoritative and trustworthy for two reasons:

2 Reasons Peter says Scripture is completely trustworthy and authoritative:

1. They were certified by APOSTOLIC WITNESSES (1 Peter 1:16-18)
2. They were imposed not by human whims but by the MIRACULOUS leading of the HOLY SPIRIT (1 Peter 1:19-21)

FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES WITNESS

So in our text, Peter boldly counters this false religion and these false teachers in verse 16, "¹⁶For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty." The word "for" connects the thought with Peter's previous words. The sense is, "I want you to always be able to call these things to mind after I'm gone, because they are true. We didn't make up clever stories. We were eyewitnesses of what we are handing off to you."

"¹⁶For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. So the foundation of our faith is the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ. We can note four things about this apostolic witness:

4 Important Things Concerning the Apostolic Witness:

1. The apostles explicitly DENY making up TALES about Jesus Christ – Notice verse 16, "¹⁶For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty." Is Peter responding to the charges of the false teachers, that he was following cleverly devised tales, or is he referring to the cleverly devised tales of the false teachers in contrast to the eyewitness testimony of the apostles? Perhaps there is some of both, that the false teachers were accusing the apostles of following cleverly devised tales, but Peter is turning it back on

them, saying, “It is not we who are following cleverly devised tales (as they assert), but rather *they* are following cleverly devised tales. *We apostles* are following and proclaiming what we have seen and heard.” In verses 12-15, Peter uses the first person pronoun, *I*, but in verses 16 & 18, he shifts to the plural, *we*. He is bringing in here the testimony of the apostles, in particular, of Peter, James, and John who were with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration where they saw His majesty and glory. In verse 18, “we ourselves” is emphatic. The plural pronouns make it clear that this was not a subjective vision or dream that Peter experienced by himself. Rather, it was an actual experience that Peter, James, and John all saw and heard. Peter explicitly denies that they were making up or following cleverly devised tales.

In that day, as in every age, there were religious charlatans who made a nice living by claiming to have some new revelation that would help their followers get whatever they wanted. The Greek word translated “*fables*” is the word from which we get our word, *myths*. It was often used in the Greek culture to refer to stories about the Greek gods. These stories were not literally true, but they conveyed a message that contained helpful instruction. Perhaps they were fables with a moral lesson, but the stories were not true.

4 Basic Deviations that Characterize Cults:

- (1) **False teaching on the NATURE of God** - The Bible teaches there is one God revealed in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The central feature that distinguishes cults from biblical Christianity is the doctrine of the Trinity. All cults have a distorted view of this doctrine. For example, the Jehovah’s Witnesses condemn the doctrine of the Trinity, and Mormons teach tritheism, three gods who make up the godhead.
- (2) **A false view of JESUS** - The Bible teaches that Christ is 100 percent man and 100 percent God. This has been called the *hypostatic union*. In [2 Corinthians 11:4](#), Paul warned about false teachers teaching another Jesus. A modern-day example of false teaching is Christian Science which teaches that Jesus was not God but a man who displayed the Christ idea. He neither died for sins, nor was He resurrected.
- (3) **A false teaching on SALVATION** - All cults have a works-oriented Gospel. The death of Christ is believed to give followers the *potential* to be saved. So after believing in Christ, one must serve the organization to attain salvation. Salvation is found in the organization and one is never really sure if one has done enough to be worthy of salvation. In the International Church of Christ, for example, disciples are scrutinized by their discipler daily to determine if they performed as worthy disciples. Failure to meet the standards may result in discipline. Disciples can never be certain they have done enough for salvation.
- (4) **Extra-biblical NEW REVELATION and the denial of the sole AUTHORITY of the BIBLE** - Cults claim that extra revelation is given to the leader whose words are seen as inspired by God and equal to the Bible or often seen as greater than and superseding the Bible. If there is a conflict between the Bible and the leader’s words, the latter takes precedence. So in reality, the leader’s writings take precedence over the Bible. When interacting with cultists, I often hear them claim their teachings are consistent with the Bible. However, when I point out where their teachings deviate from the Bible, they

eventually claim the Bible to be in error. In most cases, cultists claim the Bible has somehow been corrupted by the church.

Paul used this word “*fables*” negatively to refer to other false teachers.

4 Scriptural Appeals to Beware of False Teacher from Paul: *note the use of the same word “fables”

- (1) **1 Timothy 1:3-4** – “³As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, ⁴nor give heed to *fables* and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.” Paul told Timothy to “instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to these “fables” and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.
- (2) **1 Timothy 4:7** – “⁷But reject profane and old wives’ *fables*, and exercise yourself toward godliness.” Paul warned Timothy to have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. Don’t be falling for superstitions ideas and beliefs that sometimes even get propagated in subtle ways within the church... “If you fail to pray the ‘sinners prayer’ word for word you cannot be saved!” *as if it is some kind of magical incantation; or “You must be baptized by an ordained minister for your baptism to be legitimate!”
- (3) **Titus 1:13-14** – “¹³This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴not giving heed to Jewish *fables* and commandments of men who turn from the truth.” Paul instructed Titus (Titus 1:13-14) to reprove his hearers severely, “so that they may be sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.” He was referring to unbelieving Jews who added fanciful embellishments to Old Testament stories. And in his final charge to Timothy, where he strongly exhorts him to preach the word,
- (4) **2 Timothy 4:3-4** – “³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to *fables*.” Paul adds these words reminding us that in the last day (the day in which we are now living) false teachers will be prevalent. Each time Paul contrasts the truth with myths. Myths are made-up stories or fables. The truth refers to revelation from God through His chosen apostles and prophets as recorded in His Word (John 17:17). Such truth supremely focuses on God’s revelation in His Son who said (John 18:37), “for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth.” He also said (John 14:6), “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

The truth about Jesus is made known to us through the witness of the apostles. They were not making up tales. Rather, they report to us what they saw and heard about Jesus.

- 2. **The apostolic witness centers exclusively on the person of Jesus Christ as the glorious, majestic Son of God, equal with the Father** – Look at verses 17-18, “¹⁷For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” ¹⁸And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.” Peter is referring

here to one specific occasion, namely, when he and James and John were with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. We will look more at that in a moment. But for now I want you to see that Peter here exalts Jesus Christ as the glorious, majestic Son of God, equal with the Father. (He will mention the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, in verse 21.) “Majesty” at the end of verse 16 can also be translated “splendor,” “greatness,” or “magnificence.” It is used once to refer to the greatness of God (Luke 9:43).

READ: Matthew 17:1-12

Peter uses *majesty* to refer to Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, when in Matthew 17:2 we read, “*and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.*” Moses and Elijah appeared there with Him (we don’t know how the three disciples identified them). Peter says (2 Pet. 1:17) that Jesus “received honor and glory from God the Father,” whom Peter also identifies as “the Majestic Glory,” who said (1:17), “*This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased.*” Glory refers to the shining brightness of Jesus’ face and clothes. Honor refers to the words of approval that came from heaven (Schreiner, p. 315).

READ: Matthew 16:21-23 (maybe add vv. 24-28)

Just prior to the experience on the mount of transfiguration, Jesus had predicted His impending death on the cross. Peter had rebuked Jesus for such a thought, only to have Jesus strongly rebuke Peter, saying, “*Get behind Me, Satan*” (Matt. 16:21-23). Jesus went on to affirm that His disciples, too, would have to deny themselves and take up the cross to follow Him. So the disciples were undoubtedly confused. If Jesus is the Messiah, then why all this talk about death on the cross? What about His reigning in power and glory on the throne of David? In that context, Jesus said (Matt. 16:28), “*Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.*”

The account of the transfiguration immediately follows, where the three apostles saw Jesus in the glory that He will have in His future kingdom. When the Father said of Jesus, “*This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased,*” it identified Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. The phrase about Jesus being God’s Son comes from the Messianic Psalm 2. In Psalm 2:6, God says, “*But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain.*” Peter here refers to the mount of transfiguration as “the holy mountain,” because they met with God there. (We do not know exactly where it was, but it may have been somewhere on Mount Hermon.) In Psalm 2:7, Messiah says, “*I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.’*” The psalm goes on to promise to give the Son the nations as His inheritance and that He will break them with a rod of iron (Rev. 19:15).

The part about Jesus being beloved and well-pleasing to the Father comes from another Messianic prophecy, Isaiah 42:1 (note the O.T. reference to the Trinity here), where the Father says, “*Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.*” So in the context, the experience of seeing Jesus transfigured told the confused disciples, “Jesus is the glorious,

majestic promised Messiah and King. His impending death on the cross does not negate His future reign in power and glory.” Jesus is the eternal Son of God who laid aside His glory and took on human flesh through the virgin birth. As such, He is fully God and fully human, apart from sin. He did not and could not surrender any of His divine attributes, or He would have ceased to be God, which is impossible. But, He voluntarily laid aside *the use* of some of His divine attributes as He took on the form of a servant and became obedient to death on the cross (Phil. 2:5-8).

As Charles Wesley put it in “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing,” “Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see, hail the incarnate Deity.” So on this one occasion, the veil was lifted and the disciples saw the intrinsic glory of Jesus that He shared with the Father before the creation of the world (John 17:5). The apostolic witness reveals this unique, glorious, majestic Son of God to us.

3. **The apostolic witness affirmed that Jesus Christ is coming again in power and glory –** Notice verse 16 of our passage in 2 Peter 1:16, “¹⁶For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.” When Peter says (1:16), “we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” a few commentators understand it to be referring to Christ’s first coming, where His power was especially revealed in His miracles and in this revelation on the mount of transfiguration. I used to think that that was the meaning. But the word translated *coming* (*parousia*) is always used elsewhere in the New Testament in reference to Christ to refer to His second coming.

Though we don’t know who these false teacher were by name, we do get something of a glimpse of some of their false teaching, and at least part of their false teaching that Peter centered in on regarded the return/second coming... the coming again of Jesus. **READ: 2 Peter 3:4.** Since Peter was dealing with false teachers who scoffed at the idea of Christ’s second coming almost all commentators understand “the power and coming” of 1:16 to refer to His second coming. The meaning of verse 16, then, is that the apostles had not devised the idea of Christ’s second coming as a clever tale. As we’ll see in a moment, their experience on the mount of transfiguration was a prophetic glimpse of what it will be like when Jesus returns in power and glory.

Some things to remember about the return or second coming of Christ:

- (1) **Jesus had specifically predicted that He would come again to receive His followers unto Himself in heaven –** John 14:1-3 says, “*Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.*² *In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*³ *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*” Andi n Acts 1:11, when Jesus ascended into heaven after the resurrection, the angels said to the disciples, “*Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.*” These are only two of the reminders of Jesus telling us that he would come again. The next three follow based on what Acts 1:11...

- (2) Since He ascended bodily, He will return bodily - “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”
- (3) Since He ascended visibly, He will return visibly - “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”
- (4) Since He ascended suddenly, He will return suddenly- “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”
- (5) No one knows when the return or second coming of Christ will take place – Mark 13:32-33 says it, “³²But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.” This reminder is repeated in Matthew 24:36-44,³⁶ “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of ^{the}heaven, but My Father only. ³⁷But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴²Watch therefore, for you do not know what ^{the}hour your Lord is coming. ⁴³But know this, that if the master of the house had known what ^{the}hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” Luke 12:40 says it like this, “⁴⁰Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

While Christians differ over many of the details of Christ’s return, all who believe the Bible as the Word of God affirm that He will return bodily in power and glory to judge the wicked and to bring final redemption and eternal glory to His people (Heb. 9:28). All who have tasted of God’s grace in Christ are “looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus” (Titus 2:13).

This is not a minor theme in the New Testament. If anyone denies the second coming of Jesus, he denies the gospel and a major part of biblical revelation. As His redeemed people, we should be living daily in the hope of His coming, longing for the day when He will appear (2 Tim. 4:8)

So the apostles specifically deny making up tales about Jesus Christ, especially with reference to His second coming. The apostolic witness centers exclusively on the person of Jesus Christ as the glorious, majestic Son of God, equal with the Father. The apostles also clearly proclaimed that Jesus Christ will return in power and glory.

- 4. The apostles affirm being eyewitnesses of the majesty of Jesus Christ on the mount of transfiguration – Here it is again in verses 17-18 of our passage in 2 Peter 1, “¹⁷For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the

Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." ¹⁸And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain."

The apostles witnessed Jesus' glory and majesty from the time of His baptism to His ascension. As the apostle John put it (John 1:14), *"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."* So the question is, why does Peter here bring up the transfiguration as the prime example of seeing Jesus' majesty, rather than the resurrection or the ascension?

Why the transfiguration?:

- (1) **It's significance for Peter personally = life changing experience** - For one thing, the transfiguration was the only time Peter saw Jesus in His majesty and glory. Stephen looked into heaven and saw the glorified Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56). Paul saw the glory of Christ in the blinding flash of light on the Damascus Road, when he heard His voice (Acts 9:3-8). He also had the experience of being caught up into heaven, where he heard things which a man is not permitted to speak (2 Cor. 12:4). John would later see the glory of Christ on the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:12-20). But this was Peter's only experience of seeing the glory of Christ, and he could never forget it.
- (2) **It's sign to Peter and believers spiritually = points to the second coming** - But his main reason for referring to the transfiguration here is that it guarantees Christ's coming again in power and glory, which the false teachers were ridiculing (3:1-4). It was a brief, prophetic display of what it will be like when the kingdom of God comes in power (Matt. 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27). If the transfiguration was a historical event, so the second coming will be historical. It is not just a "spiritual" coming. While Jesus' first coming presented Him as the humble, gentle, suffering servant, His second coming will be as the conquering warrior, ruling the nations with a rod of iron, judging all of His enemies (Rev. 19:11-16; Matt. 26:64).

Why did Jesus only pick Peter, James, and John to witness the transfiguration?

As you consider this amazing revelation of Jesus' glory on the mount of transfiguration, the question comes to mind, *"Why did Jesus only pick Peter, James, and John to witness this event?"* If it happened today with a future political leader, his press aides would have staged the event before a full stadium, with the cameras rolling. But Jesus excluded nine of the twelve and then commanded the three who saw it not to say anything about it until after He had risen from the dead (Matt. 17:9). We can't know the exact reasons why the Lord limited this revelation to these three, but His choice reveals His abundant grace for sinners.

- *Jesus had just rebuked Peter by calling him Satan! He also knew that Peter would deny Him on the night before His crucifixion.*
- *James and John clamored for first place among the twelve. But the Lord picked those three, perhaps to teach us that if we know Him, it is not because of our worthiness, but rather because of His grace.*

Also, the other disciples had to rely on the witness of these three. That required humility on their part. They had to set aside the pride that would have caused them to say, “Why do these three get the special revelation? They aren’t any better than we are!” True, they weren’t any better. But God chose to reveal the glory of Christ to them, and the others had to accept their witness. So do we. Have you done that?

FOUNDATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

If you’re going to base your entire life on something, you want to know that it is solid. If you’re going to stake your *eternity* on that same thing, you *really* want to be sure that it is the truth. It would be utterly tragic to spend your life on a path that you thought led to heaven, only to find out too late that you were wrong!

As Christians, we build our lives and stake our eternity on the truth of God’s Word:

- **How can we know that it’s true?**
- **How can we be sure that it isn’t just a collection of quaint writings from a bunch of Jewish guys who lived thousands of years ago?**
- **And, since even Christians interpret the Bible in so many different ways, how can we know that *our* interpretation is correct?**
- **Even some who claim to be evangelical Christians say that we cannot know the exact meaning of Scripture.**
- **They would say that if you claim to know what the Bible says, you are dogmatic and arrogant.**
- **To claim that your view is the only right view is divisive.**
- **Are they right?**
- **Can we know for sure that what the Bible says is true and that we are correct in our understanding of it?**

As we’ve seen, Peter knows that he is about to die (1:14). He wants to leave his readers with a solid foundation so that after he is gone, they will not be led astray by false teachers, who are already plaguing the churches. That solid foundation is the revealed Word of God. The central focus of all Scripture is the Lord Jesus Christ. In 2 Peter 1:16-18, Peter boldly states that the apostles were not following cleverly devised tales when they made known the power and coming of the Lord Jesus. Rather, the experience that they had on the mount of transfiguration, when they saw Jesus’ majesty and glory, was a prophetic glimpse of the truth that He is coming again in power and glory to reign. The apostolic witness to Jesus Christ, which we now have in the New Testament, is one leg of the foundation of our faith.

The other leg is (v. 19), **“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed...”** I’ll explain this phrase more in a moment, but I think his meaning is that the apostles’ experience on the mount of transfiguration confirmed and clarified the truth of the Old Testament, that the Messiah will come again to judge the world and to reign in glory over His redeemed people. Therefore, Peter tells us to pay attention to that word as a lamp shining in the dark, until Christ returns. Also, we must be careful to interpret God’s Word correctly (v. 20), because it is not the word of man, but rather the inspired Word of God (v. 21). Thus,

Since we have the solid foundation of God's inspired Word, we must pay careful attention to it and interpret it correctly

Ironically, these verses challenge us with some difficult interpretive issues, so I will try to explain the text as we work through it, so that we can apply it correctly.

3 Important Truths About the God's Word:

1. We have the solid foundation of God's Word (1:19a) - We not only have the apostolic witness to Jesus as they saw Him on the mount of transfiguration (1:16-18), but also (v. 19 in Greek begins with “and”) “we have the prophetic word made more sure.” “We” refers first to the apostles (as in 1:16-18), and by extension to the church. In the context of the Lord’s coming (v. 16), the “prophetic word” refers to the Old Testament prophecies relating to “the day of the Lord,” the day of judgment and salvation (Thomas Schreiner, *The New American Commentary, 1, 2 Peter, Jude* [Broadman], p.319). By extension, it applies to all of the Old Testament, since the Scriptures all tie together. But the idea is that the Old Testament prophecies about the coming day of the Lord are confirmed and clarified by the transfiguration, where the disciples saw a prophetic preview of Jesus in His glory. But, what does Peter mean when he says “more sure”? Some follow the King James Version, which translates, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy” **The idea is that the written word is more sure than the disciples' experience on the mount of transfiguration was.** For example, **John MacArthur** (*The MacArthur Study Bible*, New American Standard Bible Updated edition [Nelson Bibles], p. 1924; also, see, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 2 Peter & Jude* [Moody Publishers], pp. 61-62) argues that the Greek word order favors that translation. **He thinks that Peter is saying that Scripture ranks even above his experience of seeing the transfigured Christ.** He states (*Study Bible, ibid.*), “the Word of God is a more reliable verification of the teachings about the person, atonement, and second coming of Christ than even the genuine first hand experiences of the apostles themselves.”

So it seems preferable to understand that Peter is saying that the Old Testament prophets gave us a sure word about Christ. They predicted His sufferings and the glory that would follow. But the apostles did not understand how it all fit together until after Jesus’ death and resurrection. Then Jesus explained how it was necessary for Him “to suffer these things and to enter into His glory” (Luke 24:27; see, also vv. 44-45). The three disciples then recalled their experience on the mount of transfiguration, where seeing Jesus’ glory was a prophetic glimpse of His coming again. So in this sense, the Old Testament prophetic word was made more sure. The transfiguration confirmed and clarified the truth that was there, but which they did not understand until after that experience.

Before we leave this point, consider for a moment just some of the prophetic Scriptures with regard to Jesus Christ. I have heard that there are over 300 prophecies about Christ in the Old Testament, but let’s take just a few:

- ***The Messiah would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14),***
- ***of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10),***
- ***of the lineage of David (2 Sam. 7:16),***
- ***in the city of Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2).***

- *His ministry would be introduced by a forerunner, who would speak in the spirit and power of Elijah (Mal. 3:1; 4:5; Isa. 40:3-5). This was fulfilled, of course, in John the Baptist.*
- *Other prophecies speak of His ministry (Isa. 42:1-4; 61:1-2),*
- *His miracles (Isa. 35:5-6),*
- *and His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey (Zech. 9:9).*
- *Psalm 22, written hundreds of years before crucifixion was known as a means of execution, describes His death on the cross.*
- *That psalm also describes the taunts of His accusers (v. 8) and the soldiers casting lots for His garments (v. 18).*
- *Isaiah 53 also describes Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sins. It mentions specifically (v. 9) that His grave would be assigned with wicked men, yet that He would be with a rich man in His death. As you know, He was crucified between two criminals, but buried in the tomb of a rich man. All of these, plus many more prophecies, were specifically fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ.*

Years ago, a math professor named Peter Stoner wrote a little book, *Science Speaks* [Moody Press, 1963]. In it, he assigns probabilities to a number of biblical prophecies and then calculates the odds that these things could have happened by sheer chance. In one chapter, he takes just eight prophecies concerning Jesus Christ and uses very conservative estimates to determine how probable it is that anyone who might have lived from the time of those prophecies down to the present could have fulfilled them all. His answer is, 1 in 10^{17} . How big is that number? To illustrate, Professor Stoner says (pp. 106-107), take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover the entire state two feet deep. Now mark one of those silver dollars, stir it into the whole mix, blindfold a man and tell him he can go as far as he wants, but he has to pick just one. His chances of picking the marked silver dollar are the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing just these eight prophecies (apart from divine inspiration) and having them all come true in one man. He goes on to show that if you take 16 prophecies, the odds increase to 1 in 10^{45} , an unimaginably huge number. It would involve a ball of silver dollars extending 30 times as far as from the earth to the sun! And that's just 16 prophecies, not the 300 which Jesus fulfilled!

So Peter's first point is, we have the solid foundation of the prophetic word, which was further confirmed by the apostles' experience of seeing Jesus' glory on the mount of transfiguration.

2. **We must pay careful attention to God's Word in view of the coming day of judgment (1:19b)** – Notice Peter's words again in verse 19, “*And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.*” The flow of thought from the context is, “Since the Old Testament prophets predict the power and glory of Christ in His coming and since our experience on the mount of transfiguration confirmed those prophecies, pay close attention to the Scriptures.”

Peter compares the Bible to a lamp shining in the darkness, much as Psalm 119:105, “*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*” This is the only New Testament use of this

Greek word for “dark.” It has the connotation of being not only dark, but also dirty or squalid. To navigate this dark, dirty world safely, you need the lamp of God’s Word.

The Bible says that the world is a dark, dark place. It is a morally dark place. There are many hazards where you can conk your head or fall into a pit. When we come to know Christ, the Bible becomes our light to show us how to live to please Him in view of His coming, so that we can avoid temptation and sin.

The **day dawning** (v. 19) refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ. That end time is called “the day of the Lord.” It will be a day of gladness and hope for believers, because our redemption draws near (Luke 21:28). But it will be a time of terror and awful regret for those who have rejected Christ.

But, what does Peter mean when he says, **“the morning star arises in your hearts”**? This also refers to the coming of Christ, who calls Himself “the bright morning star” (Rev. 22:16; see, also Rev. 2:28; Num. 24:17). But, what does Peter mean when he says that the morning star **“arises in your hearts”**? This almost sounds as if the second coming is not an objective, outwardly visible event, but rather an inward, subjective experience in believers’ hearts. But Peter clearly believed in the objective, bodily, personal return of Christ. So he probably means that now, in the darkness, the prophetic word shines to illumine our path. But when Jesus, the morning star, returns, we will have the light of His presence so that we will no longer need the prophetic word. The One of whom the prophecies spoke will be with us personally, shining fully into our hearts.

As Peter Davids writes (*The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude* [Eerdmans], p. 210), “One treasures a love letter while the beloved is absent, but once he or she is present, the letter is laid aside and exchanged for the personal contact.”

Before we leave verse 19, let’s apply it by asking, **“Are you paying attention to the lamp that is shining in the darkness?”**

- ***Do you read the Word regularly to gain the light that you need to live in a manner pleasing to the Lord?***
- ***Are you living in light of His coming, when we all will stand before Him to give an account of how we have lived (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10-12)?***

We have the solid foundation of God’s Word, but we must pay attention to it in view of the coming day that surely will dawn.

3. **We must interpret the Word correctly, because it is not the word of man, but the inspired Word of God (1:20-21)** - The NASB usually gives an almost literal rendering of the Greek text, but in verse 20 it errs. It adds the word “but” (which is not in the Greek at all) and begins a new sentence. The ESV and NKJV gets it right by continuing the sentence from verse 19, **“...knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation.”** Peter is explaining that we should pay close attention to Scripture by interpreting it correctly, because we are dealing with the inspired word of God to us through these human authors.

2 Parts to Understand:

- (1) **We must interpret the Word correctly (2 Peter 1:20)** - But, again we must deal with some interpretive problems in order to understand verse 20. Verse 20 says, “²⁰knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,” Verse 20 has been interpreted in three main ways.

Three Views on 2 Peter 1:20: (especially the phase “of any private interpretation”)

- [1] **The Catholic Church View** - First, the Roman Catholic Church uses verse 20 to teach that individuals are not permitted to interpret the Bible for themselves. Rather, they must depend on the official teaching of the church... in other words “the pope” or a “priest” must tell them what to believe and what the Bible says. The practical result of this has been that many Roman Catholics have never read or studied the Bible on their own. For many years, the Church opposed translating the Bible into the common languages of the people for fear that they would misinterpret it. So Catholics had to depend on the priests as the correct interpreters of Scripture. But this view reads into the text all sorts of things that are not there. The question is, is the church over the Word or is the Word over the church?
- [2] **The Origins of Scripture View** - Second, some understand the verse to be referring not to the interpretation of Scripture, but rather to its origin... or where Scripture came from. The NIV gives an interpretive translation, “no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation.” In favor of this view is that the word “is” (NASB) means, “comes” or “came about.” Also, verse 21 seems to support this view by further explaining how the prophets got their message. But, against this view is the meaning of the word “interpretation,” which only occurs here in the New Testament. The words “interpretation” in verse 20 means “to untie a knot or solve a puzzle.” So it more likely refers to the proper interpretation of prophecy after it was given, not to originating the prophecy (Schreiner, p. 323).
- [3] **The Proper Interpretation View** - The third view is that Peter is saying that we aren’t free to interpret Scripture according to our own personal whims. Scripture is not to be interpreted subjectively (one-sidedly, emotionally, with your own personal whims), according to my feelings or preferences, but rather, objectively, according to the meaning of the text. To interpret it according to your subjective feelings would be to twist the Scriptures, something that the false teachers were doing (2 Pet. 3:16; see also, 2 Tim. 4:3-4). So while Peter could be referring to the origination of Scripture (the second view), because of his concern about the false teachers (2:1; 3:16), I favor this view. Peter puts this as a priority (“first of all”) because if Christ is coming again in judgment and His Word is the standard for judgment, then we’d better understand it correctly.

Example... you can’t stand before the judge after you’ve been driving 100 and say, “I didn’t understand that sign with the 25 on it!” Nor would it do to ask the judge, “What does 25 miles per hour mean *to you?* For me, 100 *feels* more like 25.” Sorry, but 25 mph is *not* a subjective feeling; it is an objective standard by which anyone may be judged.

I don't have time to go in depth into the proper principles for interpreting the Bible, but I'll quickly mention a few key things.

3 Principles of Interpretation:

- *First, we must always interpret a text in light of its context -*
- *Second, the Bible interprets itself, especially, individual authors interpret themselves -* If you let Paul in context interpret Paul on justification by faith and James in context interpret James on justification by works, they do not contradict each other.
- *Third, interpret the Bible based on grammatical, linguistic, and historical considerations -* Words mean something and languages put words together in structured ways.

We must seek to determine what the text meant to the original author and readers in their historical setting before we ask how it applies to us in our culture. So, Peter's point is, we are not free to interpret the Word in any way that we please. Why not?

- (2) **We must interpret the Word correctly because it is not our word, but the inspired Word of God (1:21)** – Notice verse 21, “²¹for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” Peter continues, “for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” The idea is, you are not free to interpret the Bible according to your feelings or to take or leave parts of it as you like, because (“for”) the Bible is the very word from God to us through these inspired men. It carries God’s authority and wisdom for how we should live. It is the word of the Sovereign of the universe, to whom we will give account. So we had better take care to understand it correctly and obey it completely! Verse 21 is one of the key verses explaining the inspiration of Scripture. It shows that Scripture comes to us through human authors, but that they didn’t make it up themselves. Rather, they were moved or carried along by the Holy Spirit. The verb is used of the wind carrying along Paul’s ship in the storm at sea (Acts 27:15, 17). Charles Hodge gives one of the best explanations (*Systematic Theology* [Eerdmans], 1:154). He wrote, “inspiration was an influence of the Holy Spirit on the minds of certain select men, which rendered them the organs of God for the infallible communication of his mind and will. They were in such a sense the organs of God, that what they said God said.”

While certain portions of Scripture were dictated directly by God, in most places He used the personalities and experiences of the authors to shape their language and message, but the final product is, as Hodge puts it, “...what they said God said.” (See 2 Sam. 23:2; Jer. 23:16-22; Ezek. 13:2-3; Acts 28:25; Heb. 3:7; 10:15.) In the Old Testament alone, the writers refer to their writings as the words of God over 3,800 times (*MacArthur Study Bible*, p. 1924).

CONCLUSION

Have you ever watched footage of when they want to take down an old skyscraper? Engineers put dynamite charges at strategic places in the foundation. When they set it off, the building implodes.

It's not surprising that Satan relentlessly tries to blow up the foundation of our faith, which is the Word of God. His very first temptation challenged Eve (Gen. 3:1), "Indeed, has God said ...?" He has attempted to bring down our faith through liberal theologians, who undermine its veracity.

Our higher educational system (Harvard, Yale, and Princeton were founded to train men in the Word) is now dominated by skeptics who sneer at God's Word. Evolution, which (against all reason) is accepted as fact in our public educational system, does away with the need to submit to the Almighty Creator.

Yet, in spite of the attacks, the Word of God endures forever (1 Pet. 1:25). It gives us a solid foundation on which to build our lives and to stake our eternity. Make sure you pay attention to it by spending consistent time reading and studying it. Be careful to interpret it correctly. Walk by the light that it gives you to avoid the pitfalls in this dark world. Then you will rejoice when the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

Application Questions

- 1. Since Christians have so many different interpretations of the Word, how do we determine which are right and which are of primary importance?**
- 2. How would you answer a critic who pointed out supposed "contradictions" in the Word? What should you say?**
- 3. Roman Catholics contend that the Protestant "right of private interpretation of Scripture" has resulted in thousands of denominations, while their view has preserved the unity of the church. How would you answer this charge?**
- 4. How can we know that the Holy Spirit *really* inspired the authors of Scripture and that they weren't just making it up?**