

HOW CAN CHRISTIANS SAY THEIRS IS THE ONLY TRUE RELIGION? (continued)

2 Peter 1:16-21 - "For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. [17] For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," [18] we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. [19] And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, [20] knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. [21] For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Last Sunday we considered the rather surprising approach Peter took in validating the unique power and authority of the gospel. And what we took note of was the fact that Peter *didn't* draw on his own personal inward experience or the meeting of certain inward healings. That was surprising because Peter, of all people, certainly had a great story to tell. Now that we've considered the approach Peter *didn't* take, let's look at what he *does* say:

1) **THE BIRTH OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH WAS NOT IN THE SECOND HAND REPORT OF SOMEONE ELSE. THE APOSTLES WERE EYEWITNESSES OF THE DEITY, MAJESTY AND GLORY OF JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD**

2 Peter 1:16-17 - "For we did not *follow* cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but *we were eyewitnesses of his majesty*. [17] For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased...."

This is always the language of the New Testament. The Christian faith is never presented as being grounded in *ideas*, or *concepts*, or even *a code of morality or ethics*. All of those things have their *place*, but they are the *fruits* - never the *foundation*. That word "*follow*" is so important - "*We did not follow....*" The life of Christ is not the *result* - it doesn't *follow after* - any philosophic system or ethical system. There are *solid events and the faith originates* in those events. And, what is just as important to Peter, the apostles were *eyewitnesses to those events*.

This rings true with what the other apostles said:

1 John 1:1-2 - "That which was from the beginning, *which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands*, concerning the word of life— [2] the life *was made manifest, and we have seen it*, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and *was made manifest to us....*"

Peter and John are saying the same thing - "*We don't come proclaiming our ideas. We're not describing something we found on some parchments in a cave. We're not following some teaching on how to find a richer life. We were with Jesus. We saw Him crucified. We talked to Him after He had risen from the dead! We know what He said about Himself and about who He was and why He came. We are eyewitnesses!*"

And then Peter recalls one particular time, one particular event in the life of Jesus, of which they were eyewitnesses: **2 Peter 1:17-18** - "For *when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory*, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," [18] we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for *we were with him on the holy mountain.*"

Peter specifically mentions the time he (along with James and John) was with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. I'm not sure we give this event the weight of importance that the Scriptures do. *It's covered three times in the gospels. It's also predicted about seven hundred years earlier in the book of Isaiah.*

Look at the account as it's recorded by Luke: **Luke 9:28-31, 35** - "Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. [29] And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. [30] And behold, *two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah*, [31] who appeared in glory and *spoke of his departure*, which he

was ***about to accomplish*** at Jerusalem....35....And ***a voice came out of the cloud***, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; ***listen to him!***"

Apparently, this was a very decisive event in the lives of those three apostles. Peter could have mentioned any of a great number of wonderful events he had witnessed. He could have chosen the Ascension of Jesus. He could have chosen seeing Jesus risen and alive after His crucifixion. He could have talked about any number of miracles He had seen personally. ***Why did he choose this event - the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain?***

Let's try to put this whole first chapter together like this. In the very first verse, Peter feels no shame or hesitation at all to tell the people that their faith must be the faith of the apostles if it is to have any saving value. Any view of Jesus that reached any conclusion short of Him being, ***"...our God and Savior, Jesus Christ"*** (1:1), was to be rejected.

Later on, in **verse 11**, Peter is going to remind them about the importance of making certain of their **"entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."**

Now, people could well ask the question, ***"Peter, what do you know about who Jesus really was. And what gives you the right to talk with such certainty about this kingdom that Jesus has?"***

And that's a fair question. Lots of people have teachings and opinions about God and about different realms and regions and how we can get there. Those claims aren't unique to the Christian faith. Why should we give particular attention to the message of the apostles?

To all those questions Peter has an answer. He says, ***"I was there on the mountain. I saw the splendor and majesty of who Jesus was. I know about the meaning of His death. That conversation with Moses and Elijah wasn't just small talk. They were talking about Jesus' death and all that this would accomplish for mankind. And then, there was something else - something very important. God spoke up there on that mountain! I'm not just giving you my assessment of Jesus Christ and His kingdom. God spoke. I heard the voice myself. I heard the words. God endorsed His Son, Jesus Christ. God gave Him this place of centrality. Father God backed up everything Jesus said. That's how I know this is all true. That's why Jesus is different. That's why your faith must be my faith. God says so! God the Father says, "Put your faith in Jesus. Listen to Him!""***

So our faith rests, not on second hand accounts of religious seekers, but on the eyewitness testimony of God's endorsement and vindication of His Son, Jesus Christ.

"Well, pastor Don, that's all well and good that Peter was an eyewitness to all of these great events. But I wasn't there. I wasn't an eyewitness. How can I be sure that this written record of what Peter says is accurate. How can I be sure that the book I hold in my hand as we live in the year 2019 is a faithful rendition of what Peter actually said and saw so many years ago?"

That's the issue Peter will now address.

2) **THE SCRIPTURES ARE NOT A COLLECTION OF THE MUSINGS AND CONTEMPLATIONS OF RELIGIOUS THINKERS. THE SCRIPTURES ARE THE REVELATION OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD, HIMSELF**

2 Peter 1:19-21 - "And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, [20] knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. [21] For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, ***but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.***"

Let us put several thoughts together quickly under this last point:

- a) Peter says ***"We*** (the church to whom he writes) ***have something more sure, the prophetic word...."*** (19). Obviously, he doesn't mean more sure in the sense that it's any more true than it was before. Rather, Peter means we have the ***advantage of seeing the fulfillment of the other passages of Scripture written long ago.***

Peter mentions the greatest example of this when he talks about the incarnation and coming of Jesus Christ to earth - ***"For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and***

coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (1:16).

The very details of the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, were spelled out hundreds of years before. Where He would be born. What He would do. How He would die. Where He would be buried. His resurrection from the dead. **All of those things were predicted earlier.** But the people who lived back then **didn't see those events take place.** They had the prophetic word only. We have the prophetic word **made more sure** because we've seen its fulfillment.

- b) Then, Peter says the Bible you hold in your hands is **not like any other book in the world.** God was directly involved in the words of the text of Scripture:

2 Peter 1:20-21 - “....knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. [21] For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

The idea here is **God didn't just speak up there on the mountain. The same God still speaks.** Please understand, when we talk about the inspiration of the Scriptures, we don't mean that the Bible is an **inspiring book to read.** The inspiration of the Scriptures has nothing whatsoever to do with the **effect** the Bible has on the reader.

When we talk about the inspiration of the Scriptures we are talking about the **origin - the source of the Scriptures.** We're talking about **how the Scriptures came to be.**

Every other book in the world is the product of human minds and human thoughts. Peter says that the Bible didn't have its origin in the human mind or will at all. It's not a book of Peter's opinion or Paul's opinion or John's ideas about Jesus. These men, says Peter, were only **responding to the Spirit of God** when they wrote. Peter actually says they were **moved - carried - born along** by the Spirit of God (21).

- c) In light of these first two truths, Peter's exhortation is to **pay attention - “take heed” in the KJV** - to the message of the Scriptures. Listen to how beautifully he puts it - **2 Peter 1:19 - “And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts....”**

Peter already said he was going to remind them of things they needed to know, but were in danger of neglecting. Let me close with the single most important truth you will ever hear before you leave this earth. And listen to how a small phrase can sometimes sum up everything we need to know:

Peter says, **“Take heed to the Scriptures.”** Every other spiritual problem stems from this one. There are people here today who have never taken seriously the message of salvation. They have never made Jesus Christ, God the Son, Lord of their lives. But the root problem is **they have never taken heed to what the Bible says about Jesus Christ.** They may **know** about that truth. They may have **heard** about that truth. But they have never **taken heed** to it.

There are people here who find their lives all gummed up by sin and rebellion. And they are stubborn in their resistance to the call of the Spirit to finally repent and forsake their sin. But the root problem is they simply are not **taking heed** to what the Bible says. They may **read** their Bible. They may **know what they should do.** But they aren't **taking heed** to the Scriptures.

There are people here today who are totally immersed in the things of this world. They have little time for church or the things of God. They get excited about success but remain unmoved by spiritual things. That's because they have never **taken heed** to the teachings of the Scriptures about the nearness of eternity and the futility of earthly pursuits.

They aren't **enticed** by the precious and magnificent promises Peter described in **verse 4**, and they aren't frightened by the warnings of the Scriptures that they must give account of their lives before Jesus. But in either case, the problem is the same. **They aren't taking heed to the Scriptures.**

Church, we need to be reminded again that the Word of God contains our only hope. That is why Peter says it's a light that shines in a dark place. He means that if you don't **take heed** to the Scriptures, you will live in total darkness. You can't know the truth. You can't be freed from the darkness in you and around you.

He means our own self-centered inclinations will lead us nowhere when it comes to spiritual truth. He means the counsel of friends and experts will never bring the life of God into your situation. ***You will wander and fall until you take heed to the Scriptures.***

Most of us know another Bible verse that almost sounds like those words from Peter: **Psalm 119:105** - ***“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”***

Almost everyone in this room could quote that verse. But almost nobody could quote the verse that comes right after it. And that’s too bad. Because the verse that comes next ***defines*** how the Bible ***becomes*** that lamp and light in my daily living. Listen to the next verse: **Psalm 119:106** - ***“I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules.”***

Is there a better reminder for us all? We will do well to ***“take heed”*** to the more sure Word given to us. Seek out fresh application points. Probe for inattentiveness. Keep the lights on in your soul.