

Sunday, December 3, 2023 pm

Studies in 2 Peter The Message Verified 2 Peter 1:16-21

Tonight we continue our study through 2 Peter. We have noted that the primary point of this letter is a warning against false teachers. They will be addressed in chapter 2. Leading up to that, Peter seeks to ground them in God's word and their character, for these are the qualities that will help to identify and withstand false teachers and their errors. In our last lesson, we find Peter declaring his belief that his time on earth was approaching its end. With that in mind, he desired to remind them of what they had been taught.

In our lesson this evening, we find Peter defending his authority and his message. This lesson is divided into those 2 parts.

I. Peter's authority as an apostle (1:16-21)

- a. The book of Acts makes several appeals to the authority of the apostles as eyewitnesses.
 - i. Acts 2:32 – Peter and the apostles witnessed His resurrection
 - ii. Acts 5:30-32 - Peter and the others before the council for preaching Jesus. Again, they were eyewitnesses of His resurrection.
 - iii. Acts 10:39-43 – as Peter teaches Cornelius he makes reference to the life of Jesus, noting the Jews killed him and God raised Him the 3rd day. He also appeals to the prophets as witnesses.
- b. Peter begins by noting they did not follow “cunningly devised fables”.
 - i. NASB – “cleverly devised tales”, ESV, LSB – “cleverly devised myths”.
 - ii. The actual word for fables is μῦθος (mythos).
 - iii. Greek and Roman gods had many outlandish myths attached to their origins and purpose. While some of what Jesus did was supernatural, the accounts of His life dwelling among men was placed in a REALISTIC historical setting.
 - iv. It is possible that as Peter writes some were questioning his authority, as they did with Paul and others. Thus his need to validate his “credentials”.
- c. When we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - i. They preached Jesus as one who validated His claims with powerful works, witnessed by many. Romans 1:3-4 notes that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power...; John 20:30-31 declares the signs Jesus performed that give us reason to believe in Him.
 - ii. We also need to consider what Peter is talking here – is he looking back to when Jesus came to this earth, or is he looking forward to His return? Of interest is the word for coming is the word παρουσία (Parousia) and when spoken of Jesus was always in reference to His future return (the word is also used to describe men coming including – Titus (2 Cor. 7:6-7, Stephana (1 Cor. 16:17) and Paul himself (Phil. 2:12, cf. 2 Cor. 10:10). The other 17 times (including 3 spoken by Jesus in Matthew 24:27, 37 & 39) are in reference to Jesus.
 - iii. Peter likely was referring to previous teachings about the Lord coming back. BUT, His credentials for that declaration is found in the fact that Jesus DID come to this earth AND...
- d. Peter was an eyewitness
 - i. They were eyewitnesses of His majesty. Notice that Peter uses the plural here. Peter was not alone. As noted above, the apostles were witnesses to both the life AND resurrection of Jesus.
 - ii. This is declared variously in the NT writings. Acts 10:39-41 notes that they were witnesses who also “ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.” 1 John 1:1 - *That which*

was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—. The declarations are clearly more than just a passing observation.

- iii. In essence, Peter was saying, “I was there and saw these things with my own eyes.”
- e. For He received from the Father... (17-18)
 - i. Peter declares that Jesus was honored and glorified by God the Father when the voice was heard “from the holy mountain”. The voice declared, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”
 - ii. Clearly this is a reference to the transfiguration of Jesus which was recorded in the 3 synoptic gospels (Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-9 & Luke 9:28-36). The occasion occurred, likely, toward the end of Jesus’ 3 years ministry.
 - iii. The occasion was a powerful testimony as Peter, James and John saw Jesus gloriously transformed (his face shone like the sun and clothes became as white as light – Matt. 17:2). They also saw Moses and Elijah (representative of the law and the prophets) speaking with Him. THINK of how powerful that occasion must have been.
 - iv. THEN they heard a voice declaring of Jesus, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” The gospel accounts add, “Hear Him” – a powerful lesson in authority. Why Peter did not include might be because of the point he is making – his authentication as an apostle and eyewitness.
- f. NOTE: In this passage, Peter CLEARLY declares himself the author of this letter, as well as his authority to teach them. In our apologetics studies we have noted that one of the reasons for accepting the books of the NT, including the gospels, is the integrity of the writers. There is nothing recorded in early history that calls into question the integrity of the apostles – they were known to be men of honor who lived their lives believing and teaching about Jesus, both his life and resurrection. The typical responses of skeptics are that 1) they were misguided and deluded in what they believe they saw OR 2) the letters were composed later as legend. There is no evidence to corroborate either of these views. They are simply speculation, typically from those who do not WANT to believe what scripture teaches.
- g. AGAIN, in essence, Peter is saying, “I was there and so were others”. He spoke and wrote with the credentials of an apostle. Consider 1 Corinthians 14:37, *If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.*

II. God’s prophetic word

- a. Peter NOW appeals to God’s word as another source of verification. In particular, he appeals to prophecy. Why is prophecy so powerful? Because only God can with pinpoint accuracy foretell what is going to happen in the future.
 - i. Isaiah 46:9-10, *Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning. And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,’ and Isaiah 41:21-23, “Present your case,” says the Lord. “Bring forth your strong reasons,” says the King of Jacob. “Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; Let them show the former things, what they were, That we may consider them, And know the latter end of them; Or declare to us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, That we may know that you are gods; Yes, do good or do evil, That we may be dismayed and see it together.*
 - ii. These passages are in the midst of long discourse on the foolishness of idolatry. It is also a passage where God through Isaiah powerfully predicts in detail coming events over the next 2 centuries (including the name of Cyrus – Isa. 44:28-45:1).
- b. *So we have the prophetic word confirmed*

- i. Peter is declaring that there were prophecies about Jesus coming to this world and what would happen to Him. There are many, many such passages found all throughout the Old Testament.
 1. Genesis 12:3 – through Abraham’s seed all nations would be blessed
 2. Deuteronomy 18:15 – YHWH would raise up a prophet like Moses (a Lawgiver)
 3. 2 Samuel 7 – God would establish the throne of David – which Jesus is now seated upon (see Acts 2)
 4. Psalm 22 & Isaiah 53 which in spectacular detail describe what Jesus endured on the cross.
 5. Zechariah which provides at least 4 specific details about Jesus coming to this earth – Zechariah 9:9 – Jesus would ride in on a donkey (Matt. 21:5-7); Zech. 11:12-13 – 30 pieces of silver to betray Him (Matt. 27:3-10); Zech. 12:10 – they will look on Me whom they have pierced (John 19:37); Zech. 13:7 – smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered (Matt. 26:31). Zechariah writes around 520 BC according to the book of Ezra to resume the building of the temple. Such prophecies show the hand of God at work in Jesus coming to this earth.
- ii. Truly, because of prophecy we KNOW that Jesus was the promised Messiah.
- c. *Which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place.*
 - i. God’s word is something we need to consider, both old and new testaments. 2 Timothy 3:16-17, etc.
 - ii. But consider Romans 15:4 in relation to the Old Testament. We are foolish if we deem the Old Testament as unimportant in our studies of the life of Jesus. It is through the Old Testament and its prophecies that we have confidence in Jesus.
 - iii. Throughout Acts, the apostles regularly appealed to OT prophecy concerning Jesus and His kingdom –
 1. Acts 2:25-31 – quotes David in Psalm 16:8-11, a passage Peter applies to the resurrection of Jesus and thus explains it
 2. Acts 3:22-23 – Peter made reference to Deuteronomy 18:15 – God would raise up a prophet like Moses.
 3. Acts 13:32-33 where Paul quoted from Psalm 2:7 – “You are My Son, today I have begotten You.”
 4. Acts 17:2-3 – Paul would go to the synagogues and reason from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.
 - iv. Also, throughout 1 Peter, he made continued references to Old Testament passages – 1 Peter 1:24-25 (Isa. 40:6-8), 2:4-10 (Isa. 28:16, Psa. 118:22, Isa. 8:14), 2:22 (Isa. 53:9), 3:10-12 (Psa. 34:12-16), 3:20 (Genesis 6-7), 4:18 (Prov. 11:31), & 5:5 (Prov. 3:34)
 - v. Finally, consider Luke 24:44, one of my favorites after Jesus arose where Jesus appealed to the entirety of our Old Testaments and everything therein that was fulfilled in Him.
- d. *Until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts*
 - i. This is a challenging statement with many interpretations. Some have interpreted it as a reference to the Lord’s return in the future – implying we continue to heed His word as long as this world endures.
 - ii. HOWEVER, a better interpretation is an encouragement to keep studying until you are fully convicted as to His truth. 2 Timothy 2:15, Ephesians 4:11-14ff. Recall that Peter is warning them against false teachers (coming up next).
 - iii. Notice the “morning star”, which most see as a reference to Jesus (cf. Malachi 4:2 – He is “the Sun of Righteousness” & Revelation 22:16 – “I am the Root and Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”), is to rise in your hearts. Jesus needs to dwell within our hearts – Ephesians 3:17.

- e. *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation...*
 - i. This expression has so much meaning, yet it needs little explanation. The prophets when they wrote were not guessing about God.
 - ii. In much of mythology and polytheistic religions, stories and legends about the gods developed over time. Often men would make gods into their own image (i.e., what they wanted him to be) and clearly much of it was just fantasizing. They were NOT written by eyewitnesses! See Romans 1:20-23 as an example of this.
 - iii. BUT, as we have seen even in this lesson, OT prophecy was CLEARLY the hand of God at work.
- f. *For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*
 - i. In this Peter declares that what men wrote was what God intended for them to write.
 - ii. Acts 1:16, as they chose a replacement for Judas, Peter arose and declared, *“Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus;”*
 - iii. Acts 28:25, Paul in Rome, his teaching rejected by some noted, *“The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers...”*
 - iv. Finally, simply consider the apostles themselves. Jesus promised them that the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance what He had taught and guide them into all truth (John 14:25-26, 16:12-15, etc. Galatians 1:11-12 – Paul’s message came *“through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*

When we open our Bible to read it, study it and teach it to others, we can do so with the confidence that it IS the word of God. It was penned by men of high integrity and with the undeniable finger of God at work. That is what Peter declared in this text and that is how we ought to view God’s word. And when we do, we will learn what God wants us to do, how to live AND how to identify the false teacher. What is your confidence in His word? Think about it!