

BACK TO THE BIBLE SERIES: 2 Peter: Hope Filled Living in a Culture of Despair Wk 2

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What is your source of truth? Well, that's what we want to talk about. If you have a Bible turn with us to Second Peter Chapter One. We're going to pick it up in Verse 16.

“For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased—and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.” (Vs. 16-18, NASB)

So, Peter is saying that his source of truth comes from Jesus Himself. He is one of the core disciples that got the message directly from Jesus Himself. Now little by little, this band of apostles, they are dying off. This group that could say, “I got it directly from Jesus Himself”, are becoming fewer and fewer, but Peter is identifying Jesus as his source of truth.

Specifically, what he's referring to here is what we call the Transfiguration. It's recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke. It was a moment when Jesus invited only three of the apostles, Peter, James and John, to come with Him up on an unknown mountain. And there Jesus began to transfigure, meaning He began to change into his glorified state. Literally, Peter, James, and John got to see Jesus as He will be glorified in His return, as a reminder of the promise that Jesus is coming back.

It does seem one of the major themes of the false teachers is this idea, that Jesus is coming back, is just a myth, that it's not really true. So, Peter says he didn't make up some fairy tale. It's not a myth. All of the Greek religions were full of fables and myths. That's kind of what dominated the Greek religions. And Peter's using a very strategic word to say, this isn't some sort of a fable or myth. It's not something that I just made up. All of the world religions today would have beliefs. But the question is where do those beliefs come from? They could be just made up. They could just be fantasies. They could just be myths. Peter is saying, I got it directly from Jesus Himself. As a matter of fact, I was both an eyewitness and an ear-witness. I actually heard God say, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.” As a matter of fact, when he says, “We ourselves heard this”, it's what we call the emphatic in Greek. It's kind of underscoring, I heard it with my own ears. I saw it with my own eyes. That is the origin of this truth that he teaches.

All the apostles except John, other than Judas, were executed for the belief in a resurrected Christ. Not a single one of them backed off, not a single one of them recanted. Every single one of them died, filled with hope, in their belief in a resurrected and returning Christ. Peter is about to die for the sake of the Gospel. So, do you think in this moment he's just making it up, or wouldn't there be credibility in his words? So, you tell me, what is the chance that Peter's telling the truth, versus what is the possibility he's lying and he's willing to die for a lie? That's the point of that paragraph. That's the origin of the truth. Where are the false teachers getting their message? Where's it coming from and what is the source of their truth? But it's more than that. Verse 19:

So we have the prophetic word made more sure (it means more reliable), to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day (meaning the Day of the Lord, the return of Christ) dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. (which is a reference to the Spirit of Christ reaching its fullness in their salvation, what he described in verse 11.)

What he just said is it's even more than Peter as an eyewitness. There is this whole prophetic witness of the Old Testament that predicted the coming of the Messiah. That prediction and the fulfillment is like a light and he says, "You'll do well to follow the light through life all the way to the return of Christ and the ultimate fulfillment of our salvation and entrance into the new Heaven and the new Earth," which we will talk about in Chapter 3. So, what is he talking about? He's talking about the whole of the Old Testament, and specifically the voice of the prophets.

So, what do we know? We know with absolute certainty that the books of the Old Testament were gathered and collected and completed well before the First Century. By the First Century there was a clear sense of the Old Testament. The books were gathered, collected, known and understood. Some of the rabbis actually had the entirety of the Old Testament memorized. So, we know as a historical fact that these were written hundreds of years before the fulfillment of Christ. We also know with historical reliability that Jesus fulfilled each of these prophecies perfectly. There's some disagreement on the number but roughly seventy prophecies, specifically referring to the Messiah, Jesus perfectly fulfilled. Now many of these prophecies were things beyond Jesus' control—things like His family lineage, born of a virgin, being from Nazareth, born in Bethlehem, the Magi, the star, what King Herod did, how He would die, how He would be betrayed, what would be paid for that betrayal, where He would be buried. None of these things could He control, yet all of them were perfectly fulfilled in Jesus.

Mathematician Peter Stoner years ago decided to try to figure out the probability that this just happened by chance. Peter Stoner was a mathematics professor. His specialty was the Law of Probability, so he set out to apply his science to the prophecies of the Messiah. He picked eight of the prophecies which he lists, and did the study to try and figure out: what's the probability that just these eight could have happened by chance? His conclusion: the odds are 1 to 10 to the 17th power. For those of you that are math challenged like myself, it's 10 with 17 zeros after it! In order to illustrate the number, he said if you took 10 to the 17th power number of silver dollars and you dropped them in the state of Texas, it would go north to south, east to west, border to border, 2 feet thick, across the entire state. One of those coins is marked with an "X". Then you get in a helicopter, fly over the state of Texas, are blindfolded and you drop out of the helicopter at the place of your choice. You reach into the pile and you pull out the one coin with the "X". That's the odds of 1 to 10 to the 17th power. That's just eight of the prophecies. He decided then to calculate 48 of the prophecies. His conclusion: the odds are 1 to 10 to the 157th power. Write that down when you go home—10, and then 157 zeros. The ability to illustrate that number is so ginormous that it goes beyond comprehension. The odds are virtually impossible. How much faith would it take to believe that all that happened perfectly by chance? Way more than I've got! The reality is, it does give evidence that this is not merely a human book, but rather a divinely-inspired prophetic work, which is exactly where Peter goes. Verse 20:

But know this first of all (and that means of most importance), that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,

What he means by that is you can't just make the Bible say whatever you want it to say. Sometimes you hear people say, "You know, what does the Bible mean to you?" It's a very bad question. The question is not what does the Bible mean to you; the question is what does the Bible mean? What is the writer's intent? God had something specific He wanted to say and it's our job to figure that out. Now this is really important in a post-modern culture, because part of the fabric of post modernism is the actual meaning is in the interpreter. Regardless of what the writer intended, I'm free to twist it into whatever I want it to mean. It's the same as when you look at a piece of artwork. It doesn't matter what the painter intended; it's up to me to interpret the meaning of the painting. So what Peter is saying is, "That's not true!" There is an intent by the writer and that's the meaning of the text.

Verse 21:

...for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved (that word moved is a word used to describe the wind blowing a sailboat across the sea) by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

This is one of the critical texts in the New Testament that reminds us that the Bible is not a collection of someone's opinions but actually these men were moved—blown by the very breath of God—to write exactly what God wanted written. One of the beauties of the Bible is it's written by people that have different backgrounds, educations, styles, personalities, and all of that is reflected in the writings. But within that, the Spirit of God breathes through them in order that they write exactly what God intended, in order to claim that the Scripture is the authoritative, inspired, reliable Word of God.

Several years ago, I was having a conversation with a friend of mine who I would describe as kind of a baby Christian, and in the midst of the conversation—we were talking about something in the New Testament—he said, "Well that's just Paul's opinion." And I said, "I'm sorry, what?" It just kind of took me back for a minute. He said, "Well that's just Paul's opinion; I don't have to agree with that," and I realized he failed to understand one of the most basic foundational beliefs of our Christian faith. The Bible is not a collection of man's opinions; the Bible itself doesn't claim that. It claims to be the Word of God. The prophets claim to be declaring the Word of God. Jesus claimed that the Scriptures are the Word of God. The New Testament writers claimed to be presenting the Word of God. The Scriptures are the very God-breathed, miraculous Word of God. There's no other way to explain things like fulfilled prophecy. The amazing reliability of archeology and history and even science again and again demonstrate the Scriptures to be true.

So, the fact of the matter is you're free to believe whatever you want to believe. As a person made in the image of God, God has given you that freedom; He's given you that capacity. But I would ask you to consider: what is the source of what you believe? Most people will go through life, and the pathway of life will be directed by nothing more than their opinion, nothing more than their opinion or influence by

the opinion of someone else. Even their eternal destiny will be based on nothing more than merely their opinion. I don't know about you; I find that to be utterly frightening—utterly frightening that I would not only define the pathway of my life, but my eternal destiny, on nothing more reliable than that! It's helpful to remind ourselves that just because someone believes something doesn't make it true...just because someone sincerely believes something, doesn't make it truer. At the end of the day, the truth wins—what Francis Shaeffer used to call true truth. Dallas Willard used to say, "Reality is what you run into when you're wrong." You can believe whatever you want. That doesn't make it true, and are you really willing to risk your eternal destiny on nothing more than your opinion? I can only speak for myself, but I will say, "For me, I am basing my life and my eternal soul into that which I believe to be the authoritative, reliable, inspired Word of God!"

Our Father, we celebrate that we have not been left in the darkness to just grope around trying to figure out what's true and what's not true. Lord, every day we are bombarded by lies. Lord, help us to diligently seek, understand, and believe the truth—the truth that You have given us in Your authoritative, reliable, inspired Word. Lord, we thank You for that. In Jesus' name, Amen.

"Science Speaks" by Peter Stoner. Moody Press, Chicago, 1963

Arnie: Bryan, when it comes to believing in Jesus, proof isn't always the issue, is it?

Bryan: No, it's not. In many ways people see what they want to see, and I think it's helpful to realize that it may be pride, but sometimes it's hurt. Sometimes it's fear. People have lots of reasons for what they believe, but maybe a lot of it roots down to they just want to be their own God. And in order to protect that, they see what they want to see. And no amount of proof is going to convince them. But I think we all understand the evidence is there if people genuinely want to investigate it.

Bryan: So, Arnie, you grew up in a Christian home. You must have heard truth from a young age, yet you rejected it for many years. What was it that ultimately told you that Jesus was the Way, the Truth and the Life?

Arnie: You know, there's nothing like a 75-foot wave on your boat, on the way to Alaska, that is just about to smack right into you. And I realized then that all of this humanistic psychology and positive thinking and all these positive affirmations meant nothing. And I really instantly got the truth of Jesus Christ, just looking at that wave that was about to crash on our boat.

Bryan: Yeah, that's powerful. I think for a lot of people, I think the strategy is like, stay in the relationship with your neighbor, your coworker, whoever it is, because life eventually is going to hit them hard, and they may rethink in that moment what they believe.

Arnie: Very true. We see people all the time who - it's not about truth, it's about accepting Jesus. I think there's a difference in an intellectual mindset versus a heart and soul mindset and you just have to stick with people. You're right.

Cara: So Second Peter, First [Chapter], verse 19 says, "So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and

the morning star arises in your heart". Bryan, that's the kind of language in the Bible that I think can sometimes confuse people. Can you just remind us again what that means?

Bryan: What, that's not perfectly clear? So, it is poetic language. The prophetic word is talking about the Old Testament prophecies regarding Christ, made surer because He's the fulfillment. So not just Peter's an eyewitness, but all the fulfillments of the prophecies. So, pay attention, basically because it's true. And then the whole idea of a lamp shining in a dark place is the light that brings until Jesus returns, the day dawns, and the morning star arises your heart, which is the Holy Spirit basically bringing the fulfillment to your salvation. So, it is kind of hard to understand. It's Old Testament poetic language.

Cara: Well you bring up the Old Testament. I think some dismiss the Old Testament as just kind of this archaic history, but, and actually, I kind of viewed it that. I focused a lot on the New Testament, but that's kind of off track when you consider that the whole Old Testament points to Christ over and over again. You see the prophecies and then the New Testament comes along as a fulfillment. You also see Jesus pointing back to the Old Testament, so it's all one cohesive account of truth.

Bryan: Yeah. So, it's one unfolding story full of pictures, images, prophecies, shadows, ultimately fulfilled in Christ. But it can get confusing. And I think people make a lot of theological errors when they're trying to figure out how does the Old Testament apply to life today? So, it does take some study and it certainly does get confusing.

Cara: I just did a Bible study that showed how Christ met all these prophecies in that. And it is just truly amazing. You know, I started with the Resurrection, but then to back up and go back into the Old Testament. It's just truly amazing.

Bryan: It is. And most of those were things he couldn't control. [Right]. Things like where he was born and what Pilate did and what Herod did.

Arnie: So, Bryan, to be able to spot a lie, we really need to be very familiar with the truth.

Bryan: Yeah. So, we've talked about this several times, but you can't say it enough. It's the only way. There are no shortcuts. You have to know the truth and it's the truth that's going to set you free.

Arnie: And that's what we try to do at goTandem, is basically get the truth in front of you on a daily basis. Because sometimes Satan can pose as an angel of light. And I've always said, if you've got Scripture in front of you, it keeps you focused.

Cara: Well, that's why I like goTandem, is because you can be secure in knowing that you're going to get solid truth from goTandem.

Arnie: Call it Holy Spirit opportunities. Visit at goTandem.com.