

**New Series: Last Days – 2 Peter  
“The Bible Stands”  
2 Peter 1:19 – 21**

**Big Idea – We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God and a priority for our Christian lives.**

In vss. 16-18 Peter reminded his readers of the Transfiguration, and also affirmed several important doctrines of the Christian faith.

He affirmed that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God. The test of any religion is, "What do you say about Jesus Christ?" If a religious teacher denies the deity of Christ, then he is a false teacher (1 John 2:18-29; 4:1-6).

But the person of Jesus Christ is only one test; we also should ask,

"And what is the work of Jesus Christ? Why did He come and what did He do?" Again, the Transfiguration gives us the answer; for Moses and Elijah "appeared in glory, and spoke of His decease [exodus] which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). His death was not simply an example, as some liberal theologians want us to believe; it was an exodus, an accomplishment. He accomplished something on the cross—the redemption of lost sinners!

The Transfiguration was also affirmation of the truth of the Scriptures. Moses represented the Law; Elijah represented the Prophets; both pointed to Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-3). He fulfilled the Law and the Prophets (Luke 24:27). We believe the Bible because Jesus believed the Bible and said it was the Word of God. Those who question the truth and authority of the Scriptures are not arguing with Moses, Elijah, or Peter, but with the Lord Jesus Christ.

This event also affirmed the reality of God's kingdom. We who have a completed Bible can look back and understand the progressive lessons that Jesus gave His disciples about the Cross and the kingdom, but at that time those twelve men were very confused. They did not understand the relationship between His suffering and His glory (Peter's first epistle discusses this theme) and the church and the kingdom.

At the Transfiguration, our Lord made it clear to His followers that His suffering would lead to glory and that the cross would ultimately result in the crown.

There was also a very practical lesson that Peter, James, and John needed to learn, because each of these would also suffer. James was the first of the apostles to die (Acts 12:1-2). John lived a long life but it led to exile and suffering (Rev. 1:9). Peter suffered for the Lord during his ministry, and then laid down his life just as the Lord had prophesied.

On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John learned that suffering and glory go together, and that the Father's special love and approval are given to those who are willing to suffer for the sake of the Lord. **1 Peter 4:12-19; 5:6-10**

Remember Peter's statement of "like precious faith." This means that our faith gives us "an equal standing" with the Apostles! They did not travel first-class and leave us to travel second-class! "Like precious faith with us" is what he wrote.

We have learned two important truths as we have seen these contrasts: men die, but the Word lives, and experiences fade, but the Word remains.

### **3. As the world darkens God's Word shines brightly – vss. 19 – 21**

We should not be surprised that our world is engulfed in spiritual darkness. In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord warned that there would be counterfeiters who would invade the church with their false doctrines (Matt 7:13-29).

Paul gave a similar warning to the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:28-35), and he gave further warnings when he wrote his epistles (Rom. 16:17-20; 2 Cor. 11:1-15; Gal. 1:1-9; Phil. 3:17-21; Col. 2; 1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 3-4).

Even John, the great "apostle of love," warned about antichristian teachers who would seek to destroy the church (1 John 2:18-29; 4:1-6).

In other words, the Apostles did not expect the world to get better and better either morally or spiritually. They all warned the church that false teachers would invade the local churches, introduce false doctrines, and lead many people astray. The world would get darker and darker; but as it did, the Word of God would shine brighter and brighter.

Peter made three affirmations about this Word.

### **1. It is the sure Word (v. 19a).**

Peter was not suggesting that the Bible is more certain than the experience he had on the Mount of Transfiguration. His experience was real and true, and the record in the Bible is dependable. As we have seen, the Transfiguration was a demonstration of the promise given in the prophetic Word; and this promise now has added certainty because of what Peter experienced. The Transfiguration experience corroborated the prophetic promises. The apostates would attempt to discredit the promise of His coming (2 Peter 3:3ff), but the Scriptures were sure. For, after all, the promise of the kingdom was reaffirmed by Moses, Elijah, the Son of God, and the Father! And the Holy Spirit wrote the record for the church to read!

"The testimony of the Lord is sure" (Ps. 19:7). "Thy testimonies are very sure" (Ps. 93:5). "All His commandments are sure" (Ps. 111:7). "Therefore I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (Ps. 119:128).

It is interesting to put together 2 Peter 1:16 and 19: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables.... We have also a more sure word of prophecy."

### **2. It is the shining Word (v. 19b).**

Peter called the world "a dark place," and the word he used means "murky." It is the picture of a dank cellar or a dismal swamp. Human history began in a lovely Garden, but that Garden today is a murky swamp. What you see when you look at this world system is an indication of the spiritual condition of your heart. We still see beauty in God's creation, but we see no beauty in what mankind is doing with God's creation. Peter did not see this world as a Garden of Eden, nor should we.

God is light and His Word is light. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105). When Jesus Christ began His ministry, "the people which sat in darkness saw great light" (Matt. 4:16). His coming into this world was the dawning of a new day (Luke 1:78). We Christians are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14-16), and it is our privilege and responsibility to hold forth the Word of life—God's light—so that men might see the way and be saved (Phil. 2:14-16).

As believers, we must heed this Word and govern our lives by what it says. For unbelievers, things will get darker and darker, until they end up in eternal darkness; but God's people are looking for the return of Jesus Christ and the dawning of the new day of glory. The false teachers scoffed at the idea of Christ's return and the dawning of a

new day, but Peter affirmed the truth of the sure Word of God. "But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (2 Peter 3:10).

Before the day dawns, the "day star" (or morning star) shines brightly as the herald of the dawn. To the church, Jesus Christ is "the Bright and Morning Star" (Rev. 22:16). The promise of His coming shines brightly, no matter how dark the day may be (see Num. 24:17). He is also the "Sun of Righteousness," who will bring healing to believers but judgment to unbelievers (Mal. 4:1-2). How thankful we ought to be for God's sure and shining Word, and how we ought to heed it in these dark days!

### **3. It is the Spirit-given Word (vv. 20-21).**

2 important Scriptures about the divine inspiration of the Word of God.

The other is 2 Timothy 3:14-17. Peter affirmed that the Scriptures were not written by men who used their own ideas and words, but by men of God who were "moved by the Holy Spirit." The word translated moved means "to be carried along, as a ship is carried by the wind." The Scriptures are "God-breathed"; they are not the inventions of men.

Again, Peter was refuting the doctrines of the apostates. They taught with "feigned words" (2 Peter 2:3) and twisted the Scriptures to make them mean something else (2 Peter 3:16). They denied the promise of Christ's coming (2 Peter 3:3-4), and so denied the very prophetic Scriptures.

Since the Spirit gave the Word, only the Spirit can teach the Word and interpret it accurately (see 1 Cor. 2:14-15). Of course, every false teacher claims that he is "led by the Spirit," but his handling of the Word of God soon exposes him. Since the Bible did not come by the will of man, it cannot be understood by the will of man. Even religious Nicodemus, a leading teacher among the Jews, was ignorant of the most essential doctrines of the Word of God (John 3:10-12).

In 2 Peter 1:20, Peter was not prohibiting the private study of the Bible. Some religious groups have taught that only the "spiritual leaders" may interpret Scripture, and they have used this verse as their defense. But Peter was not writing primarily about the interpretation of Scripture, but the origin of Scripture: it came by the Holy Spirit through holy men of God. And since it came by the Spirit, it must be taught by the Spirit.

The word translated "private" simply means "one's own" or "its own." The suggestion is, since all Scripture is inspired by the Spirit it must all "hang together" and no one Scripture should be divorced from the others. You can use the Bible to prove almost anything if you isolate verses from their proper context, which is exactly the approach the false teachers use.

Peter said that the witness of the Apostles confirmed the witness of the prophetic Word; there is one message with no contradiction. Therefore, the only way these false teachers can "prove" their heretical doctrines is by misusing the Word of God.

A text without a context is a pretext.

The Word of God was written to common people, not to theological professors. The writers assumed that common people could read it, understand it, and apply it, led by the same Holy Spirit who inspired it. The humble individual believer can learn about God as he reads and meditates on the Word of God; he does not need the "experts" to show him truth.

However, this does not deny the ministry of teachers in the church (Eph. 4:11), special people who have a gift for explaining and applying the Scriptures. Nor does it deny the "collective wisdom" of the church as, over the ages, these doctrines have been defined and refined. Teachers and creeds have their place, but they must not usurp the authority of the Word over the conscience of the individual believer.

Until the day dawns, we must be sure that the love for His coming is like a shining star in our hearts (2 Peter 1:19). Unless we love His appearing, we will not look for His appearing; and it is the Word that keeps that expectation bright.

Men die, but the Word lives.

Experiences fade, but the Word remains.

The world grows darker, but the prophetic light shines brighter.

The believer who builds his life on the Word of God and who looks for the coming of the Savior is not likely to be led astray by false teachers. He will be taught by the Spirit and grounded on the sure Word of God.

Peter's message is, "Wake up—and remember!" A sleeping church is the devil's playground. It is while men slept that the enemy came in and sowed the tares (Matt. 13:24ff).