

**New Series: Last Days – 2 Peter
“God’s Word Stands Forever
2 Peter 1:12 – 21**

Big Idea – Peter emphasizes the paramount importance of the Bible, the Word of God.

1. People die but the Bible lives on – vss. 12 – 15

1 Corinthians 3:11 says that Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church.
Ephesians 2:20 says that the apostles and prophets laid the foundation of the church

Peter talks next about why he had to remind them of “these things”
Jesus had told Peter how and when he would die:

18 “But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don’t want to go.”

19 Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. (John 21:18, 19)

“not be negligent” – Peter wanted to fulfill the mission Jesus had given him in Luke 22:32 – “when you return you will strengthen the brothers”

“meet/fitting” – the right thing to do

“endeavor” – hasten to do something, get with it, step on it!

What was it that Peter was so adamant about getting done? Helping them in their “remembrance” – not to forget!! What?

“these things” – even though they knew them, and were grounded in them, this was no guarantee they would not forget.

Paul said the same thing about repeating truth - Philippians 3:1 “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you *is* not tedious, but for you *it is* safe.”

Before he died he wanted to write these two letters to the church so they would have a reminder after he was gone. He knew that men die, but the Word of God lives on.

May also have been alluding to Mark's Gospel – many Bible scholars believe that the Holy Spirit used Peter to give Mark a lot of the data about Jesus Christ that he wrote in the Gospel bearing his name. In 1 Peter 5:13 he called him "Mark, my son" A church father named Papias said that "Mark was Peter's disciple and interpreter."

Warren Wiersbe said, "The church of Jesus Christ is always one generation away from extinction. If there were no dependable written revelation, we would have to depend on word-of-mouth tradition." So we don't depend upon traditions handed down from generation to generation.

Fortunately, we can depend on the written Word of God. "It is written" and it stands written forever. We can be saved through this living Word

1 Peter 1:23 "you were born again...through the Word of God which lives forever."

nurtured by it, 1 Peter 2:2 "as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby"

guided and protected as we trust and obey it.

2. Experiences always fade but the Bible remains – vss. 16 – 18

2 Peter 1:16 "For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes

17 when he received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to him, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."

18 We heard that voice from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.

Here the emphasis is on the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ recorded by Matthew, Mark & Luke. Peter says "we" because it was him and James and John who were there with Jesus. These three men had to keep quiet about what they had seen until Jesus was raised from the dead.

What's the significance of the Transfiguration?

1. It confirmed Peter's testimony about Jesus Christ, Matt. 16:16, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

Peter saw the Son in His glory, and he heard the Father speak from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (2 Peter 1:17).

2. It was the Father's way of strengthening His Son for the awful experience of being the sacrifice for the sins of the world. Moses and Elijah represented the Law and the Prophets who foretold His Sacrifice and now He would fulfill these prophecies!

3. Also, Jesus had promised His disciples that before they died some of them would see the kingdom of God in power!

It helps us understand why Peter included this in his letter when you realize that false apostate teachers were denying the promise of Christ's coming, saying it was never going to happen. In the place of God's promises, these counterfeits put "cunningly devised fables" (2 Peter 1:16) that robbed the believers of their blessed hope.

The word fables means "myths," manufactured stories that have no basis in fact. The Greek and Roman world abounded in stories about the gods, that tried to explain the world and its origin. No matter how interesting these myths might be, the Christian is not to heed them (1 Tim. 1:4) but refuse them (1 Tim. 4:7).

Paul warned Timothy that the time would come in the church when professed Christians would not want to hear true doctrine but would "turn away their ears from the truth, and... be turned unto fables [myths]" (2 Tim. 4:4).

Paul also warned Titus about "Jewish fables [myths]" (Titus 1:14), so even some of the Jews had abandoned their sacred Scriptures and accepted man-made substitutes.

Peter wrote a summary of what he saw and heard on the Mount of Transfiguration. He saw Jesus Christ robed in majestic glory, and therefore witnessed a demonstration of the "power and coming" of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ came to earth at Bethlehem, He did not display His glory openly. His face did not shine, He didn't have a halo over His head. "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isa. 53:2).

Peter not only saw Christ's glory, but he heard the Father's voice "from the magnificent glory." Witnesses are people who tell accurately what they have seen and heard (Acts 4:20), and Peter was a faithful witness. Is Jesus Christ of Nazareth the Son of God? Yes, He is! How do we know? The Father said so!

We were not eyewitnesses of the Transfiguration. Peter was there, and he faithfully recorded his experience for us in the letter that he wrote. Experiences fade, but the Word of God remains! Experiences are subjective, but the Word of God is objective. Experiences may be interpreted in different ways by different participants, but the Word of God gives one clear message. What we remember about our experiences can be unconsciously distorted, but the Word of God remains the same and abides forever.

As we study 2 Peter 2, we will discover that apostate teachers try to turn people away from the Word of God and into "deeper experiences" that are contrary to the Word. These false teachers use "feigned words" instead of God's inspired Word (2 Peter 2:3), and they teach "damnable heresies" (2 Peter 2:1). In other words, this is really a matter of life and death! If a person believes the truth, he will live; if he believes lies, he will die. It is the difference between salvation and condemnation.

By reminding his readers of the Transfiguration, Peter 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 must also 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. We need this same lesson today.

Peter could not share his experience with us, but he could share the record of that experience so that we could have it permanently in the Word of God. It is not necessary for us to try to duplicate these experiences; in fact, such attempts would be dangerous, for the devil could very easily give us a counterfeit experience that could lead us astray.

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 counterfeits 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!

It is the Spirit-given Word (vv. 20-21). This is one of two important Scriptures affirming 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 thus 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 stated 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. Isolated texts, apart from contexts, become pretexts.

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 Saviour 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).