



## This is Not a Fairy Tale

*Series: A Divine Antidote to Heresy – Sermons in 2 Peter*

2 Peter 1:16-21

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**Introduction:** Thus far, in our study of 2 Peter, the apostle's main thrust has been to spur us on to spiritual growth and the ever-growing development of the character and virtue of Jesus Christ because we have been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, which has been poured out, the guiltless for the guilty, the sinless for the sinner, to make us the children of God. His strategy has been, first of all, to shore up and to strengthen the church, to give support and encouragement to sheep to which he is undershepherd. Peter has been concerned in this letter to protect the church, to encourage our growth in grace so as to protect young believers and even more mature believers from spiritual disaster and shipwreck.

And now, having strengthened and undergirded the church in the truth of the gospel, now he seeks to protect them by taking the battle to the false teachers and false prophets who were seeking to lead the church astray. One of the false teachers' resounding themes, in fact the reason that they felt free to play fast and loose with God's truth, was that, from their perspective, the return of Jesus Christ to judge the living and the dead was a myth, a fairy-tale and a fable. There was no need to be careful in the way that one lived, no need to take the claims of the gospel and the assertions of the apostle's and of Peter's preaching so seriously because the return of Christ, when He will reward the faithful and judge the unrepentant without mercy is all a falsehood. Peter and the apostles were making this up to keep them in line. The false teachers denied the return of Christ. Peter makes that clear when he says in chapter 3 (**2Pe 3:3-4**) The false teachers sought to minimize and undermine the return of Christ so they could maximize their sinful behavior. With hearts hardened and minds clouded by greed and by lustful passions, they could not accept the truth of Christ's return.

This rejection of Christ's return, this denial of Christ's coming, stabs at the very heart God's eternal plan to give to Christ **authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.** (**Joh 5:27-29**) The false teachers wanted to reject Jesus

Christ as Lord over the future especially because they did not want to live **lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!** **(2Pe 3:11-12)** If there is no return of Christ, there will be no judgment by Christ and if there is no judgment coming in the future, we can live however want to live. It's deceit that leads to death. So the attack of the false teachers and false prophets was to deny and discredit the preaching of Peter and in particular the return of Christ. Peter means for us to understand, first:

**1) The truth of the apostles' teaching, and of Peter's teaching in particular, is grounded in the apostles own eyewitness testimony to the majesty of Christ. (v. 16-18)** The false teachers were doing all that they could to discredit and call into question Peter's preaching and teaching. In response, Peter says clearly, **"we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"**. In other words, Peter is saying, "We were not deceived by anyone and were not making this message up when we told you about the power of Christ proclaimed to you His second coming." Peter is arguing that when he preached to them, as he had just done, of the present power of the Lord Jesus Christ to call and save and equip Christians for lives that adorn the gospel, for lives that reflect His excellence and glory, and of the glorious return of Christ and the magnificent future which awaits the faithful Christian, he is not guilty of exaggeration or speculation, assumption, hearsay or rumor, he is speaking the truth. The accusation that the apostles followed "cleverly devised myths" when they taught and preached of Christ's return was laughable, especially considering the fact that it was the false teachers themselves who specialized in destructive heresies, false words and loud boasts of folly.

No, Peter is saying, the story of Christ's return, is not a myth like the story of Hercules. It is not a fairy tale like Beauty and the Beast. It is not one of Aesop's Fables or the product of scheming and plotting men who manufactured the whole thing as a means of controlling and manipulating the hearers. The return of Christ in power and in glory is a reality with which every human soul must reckon and the only way to rightly and profitably reckon with the return of Christ is be found safe in His saving work on the cross, holding to His promises, growing in grace, making your calling and election sure, rooted in the ancient truths of the gospel.

Peter is telling us that the return of Christ is no fairy-tale and the reason he can say this is that is: **we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.** Peter's confidence in Christ's future coming in power and in glory to judge the living and the dead is based not on a myth or some cleverly devised story, but on his eyewitness experience of Christ's majesty. Specifically, Peter is talking about Christ's transfiguration. Now why would Peter talk about the transfiguration in light of Christ's second coming? Look at it with me in Mark 9 and I'll show you. Back up to Mark 8 for a second and let me show you something. Jesus is foretelling His death and resurrection and then talking about the right response of faith to what He is saying. He finishes His call to deny self, take up the cross and follow Him with these words: **(Mar 8: 38)** He is telling of his coming again in power and in glory and then he says this: **(Mar 9:1)** The fulfillment of this promise is found in what is recorded for us next **(Mar 9:2-8).**

Six days after He had spoken of His future coming "in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" and making the promise that some were standing there who would see the kingdom of God after it had come in power, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up onto a mountain and was transfigured before them, Matthew says that His face shone like the sun, His clothes glowing, Christ was radiantly displaying His intrinsic glory as the Son of God. For a brief moment the veil of His humanity was lifted and His true essence was allowed to shine through. The glory which was always in the depths of His being rose to the surface. It was a glance back and a look forward into His future glory. But I want you to notice the facet of the transfiguration that Peter hones in on. It is the testimony of God. Peter writes: **(2Pe 1:17-18)** The apostles had beheld the glorious transfiguration of Christ, but they did not really understand what they had seen. They needed God to speak. And He did. From His Shekinah glory, from the cloud of glory, they heard the words of the Father, identifying Jesus, God's Son, as the object of His love and His appointed Messiah: **"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."** Those words from God gave explanation to what Peter and James and John were seeing. Though Christ had spoken to them that He would suffer and die in Jerusalem, the words of God spoken as His glory was revealed, spoke to them of the reign which would follow His death and resurrection. This **beloved Son of God** is the Son written of in Psalm 2, the Messianic Psalm describing the coming reign in glory of the Messiah of Israel: **(Psa 2:6-12)** God's words remind them of a glory and power yet to be revealed, a reign yet to come.

This One with whom the Father was well-pleased is the One written of in Isaiah 42 **(Isa 42:1).** He is the Messiah of Israel, the chosen One of God, and He will bring forth justice to the nation. So in all of this, Peter is saying, "We saw the display of His glory, the majesty that will be His when He comes to reign. We heard the confirming voice from the Majestic Glory, the voice of

God the Father, who said, **'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased.'** Peter is saying, "We speak the truth." We know we are speaking the truth about Christ's glorious return and all that goes with it because we were there when Christ was transfigured. We saw His glory. We heard His Father speak. We were given a glimpse, a preview, a foretaste of the glory and the power and the majesty that will be displayed when Christ comes again to this earth to rule and to reign.

Why is the defense of Christ's return to earth in glory a matter of highest concern for Peter? Whenever any aspect of the work of Christ, any aspect of His character, comes under attack, the entirety of the gospel is under attack. The work of Christ in the redemptive plan of God is not modular in its construction. It is not made up of separate modules that can be rearranged, replaced, or interchanged at will. The gospel is a unified whole. It is a unified body of doctrine. From the eternal counsel of God and His electing love, to the incarnation of Jesus Christ in a virgin's womb by the work of the Holy Spirit, to his perfectly sinless and law-fulfilling life, to His substitutionary, wrath-bearing, soul-purchasing, sin-atoning, sufficient and willing sacrificial death on the cross, to his glorious resurrection and triumphant return – all of this is included in the gospel. And if one aspect of the gospel is under attack, the entirety of the gospel is under attack. If someone can discredit one part of the gospel, then the whole thing falls apart. If you believe what you like in the Word of God, and reject what you don't like, it is not the true gospel you believe, but your own imagination. The attack on Christ's return is an attack on the gospel.

The glorious return of Christ in all power and glory is an integral part of the gospel. The apostle John wrote: **Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (1Jn 3:2-3)** The glorious return of Christ is an essential part of the gospel, it is vital to our living in hope. It is consummation of the gospel that Peter proclaimed and he defends it fervently for this reason. If Christ is not returning, then why did He come in the first place? The sure hope of Christ's return should motivate believers to seek to order our lives in light of the truth of the gospel and all that Peter has been teaching us thus far. **The truth of the apostles' teaching, and of Peter's teaching in particular, is grounded in the apostles own eyewitness testimony to the majesty of Christ,** but even more in something more certain, in the Word of God. Peter means for us to see:

**2) The truth of the apostles' teaching and of the Peter's teaching in particular is grounded in the more certain prophetic word of God. (v. 19-21)** Now what is Peter saying? The prophetic word, the OT Scriptures in other words, are even more comprehensive, more enduring, and more reliable and trustworthy than the **experiences** of anyone, including Peter and the other apostles, even one as incredible as the Transfiguration of Christ. The OT Scriptures are the Word of God and the Word of God is a more trustworthy authentication of the truth about the Person, atonement, and second coming of Christ than even the genuine first hand experiences of the apostles themselves. So what Peter is saying, in effect, is this. **“When I preached to you Jesus Christ and a gospel that has as its culmination the return in glory of our Lord and Savior, I want to tell you that you can have full confidence in what you hear for two reasons – first, because of the experience of the apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration, and second and even more powerfully, because we have we have something more sure, the prophetic word.”**

Do you see what Peter is doing here? He wants these believers to whom he is writing to have an unshakable and unswerving confidence in the revelation that God has given in His Holy Word. The very foundation of our faith --- all that we believe and all that we know and respond to by faith is found in the Word of God. If the Word of God is unreliable, we have nothing. The Word of God is more reliable and more trustworthy than even the experiences of the Apostles. Now how can Peter say that? He can say that because of Scripture's source. What does he say? **...no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 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.**

Now I want to make sure that we understand this because this is very important. Man is not the source of Scripture, the word of God is not produced by the will of man. Peter's point is that absolutely no portion of Scripture came into existence based on the prophet's own ideas or thoughts, as was the case of false prophecies. Man is not the source of the Word of God, the Holy Spirit is. That is what Peter is saying here.

**Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit...**Men spoke from God using their own vocabulary and their own style. They spoke out of their own personalities. They spoke not from their own limited perspective, but as a channel of God of God's truth. And what they spoke and how they spoke it was controlled by the Holy Spirit. God did not merely communicate His truth to the men who wrote Scripture and then just leave them on their own to sort of paraphrase what God said. No, they were carried along by the Holy Spirit, they were

carried along by the power of the Holy Spirit so that they composed and recorded without error the exact words that God wanted written. This does not mean that God dictated every word. Rather His Spirit so pervaded the mind of the human writer that he chose out of his own vocabulary and experience precisely those words, thoughts and expressions that conveyed God's message with precision. And we know that this truth of inspiration of the Word of God extends to the books of the NT. The testimony of the Christian church has always been: **(2Ti 3:16-17)** As Calvin said of the human authors of Scripture, **"They did not blab their inventions or their own accord or according to their own judgments."**

When Peter emphasizes the trustworthiness of the Scriptures, he is taking a shot at the false teachers and their false words. The reliability of the Scriptures and the work of inspiration of the Holy Spirit through true spokesmen of God stands in stark contrast to the false teachers and false prophets who were seeking to deceive the flock that Peter was writing. Jeremiah gives a scathing description of the common character of false prophets of every age. Look at it with me in Jeremiah 23: **(Jer 23:16-33)** The scary thing in all of this is how frighteningly effective false prophets and teachers can be. Because of their smooth talking and promise of vain hopes, they often effective in confusing and deceiving believers and undermining the Word of God and moving our confidence away from it which is why Peter says of God's Word -- **you will do well to pay attention (to it) as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.**

You would do well to pay attention to it, to heed the word of God, to submit to it, to know it and love it and delight in it, to trust in its instruction, to believe its promises. Do we take notice of God's word as we should? Does it occupy a place of honor, a place of value like it deserves. Do we read it, study it, memorize it, meditate on it, apply it in our lives. Are our Bibles worn out, marked up, smudged with fingerprints and used? Look at the one that you have in your hands right now. God has spoken to us by His Spirit, in ink on paper. Do we treasure God's words to us? Do you feast upon His words? The driving issue of your life can never be what you think, or what you feel, or what seems right to you. It is not what is new and exciting and interesting. It cannot be unbiblical notions that we baptize with the phrases – "the Lord spoke to me" or "I'm feeling led" ... but only – what says the Lord? I love what John MacArthur says here: **Scripture needs no updating, editing, or refining. Whatever time or culture you live in, it is eternally relevant. It needs no help in that regard. It is pure, sinless, inerrant truth; it is enduring. It is God's revelation for every generation. It was written by the omniscient Spirit of God, who is infinitely more sophisticated than anyone who dares stand in judgment on Scripture's relevancy for our society, and infinitely wiser than all the best philosophers,**

**analysts, and psychologists who pass like a childhood parade into irrelevancy.** God's Word is the central gift that Christ has given to the church. We he ascended to the right hand of the Father, the major gifts which He gave to the church according to Ephesians 4:11-12 were to write that Word (the apostles), to proclaim that Word fearlessly (prophets and evangelists) or to preach and teach that Word (shepherds and teachers) to equip the saints for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ.

We must, so that our hearts might be guarded from error, pay attention to the Bible **as to a lamp shining in a dark place.** Peter is saying that all the word besides the Word of God is darkness. All the philosophies, all the promises, all that passes for knowledge of good and evil, right and wrong, all that passes for revelation – all besides the Word of God is darkness. That word for darkness is a word that means dirty, murky and dark – it's the picture of a swamp. Alone, the Word of God stands as a light, the light of God's Word revealing the Light who is Christ. In fact, Peter's whole desire is to encourage us to hold fast to God's Word as a Lamp shining until Christ comes again – until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts. That day is the day of Christ's return, the day of His glorious unveiling, the Day when the Bright and Morning Star who is Christ will shine over all the earth in the radiance of His glory and the glory of God will fill the earth. There is no escaping the eternal importance of the return of Christ or of the significance of Christ's return for our faithful walk with God. It is the hope and the motivation of our faithfulness and holiness. Oh beloved, see what Peter is doing as he prepares to launch his offensive against the false teachers that were troubling the churches to which he wrote. He answers their attacks on the message that he preached, on the gospel itself, especially on the return of Christ by declaring the truth of his message as authenticated by his eyewitness testimony, but even more by the Word of the Living God. This is no fairy tale...

**Thoughts to consider:**

**1) Are you fully embracing and holding fast to the entire gospel of Christ?**

**2) Beloved are you looking for His glorious return, and living as if it could be today?**

**3) There are four things that we ought to do with the Word of God...admit it as the Word of God, commit it to our hearts and minds, submit to it, and transmit it to the world. (William Wilberforce)**

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