

Review

Last week, we read Peter assert that his belief in Jesus Christ was not based on following "cleverly devised tales." In fact, Peter had been an eyewitness to the miracles, the crucifixion, and the resurrected Jesus. He singled out the Mount of Transfiguration as an exceptional event which he had witnessed: the time when he saw Jesus as He appears in glory in His kingdom.

What Peter saw, testified to, and ultimately died for, was certain. But he doesn't ask us to simply take the word of someone who was an eyewitness. Instead, he points to an even greater testimony, one which is more certain than hundreds of eyewitnesses: the prophetic Word of God.

1:19-21 More Sure

Some translations of this verse have a tendency to change what Peter is saying. For example, the NIV says,

2Pet. 1:19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain...

Even the NAS translators' addition of the word "**made**" clouds the meaning.

In fact, what Peter wrote was, "**And we have more firm the prophetic Word...**"

He's not saying that his eyewitness account makes the Word more certain. He's saying that more certain than even his eyewitness account is the Word.

Peter had heard God's voice speak from the cloud,

Matt. 17:5 ..."This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"

That was the very voice of God heard by the apostle, which he testified to us. But even more reliable than eyewitness testimony is the written Word of God, widely distributed before the prophecies contained within it came to fulfillment.

The Prophetic Word

Which prophecies? All of them, but specifically the prophecies which foretold of Jesus Christ. And there are over 300 of them!

For example, the prophecy which stated that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. The prophet Micah had claimed to hear from God, and wrote that God said,

Mic. 5:2 "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity."

How are we to know that this was really God speaking? Because it came true. The Lord said,

Deut. 18:21-22 "You may say in your heart, 'How will we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken."

The test of a prophet is fulfillment of what he says. It is one thing for Peter to say, "I saw this on the mountaintop. I heard this in the cloud." It is quite another for a prophet to say, "This will happen," write it down, circulate it throughout the world, and then afterwards it comes to pass. That is "the prophetic Word more sure" than an eyewitness account.

Men Moved By The Spirit

Other examples of this prophetic word include what Zechariah said, describing Jesus' nature, His office, and how He would enter Jerusalem:

Zech. 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

And Isaiah discussed His torture by scourging, His death by piercing, its purpose, and others' view of it as well:

Is. 53:4-6 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chas-

tening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

The fulfillment of the prophets' writings proved that God had spoken to them, for God alone can declare the future with such accuracy, just as He said:

Is. 46:9-10 "Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure'"

These are testimonies which have stood the test of time, because they were given by Him Who is outside of time and the Creator of time.

The Word Versus "A Word"

The authority we have is the Word God gave to us. Even when someone asserts, "I swear that I saw this," it is not to be taken as authoritative.

Unfortunately, there are far too many Christians whose faith is built on experience and "testimonies" of others, rather than the Word of God.

In a similar vein, many people claim to be speaking new prophecies from God. That's fine in some respects, for God still grants gifts of prophecy to people. But every message someone claims to be speaking for God must be compared to the Word of God.

Paul told the Corinthian church:

1Cor. 14:29-33 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets, for God is not a God of confusion...

Our certainty must always be based on the Word God gave us, not

"a word" someone gives us.

One's Own Interpretation

Some have read Peter's statement in verse 20 as saying that we are never to interpret prophecy. But here again, the Greek has not been translated well in many Bible versions. Especially the word "**interpretation**" is misleading. The word "**ep-IL-oo-sis**" means "**release**" or "**unloosing**."

What Peter is literally saying is, "**Understand this primarily: no prophecy of Scripture has come into being by its own release. No man's will ever carried it, but it was carried by the Holy Spirit to holy men of God.**"

Or, in simpler terms: "**Men didn't give us the Word. God did.**"

That's how Paul could say,

2Tim. 3:16(NIV) All Scripture is God-breathed...

Pay Attention To It

Since the Word of God is from God, and because it is so very certain, we would do well to pay attention to it.

Peter describes it as a lamp shining in a dark place. I was driving home from church on Thursday night, and noticed that my eyes were naturally attracted to oncoming headlights. They were almost irresistible, and I had to force myself to look at the side of the road to keep from being blinded.

In the case of the Scriptures, we should be giving in to the desire to stare at the light that shines in the darkness. Let us be blinded to everything but the light of the Word of God.

It makes me think of the great old hymn written in 1922 by Helen Lemmel:

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."