

The Certainty Of The Prophetic Word (2 Peter 1:19–21)

Peter has just reminded his readers that he and the other apostles were eyewitnesses of the majesty of Christ. They saw His glory upon the Mount of Transfiguration and heard the Father's voice declaring Jesus to be His beloved Son (2 Peter 1:16–18; Matthew 17:1–5). Yet, instead of asking Christians to place their confidence in apostolic experiences, Peter directs them to the prophetic Word of God. The prophets had spoken centuries before Christ came into the world, and their message had now been confirmed. Peter therefore urges believers to pay careful attention to the Scriptures because they are God's light in a dark world and because they originated, not in the minds of men, but with the Holy Spirit Himself.

Introduction:

1. Every Generation Must Decide What Its Final Authority Will Be. Throughout history men have searched for truth through philosophy, tradition, science, public opinion, and human reasoning. Yet human wisdom continually changes because man's knowledge is always limited (1 Corinthians 1:20–25). God's truth, however, never changes because God Himself never changes (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). If God has spoken, then His Word must become the final authority in every matter of faith and practice (John 17:17). Peter reminds us that Christians possess such an authority in the inspired Scriptures.
2. Christianity Is Built Upon Divine Revelation Rather Than Human Imagination. Peter reminds his readers that the apostles did not preach cleverly invented stories but historical events they had personally witnessed (2 Peter 1:16–18; Acts 10:39–41; 1 John 1:1–3). Yet even after describing the Transfiguration, Peter immediately directs attention away from his own experience and toward the prophetic Scriptures. Eyewitnesses eventually die, but God's written Word continues to speak with the same authority in every generation.
3. Peter Gives Three Reasons Why Christians Can Completely Trust The Bible. First, the prophetic Word has been confirmed through fulfilled prophecy. Secondly, the prophetic Word did not originate with the prophets themselves. Thirdly, the prophetic Word came from God through the Holy Spirit. These three truths provide one of the clearest biblical explanations of the inspiration and authority of Scripture.

1. The Prophetic Word Is God's Reliable Light In A Dark World (2 Peter 1:19)

- a. The Prophetic Word Has Been Confirmed Through Fulfilled Prophecy. Peter declares, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy.” The prophetic word refers to God's revelation through the Old Testament prophets, especially concerning the coming Messiah (Luke 24:25–27, 44; John 5:39). Peter had just witnessed Christ's glory upon the Mount of Transfiguration. Rather than replacing the prophetic Scriptures, that event confirmed them. God's promises had proved themselves true. Every fulfilled prophecy demonstrated that the Scriptures originated with God, whose knowledge extends from eternity to eternity (Isaiah 46:9–10). Because God has faithfully fulfilled His promises concerning Christ's first coming, Christians may confidently trust every promise that still awaits fulfilment.
- b. Christians Are Wise To Give Constant Attention To God's Word. Peter says, “Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed.” This describes far more than occasionally reading the Bible. It calls for careful study, thoughtful meditation, obedient faith, and continual application (James 1:22–25). The Bereans were commended because they searched the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11), while Paul instructed Timothy to devote himself to reading and doctrine (1 Timothy 4:13). Faith comes by hearing God's Word (Romans 10:17), and spiritual maturity depends upon remaining rooted in divine truth rather than human opinion.
- c. The Scriptures Continue To Guide Men Until They Come To Christ. Peter compares God's Word to “a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.” The darkness represents a world blinded by sin and error (Isaiah 9:2; Ephesians 5:8). Scripture serves as God's lamp, showing men the path to salvation (Psalms 119:105). The prophets continually pointed forward to Christ just as a lamp guides a traveller until sunrise arrives. This beautifully harmonises with Paul's statement that the Law served as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ (Galatians 3:24). The Old Testament was always intended to prepare mankind for the coming Saviour.

2. The Prophetic Word Did Not Originate In Human Thought (2 Peter 1:20)

- a. Peter Introduces A Foundational Principle About The Nature Of Scripture. He begins by saying, “Knowing this first,” showing that what follows is of primary importance (2 Peter 1:20). Peter is not merely adding another observation. He is introducing a truth that must govern our understanding of biblical prophecy. Before explaining where prophecy came from, he first explains where it did not come from. Unless this principle is understood, the authority of Scripture cannot be fully appreciated (2 Peter 1:20).
- b. The Prophets Were Not Declaring Their Own Opinions Or Explanations. Peter writes, “No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.” In its context, Peter is discussing the origin of prophecy rather than the reader's interpretation of prophecy. Verse twenty-one begins with the word “For,” explaining the statement made in verse twenty. Isaiah did not invent his message. Jeremiah was not recording personal reflections. Daniel was not making educated predictions. They proclaimed God's message rather than their own (Jeremiah 1:4-9; Ezekiel 2:7; Amos 3:7-8). The authority of Scripture therefore rests upon God rather than upon the men who wrote it.
- c. Scripture Is Entirely Different From Every Merely Human Religious Book. Every human author writes from personal knowledge, experience, and opinion. The prophets consistently denied that their message originated with themselves. Again and again they declared, “Thus saith the Lord” (Isaiah 38:4; Jeremiah 2:1; Ezekiel 3:4). They understood themselves to be God's spokesmen rather than independent religious thinkers. Consequently, Scripture does not present human speculation about God but God's revelation to mankind.

3. The Prophetic Word Originated With God Through The Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21)

- a. Prophecy Never Came By The Will Of Man. Peter now explains the statement made in the previous verse by saying, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man.” No prophet decided for himself what God should say. Scripture did not come into existence because gifted religious men sat down to write their thoughts about God or the future. Human wisdom could never have discovered the truths revealed in the Bible (1 Corinthians 2:9-13). The plan of redemption, the nature of Christ, the establishment of the church, and the hope of eternal life are truths that originate with God alone. Every prophet depended entirely upon divine revelation for the message he proclaimed.
- b. God Chose Faithful Men To Communicate His Revelation. Peter says, “Holy men of God spake.” Throughout history God selected faithful servants to reveal His will. Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the other prophets came from different backgrounds, lived in different centuries, and possessed different abilities. Yet together they proclaimed one harmonious message because God was the source of that message (Hebrews 1:1-2). Their personalities remained theirs, but the truth they proclaimed belonged entirely to God.
- c. The Holy Spirit Guided The Prophets So That Scripture Is God's Word. Peter concludes that these holy men “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” The word “moved” describes being carried or borne along. The prophets actively spoke and wrote, but the Holy Spirit directed the revelation they communicated. Paul expresses the same truth by declaring that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Consequently, the authority of Scripture rests upon God Himself rather than upon its human writers. Because God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), His Word is completely trustworthy. Because God does not change (Malachi 3:6), His Word remains permanently relevant and authoritative.

Conclusion:

1. The Fulfilment Of Prophecy Gives Us Complete Confidence In God's Word. Peter had seen with his own eyes what the prophets had foretold centuries before. Fulfilled prophecy demonstrates that God's promises never fail and that His Word deserves our complete confidence (Isaiah 46:9-10).
2. God's Word Remains The Only Reliable Light In A Spiritually Dark World. Human opinions change from generation to generation, but God's revelation continues to guide men to Christ and direct believers in righteous living (Psalms 119:105; Matthew 24:35).
3. Since Scripture Originated With God, It Demands Our Complete Obedience. We are not free to ignore, alter, or replace God's Word with human tradition. Because it came from the Holy Spirit, it remains the final authority in every matter of faith and practice (James 1:22; Colossians 3:17).

Applications:

1. Build Your Faith Upon The Scriptures Rather Than Personal Experiences. Experiences may encourage us, but only God's revealed Word provides an infallible foundation for faith (**Romans 10:17**).
2. Read And Study The Bible Daily. We cannot benefit from God's light if we neglect His Word. Spiritual growth depends upon continual study and faithful obedience (**Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15**).
3. Let God's Word Judge Every Teaching You Hear. Never accept a doctrine simply because it is popular or sincerely believed. Test every teaching by the Scriptures (**Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1**).
4. Defend The Divine Inspiration Of The Bible. Peter reminds us that the Scriptures did not originate by the will of man but were given through holy men who were moved by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we should confidently defend the Bible as God's inspired revelation rather than merely another religious book (**2 Peter 1:20–21; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; Jude 1:3**).

Questions:

1. What does Peter mean by “the prophetic word” (**2 Peter 1:19**)?
2. Why does Peter say Christians “do well” to take heed to the Scriptures (**2 Peter 1:19**)?
3. What does Peter compare the Scriptures to, and what lesson does the comparison teach (**2 Peter 1:19**)?
4. What does Peter mean when he says that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation (**2 Peter 1:20**)?
5. How does verse twenty-one explain verse twenty (**2 Peter 1:20–21**)?
6. What does the expression “moved by the Holy Ghost” teach about inspiration (**2 Peter 1:21**)?
7. Why can Christians have complete confidence in the Bible (**2 Peter 1:19–21**)?

Summary:

Peter reminds his readers that although he and the other apostles witnessed Christ's glory upon the Mount of Transfiguration, the enduring foundation of faith is the prophetic Word of God. The ancient prophets foretold the coming of Christ centuries before His birth, and their words were confirmed through His life, ministry, death, and resurrection. Therefore believers should carefully heed the Scriptures because they remain God's light in a spiritually dark world.

Peter then explains that the authority of Scripture does not rest upon the wisdom or abilities of the prophets themselves. They were not expressing personal opinions, religious philosophies, or educated predictions about the future. Instead, they faithfully proclaimed the message that God revealed to them. Scripture is therefore fundamentally different from every merely human religious writing.

Finally, Peter declares that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. The ultimate Author of Scripture is God Himself. Because the Bible originated with the Holy Spirit, it is completely trustworthy, permanently authoritative, and fully sufficient to guide mankind in every generation. Christians should therefore study it diligently, obey it faithfully, and confidently proclaim it to the world.

Questions & Answers:

1. What does Peter mean by “the prophetic word” (2 Peter 1:19)?

Answer: The prophetic word refers to God's revealed message through the Old Testament prophets, especially the prophecies concerning the coming Messiah, which were confirmed by Christ (2 Peter 1:19)

2. Why does Peter say Christians “do well” to take heed to the Scriptures (2 Peter 1:19)?

Answer: Because the Scriptures provide God's trustworthy guidance in a spiritually dark world and should therefore be carefully studied and obeyed (2 Peter 1:19)

3. What does Peter compare the Scriptures to, and what lesson does the comparison teach (2 Peter 1:19)?

Answer: Peter compares the Scriptures to a lamp shining in a dark place, teaching that God's Word provides the light needed to guide men safely to Christ (2 Peter 1:19)

4. What does Peter mean when he says that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation (2 Peter 1:20)?

Answer: Peter teaches that the prophecies did not originate from the prophets' own ideas or explanations but came from God (2 Peter 1:20)

5. How does verse twenty-one explain verse twenty (2 Peter 1:20–21)?

Answer: Verse twenty-one explains that prophecy did not come by the will of man but from holy men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20–21)

6. What does the expression “moved by the Holy Ghost” teach about inspiration (2 Peter 1:21)?

Answer: It teaches that the Holy Spirit guided the prophets in communicating God's revelation, making Scripture the Word of God rather than merely the word of man (2 Peter 1:21)

7. Why can Christians have complete confidence in the Bible (2 Peter 1:19–21)?

Answer: Because its prophecies have been confirmed and its message originated with God through the Holy Spirit rather than through human wisdom (2 Peter 1:19–21)