

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 8/30/92
II Peter 1:19-21 "Getting the Most Out of Bible Study"

Intro: Story in Ports Times from last week (8/22/92?)--The Virgin Mary will be appearing on Monday night, Aug 31 in Cold Spring, Ky. That is according to an Ohio woman who calls herself a visionary who told St. Joseph church pastor Leroy Smith that Mary would give a sign at the church at midnight. Don't flock there tomorrow. You will need an invitation to get in, church officials have said. The invitations are available to the church's members, only one per family.

The world is full of people who are enthralled by the spectacular. And though you may not be interested in traveling to Cold Springs tomorrow, perhaps you've thought at one time or another, "You know, if I could only get a direct message from God, it would make it easier for me to live the Christian life. If I could only hear the voice of God, if I could actually see Jesus, I would be better equipped than I am now for succeeding as a Christian."

Q: Is that true? Tonight I want you to hear the testimony of someone who actually had true-life encounter with the Glorified Christ. He actually saw the Majesty of God and heard the awesome voice of God. You may be surprised at what he said.

It was Peter--Read his testimony in II Peter 1.

The Bible can change your life. Do you believe that?

That bold claim was the statement I made 6 weeks ago when we began the series we are finishing tonight, "How to Study the Bible."

Our Goals:

1. To enable each person to have a meaningful, personal Bible Study
2. To teach people the process to follow in interpreting and applying the Bible

Now let's investigate Peter's words in II Pt 1.

The Setting:

Peter is about to die.

V 14 "Knowing that shortly I must put off my tabernacle..."

V 15 "...after my decease..."

Q: Why did Peter write this letter? He wrote it to Christians (1). Why?

A: To remind his readers of what they already knew.

V 12 "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance...truth."

V 15 "...to have these things always in remembrance."

Why did Peter want to remind his readers to not forget the truth?

1. They were under attack by false teachers (2:1).
2. He himself would not be around much longer to protect them.

Q: What did Peter's readers know? What is the content of truth that is the basis of Christianity? What is the basis of all Christian experience?

A: In vv 16-21, Peter tells us where he received the truth he passed on to us.

Proposition: There are 2 witnesses that Peter said (in II Pt 1:16-21) testified to the truth of what he taught about Jesus Christ.

I. Witness #1--Eyewitness Account (16-18)

- A. Not Fables (16a)
- B. The Transfiguration (16b-18)

II. Witness #2--The Scriptures

- A. The Old Testament
 - 1. Revelation (20)
 - 2. Inspiration (21)
- B. The New Testament (3:15-16)

I. Witness #1--Eyewitness Account (16-18)

False teachers attacked the validity of Peter's message. Notice his disclaimer.

A. Not Fables (16a)

V 16 "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables"

In the Roman world, there were scores of religious teachers. There were also volumes of mythical stories about gods, about the creation of the world, about fantastic events. You had to take them tongue in cheek. They were man-made fables.

Not so with the message Peter preached. He didn't preach fables. He didn't make up the account he passed on about Jesus.

Now notice what Peter does next. He picks one particular event from Jesus' life. Perhaps the one that impacted Peter the most. What event?

B. The Transfiguration (16b-18)

V 16b "we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord...eyewitnesses..."

Peter said he was an "eyewitness" of the majesty of Jesus Christ. When? One day 3 decades earlier. You can read about it in Mt 17:1-5.

Jesus invited Peter, James, and John to join Him. They traveled to a high mountain. You remember what happened. Jesus was "transfigured" before their very eyes. What they saw dropped them on their faces. His face shone like the sun. His clothing was bright like light. They saw Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus.

Note: The Eyewitness Account of the Apostles eventually became the NT.

But do you know something. As impressive as were the things Peter saw, what impressed him most was what he heard.

V 17 "...there came a voice..."

V 18 "And this voice which came from heaven..."

That was some experience! A confrontation with the Majestic, Living God! Peter never got over it. The experience left an indellible impression on him for the rest of his life. No doubt it would have us too!

Which leads us to an important question...

Q: Are we shortchanged today since we can't see and hear what Peter did?

Illust:

A: Absolutely not!

V 19 "We have a more sure word of prophecy..."

Tran: There is a second, even more powerful witness than the Eyewitness Account.

II. Witness #2--The Scriptures

Listen carefully to what Peter said about the Scriptures...

V 19 "We have a more sure word of prophecy..."

"sure" = firm, secure

Ps 19:7 "The testimony of the Lord is sure."

Ps 93:5 "Thy testimonies are very sure."

Ps 111:7 "All His commandments are sure."

Peter is not suggesting that the Scriptures are more certain than the experience he had on the Mount of Transfiguration. What he heard and saw was real! It did happen! But never forget this. The Scriptures are sure and reliable.

Quote: Senate Chaplain Richard Halverson (in Hendricks, 340)..

What Scriptures?

A. The Old Testament

V 19 "word of prophecy"

That expression referred in Peter's day not just to the section of the Bible written by the prophets, but to the entire OT. The whole OT is sure and reliable. The entire OT pointed to Jesus Christ.

Q: What did Peter say we are to do with the Scriptures?

A: "take heed"

Listen. God didn't give us His Word so we could dissect it, debate it, discuss it on a take it or leave it basis. No, He gave it to us and expects us to "take heed" to it.

For how long?

V 19 "as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn..."

The imagery is beautiful. Peter says the Bible is like an oil-burning lamp ("a light that shines in a dark place"). One day the "Day Star" will come, the Light Bringer. Who's that? Acc to Num 24:17, the Daystar is the Messiah.

One thing's for sure. You don't need lamps in the daytime. You don't use a flashlight when the sun is high in the sky. If I understand the implication, we won't need to study the the lamp of the Bible in heaven because we'll be in the presence of the Brilliant Son!

But until then, until Christ returns for us, until that day dawns, what kind of world do we inhabit? A dark ("murky") world. We must let the Word of God be our guiding light.

Q: Do you make the study of the Bible a priority in your life?

Key: Peter interpreted his mount of Transfiguration experience in light of the Scriptures. So must we! I must always interpret my experience in light of what the Bible says, not the other way around.

Eg--"I had an experience where I spoke in tongues, so tongues must be for today." But wait. What does the Bible say about tongues speaking? I must always interpret my experience in light of Scripture, and not the Scriptures in light of my experience.

I want to mention 2 very important theological words related to the doctrine of the Bible: Revelation and Inspiration. The Bible is the revealed Word of God. The Bible is also the Inspired Word of God. Peter shows us both concepts in vv 20-21.

1. Revelation (20)

V 20 "Knowing this first..."

The Bible is God's revelation. God reveals Himself to us in the Book. But know this. No prophecy is of any "private interpretation."

What's Peter mean? Various suggestions have been offered.

The word "private" means "one's own" or "its own." That is, since all Scripture is inspired by the Spirit, it must all hang together. No one Scripture should be divorced from another (Wiersbe). You can use the Bible to prove anything if you isolate them from their proper context.

We must never forget that the Bible is God's revelation. Our task is always to ask, What did God mean when He gave us that verse?

Key: As Wiersbe observes, the Bible was written to common people, not to theological professors. The writers assumed that common people could read it, understand it, and apply it, by the help of the Holy Spirit who revealed it. The Bible is not of private interpretation.

One of the great themes of the Protestant Reformation was "Sola Scriptura." The Reformers like Calvin and Luther were committed to getting the Scriptures into the hands of the common people.

The Roman Catholic church responded with the Counter Reformation.

Quote: Here's what they said in the Council of Trent. (Sproul, 35)

Sproul's observation (in "Knowing Scripture"), "Do you catch the flavor of this pronouncement? The statement is saying, among other things, that it is the responsibility of the teaching office of the Roman Catholic Church to expound the Scriptures and to declare the meaning of the Scriptures. This is not to be a matter of private judgment or private opinion." (35)

May we never forget the Bible is not just for "experts."

Q: How did we get the Bible?

2. Inspiration (21)

V 21 "For prophecy came not..."

We call a b-ball team "inspired" that came back from a 10 point deficit with 4 minutes remaining to win. We call the poet or artist "inspired" who grasps what the rest of us miss. But listen. As David Hubbard observes, "We may say that Shakespeare and Milton, da Vinci and Rembrandt, Pasteur and Einstein were inspired, but not in the same sense that Amos and Isaiah or Luke or Paul were."

Why not? The problem is that our english word "inspired" has different meanings. When we say that the Bible is "inspired," we mean that God gave it to us, through human instruments.

V 21 "not by the will of man"

But...

V 21 "holy men of God spoke as they were moved..."

"moved"--key word; means "to bear, carry, bring forth"

Illust: word used in Acts 27:15, 17, there to describe a ship being carried along by the wind. That's how it worked in the process of inspiration. The Holy Spirit was like the wind. The human authors were like the ship's sails. The Spirit carried them along so that what they wrote was God's Word.

Note: Inspiration does not mean that God "dictated" the Bible to the writers. Nor that they were caught up in some moment of ecstasy. In fact, as you read you see that the Spirit actually used the writer's own personality and style. But the finished product is the inspired Word of God.

Q: Did Peter write II Peter? Yes

Q: Did God write II Peter? Yes

Tran: OK, that's the OT. What about the NT?

B. The New Testament (3:15-16)

Turn to 3:15-16. Peter wrote this letter in the year AD 66, more than 30 years after Jesus returned to heaven. Jesus had told His disciples that He would send the Counselor, the Holy Spirit. He told them the Spirit would guide them into truth (Jn 16:13). He told them the Spirit would bring things to their remembrance about Him. And He did just that.

But as the years passed, the Apostles started writing down the account of what they experienced having been with Jesus. They also wrote instructional letters to local churches. Peter did. So did the Apostle Paul.

I want you to see what Peter said about the writings of Paul.

3:15-16 "...even as Paul has written...in all his epistles...as do the other scriptures..."

Q: On what level did Peter put Paul's writings?

A: On the same level as the OT Scripture!

Challenge:

Let that sink in. You and I possess the Bible. Peter said that the Bible is sure, even more sure than an ecstatic experience because it's written down and can be passed on. Don't shortchange yourself. Treasure the Bible. Study the Bible.

1:3-4 "God has given us everything we need...great and precious promises"

Quote: A.W. Tozer (in Hendricks, 331)

The Steps Involved in Bible Study:

Review: (from 2 weeks ago)

Key: Effective Bible study requires a method.

Q: What steps should we follow when we study the Bible?

A: Howard Hendricks, in his book "Living By the Book", suggests 3.

Transp: "Observation, Interpretation, Application" cartoon

Ask these key questions:

1. Observation--What do I see?
2. Interpretation--What does it mean?
3. Application--How does it work? How does it apply to my life?

Illust: "Tower of Babel" (MacArthur, 68)

Examples in Philippians:

Q: How do I go about applying God's Word to my life?

A: Howard Hendricks suggests we need to ask 9 questions...

Transp: "Nine Questions to Ask" (H. Hendricks, p. 308)

1. Is there an example for me to follow?
2. Is there a sin to avoid?
3. Is there a promise to claim?
4. Is there a prayer to repeat?
5. Is there a command to obey?
6. Is there a condition to meet?
7. Is there a verse to memorize?
8. Is there an error to mark?
9. Is there a challenge to face?