

Session 3: 2 Peter 1:16-21,

2nd Coming of Christ and What the Bible Reveals

The aim of the letter is to recall men to certainty in regard to the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ.

The heretics, whom Peter is attacking, no longer believed in it. The long delay caused men to believe that it was not going to happen.

Remember... if we don't believe in all the promises of God, then how can we believe in any... including salvation and heaven for the believer?

Peter's right to speak it...was the fact that he was on the Mount of Transfiguration and he saw and heard the glory of the Lord. He had the authority to teach it...because he witnessed it.

HE WAS AN EYEWITNESS TO THE FACT THAT JESUS IS ALIVE!

2 Peter 1:19-21,

Two things to note here:

1. **Prophets and Prophecies** - When any of the prophets interpreted any situation in history or told how history was/is going to unfold itself, they were not expressing a private opinion of their own; they were passing on a revelation which God had given them.
2. **God's Teacher/Preacher (Yesterday and Today)** - Scripture does not consist of any man's private opinions but is the revelation of God to men through His Spirit who is still specially operative within the Church.

Test the Teacher

Peter changes everything! Up to this point the Christians being addressed seem to be passively observing a debate between Peter and some false teachers. Now, suddenly, Peter expects them to actively defend God's Word. Peter's words, which were sharp criticism of the other teachers, are now encouragement for the believers. He is creating a vision for why Christians must hold on to God's Word as their standard for doctrine.

What the Bible Reveals

- **Rely on God's Word.** It is your compass for navigating through doctrinal storms. Christians who know what they believe and why they believe it will rarely be fooled by the false teachers. They know the Bible:
 - o Is sure (v. 19)
 - o Lights the way (v. 19)
 - o Was inspired by God. It is a message from God (v. 20-21)
- **Study God's Word.** Peter expects everyday people to read the Bible, understand it, and apply it to their lives. He does not want Christians to blindly accept the interpretation presented by any teacher.

What Systems Thinking Tells Us....

- Structures can be changed. The debate between Peter and the false teachers was in a vicious cycle downward. If allowed to continue nothing good would result. When you are in this type of cycle one of the best plans of attack is to change the underlying structure. In this case Peter transforms his doctrinal fight with these teachers into a drive to have Christians study the Bible and use it to keep their doctrine sound. The debate that had hinged on which side was more persuasive and logical now depends on which side is Biblical.
- Have an anchor. The only way to resist the constant pull away from good doctrine is to have a fixed reference point- God's Word. Peter says to "pay attention to it." (v. 16)
- Sometimes it takes a lot of effort to stand still. To "go with the flow" takes no effort at all. It is easy to nod your head and agree with whatever your teacher is saying. On the other hand, it takes a lot of effort to scour God's Word and determine for yourself whether what you are being taught is true.
- Correcting your teacher's doctrine is not a priority. Peter simply tells
- Christians to persevere and stay in the light; of God's Word.

Conclusions

- **People in the classical age were very intelligent.** The Christians to whom Peter wrote were literate and capable of complex reasoning. Peter presents them with a deep doctrinal issue and has confidence that they can determine whether that is true based on their own search of Old Testament Scriptures.
- **Test what you are taught.** First century Christians were told to test the teachings they heard based on Old Testament Scripture. With the addition of the New Testament, easier access to Bibles, and better tools for Bible study, discerning correct doctrine should be even easier today.
- **Doctrine will change.** Peter expected doctrine to change and it has. New ideas and ways to think about the Bible are introduced, and they can be adopted by Christians if they are supported by what the Bible teaches.
- **Vision is powerful.** While many Christians can defend God's Word against heresy in the short term, the on-going fight is exhausting. Giving them a vision of the wonderful origins of this book and the rewards that await those that are faithful to it will help them persevere in this struggle. It is the vision that will keep Christians holding on to God's Word.

Remember, this is an internal problem. This whole debate is taking place inside the church. The church is not being assaulted by the pagan culture of the outside world. It is being corrupted from the inside by teachers it had appointed. Individual Christians view these teachers as having stature and authority similar to Peter's.

This causes a problem for many of the Christian believers. The doctrine being taught by these teachers does not agree with the doctrinal standards that Peter had established.

This puts pressure on the Christians to lower their doctrinal standards to accommodate the new teachings.

There are some very nice "perks" that go along with this "lowering of your standard" approach.

- **It requires little effort.** All these Christians have to do is tweak a mental model or two.
- **It can be done quickly.** They can probably change their doctrine while they are listening to what the teachers have to say.
- **It's the path of least resistance.** If they do not change their doctrine the pressure will stay. As the teachers' doctrinal standards deteriorate further, the pressure will build as the required amount of change in doctrine grows. On the other hand, Christians who change their doctrinal standards to accommodate the new teaching no longer have a problem with what is being taught. The pressure they felt is gone. *And doctrine that has been compromised once is much easier to compromise again.*
- **It avoids potentially uncomfortable situations.** When a Christian disagrees with the doctrine of the teachers that are in authority in his church, it is an uncomfortable situation even when it is handled wisely. Eventually, the church has to acknowledge that something is wrong, which can lead to the conclusion that someone is at fault. This, in turn, may bring about conflict as everyone tries to save face.
- **It allows them to concentrate on survival.** These Christians have pressing, non-doctrinal problems that need their time and attention. They are being persecuted for their faith which has made them scatter throughout modern day Turkey.

Final Conclusion: Stand on God's Word! If standards are seemingly going down instead of holding to the Biblical and godly standards you know to be right and wholesome for you, then you can bet that there are preachers and teachers that have yielded to the "survival mode" in the church.