

2. Everything we need is in the word of God

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Preacher: Bob Fyall

[0 : 00] Let's have a moment's prayer before we come to the scriptures. And God our Father, as we draw near to you, we pray that you will most graciously draw near to us.

That you will open your word to our hearts and minds, and that you will open our hearts and minds to your word. And we ask this in the name of him to whom that word points so perfectly and fully. The living word, the Lord Christ himself. Amen. So if we could have our Bibles open please at 2 Peter chapter 1 looking at verses 12 to 21.

In the city of London, and indeed in some other cities, there are places known as Speaker's Corner. The most famous of these is at Hyde Park.

And many prominent speakers have delivered addresses there, have expounded various views, some of them better and some of them more wholesome than others.

[1 : 10] One of the most famous speakers in the later part of the 20th century was Donald Soper, later Lord Soper, the famous Methodist. He spoke there throughout much of the later part of the 20th century, indeed being taken there in a wheelchair when he was in his 90s.

I never heard him at Speaker's Corner, but I frequently heard him on the radio on Thought for the Day. Now he did say many good things, but there was one thing he regularly said which was grievously misleading.

And it was this. Speaking of the Bible, he said, The Bible is a wonderful servant of the mind of Jesus, but an intolerable master.

Now do you see what that means? That means that Lord Soper was saying that he had a means of knowing the mind of Christ, which was separate from and indeed superior to the scriptures themselves.

Because how else do we know the mind of Christ other than through the scriptures? If we don't have the scriptures, then we're led, we're shut up to conjecture, where we're shut up to what Peter here calls cleverly devised myths.

[2 : 29] And that's such an important thing to grasp, because you often hear that today, but in other ways. It's not the Bible that's our authority, it's Jesus. But we only know Jesus as the Spirit reveals him in the pages of scripture.

And Peter is terribly concerned that the church remain apostolic after he's gone. Look at verse 13. I think it is right, as long as in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon.

Now I said last week, almost certainly Peter was martyred during the great persecution launched by Nero in the 60s of the first century, and probably Paul perished at that time as well.

Peter may be as little as weeks away from his death. And like the true leader, like the true shepherd he is, he's not saying, oh well, my time's up. He's saying, I'm desperately concerned for those who will come after me, that they won't be misled, that they won't be deceived by false gospels.

That's why he says, I'll stir you up by way of reminder. The gospel is already given, but it must continually be preached, continually be applied, because there's always the danger that the second and third generations will lose the enthusiasm, will fall away.

[3 : 53] How is the church to remain apostolic? It's not going to remain apostolic simply by enthusiasm, simply by good leadership, simply by experience. All of those things are necessary.

It's only going to remain apostolic insofar as the apostolic gospel is preached, believed in, and lived. Now we're mainly going to be looking at verses 16 to 21.

Just a word or two about these verses 12 to 15. I've suggested as a title for this series, Everything We Need Until the Lord Returns.

And that makes the point that Peter isn't simply talking about the Christians of his own day. He's talking about those, including us, who will come after him, and all the generations until the Lord returns.

And he is going to be saying a great deal about the Lord's return in chapter 3, and indeed he touches on it in this chapter. And he's concerned that they be taught and that they grow.

[4 : 54] Now in verses 1 to 11, he said we have everything we need for life and godliness. In the gospel, we have everything we need to save us, and also to keep us.

That's what he said in these first 11 verses. Now he is saying we have everything we need in the word of God. That's what this section is about. Now some people will call this bibliolatry, the worship of a book.

Now that's a misguided criticism. It's not worship of a book. It's the grateful recognition that in this book, the word of the apostles and the prophets, the living God has spoken a message.

He has spoken a message that is valid for every time, and a message which centres around the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the word of God for every generation, including our own and any generations who will follow.

And when we talk about the apostles and the prophets, that's shorthand really for the whole Bible. The prophetic scriptures of the Old Testament, the apostolic scriptures of the New Testament, and together they form the word of God, the voice from heaven, the light shining into the darkness, that keeps us going, that gives us strength, that guides us until the full day dawns, and Christ himself appears.

[6 : 21] So that's the point of these verses 12 to 15. He's saying, as long as I live, and it's not going to be very long, I'm going to teach you the word of God. And when I go, there is still that word, taught by faithful people, which will sustain you, which will keep you, until the Lord returns.

Now, there is some dispute in the commentaries, about every effort after my departure. It obviously includes at least this letter, as he writes this letter, along with his first letter, to strengthen and to inspire the Christians.

Some have suggested we can't prove this. It may actually refer also to the Gospel of Mark. We believe that Peter's reminiscences, Peter's experiences, lie behind that Gospel, and that may be another way.

But what Peter is saying, primarily, is the Scriptures, are the guide. So there's two major points, I want to make this evening. Very simple, very straightforward.

First of all, verses 16 to 18, we need the message, of the apostles. That's the first point. But secondly, verses 19 to 21, we need the message, of the prophets.

[7 : 38] These are the two, substantive points, I want to look at tonight. We need the message, of the apostles. And notice how Peter, introduces that in verse 16, we did not follow, cleverly devised myths.

On the whole, people are fond of myths. The world is full of myths, and the church is full of myths. It's usually more convenient, to believe myths.

Because myths, seldom make any great demands on us. Either demands on behaviour, demands on spirituality, demands on intellect. myths, tend on the whole, to flatter us.

For example, the prosperity gospel. The idea that, if we are wholly faithful, to the Lord, the bank balance, will always be healthy, there will be two cars, in the drive, and everything will be wonderful. That dangerous nonsense, that so often, afflicts the, the church of God. Or else, the Jesus, the myth of the Jesus, who is simply, a remarkable human.

[8 : 41] And if that's the case, there's no more reason, why we should believe in him, why we should follow him, than any other great figure, in history. In many ways, the propensity to believe myths, is exemplified, in books like, the Da Vinci Code.

It's not that everybody read, when the Da Vinci Code, was at the top of the best selling list, about two years ago. It's not that people read, the Da Vinci Code, and say, well of course now, we know that the Bible is not true.

It's not that, it simply created, a kind of, a kind of mythical world, which people felt happy with. There were no demands made on it.

And of course, it pandered to so many, modern prejudices, attacks on institutions, and attacks on, on belief, rather than fuzziness. So, and all of these books, are based on, no evidence, and on endless speculation.

So that's what the Apostle, is saying first of all. What we are telling you, is not like the kind of myth, that's written later, books like the Gospel of Thomas, and so on, on which the Da Vinci Code, draws very heavily.

[9 : 49] Peter says, two things. Why do we need, the message of the Apostle? He gives us two reasons for it. First of all, the message of the Apostles, is eyewitness testimony. Verse three, sorry, verse 16.

We made known to you, the power and coming, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we were eyewitnesses, of his majesty. What is the foundation, of our faith?

Why do we believe, the Gospel? Because it's based, on the eyewitness, testimony, of people, who saw the Lord, who knew him. People like Peter, James and John, the three who were, on the Transfiguration Mountain.

And John says, in his first letter, we saw him, we touched him, we hurt him, our hands handled him. See, in the first century already, there was this myth, of Gnosticism around.

The idea, the body, was evil, and the spirit, is good. Everything vague, and fuzzy. And while, John writes his Gospel, to prove, that Jesus, is the divine word, he writes his letter, to prove, that the divine word, is the human, Jesus of Nazareth.

[11 : 01] See what I mean? The, every day is quite happy, the idea of the divine word, this power, this voice, that speaks. But the idea, that this was embodied, in Jesus of Nazareth, who lived, whom they accompanied with, that is the Gospel.

But more than that, when he says, the power and coming, of our Lord Jesus Christ, this is not the first coming, he's talking about, this is the coming again. On the Transfiguration Mountain, these men, and you can read the story, in Matthew chapter 17, in Luke 9, and in Mark 9, we have the story told.

They had a glimpse, of what it will be like, when Jesus comes again. It was the Jesus they knew, that transfigured, glorious beyond their imagining, and standing with him, were the two ancient, were the two representatives, if you like, of the Old Testament, the law and the prophets, Moses and Elijah.

And the Gospel writers, are very careful, they say, they saw his glory, and the men, who were with him. Not that they saw, the glory of the three men, they saw his glory, and the men, who were with him.

So they saw Jesus, as he will be, when he comes again, in his glorious majesty, to judge the living, and the dead. Now we'll be seeing this, later on, next week, and the next two weeks.

[12 : 27] The coming of the Lord, is not just an odd doctrine, tagged on at the end. It's the very heart, of the Gospel. If we don't have, the power and coming, of the Lord Jesus Christ, then Jesus is not, going to have the last word.

That's what the coming means, he is going to have, the last word. He's going to wind up history. He is going to make, the final judgment. No one else, not cunningly devised myths, but Jesus of Nazareth, who became, who became human, for us, and for our salvation, who died on the cross, who rose again, from the dead, and sent the spirit, will return, to wind up history, the power and coming, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So Peter is saying, we need, the word of the apostles, because, the apostles saw, it was eyewitness testimony. But there's more than that.

Secondly, what the apostles heard. Not only did they see, but they heard, verse 17, for when he received, honor and glory, from God the Father, the voice was born to him, by the majestic glory. See, experience is not enough. You can misunderstand, an experience. As the years pass, the experience become, distorted in our memory. We can even wonder, if it actually happened.

[13 : 51] But this experience, is authenticated, by the most, by the most, authoritative source of all, a voice, from heaven. Now, there always have been, people around, who claim, to have a voice, hear voices, from heaven.

How do we know, they're telling the truth? Well, Peter makes it, very obvious to us here. You would have thought, a voice from heaven, would have spoken, in its own words, so to speak.

But this voice, from heaven, is quoting, the Old Testament. He received, honour and glory, from God. This is my, beloved son, in whom I am, well pleased.

Quoting Psalm 2, which is addressed, to the king, who will reign, and Psalm Isaiah 42, addressed, to the servant, my chosen, in whom I delight, who will suffer, and die, for sins.

When you add to that, the honour and glory, reflects Psalm 8, and what it says, about humanity, you can see, how this fits, into the big picture. The voice from heaven, is saying, Peter, James, and John.

[14:58] In case you, misunderstand, what is happening. This is what, the story, has been about. This is what, Moses and Elijah saw. This is what, the Old Testaments, have told you, he is here now.

This, is the last Adam. The one, who will restore, humanity. The one, who will, recreate, the broken, and marred, and spoiled image.

This is the king, who will reign, over the whole universe. This is the servant, who gave his life, and rose again, from the dead. This is the lion, who is also the lamb.

So you see, if you, if someone comes along, and says, I've got a voice, from heaven, and you must listen to me. You say, good for you, so do we. Here is the voice, from heaven.

The word, of the apostles, and the prophets. This is the voice, from heaven. As Peter says, we do well, to pay attention, to this. Because, this is the authentic, voice, given not just, to Peter, and his friends, but given to us.

[16:06] This experience, is authenticated, by scripture, and there surely, can be no greater, authentication, of scripture, than that, God almighty, himself, when he describes, what is happening, uses the words, of scripture.

No better words, could be found. So we need, the message, of the apostles. We need the new testament, we need to read it, we need to love it, we need to teach it, we need to believe in it, we need to make it, part of our daily lives.

But secondly, Peter is very careful, we don't make a mistake here, that too many Christians make. He goes on to say, verses 19 to 21, we need the message, of the prophets.

You see, many, too many Christians, think, that if we have the new testament, we can safely ignore, the old testament, if we have the full light. Why need to bother, about, what happened before?

But surely, what's already been said, disproves that. Why is it, that God, from heaven, uses the words, of the old testament? He uses them, because they are, as relevant, to Peter, and his friends, and to us, as the new testament.

[17:19] And this is the consistent voice, of the new testament. Remember that great story, in Luke, of the Emmaus road, when the stranger, joined, Cleopas, and his friend, and told, and said to them, foolish ones, and slow of heart, to believe, all that the prophets, have spoken.

What did he go on to say? He didn't go on to say, then, you don't need the bible, now, you've got me. What did he go on to say? Beginning with Moses, and the prophets, he revealed to them, in all the scriptures, the things, concerning, himself.

Peter is saying, the witness, of the old testament, is a further, affirmation, of the reality, of that experience, of the truth, of the power, and coming, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. Now, the coming, refers, refers, of course, to both comings, the whole, great invasion, of God, by which he came, in Jesus, and which he will come again, in the last day.

Where is this, first mentioned, in the bible? First mention, of the coming, of the power, and coming, of our Lord Jesus Christ. Surely, it is Genesis 3.15, the descendant, of the woman, will crush, the head, of the serpent.

[18:40] That is, the first mention, of the power, and coming, of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just to say, we need to love, the new testament, we need to love, the old testament, we need to study it, we need to, we need to prize it, we need to learn it.

And Peter, in his first letters, already talked, about the prophets, in chapter one, desiring, to look into this. God gave them, a partial fulfillment, and God has decreed, that we still need, that fulfillment.

And, once again, Peter says, two things, about the old testament, witness, as he said, about the new testament, witness, and it's the same, kind of thing. First of all, the old testament, witness, shines as a light, in the darkness.

If you like, there is something to see. Verse 19, we have something more, sure, the prophetic word, which do well, to pay attention, as to a lamp, shining, in a dark place.

So often, throughout the old testament, particularly, Psalm 119, perhaps, that wonderful psalm, referred to earlier on, reflecting, on the word of God, looking at it, from every angle, savoring it, loving it.

[19 : 48] And, basically, what he's saying, is that, this light, will lead us, to the full day. Now, the full day, in one sense, came with the full revelation, the full revelation, in the new testament.

But, that full day, also, will be, when Christ himself, comes, the power, and coming, of our Lord Jesus Christ. And, the morning star, rises, in your hearts.

In other words, when that day comes, two things will happen, there will be, an outward illumination.

We will see, clearly, what is now, invisible. It will then, be evident, that Jesus Christ, is Lord.

Every knee, will bow, every tongue, will confess. But also, the morning star, rises, in our hearts.

There will be, an inward illumination. We will see then, of what we have, glimpsed, dimly, by faith.

What we sometimes, doubted. What we've often, found a struggle, to hold on to. And that was true, all the time. And that's what, Peter is saying here. This light, will guide us, in a dark place.

[20 : 52] The word is murky. The word suggests, fogginess, confusion. And it's, all kinds of things. First of all, it suggests, the confusion, the confusion, of cleverly, devised myths, which that light, will guide us through.

It suggests, the unsavory, practices of the world. People love, darkness, rather than light, because their deeds, are evil. And when that day dawns, we will see then, what we cannot see, clearly now.

That the whole story, hangs together. That Christ, revealed in his glory, the Christ, whom we believe, now by faith, will, it will be shown, and no one, will be able, to doubt it.

See at the moment, it's difficult, to prove, in fact, it's impossible, to prove, scientifically, that what's preached, from this pulpit, differs, from what's preached, from others.

Where perhaps, this is not being preached, and next week, we'll look at, the whole question, of false prophets, and false teachers. Peter is saying, hold on to that truth, be guided by that light, and the day will come, when that light, will be so, overpowering, that everyone, will see it.

[22 : 00] But secondly, what the prophets, heard. Just like the apostles, they saw, they didn't see as clearly, as the apostles. But secondly, what they heard, and that's verses 20, and 21.

Knowing this, first of all, that no prophecy, of scripture, comes from, someone's own, interpretation. Now, it's quite fashionable, in some commentaries, to describe prophets, as religious geniuses, people who have, particular insights, and so on.

Undoubtedly, the prophets, people like Isaiah, and Jeremiah, were highly gifted men. But the point is, it's not, that they were highly gifted, had wonderful intellect, but that they were, given a message, by God.

And not only that, they were given, the interpretation, of that message. It's fascinating, if you look at the prophets, you often read something like this, the words of Amos, which he saw.

In other words, as both seeing, and hearing. He sees, in the, he sees from the vantage point, of the divine, assembly, if you like, and he comes, with these words.

[23 : 07] But when Amos, gives his visions, in chapter 7, and following, he's given the interpretation, of these visions. He's not left, to try and work out, what they mean. Similarly, Daniel, in his dreams, and visions, has given the interpretation, of these.

And that's what this means, that, no prophecy of scripture, comes from someone's, own interpretation. As Dick Lucas says, in the commentary, I mentioned last week, Isaiah didn't come down, to breakfast, one morning, and say, I've had a wonderful, new idea, about the Exodus.

God gave him, that revelation, in chapters 51, and following, that when the people, returned, from Babylon, it would be a repetition, of the Exodus, from Egypt. God was still, working out, his purpose. It doesn't mean, either, that we don't need, to work hard, at the text of scriptures. It doesn't mean, we don't need faith. And it certainly, doesn't mean, we don't depend, on the Holy Spirit.

But what it means, is that ultimately, God has spoken. God has spoken, and therefore, we must obey. It doesn't mean, the scriptures, were dictated, as it were.

[24 : 14] Because, read for example, Luke chapter 1. One of the few, glimpses we have, in scripture, of how a biblical book, was written. Luke in that, chapter talks about, says many others, have written, many others, have talked about it.

I've done my homework, as well. I've read the reports, I've listened to the reports, and now I'm presenting, my account, You see, the inspiration, of scripture, is never explained, in scripture.

But what is made, perfectly clear, is that the Holy Spirit, super intends, the whole process. So the result, we have, is not just, the words of Peter, but the words of God.

That applies to, all the writers, of scripture. They're the words, of people. People who worked, hard at it. People who have, their own style. People who have, their own ways, are expressing ideas.

But nevertheless, the Holy Spirit, so worked, that what we have, is the word of God, the voice, from heaven. It says, for no prophecy, was ever produced, by the will of man.

[25 : 16] In other words, you don't volunteer, to be a prophet. You don't go along, and say, well by the way, I think I'd make, a good prophet. Prophets are called, prophets are chosen, and prophets are given, the word.

But men spoke, from God. These wonderful phrases, that sums up, what the scripture, are men spoke, from God. As they were, carried along, this word is used, in Acts 27, of the shipwreck, which Paul, was involved in the ship, was carried along, by the wind.

Now, if you've read that, account, you'll know very well, that didn't mean, that the shipmen, had to do nothing, and similarly, the fact they were, carried along, by the spirit, means, they had to work, jolly hard, as they put down, what the spirit, was saying.

And we of course, need that same spirit, as we study the word, as we listen to the word, we need to pray, for that spirit's, illumination, as we open the word, whether we're, opening it, for our private reading, and certainly, when we're opening it, to teach it to others.

The spirit, who gave the scriptures, is the only one, who can truly, interpret, the scriptures. So what is Peter saying? And Peter is saying, we have everything, that we need, in the word of God.

[26 : 33] That doesn't mean, we don't ever read, any other books, or do any of that, that's not what he's meaning, at all. What he means, is that, as we live the life, of faith, in this godless world, we have first of all, a light, that shines, an experience, but secondly, we have a voice, from heaven.

And, in the scriptures, we have, everything we need, for life, and godliness. And that's why, we thank God, for those, who were called, by him, to give us, the scriptures.

Those who, those who devoted, the light. When you read a prophet, like Jeremiah, for example, I'm reading Jeremiah, at the moment, and when you, see what it cost him, the awful things, it cost him, to bring that, living word of God, not just to his own generation, but to every generation, then you realize, something, of what it means, to be called, by God.

It's not like, it's not like, winning a holiday, for two in the Caribbean. It's a terrifying, experience. So we have, something more sure. We have the word, of the apostles, we have the word, of the prophets, and we have that spirit, who inspired, the gracious Holy Spirit, when we open that word, and ask for his help, comes to us, so that, we will find, in scripture, a light, shining, that will lead us, to the perfect day.

Amen. Let's pray. God our Father, we, ask forgiveness, for the, flippant way, and for the, cavalier way, in which we often, treat the words, of the apostles, and the prophets.

[28 : 22] We pray indeed, that we may listen, to the voice, from heaven. We may follow, the light, that shines, from heaven. And we will find, that that light, will lead us, through the darkness, and the murkiness, of this world, to the perfect day.

So bless us Lord, and strengthen us, in Jesus name. Amen.