

The Prophets and Apostles can't be Lying

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[0 : 0 0] Good afternoon and welcome to our lunchtime Bible talk. I'm Josh Johnston. I'm one of the ministers in training here at the Tron, and we are today looking at our fourth study in the first chapter of 2 Peter. So please all turn in your Bibles to 2 Peter. We'll read the whole chapter today, but we're really looking at verses 16 to 21 to finish it off. So if we begin in verse 1, you'll find on page 1018 in the church Bibles.

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ to those who have obtained the faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For he ever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure. For if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. For in this way, they'll be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Therefore, I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure, you may be able at any time to recall these things. For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was born to him by the majestic glory, this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this very voice, born from heaven. For we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have something more sure, the prophetic word to which you will do well to pay attention, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this, first of all, that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have spoken to us and spoken so clearly. We thank you that we can know you, that we can read and hear of your promises and so believe and trust them. We thank you that your word is unchanging and completely trustworthy. That as we will all one day no longer be in these bodies and will have passed away. We thank you that your word will still stand, will still be true.

We thank you for the Lord Jesus upon whom these promises have been brought to reality for us. We ask that you work within us now a growing love and affection for him, for his words and for his way.

[4 : 44] May we all yearn for his return, that we might fully share with him in his great glory. Help us to have in mind the truth of his return, that we might not despair with this world, but that we might live faithfully for you whilst we're here, being confident that at the last day we will stand because of Jesus. Give us great confidence in your gospel, we pray, that we might share it with a world desperately in need of your grace.

Give us great confidence, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Downstairs we have a book room and every so often in the middle stand the display changes and picks up a specific focus. The current one is don't judge a book by its cover.

Some of the covers may have looked trendy and appealing in the 80s, but now I miss the masses of beautifully produced books, the only thing that can be said to be pretty about them is that they're pretty bad. But a dodgy looking book cover doesn't mean that what's inside or underneath the cover isn't something really quite wonderful. When buying a book, the real concern ought to be what is underneath the cover. What credibility is it going to have? Is it truthful? Is it reliable? Will it be helpful? Peter was writing to Christians who faced a real temptation from people who appeared to be trustworthy Christians. The temptation was that they could live however they wanted. The temptation was to give in to the desires they had and not to worry about any consequences. The temptation was driven by questioning whether Jesus was coming back because if he wasn't, there wouldn't be any consequences.

The error of these dangerous Christians was to deny that Jesus was coming back as judge. And this had a complete impact on how they lived. We see that all over chapter two, don't we? They behave in ways that ought to have nothing to do with being Christian. And it fits, doesn't it?

If they don't anticipate being judged, then why would they show any self-control? In fact, why would they show any godliness at all? This way of life may seem very appealing to many people, being able to do all that you want and to have nothing to worry about in the end. But Peter is clear that it is a dangerous way to think because it produces lives that say Jesus isn't coming back. The two things are completely linked. What we really believe will show out in how we live. That's why Peter can describe them at length as they really are. Often when we come across people who have changed their beliefs as Christians, it's to suit a way of life that doesn't fit with the gospel. Whether that change be to denying Jesus completely or more subtle ways to undermine his words, there are two things going on.

[8 : 02] A change of faith, but a change in faith that allows people more freedom to live as they want. We aren't really able to separate those two things. We can't separate them out to think which one comes first, which one's driving the other, because the reality is they both drive each other.

So Peter doesn't respond to this danger by simply telling the believers to act in a godly way. He also responds by reminding them again and again of what is the real truth about life, about death and judgment. And he backs it all up with solid and certain proof, first-hand evidence, and eyewitness testimony that can be trusted. He responds with real substance. The tonic is that they both know the truth and know the kind of life that fits with that. So just like with any Christian book we think about buying, we need to look beyond the cover to see what substance there is underneath.

Peter is giving us the substance of the real gospel and the life that fits with that. He wants these Christians to know that however good the front cover looks for living as we please, underneath it is a hollow shell. It is false and not worth following. So Peter says firstly in verses 16 to 18, Jesus's return is no lie. Jesus's return is no lie. Look at verse 16. He says, for we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. What Peter has been reminding these Christians of is what the apostles have always said. We saw last week that Peter's message was to remember what they already knew. It wasn't anything new. And he goes on to say why. It is because they do not follow myths, not even ones that are cleverly concocted.

Peter and the apostles' role was to make clear the gospel to believers and to unbelievers. And key to that is that Jesus is coming back. And unlike in his first coming, this time he is coming in power. That's what they are making known to Christians. And that's important to know.

How could these apostles be sure that what they were speaking was the truth? How can we know that we can trust them? Look at the end of verse 16. It is because they were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

[10 : 54] At Jesus' transfiguration, Peter witnessed what happened. He says, For when Jesus received honour and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the majestic glory, this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Peter was standing on the mountain watching. They were there when suddenly Jesus became so radiant, so white, that this earth couldn't bleach, bleach, things to be that white, we're told. He saw this happen. He saw two people who were already with God passed away from this world, walking along with Jesus. And suddenly this voice of God from heaven bellows out of a cloud. This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.

Peter received in this instance a fortieth of what was to come. He experienced a glimmer of what the future glory is going to look like. A radiance so bright, so white, that it isn't of the earth, because it was heavenly. Peter and the others experienced something that is not of this world.

They experienced the great future that awaits. The great future that is in store for Jesus' people. God's majesty was appearing before their very eyes. The great end goal of human history was displayed to them in that moment on that mountain. They knew what the future held, and nothing would undermine it.

That's why they can say with all authority that Jesus is coming back. It might sound like something out of this world that's barely believable, but they saw it happen, and they passed it on.

After all, these are the people who were with Jesus for his ministry. They saw him, they heard him, they touched him, they knew him. Jesus' return is no lie. It's no mere story cleverly concocted.

[13 : 00] No, the apostles saw it. That's why they can say, verse 18, we ourselves heard this voice born from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. Can anyone else say that? Can these false teachers say that? Absolutely not. The apostles were eyewitnesses. They were really with him. What they say has real substance and credibility. Jesus is coming back. All of human history is looking forward to that point, and it's not a lie. But that's not all of Peter's proof for it. As we probe under the cover of the book, thinking about, is this worth buying? Is this substantial? We see that there's more evidence to come. If any Christians were revering under the temptation to live like the world. If you're unsure whether Jesus was coming back, Peter goes on. He says, secondly, in verses 19 to 21, God's words will carry us to his return. God's words will carry us to his return. It's not just the word of the apostles that we have. Even though they witnessed something extraordinary and were reliable on their own. Peter goes on to say that the message of the prophets points to and says the same thing.

We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed. The substance of the Christian faith is based both on the words of the prophets and the words of those who stood with Jesus. They complement and confirm each other. They're saying the same thing. They both have in view the return of Jesus, who will bring with him in full color all that's been promised. This is not just the musings of mere men. The prophets did not get up one day and think, I'm going to write a book. And in my book, I'm going to have an epic tale that ends with a man coming back on a white horse. They were not out to make money by selling lots of books. No, the prophets were messengers from God speaking his words. Look at verses 20 and 21.

Knowing this, first of all, that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man. But men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. So Peter's grounds for this, for the message that he teaches, the basis for Peter telling of Jesus' return is God speaking through prophets and God speaking from a cloud as they witnessed his majesty. Peter's message is certain, whereas anyone who would have you think that you can behave as you please, they do nothing but twist the word of God. We see that all over chapter two.

They twist the word of God. In fact, listen to what chapter two says about what they do. They secretly bring in destructive heresies. They get many to follow their ways, meaning that because of them, the way of truth will be blasphemed. They will exploit you with false words. Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. It would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.

They've turned from the truth. They speak with loud boasts of folly, and by doing this, they entice people away from the truth. Peter is making it clear that the lifestyle that might look attractive. The life of doing whatever you please is based on lies. The life that you might think will bring you happiness, that you get to do whatever you want, is completely baseless. It's twisting the truth about God. The life of following Jesus has the whole weight of the apostles and the prophets behind it.

[17 : 35] It has the whole weight of God himself behind it as he speaks these promises. Peter wants you to know that however attractive the front cover of the other life looks, underneath it is rotten and worthless. But following Jesus's gospel is the certain way to a godly and truly free life. The return of Jesus is absolutely vital. The gospel is ripped of its good news if Jesus isn't coming back. This is as good as it gets if he isn't coming back. How depressing. But, Peter says, he is coming back. And that's our final point. Look again at verse 19. He is coming back, as has always been promised, and you will do well to listen to that. We will do well to pay attention to Jesus's return. We have seen how sure it is that he will come back, and he will come back as judge.

And it is completely essential that we pay attention to that. If we're convinced of this, it will shape our lives. Just as failure to get that leads many people to live as they please, even today, shaping them to be more concerned with what pleases themselves than with what pleases God.

So, too, will our lives be shaped by paying attention to Jesus's return, only shaped for the better. The message that judgment is coming also brings the message that you can be saved from that judgment. Listen to what Peter says in chapter 2.

If, by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly, and if he rescued Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment. And again, listen to chapter 3.

But according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. What we believe about Jesus' return shapes everything. If we know that we'll be declared righteous on that day, then it shapes how we live now. We know we can begin to live up to what Jesus has done. We can trust God's promises to transform us because he's given us everything we need for a godly life. If we know that we will one day fully enjoy what Peter experienced in part at the transfiguration, then we have much more to look forward to, knowing that this life isn't it.

[20 : 44] Knowing that things are only going to get better and brighter for us. For those who live as they see fit, they deny the truth about Jesus.

They may think it's a freeing thing, but what is waiting for them couldn't be further from freedom. It is slavery. It is destruction. And it means that this is as good as it gets.

But for those who long for Jesus' return, it's a truly glorious thing. It's escaping from darkness to light forever. Look again at verse 19.

You will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. We will do well to pay attention to the return of Jesus.

That is what the prophets have spoken of, and that is what Peter is reminding us of. We will do well to have it in focus until the day that it happens, until that day dawns, until the morning star, the Lord Jesus, long promised, will finally come. On that day, the promises God has made will be aligned perfectly with what we see and experience. We will not just enjoy them by faith, but we will enjoy them fully, really, and by sight.

[22 : 18] Jesus' return is no lie, and why would we want it to be? Underneath the front cover of the Christian life, we have the best ending possible.

It carries the weight of the prophets' and apostles' testimonies. It is as sure as God's own word telling us, because that's what it is.

And for all who believe it is good news, something to long for, it is a great day. Jesus' return is no lie, and why would you want it to be?

Let's pray. Father, we do thank you for the Lord Jesus.

We thank you that, as he has come already to the cross, to take the burden of our sin from us, that we can also, because of that, look forward with great joy to his return.

[23 : 29] Give us great confidence in that, that it would shape everything we do. For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.