

## **“SOMETHING BETTER THAN AN EYEWITNESS.”**

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### **Scripture Texts: II Peter 1:16-21**

#### **Introduction.**

Dave Barry is a Pulitzer Prize-winning newspaper columnist who wrote a nationally syndicated humor column for about 25 years. Phama and I laughed out loud at a lot of his humor. We learned whenever he wrote, “Seriously, I am not making this up” that was a sure sign he was in fact definitely making it up.

Peter is arguing he is definitely not making up what he is saying about Jesus, and the proof of that is found in two things, we were eye witness, and better yet, we have the prophetic Word.

Peter’s authority was being challenged, so he grounds it in two reasons.

#### **II Peter 1:16-18, establishes the first argument, we were eyewitnesses.**

He starts by answering the accusation that his teaching is a made up myth or fairy tale, some sort of once upon a time story. Someone has accused Peter of being out of date or old fashion or irrelevant. We have a phrase now days, “that is so yesterday.”

Meaning passé,

I like the guy who said, “saying it’s so yesterday, is so yesterday.”

There were people saying the coming of Jesus was a myth. Peter actually quotes what they say in chapter 3.

**II Peter 3:4** They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”

Why are they rejecting the Second Coming? They actually had a motive. They are saying you don’t have to worry about being personally accountable for your moral and ethical actions. You can go ahead and do whatever you want, whenever you want, with whomever you want, without fear of divine punishment. This will be more clear in chapter 2 and 3.

Peter's answers that the basis of what we teach is not in ourselves or in the words of men. It rests in person of Jesus Christ and in the prophetic Word of God. Or to say it another way, it rests on the living Word of God and the written Word of God.

First, he reminds them that he was an eyewitness. Four times he describes what he saw and heard. He was an eyewitness and an ear witness.

Peter isn't making his argument stand on his own amazing personal experiences.

He is bearing apostolic witness to facts of our faith to which he was an eyewitness. This is not the same as a subjective spiritual experience. He didn't preach his experience, he preached Jesus Christ with whom he had spent three years, he saw His miracles, he heard His amazing authority in His preaching.

He could bear apostolic witness to Jesus' authority and power over illness, disease, demon, creation and nature, even over death. He could bear witness to Jesus being nailed to a cross and buried in a grave and they rising from the dead.

He singles out one especially profound experience. He saw the transfiguration where more clearly than anything else, Peter saw the glory of the Son of God. Not only that but he saw Moses and Elijah. And not only that but he heard the voice of God.

Is the church of Jesus Christ built on myths and lies and fabrications deliberately told to deceive, or is the church built on the solid rock of the testimony of Peter and the other apostles?

Would a man who denied Jesus three times to save his own neck because he was afraid of dying, now make claims and statements that exposed him to the constant threat of persecution and death?

But of course someone could easily argue, well that's all nice and good for you Peter, but we haven't seen or heard anything and how do we know you are telling the truth and not making this up?

Like those who deny that the holocaust happen or deny that anyone has landed on the moon or even the man sued last week for his denials that the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting happened. Some people refuse to believe, like doubting Thomas.

## **II Peter 1:19-21, establishes the second argument, we have the prophetic Word.**

So Peter doesn't let his argument stand on one leg, he adds something of even greater validity. There is an even more reliable light than just him, something more sure, the prophetic Word.

He is saying to us that your faith can be just as sure as his eyewitness kind of faith. In fact, we can be more sure, because the prophetic words is more sure than what he saw and heard.

Seeing isn't essential to believing, God doesn't have to show up every 50 years or so to keep the proof alive, we already have it.

God has not left us in the dark, the Scriptures declare the truth, Jesus is the Son of the living God, He has come and He is coming again to judge the living and the dead.

The myth is not that it's not truth, the myth is that you have to have a sign, something you can see or hear for it to be true. That's the myth. Take God at His Word, this is the light by which you can set your course and live your life and strengthen your marriage and teach and discipline your children, and get God's wisdom for your life.

Nothing in this book came from the fertile imaginations of men, nothing in here is the stuff of myth or fable or fairy tale. This is not a record of what man has done for God, this is a record of what God has said and done for man.

The Greek word here for "carried" (or moved) is the word from which we get our word for ferry. The prophets and apostles who wrote down Scripture were ferried along. Each writer got on the ferry and did their own thing, wrote in their own voice and style, but God the Holy Spirit was the ferry captain making sure the ferry arrived at the right destination (illustration from Kent Hughes).

In other words, God guided the human writers intentions to express God's own intentions. Paul says it this way:

**I Corinthians 2:12-13** Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. 13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

Let me try to explain how this process happened by contrasting it to how the Muslims say the Quran came into existence.

Muslim's believe the Quran existed in heaven in Arabic written by Allah. It was given in its exact heavenly form by the angel Gabriel to Mohammed. Mohammed was not the author but the recipient. This is why the Quran must only be in Arabic and must only be recited in Arabic and any translations are not consider the true revelation.

This is not the Christian doctrine of how we received the Scriptures.

We don't believe the Bible was written by God in heaven. Nor do believe in a mechanical dictation of the words such that it didn't pass through the mind and hearts of the authors, but only from God to their fingers, bypassing everything else.

If it had been dictated by God, then there would be no difference in style and characteristics from Genesis to Revelation.

But in fact the Bible reflects the different thoughts and experiences and backgrounds of the human authors, while the Holy Spirit kept them from error. They expressed the truth in their own manner, but it was always the truth, as assured by the Spirit.

We believe Scripture is like the incarnation. As Jesus was divine and became human and is bound to human nature, so God bound His divine Word in human words. As Jesus is without sin and error, so the Bible is without sin or error. God humbled Himself to take on human flesh, and He humbled Himself to reveal His Word in human language and human forms of speech and communication.

God spoke through 40 different authors over 1600 years in three different languages and many different styles and forms, history, poetry, prophecy, letters, etc. The characteristics of each author can be seen.

This is why when we study the Bible we place an emphasis on context and seeking to understand the authors original intentions and how James use of a word may be different from how David used that word.

This book is a miracle of God, the Word of God, and the word of men moved by the Holy Spirit who spoke from God. This is a supernatural as it gets.

**Psalms 19:10** More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

**II Peter 1:19** ... 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.

## **Implications and application.**

I think that if I had seen and heard what Peter saw and heard on the Mount of Transfiguration I would be absolutely convinced and I would believe and obey. But Peter says I don't need what he had to absolutely believe and obey. We have something more sure than a booming voice from heaven.

It would have been very amazing to see the Red Sea divide or to see Jesus walking on water or to see Lazarus come out of the tomb. But it is also very possible to have seen all the things of the Bible and still completely misunderstand or miss the point.

Seeing isn't always believing. Experiencing isn't always convincing.

We are way better off. We see so much more clearly. We can see the grand sweep of God's redemptive purposes all through Scripture. We see His glory revealed in the miracles and in the cross and in the resurrection. We see the meaning of the prophecy in its fulfillment in Jesus.

This is why Scripture, and Scripture alone, is so profitable and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training. This is why Scripture alone is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. This is why Scripture is the very words of life.

Without the Bible you can't see and what you do see you will not make right sense of. Without the Bible you can't hear and understand, you might hear, but you won't understand. Without the Bible you cannot be wise unto salvation, but will remain foolish unto death. Without the Bible you cannot see glory, you can't see the light of the gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ. Without the Bible you will starve to death. You can't live by bread alone. Without this you will die.

Which is more valid, a phone call or a letter? In business which is more valid for making a transaction, a phone call or a written contract? Don't we say we need it in black and white? Here it is.

No wonder Jesus says to those who demanded a sign in order to believe, that if they didn't believe Moses and the prophets, meaning the OT, then they wouldn't believe a sign either.

This is the Word of God given to men and guided and protected and kept from error as it was given to us. It has a claim on us, we must orient our lives around the teaching of this Book.

Some of you are basing your inspiration and faith on devotionals and inspirational books and personal testimonies of people. Daily Bread, Today, Jesus Calling. They may make us feel good, they may be inspiring, they have their place but they are not God's Word, they will not feed your soul and make you wise the way the truth from God will.

This is God's wisdom about how to discipline our kids, or deal with conflict, or manage our finances, or how to think about politics or world events or find God's will and purpose.

This is the Word of God and we are wise if we listen to it as God speaking directly to us.

Listen to how Scripture itself describes the Word of God for us:

It is true (Psalm 119:142) and altogether reliable (Hebrews 6:18).

It is powerful, working its purpose in our hearts (1 Thessalonians 2:13) and not returning empty to the One who sent it (Isaiah 55:10–11).

It is pure, like silver refined in a furnace seven times (Psalm 12:6).

It is sanctifying (John 17:17).

It gives life (Psalm 119:37, 50, 93, 107; John 6:63; Matthew 4:4).

It makes wise (Psalm 19:7; 119:99–100).

It gives joy (Psalm 19:8; 119:16, 92, 111, 143, 174) and promises great reward (Psalm 19:11).

It gives strength to the weak (Psalm 119:28) and comfort to the distraught (Psalm 119:76) and guidance to the perplexed (Psalm 119:105) and salvation to the lost (Psalm 119:155; 2 Timothy 3:15).

This is the inexhaustible wisdom of God.

**Prayer:** Holy Father and God of all truth and wisdom, thank you that you have not left us in the dark but have revealed yourself to us. We do not worship an unknown God. You have shown us your will in your Word. You have personally caused it to be preserved, translated, published and multiplied so that all may know you. Cause us to love your truth, to take it to heart, to treasure as a pearl of great price this gift you have given to us (inspired by a pray in Valley of Vision).