

The Christian Faith is Based on a Solid Foundation: The Word of God

2 Peter 1:12-21

2 Peter 1:12-18 - *“For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. ¹³ Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, ¹⁴ knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. ¹⁵ Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.*

¹⁶ For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. ¹⁷ For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” ¹⁸ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.”

Background Notes

In 2 Peter 1:12-18 Peter mentioned two events from his own life experience with the Lord. And by the way, the mention of these two events supports the fact that the apostle Peter was indeed the author of this epistle.

The first event took place after the Lord’s resurrection, at Peter’s restoration on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. There the Lord revealed to Peter that he would die a martyr’s death. Verse 14: *“Knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.”* In John 21:18-19 the Lord said to Peter, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.”* This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, *“Follow Me.”* According to reliable tradition, Peter was crucified upside down. He died a martyr’s death for the sake of Christ and the gospel. Peter probably wrote this second epistle shortly before his martyrdom, as he indicated in verse 14.

Why did Peter mention this life event? Because, as he mentioned in verses 12 and 13, he wanted to make sure that his readers were firmly established in the truth before his soon-coming departure for Heaven. Peter was an eyewitness of the Lord’s life and ministry, and he would not be with them much longer. However, they would have his epistles to remind them of what the Lord taught (v15).

The other experience Peter mentioned was when he was with the Lord at the Mount of Transfiguration. Verses 17-18: *“For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.”*

Let’s read about this event in Matthew 17:1-5: *“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”*

At what “holy mountain” (v18) did the Transfiguration take place? We don’t know! Come with me on one of our Holy Land study trips, and I’ll show you Mount Tabor, the “traditional site” of the Transfiguration. However, the Transfiguration may have taken place on Mount Hermon, in the far north of Israel. We just don’t know for sure.

Why did Peter mention the Transfiguration here in 2 Peter 1? He wanted his readers to know that the Christian faith was not a figment of his imagination. It’s the truth! Peter, James and John saw the majesty of Jesus Christ with their own eyes (v16), and they heard the voice of God from Heaven with their own ears (v17-18).

Doctrinal Points

1. The Christian faith is not a “cleverly devised fable.”

Verse 16: *“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”*

Did you realize that basis and foundation of the Christian faith is absolutely unique? No other world religion can compare! The Christian faith is based not only on the **teachings** of Jesus - it is based on actual **events** that took place in history. Christianity is unique!

Other religions are based on the teachings of their founders, not on specific historical events. Islam, for example, is based on the teachings of Mohammed, not on his life events. Anyone can start a new religion based on some new “religious teachings.” Christianity is completely different than any other world religion because it is rooted in historic events.

You see, the Christian faith is false and futile if Jesus did not rise bodily from the dead in an actual event that took place in real history. If the miracles reported in the New Testament and the resurrection of Christ did not really take place in history, then Christianity is a fable - regardless of what Jesus taught. It's just another religion.

Peter's point here is that Christianity is not just another world religion. It is not a "cleverly devised fable." ***It's the truth!*** It's based on the ***teachings*** of Jesus, but it's also based on the ***acts*** of Jesus in history - historical events that could be checked out, because there were many eyewitnesses. Praise the Lord - the Christian faith is not a cleverly devised fable!

2. The Christian faith is not just a man-made religion.

Verses 19-21: *"And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;²⁰ knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."*

The Christian faith is not a man-made religion. It is the ***God-given truth***, communicated to us by God Himself through His Word. The Bible is not the words of man about God. No! The Bible is the Word of God to man.

Verse 21: *"For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."* What a great proof text for the inspiration of Scripture! It goes right along with 2 Timothy 3:16: *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God."* In these great Scriptures the Bible claims that God Himself inspired both the ***writers*** and the ***writings*** of Scripture. 2 Timothy 3:16 emphasized the ***writings*** of Scripture, and 2 Peter 1:21 emphasized the ***writers*** of Scripture.

What does verse 19 mean? *"And so we have the prophetic word made more sure."* If the Bible is completely true, how can we make it ***more*** sure? Peter's point here was that the prophetic Scriptures are confirmed when the prophecies are fulfilled. The event of the Transfiguration of Jesus (v17-18) was a confirmation of the kingdom prophecies in the Old Testament Scriptures. The Mount of Transfiguration was a glimpse of the kingdom of our Lord on earth in the coming day. The Lord will be ruling on earth in all His glory, and believers will be here as well. This was illustrated on the Mount of Transfiguration. So the prophecies concerning the coming kingdom of Christ on this earth were confirmed by the Transfiguration event.

Verse 19 continues by saying that the confirmed Word of God in our hearts is like a light shining in a dark place. The Word of God gives us light in this dark world, until the Lord returns to take His Church and establish His earthly kingdom. He will come as the Morning Star, and as the Light breaking through the darkness at dawn!

What does verse 20 mean? *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation.”* There are several possible interpretations for this verse. Does it mean that interpretation of any Scripture cannot stand alone, but must be subject to all the rest of Scripture? That’s one possibility. Does it mean you can’t make the Bible say what you want it to say? This is certainly true, and in the context, it is likely.

It means that the prophetic Scriptures did not originate with the prophets themselves. Their writings came from **God Himself**, as the context says. So the Christian faith is based solidly on the revealed Word of God. The Christian faith is not a man-made religion.

Practical Application

Remember, a tent is temporary!

In verses 13-14, Peter referred to his body as a tent: *“Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.”*

A tent is a **temporary** dwelling place - and that’s the point!

How do you view your body? Some people - even some Christians - treat their bodies as if they were going to live forever in their present earthly body. They spend excessive time and money on maintaining the appearance of their bodies with costly supplements, cosmetics, and treatments. That’s not a biblical view of the body! On the other hand, mistreating our bodies with poor diets, junk food and a couch potato lifestyle is not a biblical view of the body either.

The proper view of our bodies is that they are like tents. They’re good and useful as **temporary** dwelling places. We value our tents and keep them in good repair, but we don’t spend time and money decorating or embroidering them, as if they’ll last forever!

Yes, there is a proper place for physical exercise and staying in good shape, because we should take decent care of our tents. We shouldn’t abuse them or let them fall into disrepair by complete lack of care! God has provided our tents for us to use in His service, so they are important and valuable for our **temporary** time on earth.

But remember, our present physical bodies are only **temporary** dwellings. As believers, we look forward to our permanent resurrection bodies. Our resurrection bodies will not age, and even better, praise the Lord - they will not be subject to sin!

So - get the right view of your body! Remember, a tent is a **temporary** dwelling!