

## SECOND PETER

### Lesson 4

#### Revelation, an Antidote to Heresy

2 Peter 1:12-21

What is the greatest battle the Christian Church is fighting within her own ranks today? Is it humanism? Is it evolution? Is it the millennial issue, the free grace/free will issue? No, although these things are all important, the greatest issue is over the Bible.

Within evangelical Christianity the issue of the inspired Word is being attacked. Emil Brunner, a neo-orthodox theologian, saw the importance of the Bible when he said, “The fate of the Bible is the fate of Christianity.” If we lose the battle for the Bible, we can be sure that Christianity is going to be severely wounded and maybe even pass out of existence.

The importance of believing in an inspired, inerrant, infallible Bible is no less today than it was in the days of the Apostle Peter. He wrote his Second Epistle to refute Christian-Gnosticism, a heresy that played down the person and work of Christ, denied the second coming, and said the Bible was full of fables and myths. Gnostics claimed to be very intelligent people with deep doctrine. They had philosophy mixed with Christianity. Yet their lives were immoral. Peter is very concerned that his readers not be taken by this heresy.

In the first verses of the epistle Peter indicated that the way to ward off getting into heresy is to remember that true Christians have received the gift of faith which enables them to believe in Christ (1:1). The gift of saving faith lays hold of the true gospel and always results in salvation. We preach sin, heaven, hell, and Christ’s death for sinners, faith, and repentance, and if a man responds to this, he will be saved indicating that a divine work has taken place, making that saving faith in Christ possible. No true conversion to Christ can come if there is not saving faith in the true gospel, for where heresy is believed, salvation cannot transpire.

Christians have also been granted life and godliness, which allows them to pursue true knowledge of Christ rather than heresy (1:3). They have been given precious and magnificent promises that they might progressively escape the corruption in this world through lust. Promises are given so they will not go after false teaching (1:4).

Verses 5-11 show how to prove and demonstrate that one is among the elect of God by his progress in moral advancement, for heresy will only lead a person into immorality.

Now in verses 12-21, Peter is going to stress the importance of the Word of God to ward off heresy.

#### **REVELATION IS TO BE REPEATED (1:12-15)**

**“Therefore, I shall always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you.”**

“These things” refers to all the truths Peter has been teaching in 1:1-11 and more—faith as a gift, practical knowledge of Christ, positional life and godliness, participation in the divine nature, God’s granting of His precious promises, the necessity of proving and

demonstrating one's calling and election by showing moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and Christian love.

Even though Peter's readers were established in these truths—had them in their heads and understood their theological significance—he was always ready to remind them. Sometimes the truths might have been only in the head and not in the heart, or if in the heart, forgotten, so the reminder was necessary.

Peter also wanted them to have good doctrine, because without right doctrine it is impossible to have right lives.

Peter kept reminding the Christians who had been established in truth about this because there is always the subtle danger of falling into heresy, no matter what one's chronological age or spiritual maturity might be.

Surely reminding these folks of positive truth also involved warning them about negative error. This is the basic reason for the epistle. Charles Spurgeon said, "It is the preacher's duty to expose error, even though it is held by saintly believers."

Often Christians do not stand against error because the person who utters it is such a nice, sweet, intelligent gentleman or lady. But if it is error, it is wrong, and it must be exposed or the saints may be led astray.

**“And I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.”**

Peter was constantly trying to stir (awaken, arouse) the saints to love and good works. This was especially true as he contemplated his imminent death. He was in his late sixties or early seventies at this time. Notice his concern was that they should have right doctrine and right living.

Peter had the same concern as did the Apostle John who wrote: *“I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth” (3 John 4)*. Peter looks at his body as an “earthly dwelling,” literally a “tent.” It was a skin tent. Life for Peter was temporary and transitory. A tent is something you fold up and move, and this body of ours will fold up one day and move on to heaven where we will get new spiritual bodies. *“For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1)*. Peter's death was near, and he knew that the Lord Jesus had predicted he would die a violent death.

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.’ Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, ‘Follow Me!’” (John 21:18-19).*

According to tradition, Peter was crucified upside down in Rome.

We have much to learn from Peter's attitude about death. Modern man has replaced the once forbidden subject of sex with death. We just don't want to talk about it. Peter had been living for years with the threat of death; he knew he would die in a horrible and painful way. Yet, he could speak about it with such wonderful calm, without fear or regret. For Peter, and for all Christians, death means entry into the everlasting kingdom. *“For to me, to*

*live is Christ, and to die is gain*” (Phil. 1:21). Seneca, an unbeliever, said, “Christians and idiots do not fear death. Why can’t reason attain to the same assurance folly has?” Such is the power of the gospel.

**“And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you may be able to call these things to mind.”**

Peter put his thoughts down on paper. Surely this includes First and Second Peter and the Gospel of Mark, as it is believed Peter contributed much information to Mark. He also wrote many other letters. When he died, he wanted people to have a right understanding of truth. Obviously, he saw the power of the printed page and two of his epistles were inspired Scripture.

If Peter was diligent to write these things down for us, we should be diligent to read them and know them; he is still speaking to us today through the Holy Scripture. Why must we repeat revelation (Bible doctrine) over and over? So Christians will not forget the truth and fall into heresy.

### **REVELATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (1:16-18)**

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

Peter had preached to these Christians that Jesus Christ would return in His Second Advent with power to establish the messianic kingdom on earth. The Old Testament promises of Christ’s return and earthly kingdom were made to the patriarchs and prophets. Peter was combating Christian-Gnostic heretics who claimed the return of Christ was a fable, a myth, a fairy tale.

*“Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.’” (2 Peter 3:3-4).*

Perhaps these heretics explained away the Second Advent and the future kingdom, but Peter says that he was an eyewitness of the Second Coming and the messianic kingdom before it ever happened. It took place at the Mount of Transfiguration.

How easy it is for some to rationalize away the Second Advent of Christ. A young Presbyterian, at his ordination exam, was asked if he believed in the Second Coming of Christ. He replied that he did. “Christ came the first time into the world and he came a second time when I received Him into my heart,” was his reasoning, but he would never admit that Christ is coming literally, bodily and visibly to this world in the Second Advent. Yet, they ordained him. How sad!

**“For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased’—and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.”**

The Mount of Transfiguration was a preview or foreview of the Messianic kingdom. It was an assurance to Peter, James and John that Christ would come a second time to establish His kingdom over the earth.

*“For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and WILL THEN RECOMPENSE EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS. Truly, truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.’ And six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; hear Him!’ And when the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were much afraid” (Matt. 16:27-28—17:1-6).*

They saw the Lord in glory. Peter and the two others saw what the Old Testament prophets had predicted about the Messianic kingdom.

## **REVELATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (1:19)**

### **“And so we have the prophetic word made more sure”**

The experience of the eyewitnesses on the Mount of Transfiguration made the Old Testament Prophet’s message “more sure.” Peter says that his experience certifies what the Old Testament prophets proclaimed to be true. Faith in Old Testament prophecies was accompanied by sight at the transfiguration and the prophetic word was made more sure. Whatever the Old or New Testaments teach can be trusted.

The heretics had neglected and misused the Word of God. Peter wanted them to see the primacy of the Word of God and to have confidence in it.

Did you know that there were over three hundred prophecies fulfilled literally in the first advent of Christ and there are at least three hundred yet to be fulfilled at His Second Advent? The study of the prophetic word is important for the Christian because it stirs him to begin to look for the return of Christ and to live a more godly life for the Savior. Do you study the prophetic Word? If you don’t, then you are not excited about the return of Christ, and you may not be living as close to the Lord as you ought to be. One thing is sure: both the Old and the New Testaments teach that Jesus Christ is going to return to this earth. Are you ready?

### **“to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place”**

Christians are to pay attention to God's Word. This literally means, "be addicted to it." We are to be "preoccupied with it." We need to give ourselves to it. We need to know it, to read it, to study it. We need to be mastered by it.

It is not enough to merely possess the Bible; we need to be subject to it. It is not how many times we have been through the Bible that is important, but how many times the Bible has been through us! If we subject ourselves to it, it will radically alter our lives. It will give us the basis for coping with life where we are. Surely, we ought to spend as much time reading the Bible as we do the newspaper or watching TV.

The Bible is "a lamp shining in a dark place." Christians, we live in a world of darkness. How do we learn to cope in a dark world? Where do we get illumination to find the way through life? We have a lamp, the Word of God. Some philosophies or manmade religions may show a brief ray of light here and there since there is some general revelation of truth in all false religion, but these will flicker out and the darkness will be even greater than before. The Bible is God's lamp for life and those who read it, study it, meditate upon it, and apply it will find a bright light in a dark world. The Word of God dispels darkness and gives the answers to life.

What do you do when your business fails? What do you do when you can't pay your bills? What do you do when your husband leaves you? What do you do when your children get out of control? The Bible has answers that can't be found in a world of darkness. The Bible gives spiritual commands and principles which cover every phase of life. Only the Bible tells us how to handle darkness, and we can trust the Bible.

**"until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts."**

It is quite permissible to translate this verse, "*you do well to pay attention in your hearts as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day shines.*" The "in your hearts" goes in the sentence above allowing the words "day dawns" to refer to the Second Advent and "the morning star arises" to refer to the Messiah who comes in the Second Advent. The point is obvious: Until Christ comes again, we Christians should be addicting ourselves to the Word of God with an emphasis on the prophetic word so that we will look for the return of our Lord and live more and more for Him.

## **REVELATION IS FROM GOD (1:20-21)**

**"But know this first of all"**

These Christians were to recognize the Bible to be of the utmost importance in their lives. They were not to neglect it. They could trust it; it originates from God.

**"that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation"**

The reason the Bible is a lamp in a dark world is that it is God's Word. This verse literally says, "No prophecy of Scripture springs forth (originates) from one's own disclosure." The Bible originates from God, not man. It is not a product of man's own intuition or understanding. We ought to give attention to the Bible, making it our lamp, because it is from God; it is God-breathed. "*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable*

*for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).*

Those who stick close to God’s Word will not be so likely to fall into any kind of heresy.

**“for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from. God.”**

Men didn’t just think up Scripture; they wrote it as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit like a ship carried along by the wind in its sails. God spoke through men. How did He do this? He supernaturally directed the minds of the writers so that without waiving their intelligence, literary style or personal feelings, or any other human factor, His complete and coherent message to man was recorded with perfect accuracy, the very words of the original manuscripts bearing the authority of Divine authorship.

There are some false views on inspiration which we should briefly expose so we will not find ourselves falling into any modern heresy in this area:

1. Modernism (liberalism). The Bible was written by sinful men and therefore full of errors, even in the original manuscripts, and is not reliable in matters of faith and practice. It is the finest book ever written, but it is just another book. The Bible gives people a good set of ethics to live by, but so do other great religious books. The Bible is inspired in that inspired men wrote it—inspired in the sense that any great book, secular or religious, is written by inspired authors.
2. Neo-orthodoxy. The Bible was written by sinful men and has errors in the original manuscripts. It is not reliable in some things, but it is still the Word of God because it is God’s Word. That which the Holy Spirit teaches a person is the Word of God to that person alone. That is, the Bible becomes the Word of God when the Holy Spirit teaches the person the thoughts of Scripture. The Bible is a human product filled with errors, but when God uses it to overpower the reader, it becomes the Word to us.
3. Neo-evangelical (Dynamic Theory). The Bible does have errors in the original manuscripts but it still is dynamically inspired. Scripture is divided into revelational Scripture without error and non-revelational Scripture, which has error. Non-revelational errors would occur in matters of history, numbers and cultural things. Revelational Scripture can be trusted in the areas of faith and practice for they make one wise unto salvation. This view denies verbal-plenary inspiration and says some portions of Scripture are inspired and others are not.

The fundamental or evangelical view of Scripture is that the Bible is verbally inspired and plenary in its totality and is infallible on all matters to which it speaks. The Bible is a product of God and man. God kept the authors from error when writing the original manuscripts. Inspiration guarantees that the final product, written revelation, was without error. Because we have an inspired Bible, we can trust it!

**CONCLUSION**

What lessons does God have for us Christians in this message? First, the Bible is not to grow old, and familiar truths are to be constantly repeated so that we will practice them and not just intellectually store them up in our heads. Second, a proper understanding of the Bible gets us ready for death, for we can say as did Paul, "*To be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord.*" Third, it is extremely important to study prophecy for it gets us ready to meet our Lord. Fourth, both the Old and New Testaments are inspired and are from God; therefore we can trust our Bible. In fact, the Bible is the most stable and sure thing in this sin-darkened world, and if we know it, it will be a lamp to our lives and we will be able to cope in a world of darkness. Fifth, the Bible alone can keep us from falling into heresy. Whether we are young or old Christians, if we are not in the Word of God, addicting ourselves to it, we are likely candidates to fall into some blatant or subtle heresy.

If you are without Christ, you have heard that the Lord Jesus is coming back to this earth, and when He does, He will judge the sinners and reward the saints. Are you prepared to meet Christ? If you do not have Him as your Lord and Savior, you shall be judged for all eternity. If you will bow to Him as your Deliverer and King, you will be saved, and you will not fear His coming but rather look forward to it. The sure word of prophecy says Christ is coming back again to this earth. Are you ready?