

## Bible Commentaries

### Coffman Commentaries on the Bible ▾

#### 2 Peter 1 ▾

#### Verse 1

#### PETER'S SECOND LETTER

#### CHAPTER 1

The keynote of this whole epistle is knowledge (**2 Peter 1:2,3,5,6,8**; **2 Peter 2:20,21**; and **2 Peter 3:18**); but it is a very special kind of knowledge which is meant. The Greek word is [*@epignosis*], that is, precise and correct knowledge.<sup>[1]</sup> It is the real or genuine knowledge, founded upon the word of God, not the knowledge that is falsely so-called.

This chapter, after the signature, greeting and salutation (**2 Peter 1:1**), gives the basis, and in a sense, the nature and location of this saving knowledge, contained in the exceeding great and precious promises (**2 Peter 1:2-4**), the growth of the Christian in this true knowledge (**2 Peter 1:5-11**), a mention of Peter's concern for the perpetuation of this priceless knowledge (**2 Peter 1:12-15**), and the inerrancy of the sources of this wonderful saving knowledge (**2 Peter 1:16-21**).

#### ENDNOTE:

<sup>[1]</sup> Stephen W. Payne, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, New Testament (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), p. 990.

**Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in righteousness of our God and the Saviour Jesus Christ: (2 Peter 1:1)**

**Simon Peter ...** This inclusion of Peter's original name, along with the one the Lord had given him is significant. "If a forger had been writing in Peter's name, he would have begun almost certainly by copying Peter's name from the first epistle,"<sup>[2]</sup> where it reads simply, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ." Why did Peter use this double name? Barnett thought it was due to "Peter's resumption in his old age of the name familiar to his youth"<sup>[3]</sup> and besides this, there is the additional factor of the entire epistle having been written in the full contemplation of impending death.

**A servant ...** The Greek word behind this is [*@doulos*],<sup>[4]</sup> the same word also used by Paul in **Romans 1:1**; **Philippians 1:1**; **Titus 1:1**, etc. It means slave, but due to the sinister connotations of that word, it is better rendered servant, as here. It is quite revealing that, despite the Greeks having two words for slave, the apostles always used [*@doulos*]. The other word ([*@andrapoden*])

means persons captured in war and sold as slaves; but [*doulos*] means one born into slavery.<sup>[5]</sup> It was by virtue of the new birth that the apostles, and all Christians, became slaves of Christ.

**And apostle of Jesus Christ ...** This is the highest title that Peter claimed, the highest that he could have claimed, and it has reference to his official status as a representative of Christ fully endowed with plenary authority.

**To them that have obtained a like precious faith with us ...** The word "obtained" here means properly to "obtain by lot, as in **Luke 1:9**."<sup>[6]</sup> This word is rare in the New Testament but does occur in Peter's speech (**Acts 1:17**). The word for "like precious" is found only here in the New Testament, but strongly suggests **1 Peter 1:7**; and, as Caffin said, "shows a correspondence with that epistle."<sup>[7]</sup> There are many other such close resemblances in this epistle with the first and with Peter's speeches in Acts, affording strong evidence of its Petrine authorship. The meaning of the whole clause is, "Those who, whether Jews or Gentiles, held a faith like that held by Peter,"<sup>[8]</sup> in short, all true Christians.

**In the righteousness of our God and the Saviour Jesus Christ ...** This is none other than the "righteousness of God in Christ (**Romans 3:22**), meaning the perfect faith and perfect obedience of the Son of God, which are in fact the sum total of all the righteousness ever achieved upon earth. All of the apostles, as well as all Christians, were saved by the righteousness of God in Christ; and it is available only "in him." As David H. Wheaton noted, "Though an apostle, he is still a sinner in need of the righteousness of ... Jesus Christ, as much as the newest convert."<sup>[9]</sup>

**Of our God and the Saviour Jesus Christ ...** The **ASV** is obviously wrong in this rendition, for it should read, "Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ," as in other versions. There are at least a dozen examples in the Greek New Testament of the title "God" being ascribed to Jesus Christ, as in **Hebrews 1:8**, etc. For a list of these, see in my Commentary on Hebrews, p. 31. The words of Jesus Christ himself demand our understanding of him as a member of the Godhead. His promises of eternal life, of raising the dead, of judging all people, of being with his church to the end of the world, and countless others, have no meaning whatever apart from his oneness with the Father in heaven. It is a gross mistake to suppose that the Christians initiated this conception in response to the blasphemous titles flaunted from the imperial throne by the worst of men. It is true that they did extol and flaunt this title of their blessed Lord Jesus Christ; but it was not one they invented; it was one they had learned from him.

[2] William G. Moorehead, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915), p. 2356.

[3] Albert E. Barnett, *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. XII (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 167.

[4] Eldon R. Fuhrman, *Beacon Bible Commentary*, Vol. 10 (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1967), p. 320.

[5] Kenneth S. Wuest, *Word Studies from the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), p. 181.

[6] B. C. Caffin, *The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 22, *2 Peter* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 1.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] James William Russell, *Compact Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1964), p. 590.

[9] David H. Wheaton, *The New Bible Commentary Revised* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), p. 1252.

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## Verse 2

**Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;**

**Grace to you and peace ...** These words are similar, in fact, identical with the greeting used by Paul, upon which frequent comments have been made throughout this series.

**In the knowledge of God ...** This is that special kind of knowledge noted in the chapter heading. Concerning it, Moorehead said:

This is the knowledge that rests on fact, that comes to the believer as something supernatural, as being communicated by the Spirit of God, and therefore is true and complete.<sup>[10]</sup>

Peter's introduction of the subject of this accurate and complete knowledge here at the very outset "anticipates the attack that is coming upon the godless speculations of the false teachers in chapter 2."<sup>[11]</sup> Some scholars once thought that Peter's attack against the false knowledge of the Gnostics required a late dating of the letter; but it is now known that the types of gnosticism refuted by Peter were prevalent in apostolic times, and that there is no reason whatever for dating the epistle outside the lifetime of its author.

[10] William G. Moorehead, *op. cit.*, p. 2357.

[11] Alfred Plummer, *Ellicott's Commentary on the Holy Bible*, Vol. VIII (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), p. 444.

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## Verse 3

**seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue;**

The true basis of saving knowledge is in God through Christ, who granted to the apostles full and complete knowledge of everything that pertains to life and godliness. The blessed promise of Christ that the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into "all truth" is certainly in the background of the statement here. The significance of this is seen in the fact that all subsequent "revelations" so-called, are relegated to the status of not pertaining to life and godliness. The very fact of the saving knowledge delivered through the apostles being complete (as Paul also said in **2 Timothy 3:17**), effectually denies the need of any subsequent information bearing upon life and godliness. In the light of this truth, what must be thought of the claims of a Mary Baker Eddy or Joseph Smith, or of any others claiming to add anything to the word of God?

**His divine power ...** Zerr thought that inasmuch as salvation is the subject matter here, "Divine power refers to the gospel, for **Romans 1:16** declares that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation";<sup>[12]</sup> and this is certainly true.

**Hath granted unto us ...** "The us here points back to ours of verse 1 and refers to the apostles of Christ."<sup>[13]</sup> Also, Macknight's beautiful paraphrase of the thought here stresses the same idea:

"Certainly God's divine power has gifted to us, the apostles of his Son, all things necessary to bring mankind to a godly life."<sup>[14]</sup>

**Life and godliness ...** The "life" here means eternal life, ever the principal concern of New Testament writers. "Godliness" is from a word occurring four times in this letter and also in one of Peter's speeches (**Acts 3:12**).<sup>[15]</sup> It was also used by Paul in the letters of the second imprisonment, being therefore apostolic, and not "a late first century word" as once alleged.

[12] E. M. Zerr, Bible Commentary, 2Peter (Marion, Indiana: Cogdill Foundation, 1954), p. 268.

[13] Raymond C. Kelcy, The Letters of Peter and Jude (Austin, Texas: R. B. Sweet Company, 1972), p. 119.

[14] James Macknight, Macknight on the Epistles, 2Peter (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, reprint, 1969), p. 523.

[15] B. C. Caffin, op. cit., p. 2.

## Verse 4

**whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust.**

**Whereby ...** "This refers to the things mentioned in the previous verse, meaning that it was through those arrangements,"<sup>[16]</sup> of the apostles being guided into all truth, etc., that all Christians have the privilege of partaking of the divine nature.

**Partakers of the divine nature ...** As Strachan put it, "In Christ we are made partakers of the divine nature."<sup>[17]</sup> The whole scheme of redemption is beautifully epitomized in this. Through their primary obedience to the gospel of Christ, Christians are added to Christ's spiritual body, inducted "into Christ," and "in him" sharing his perfection, his righteousness, his death, and all the glorious benefits of being in him.

[16] Albert Barnes, Barnes' Notes on the New Testament, 2Peter (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1953), p. 219.

[17] R. H. Strachan, Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. V (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 126.

## Verse 5

**Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love.**

In these verses there are two links with the first epistle: (1) virtue is found in **1 Peter 2:9**, and (2) brotherly kindness occurs in **1 Peter 1:22,3:8**.<sup>[18]</sup> Also, there is another word of very great interest in the passage, the one here rendered "supply," which comes from a word suggesting lavish

provision, the word [[@epichorigeo](#)],[<sup>19</sup>] and "used in classical Greek to describe the munificence of rich citizens who would finance a theatrical performance or fit out a warship for the state they loved."<sup>[20]</sup> It had a special reference to the abundant supplies provided for a chorus, a term which is derived from this word, as is also choreographer. From this, it is suggested that Peter's list here is a chorus of Christian graces, the manner of his linking each with the others being like their holding hands!

**All diligence ...** The Christian life is a working life, diligence meaning ardent application and industry.

**In your faith ...** This the Christians already had; but "faith alone" was never considered sufficient for salvation by any of the New Testament writers.

**Virtue ...** primarily means courage, a grace particularly needed in the hostile world of the period when Peter wrote.

**Knowledge ...** This is a different word from the full knowledge mentioned above, a possession the Christian already had; and it therefore refers to a faithful continuation of their studies. It is also very likely true, as Plummer pointed out that, "Knowledge here means spiritual discernment as to what is right and what is wrong in all things."<sup>[21]</sup>

**Self-control ...** This comes from [[@engkrateia](#)], "meaning the ability to take a grip of one's self."<sup>[22]</sup> This is one of the great Christian virtues which might be called perfect temperance.

**Patience ...** In the New Testament, this word carries the thought of endurance and steadfast continuity in faithful service. Jesus said, "In your patience ye shall possess your souls."

**Godliness ...** (See under **2 Peter 1:3**). This is the quality of honoring one's duties to God, standing in this list even higher than duties to one's fellow man (listed next). This conforms with the Saviour's great pronouncement that the first and great commandment is to love God, and the second is to love man (**Mark 12:18-30**). Important as the love to man assuredly is, it is secondary to the duty of loving God and obeying his commandments. It is amazing that in the culture of the present day, religious duties are relegated to a secondary status, and humanitarian duties have been elevated to the status that really belongs to religious duties.

**Brotherly kindness ...** This is from [[@filadelfia](#)], founded on the Greek term [[@fileo](#)], meaning the love of brothers, or the affection that even an animal has for its young. There is even a higher type of love; and Peter would crown his list with that in **2 Peter 1:7**.

**Love ...** "This love ([Greek: agape]) is the highest type of love; it is more inclusive than [[@filadelfia](#)], and is the kind of love God has for sinful, unworthy men."<sup>[23]</sup>

Moorehead said of this whole list:

Paul began his list of the fruits of the Spirit with love (**Galatians 5:22**); Peter ends his with love. It is like a chain; each link holds fast to its fellow and is a part of the whole. It matters little at which end of the chain we begin ... to touch one is to touch all. We are to add all diligence to supply these richly.<sup>[24]</sup>

This great list of virtues is one of the most beautiful and comprehensive passages in the New Testament, reminding one of the procession of the seven deadly sins (by contrast) in **Proverbs 6:1ff**. Here there is a magnificent procession of the glorious graces of faith.

Before leaving this, it should be noted that there is no mandate in these verses for adding these graces in the particular order of their appearance in the list. As Barnes observed, "The order in which this is to be done is not the point at all."<sup>[25]</sup>

[18] B. C. Caffin, op. cit., p. 4.

[19] Eldon R. Fuhrman, op. cit., p. 323.

[20] David H. Wheaton, op. cit., p. 1252.

[21] Alfred Plummer, op. cit., p. 445.

[22] William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 302.

[23] Raymond C. Kelcy, op. cit., p. 123.

[24] William G. Moorehead, op. cit., p. 2357.

[25] Albert Barnes, op. cit., p. 221.

## Verse 8

**For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

"It is the necessity of possessing these things enumerated in **2 Peter 1:5-7** and to be achieved at least in part by human effort, that is here stressed."<sup>[26]</sup>

**If ...** How frequently this word appears in the New Testament! suggesting here that in the last analysis, there is a vital and necessary contribution that man himself must make in the direction of his salvation, but in the sense of doing those things without which not even God can save his soul.

### ENDNOTE:

[26] Albert E. Barnett, op. cit., p. 178.

## Verse 9

**For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins.**

**Blind, seeing only what is near ...** The last clause is a limitation on the blindness, showing the kind Peter meant, which was not "total blindness" but myopia, or extreme near-sightedness.

### SPIRITUAL MYOPIA

Alas, this is the blindness that afflicts all unspiritual souls who sacrifice the hope of eternal life for immediate convenience or pleasure. There are many Biblical examples of persons afflicted with spiritual myopia. (1) Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom, solely because the immediate prospect seemed favorable. (2) The rich man neglected Lazarus begging at his gate, rather than accepting whatever inconvenience of the moment that might have been incurred in his relief. (3) Demas was dazzled by the near-at-hand attractiveness of the present age and forsook Paul (**2 Timothy 4:10**). (4) The parable of the prodigal son gives another example of one for whom the romantic allure of the "far country" with its short term promise of diversion, pleasure and entertainment, etc.,

blinded him to the tragedy of ultimate consequences. It is not hard to see that the world still has its share of those who are the spiritual sons of Lot, Demas, the prodigal son, and the rich man of the parable.

## SPIRITUAL HYPEROPIA

There is also a spiritual malady exactly the opposite of spiritual myopia except in the one particular of producing the same undesirable consequences. It is spiritual hyperopia, or far-sightedness. It is generally accepted as a compliment when people are told that they are "far-sighted"; but there is a type of far-sightedness that goes much too far: (1) The eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth (**Proverbs 17:24**). (2) The one concerned with the mote in his brother's eye while at the same time being unable to see the beam in his own eye is another example. (3) Hyperopia afflicts the emotions of some who cannot appreciate present blessings, who are restless and dissatisfied even with abundance, because they have set their eyes upon some Utopia, despising all present good in the fevered pursuit of some fantastic Shangrila. Harriet Winslow addressed these lines to sufferers of such a malady:

Why thus longing, thus forever sighing,  
For the far-off, unattained, and dim?  
While the beautiful all around thee lying,  
Offers its low, perpetual hymn.

(4) Hyperopia also interferes with the work that people should do, making it impossible for those afflicted with it to find anything close at hand to do. Like Sir Launfal, they set their eyes on the ends of the earth, dashing off in pursuit of some great thing to do, while their only opportunity for service and salvation lies ignored and forgotten at their feet. It is this class which Jesus warned with his words, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me" (**Matthew 25:45**). What far-sighted souls we are! We go in a trance dreaming of worlds to conquer while at our very doors and within our very homes the Master is hungry and sick and in prison!

Illustration. At a religious convention in Pittsburg a few years ago, a young woman from a western village sought funds to remain in Pittsburg and do social welfare work. When the committee in charge inquired of the work she had been doing at home, it came out that she had never done anything; and the chairman said, "Young lady, what you need is to learn how to move in your own burg before you move to Pittsburg!"

Great spiritual opportunities do not lie at the foot of some Andean rainbow, but here, not upon some nebulous tomorrow, but today and now. As Paul put it: "The word that is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach" (**Romans 10:8**).

**"Having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins ...** "This refers to wrong acts committed prior to baptism, not to inherited depravity of human nature."<sup>[27]</sup> "Peter is apparently thinking of the one baptism for the remission of sin."<sup>[28]</sup> This expression is an allusion to baptism."<sup>[29]</sup> It refers to "the cleansing he received in baptism."<sup>[30]</sup> "His old sins ..." means "those committed before he was 'purged' in baptism."<sup>[31]</sup> William Barclay has this:

Failure to climb the ladder of virtue is to forget that the sins of the old way of life have been cleansed away. Peter is thinking of baptism. At that time baptism was adult baptism, a deliberate act of decision to leave the old way and to enter upon the new.  
[32]

This passage sheds light on a number of important questions; and the following deductions would appear to be justified: (1) Conversion does not occur until baptism takes place. (2) "Old sins" are totally remitted at the time of baptism. (3) The salvation in this is neither final nor irrevocable. (4) Obedience to the commands of Christ is prerequisite both for cleansing from "old sins" and for the ultimate and eternal cleansing.

[27] Ibid., p. 179.

[26] B. C. Caffin, op. cit., p. 5.

[27] James Macknight, op. cit., p. 528.

[28] B. C. Caffin, op. cit. p. 5.

[29] James Macknight, op. cit., p. 528.

[30] J. R. Dummelow, One Volume Commentary on the Holy Bible (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), p. 1050.

[31] Alfred Plummer, op. cit., p. 446.

[32] William Barclay, op. cit., p. 306.

## Verse 10

**Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble:**

**Calling and election ...** are two of the biggest theological words in the New Testament; and this verse is invaluable in the revelation that neither calling nor election is a thing finally and irrevocably determined by God apart from what the Christian himself does. Also, any thought of impossibility as regards a Christian falling away and being lost is far away from the apostle's mind in a statement like this verse. "If" ye do these things! (See under verse 8). As Payne put it: "Note the emphasis on God's initiative and man's response; both are essential, or the Christian may fall (literally stumble)."<sup>[33]</sup> "All Christians have been called, but they must work out their salvation" (**Philippians 2:12**).<sup>[34]</sup> We are amazed at the comment of Wheaton, who said, "Peter even hints at the possibility that one can fall from grace!"<sup>[35]</sup> Reference to Peter's warnings in this letter as a "hint" reminds one of the gang leader in Boston, who when five of his henchmen were shot-gunned to death in the basement of a bar, said, "I believe there is a hint of opposition in this!"

[33] David F. Payne, A New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), p. 600.

[34] James William Russell, op. cit., p. 590.

[35] David H. Wheaton, op. cit., p. 1253.

## Verse 11

**for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.**

"Here ends the first main section of this epistle which contains the substance of the whole."<sup>[36]</sup> Plummer commented upon the unanimity with which even the radical scholars admit the authenticity and genuineness of this first section, adding that, "If this stands, it carries with it all the rest."<sup>[37]</sup> This is true because all of the various threads of the letter are gathered here; and a



change of style is amply accounted for by change to new and exciting subjects. The links between the parts are too strong to be severed by such considerations.

**Richly supplied ...** This is from the same word used in verse 5, regarding the provisions supplied for a chorus or theatrical company, indicating overflowing abundance.

**Into the eternal kingdom ...** But were not the Christians of Peter's day already members of the kingdom of the Lord? The answer is affirmative. Paul wrote the Colossians that they had already been translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love (**Colossians 1:13**); and therefore Peter's words here are a reference to the eternal state of God's kingdom, the state of its existence after the resurrection and in the eternal world to come. Entrance into that kingdom, or that phase of the kingdom, is also, in the light of this passage, contingent upon the Christian's response to duty, not that any sinless perfection is required; but there must be, as an absolute minimum, the intention and purpose of obedience.

This reference to the kingdom is important in showing that it was everywhere accepted as a foundational Christian doctrine. The fact of references to the kingdom being much more plentiful in the Gospels than in the Epistles does not indicate any rejection of the concept, nor any disappointment with reference to it; but, as Payne said, "It may have been avoided (the reference to the kingdom) for fear that Gentiles would misrepresent it and view Christian teaching as seditious."<sup>[38]</sup>

**Of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ...** Caffin pointed out that there is an exact "correspondence of the Greek words here with those used in **2 Peter 1:1**,"<sup><39a></sup> making a very strong argument for the rendition there as "Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Before leaving this verse, we should dwell upon the immeasurable confidence inspired by it. Some have misunderstood Peter's reference to the righteous scarcely being saved in **1 Peter 4:18** as a declaration that Christians themselves shall barely be saved at all; but in the light of this verse, it is clear that Peter was speaking about something altogether different in the first epistle. See notes, above, on that and related verses. If only the Christian's response is what it should be, his entrance into the eternal courts of joy shall be as abundant and overflowing as the generosity of those ancient "angels" who lavishly funded a chorus! Praise God for his wonderful word.

[36] Alfred Plummer, op. cit., p. 447.

[37] Ibid.

[38] David F. Payne, op. cit., p. 601.

<39a> B. C. Caffin, op. cit., p. 6.

## Verse 12

**Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the truth which is with you.**

This and the next three verses deal with Peter's purpose in writing this letter, giving glimpses of vital Christian principles at the same time. As Barclay noted, "Peter here says that his people already possess the truth and are established in it."<sup><39b></sup> As noted also in 1John, the apostles did not view the Christian community as an inquiring band seeking to know what the truth is, but as a confident, vibrant community in full possession and enjoyment of it.

**Remembrance of those things ...** It is a mistake to view this as a reference restricted to what Peter had already written to those Christians; it is rather a citation of the entire corpus of Christian truth in which they were already established, not merely by Peter's preaching and writing alone, but by that of all the apostles of Christ.

Also, there is the principle in view here that requires Christian teachers to keep reminding the saints of truth they already know. As Jesus said, "Go tell John again!" (**Matthew 11:4**).

#### ENDNOTE:

<39b> William Barclay, op. cit., p. 308.

## Verse 13

**And I think it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle cometh swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me.**

These words flow out of the heart of a man who stood in full contemplation of impending death. The Lord Jesus himself had foretold Peter's death at the hands of others (**John 21:18,19**); and in the hostile climate of Nero's Rome, coupled with the fact of his then being an old man, and remembering that Jesus had said this would occur "when thou art old," Peter considered his own death to be something he could expect at any time swiftly.

**Tabernacle ...** This word actually means "tent," the same metaphor Paul used in **2 Corinthians 5:1-4**; and one can almost see the trend of the apostle's thought in this and the following verses. Here he used the word "tabernacle," an expression he himself had used unfortunately on the mount of transfiguration (**Matthew 17:4**); and, a moment later, he used the word "decease," the term used in the gospel of Luke to describe the topic of conversation on the same mount. It was doubtless the use of these very words that triggered the forthcoming reference to the transfiguration experience.

Inherent in the use of tabernacle as the soul's dwelling place is the permanence of the soul contrasted with that of the body.

**The putting off of my tabernacle ...** Peter was soon to die, but he viewed the destruction of his body as the same as "putting off" clothes, or pulling down a tent. "The word for 'putting off' here is also in **1 Peter 3:21**, another link between the two epistles."<sup>[40]</sup>

"These (**2 Peter 1:13-15**) are the words of a man for whom death is much in mind, and this would fit the 60's as the period when they were written."<sup>[41]</sup>

[40] B. C. Caffin, op. cit., p. 7.

[41] John A. T. Robinson, Redating the New Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 176.

## Verse 15

**Yea, I will give diligence that at every time ye may be able after my decease to call these things to remembrance.**

Dummelow thought that "these things" had primary reference to Peter's first epistle, but that "more than his one letter is meant."<sup>[42]</sup> Payne leaned toward the idea that "the writer means the Gospel of Mark, which early tradition tells us was the written record of much of Peter's preaching."<sup>[43]</sup> However, the view here is that Peter meant the entire corpus of Christian doctrine which the church at the date of this letter already possessed, and which was acknowledged by Peter in **2 Peter 1:12**. See more on this in the introduction.

It is strange that the commentators are unanimously silent with reference to one of the biggest things in the verse, namely, that Peter entertained no idea whatever relative to any successor of his, rising up after him with his full plenary authority and inspiration. If he had, there would not have been any need for him to provide written records of important Christian truth that would be available after his death. This and the two previous verses reveal the purposes of Peter's writing this letter, that being to record for all ages to come a written record of vital Christian teaching.

[42] J. G. Dummelow, op. cit., p. 1050.

[43] David F. Payne, op. cit., p. 601.

## Verse 16

**For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.**

**We did not follow ...** The plural "we" here is not a mere editorial device, but is inclusive of all the holy apostles of Christ, an inclusion Peter was always careful to make (See **2 Peter 3:2**).

**Cunningly devised fables ...** "Cleverly devised myths were a feature of the theological systems of the Gnostic speculators,"<sup>[44]</sup> already operating at the time Peter wrote. However, it is just as likely that Peter had no reference at all to gnosticism, but rather, as Macknight thought, to "the cunningly devised fables that were exhibited in the heathen mysteries."<sup>[45]</sup>

**Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ ...** "Elsewhere in the New Testament and in this epistle, this expression is used of the Second Coming of Christ";<sup>[46]</sup> and there is no reason whatever for understanding it otherwise here.

**We were eyewitnesses of his majesty ...** The "we" here refers to Peter, James and John, the three apostles with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. The noun for "eyewitnesses" used here is not found elsewhere in the New Testament, but the verb occurs in 1Pet. 2:12, **1 Peter 3:2**. "Here again we have an undesigned coincidence which points to the identity of authorship for the two epistles of Peter."<sup>[47]</sup>

Peter's mention of the transfiguration in this context shows that he regarded it as "an event foreshadowing the power and majesty of the second advent and which could be regarded as a pledge of the glory to be revealed at the second coming."<sup>[48]</sup>

[44] David H. Wheaton, op. cit., p. 1254.

[45] James Macknight, op. cit., p. 533.

[46] R. H. Strachan, op. cit., p. 130.

[47] B. C. Caffin, op. cit., p. 8.

[48] Raymond C. Kelcy, op. cit., p. 130.

## Verse 17

**For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:**

Although our English versions translate this passage in consonance with the Matthew account of the transfiguration, the scholars assure us of very subtle variations in the Greek. Peter was not copying anyone! as Plummer said, "He did not slavishly follow any of the three accounts, which a forger would have been expected to do."<sup>[49]</sup> Robinson also affirmed that, "It is generally accepted that the wording of this account of the transfiguration is independent of any of our gospel texts."<sup>[50]</sup> And why not? Peter was there; his account did not need to be modeled after anything except his own remembrance of it.

Peter's introduction of the events of the transfiguration calls attention to the great spiritual meaning of it. Moses and Elijah, great representatives of the Law and of the Prophets, appeared there with Christ, and in effect laid their commissions at the feet of the Redeemer. When the cloud overshadowed them and then lifted, both Moses and Elijah were seen no more; and the voice hailed Jesus as the "beloved Son," with instructions to "hear ye him." The clear import of all that was that with the coming of Christ in his incarnation, Moses and Elijah were no longer to be heard, but Jesus only. Strangely, Peter left out the words, "hear ye him" in his mention of the event here; and as Robinson said, if any forger had been writing this, the temptation to have included those words would have been "irresistible."<sup>[51]</sup> This is a telling argument against the theory of pseudonymity.

[49] Alfred Plummer, op. cit., p. 448.

[50] John A. T. Robinson, op. cit., p. 177.

[51] Ibid.

## Verse 18

**and this voice we ourselves heard borne out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount.**

The big point of this verse is that Peter affirmed the event of the transfiguration of Christ to have been historical, objective and factual. There was nothing ephemeral or uncertain about it. It happened. "We ourselves heard." "We were with him in the holy mount."

**The holy mount ...** Many commentators mention the allegations based upon this expression and which "suggest a late date for the letter, at a time when ecclesiastical traditions were crystallized."<sup>[52]</sup> But, as Plummer said, "Such a view is not even partly right."<sup>[53]</sup> The attitude that would cause that mountain to be spoken of as "holy" was not in any sense a "late view," being far older than any of the gospel writers, and even older than the New Testament itself. The Old Testament reveals that any place where God manifested himself was "holy." See **Exodus 3:5; Joshua 5:15; Genesis**

**28:16,17; Exodus 19:12; Acts 7:33**, etc. Any Jew speaking of such a place as the mountain of transfiguration would naturally have referred to it as "holy."

Where, precisely, was the mountain here designated as "holy?" The tradition favoring Mt. Tabor as the site, first advocated by St. Cyril of Jerusalem in the fourth century,<sup>[54]</sup> is too late to have much weight. Furthermore, Mount Tabor, in the days of Christ and the apostles was populated and had a fortress on top of it;<sup>[55]</sup> and Christ's taking his apostles there would not have been taking them "apart" as Matthew said. The best guess would appear to be that the mount of transfiguration was either Mount Hermon, or one of its adjacent peaks. It would at least qualify as being a "high" mountain, as Matthew said (9,000 feet), which Mount Tabor was not (1,800 feet).

[52] David H. Wheaton, op. cit., p. 1254.

[53] Alfred Plummer, op. cit., p. 449.

[54] A. Lukyn Williams, *The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 15 2(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 171.

[55] J. R. Dummelow, op. cit., p. 683.

## Verse 19

**And we have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts:**

**The word of prophecy ...** This mention of the word of prophecy in this context certainly justifies the observation that Peter, in addition to viewing the event of the transfiguration as a foretelling of the Second Advent, also viewed it as completely in harmony with Old Testament prophecy as well. Strachan paraphrased this thus:

The transfiguration confirms prophecy. Thus we have still further confirmation of the words of the prophets, a fact to which you would do well to give heed, as to a lamp shining in a murky place, meant to serve until the Day break and the Day-star arise in your hearts.<sup>[56]</sup>

Despite the attractiveness this view has for many, however, we favor a different opinion of what is said here. Barnett pointed out that the passage may be translated differently as in the **KJV**. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy ... the prophetic word needs no confirmation, but itself witnesses to the truth of the gospel."<sup>[57]</sup> There can hardly be any doubt that the King James Version is to be preferred in this text.

**As unto a lamp shining in a dark room ...** "A squalid room" is also a valid rendition, having reference to the evil world in which the light of the gospel was shining.

**Until the day dawn ...** This is the dawning of the light in the hearts of the redeemed, a dawning which took place initially in their conversion, but which is envisioned here as a continuing phenomenon of their lives in Christ.

**And the day-star arise in your hearts ...** This clarifies the whole passage as a reference to the light given to Christians through their taking "heed" to the sure word of prophecy. "Daystar" was the term used by the ancients to refer to the planet Venus, called also the morning star. The metaphor of Christ as a star is one of the most beautiful in Scripture.

[56] R. H. Strachan, op. cit., p. 131.

[57] Albert E. Barnett, op. cit., p. 184.

## Verse 20

### knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation.

Unfortunately, this verse has been made the basis of the Medieval Church's denial of every man's right to interpret the Scriptures, and their claim to the right of interpretation for the church alone (that is, their church alone). Nothing like this could possibly be in this passage. As Kelcy said, "There are many New Testament passages which indicate that the writers expected their readers to understand what they wrote (**Ephesians 3:4**; **1 Thessalonians 5:27**; **1 John 2:12,13**)."<sup>[58]</sup>

Christ himself bore witness of the fact that every man is responsible for studying and reading the word of God for himself, when he demanded of the lawyer, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" (**Luke 10:26**). In the light of these Scriptures, therefore, we must reject the notion that would find in this place an excuse for any man's leaving the interpretation of the Scriptures to the religious experts in some church, of whatever name. After all, it was the "religious experts" who crucified Christ in the beginning, demonstrating once and finally that of all the people on earth most likely to miss it, it is the "religious experts."

There is a better translation of this verse, as noted by some of the older scholars generations ago. Macknight rendered it, "No prophecy of Scripture is of the prophet's own invention."<sup>[59]</sup> This rendition Macknight justified on the basis of the meaning of the subsequent verse, showing that a number of other New Testament passages have been similarly translated with reference to the context and not to the strict technical meaning of a word. Barnes also rendered the passage, "No prophecy was of their own disclosure."<sup>[60]</sup> The "private interpretation" is therefore a limitation, not upon readers of the prophecies, but upon the prophets who delivered God's message. Barnes further explained:

The truths which the prophets communicated were not originated by themselves; were not of their own suggestion or invention, but were of higher origin and were imparted by God<sup>[61]</sup>

The ancient prophets of God were not permitted to give their interpretation of prophecies (instead of the prophecies); but they were to deliver the words of the prophecy as the Lord had given them. It is to this limitation that the words of this verse most likely apply. Vine's dictionary of New Testament words confirms this thus: "The writers of Scripture did not put their own construction upon the 'God-breathed' words they wrote."<sup>[62]</sup>

Plummer pointed out that there is almost certainly a reference here to **1 Peter 1:10-12**; and this also sheds light on the meaning; for in that passage also, it was the inability of the prophets to go beyond the "words" God had given them that is in view.

[58] Raymond C. Kelcy, op. cit., p. 133.

[59] James Macknight, op. cit., p. 535.

[60] Albert Barnes, op. cit., p. 232.

[61] Ibid.

[62] W. E. Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, 2(Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1940), p. 268.

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## Verse 21

**For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.**

The impenetrable and eternal mystery of how God spoke through men is not revealed in the word of God, but the fact of its having been done is indeed revealed. People should not permit their inquisitiveness with regard to the "how" to divert their attention from the "what" of that which is revealed.

"Scripture is viewed as objective and fixed in meaning, and the discovery of that meaning is the duty of believers."<sup>[63]</sup>

The supreme value of the Scriptures is the burden of Peter's meaning throughout this paragraph; and, as Paine said:

It is an amazing assessment of the validity of the Holy Scriptures that Peter declares it to be more dependable than a voice from heaven heard with the natural ear.<sup>[64]</sup>

**Moved by the Holy Spirit ...** "This is the only reference to the Holy Spirit in this epistle."<sup>[65]</sup> However, as Peter credited the Holy Spirit as being the "mover" of all Scripture, no neglect of the blessed Spirit could be inferred.

It is a mistake to suppose that Peter by his reference to scripture intended to restrict his meaning to the Old Testament Scriptures. The Lord had promised Peter and all the apostles, that the Holy Spirit would speak through them (**Matthew 10:20**). Peter would make this very clear in **2 Peter 3:15,16**.

By his marvelous words in this chapter, Peter laid the basis for what he would say of the false teachers in the next. All of his allegations were founded in the word of the Lord that liveth and endureth forever.

[63] Albert E. Barnett, op. cit., p. 186.

[64] Stephen W. Paine, op. cit., p. 994.

[65] R. H. Strachan, op. cit., p. 132.

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