

2Peter 11-09-23a

This is Friday the 23rd of September 2011. We're in the book of 2nd Peter and we're at the threshold of chapter 2. We have one verse at the end of chapter 1 to finish, one or two verses there, 20 and 21, and then we'll move into chapter 2. We'll take a moment, as is our custom, to spend a minute or two in prayer. It's an opportunity to focus our concentration and ensure that we're qualified and in a position to be good students and to receive the ministry of God's Holy Spirit, which is necessary to transcend the limitations of the presenter and the presentation and our concentration and so forth and minister these things to our hearts and souls and so we'll take that moment and then we'll begin.

Father, once again we find ourselves at the conclusion of another work week. We can look back and see your grace, your faithfulness, your provision, your preservation in many cases, the wonderful blessings that have come to us as well as challenges and those things that are occasions for growth and application. We thank you for your detailed plan and purpose as it applies to each one of us individually as well as for our church as a group and as a whole.

We thank you most of all for the Lord Jesus Christ for whom everything has been made and purposed and in whom we have our righteousness, our peace, our sanctification, our hope, our expectation for the eternal future. We thank you for this portion of Scripture and the truth that it contains. We ask your blessing on us as we study it and and try to find that truth as it pertains to us so that we can live more fully and more completely as dedicated Christians, as mature children from your family who recognize and exploit the opportunities that come to us through your manifold grace.

We pray that you will be with us as we examine this portion of Scripture and enable each of us to ascertain its truth. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

You'll recall that Peter, in having written the first epistle to the scattered Diaspora Christians, largely Jewish audience out amongst the Hoi Poloi in the Roman Empire, Cappadocia, Galatia, Pontus, and so on, Pontus, that he is following up with a second letter. And in this letter he mentions the first letter and he is following up. He is sending this.

It's a different circumstance. It's a slightly later time. His companions are evidently different.

His amanuensis or letter carrier is very likely different. And so the style of the Greek is different. And this has caused no end of speculation about the authenticity of the letter.

And we find that this is a happy coincidence because Peter himself is going to talk about authentic Scripture, authentic communication from God as we come to the end of the first chapter. So he says in verse 19, we have the prophetic word confirmed or made more certain 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. And this is close to where we left off last time.

The prophetic word made more certain. I pointed this out in the past and I'm just going to refer briefly to the fact that we are greatly blessed to not live in the age of miracles and the age of the personal appearance of prophets and even the Lord Jesus himself. If I had a choice of living in the same decades that the Lord Jesus lived, from zero to thirty-something of the common era here, you know, A.D. 33 being the traditional time when Jesus left, or living now, I would rather live now because there was no New Testament Scripture in place.

If you wanted to know about Jesus, you had to go down and listen to him. You had to try to catch one of his sermons. You had to try to get into one of those inner rooms that they might be taking the thatched roof off of to let the fellow down that was sick with the palsy and so on.

We have at our leisure twenty-seven books of the completed New Testament that we can engross ourselves in and enrich ourselves from. And this is a much to be desired circumstance. We don't need miracles to confirm our faith.

We have the record of those miracles. We don't need signs and wonders from heaven to authenticate a messenger. We have an authenticated message that has stood the test of time for two millennia now.

And what a rich treasury of revelation we have here. And given the choice of having to sandal your way down from Galilee to try to find the Lord Jesus in the plane or in a boat or on the mountain somewhere, as thrilling and exciting as that would be for sort of a one-time experience, the rest of the time you're having to try to remember what he said or work from the Old Testament. I think we've got it all over the first century folks.

But it was Peter who says, we have the prophetic word confirmed, made more sure, because Jesus has come. The prophetic word that was in the Old Testament, the Jews waited and waited for its fulfillment. And he says, look at us.

We're the first generation that has seen the fulfillment of all of those Old Testament types and shadows and forward-looking images and types. It's fulfilled. It's made more sure.

And we have the prophetic word. And even the first coming of the Lord Jesus still anticipates his second coming and his kingdom and the fulfillment and drawing together of all things going into the eternal future. But he says, you do well to live in the light of this revelation, this more sure word that we have, this confirmation and affirmation and completed work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

He says, you have this as a light that shines in a dark place. And the critical thing to remember, and we kind of reviewed this thought last time, is if you're in a dark place and you have a light and you turn the light on, you don't stare at the light, do you? You use the light to illuminate where you're going and what you're doing. And there is sort of a biblicism or bibliolatry, it has been called, where people rightly recognize the importance of Bible study, but it sort of becomes an

end in itself.

And it doesn't become a light that shines in a dark place. You're just sort of a deer in the headlight staring at the light saying, isn't that a wonderful light? I really love this light. This light is just great.

Everybody ought to be looking at this light I'm looking at, instead of completing that process of not only observation and interpretation, but of application. The Pharisees knew a lot of Scripture. There are a lot of scholastic types who know all kinds of Scripture, but does it work itself out in application? Because Scripture knowledge is not the basis for reward in eternity.

There is no judgment that says you will be tested over what you know. What does it say at both the Bema, the judgment seat of Christ, and the great white throne? The books are open and people are judged according to knowledge? Works. Application.

The outworking of what we know. So we examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith, and what that basically involves is, is my knowledge working itself out and completing that purpose for which it was given, which is to change the way I think, to change the way I act, to change how I live, so that I am laying hold of righteousness by faith. Faith is what we walk by, not knowledge.

That just shall live by his knowledge? Doesn't say that. Just shall live by his faith. Faith is working itself out in love, it manifests itself in hope, in confident expectation, and hope doesn't disappoint us.

We are expectant, and we act like expectant people. When we are looking forward to a happy event, it changes how we live. We are anticipating a visit from somebody? Well, it changes our priorities.

We want to get ready. Most of us, we want to clean up. Oh no, somebody's coming, got to clean up.

Well, if the Lord Jesus is coming, we ought to have a similar motivation. We want to clean up. We want to square away.

We want him to find our house not only cleaned and swept, but occupied, and full of the furnishings of faith, full of the outworkings, the fruit of the Spirit, so that Jesus says, he doesn't say, the one who has my word, my father and I will come to him and make our home with him. Does he? What did I leave out? The one who has my words and keeps them. He it is that loves me, and I and my father will come to him and make our home with him.

Has my words and keeps them. So the word is really important, and all of us know this, or we wouldn't be here doing what we're doing tonight, but it isn't a matter of listening. It isn't a matter of merely hearing.

There's more to it, and Peter is going to move into that, but it is important that the word we listen

to be the actual word, capital W, and not false protestations or false information or false constructions. There's been a lot of spurious writing, spurious communication, spurious construing of God's word and amplification and adding onto it, and violation of that warning at the end of Revelation that says, you don't want to be adding to or taking away from scripture. So Peter addresses that, and he says, you should heed this as a light that shines in a dark place, that enables you to walk and move and do your work in a proper fashion, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Well, we have some wonderful scripture that illuminates this. The day was foretold way back in Luke chapter 1, and you know what's going on in Luke 1. You're looking at the nativity, and you've got Zacharias and the birth of John the Baptist, and it goes in, Angel Gabriel, he's mute, called his name John, write it on a tablet, and when his tongue is loose, he gives out with this great prophetic utterance, and one of the things he says in Luke 1.78 is, it's 78, you think, wow, how many chapters of the Bible outside of Psalm 119 have got that many verses? But Zacharias is speaking and sort of prophesying on behalf of his son, and he says, you child, this is verse 76, talking to John, you child will be called the prophet of the highest. You will go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the day spring from on high has visited us.

The day spring. You say, wow, what is a day spring? Well, it's not a day spring. And this is a reference to the dawn.

It is the springing up of the day. It's a reference to dawn. So this is the dawn from on high, which is the rising of the sun.

What is the precursor of the dawn? The day star. So the dawn from on high has visited us, or shall visit us, actually, is what he's prophesying, to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. This light has a purpose.

It's got a practical application. It's there for a reason. It's not just dazzling.

It's not just beautiful. There's a pragmatic purpose for it. Well, as you go forward, he says, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

And all you need to understand this is to go to the other end of the New Testament, Revelation 22, verse 16. I, Jesus, have sent my angel, my messenger, this is John, to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star.

So the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. This is the presence of the Lord Jesus. He that has my words and keeps them, he it is that loves me.

I and my Father will come to him. Christ formed in you the hope of glory. The indwelling of the

Holy Spirit is automatic at salvation, but the indwelling of the Lord Jesus Christ and the indwelling of God the Father is dependent upon knowing and keeping the word.

And Peter says, this prophetic word that I'm sharing with you, you need to walk in its light until you reach that mature place where the Lord Jesus himself is dwelling in your heart. And ultimately, of course, it's a reference to physically dwelling with the Lord after his return in the ages that are to come. So we have a preview, a foretaste of glory divine in the sense that Christ can dwell with us and we can dwell with him in the spiritual sense before it is more literally and physically fulfilled at the rapture and everything that that entails.

So you have the prophetic word made sure. And it's interesting when you look at First Corinthians 13, Paul is talking about love. Very many other things are sort of temporal and temporary.

But when that which is complete, when that which is perfect, that which lacks no good thing is come, then that which is in part is done away. And you get the idea that there he's talking about partial revelation. When that which is complete is come, which we take to be the complete New Testament canon, that which is in part, these prophetic gifts and utterances and and fill the gap speeches and things that are made by people in local churches, but hardly any of which have been recorded because they were for the moment.

Once the New Testament came, these stopgap measures were done away. This, by the way, follows the pattern of the Old Testament. Have you ever thought about what did believers do before Moses? Awful lot of people, awful lot of believers on the earth before Moses.

What kind of a Bible did they have? Didn't have Genesis, didn't have Exodus or the rest of the Pentateuch or the rest of the, you know, the books of history or any of the rest of the Old Testament. It just didn't exist. There was no written revelation.

So what did they do? Adam all the way down to Moses, there was revelation. God filled in. There were prophecies.

There were dreams and visions. There were angels that showed up. There were prophecies that were made.

You got Jacob leaning on his staff, uttering prophecies about his sons. And Moses is nowhere to be found. These sustained people in the Old Testament age.

And you have the same thing in the new. Once you have the large portions of the Old Testament complete, the prophetic ministry dwindles. It's kind of funny because in seminary they say, well, you know, you didn't have any prophets until Samuel.

And he was kind of the first big archetypal prophet. And he established a school of the prophets. And from then on you had this growing, burgeoning proliferation of prophets in Israel.

And yet the prophetic ministry tails off. You've got the handful of writing prophets, major and minor. But when you look at the span of centuries that they cover, that's a very small... Where are all these school of the prophet guys? What did they do? Well, I'm not sure that that was even legitimate.

You hear practically nothing about them. What did they do? Who got the benefit of their schooling? They barely get a mention in the historical books. You've got an ax head floating here and there and bitter water made sweet.

And they're kind of kept from starving or dying of thirst. But where's their ministry? As the increasing number of written books accumulates in the Old Testament, these prophets are more and more out of a job. Same way in the New Testament.

You have apostles at the beginning. But once the apostolic witness is complete, the writing of scripture replaces them and supersedes them. Peter is talking about that when he says, you have this prophetic word confirmed and you do well to heed it.

To heed it. It shines its light on circumstances and situations. Heed what it says.

Until the day dawns, there is a point at which we will no longer need these partial revelations. And even with the complete canon of the New Testament, it is still partial. When that which is perfect is come, when we are with the Lord Jesus, we won't be relying on our New Testament anymore because we'll have something much more fulsome, much more complete.

So until that day, we should heed it. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation. The first thing we need to do is define prophecy because we immediately think prediction.

But the gift of prophecy and this use of the word prophecy means proclamation. No proclamation of scripture. This is not predictive.

Prediction is a subset. The gift of prophecy. He gave some apostles, some prophets.

They are proclaimers. Their proclamation may or may not include prediction. There is proclamation and no proclamation of scripture.

Otherwise, Peter would only be talking about predictive parts of the Bible and that would be kind of strange. Well, there could be other parts of the scripture that are not inspired. Only the predictions are inspired.

He's talking about all of scripture. No proclamation, no declaration of scripture is of any private and it's not interpretation. It's derivation.

So this is one place where I think it's one of the more deficient spots in the King James and New

King James both. They really do a disservice to the Greek here and to understanding what the Greek means. Knowing this first, that no proclamation, no declaration of scripture is of any private derivation.

There's lots of private interpretations. If you can go into a room and maybe no two people have got the same interpretation. But that's an after the fact.

This is talking about the origination. So for prophecy you can say proclamation, declaration and for where it says interpretation, that should either be derivation or origination. Where did it come from? And I think you have a sub note there.

Yeah, it does say or origin and that that's much better. Your little footnote number two there in your New King James. And he says, knowing this first, that men didn't make this stuff up.

The prophetic word that you have made more sure and that you should live in the light of isn't humanly derived. It isn't humanly originated. And I find this funny because this is one of the popular criticisms of this book beginning really seriously.

Jerome made remarks about it and there were a few little protestations back in the early days of the church. But the real criticism of second Peter didn't come until the 19th century with the rise of German higher criticism as an outgrowth of the enlightenment and rationalism and skepticism and the rejection of the supernatural. They said, well, we've got to figure out where this really came from because God did not originate it.

And it flies directly in the face of the content of the book itself. No prophecy, no declaration of scripture is of any private origin or derivation for prophecy or declarative proclamatory scripture never came by the will of man. Holy men of God spoke, moved by the Holy Spirit.

Now this brings us to an issue of canonicity. How do we know what scripture and what isn't the name for that is canonicity? It's a little bit of a misnomer, but I want to summarize a few principles about how we know Bible is Bible and non-Bible is non-Bible. So first of all, it is important to realize that the idea of canonicity is later.

The first thing we look for is authority. It is not, Hey, this is in the Canon. So it must be authoritative.

We say this book is authoritative. Therefore it belongs in the Canon. And this is how it worked in the early days of the church.

The first few centuries of the church, they didn't say, well, is that book canonical or not? They said this, this letter that's floating around, does this have any authority? Should I pay any attention to this as a word from God or not? There was really no concept of, well, is it included in the Canon or is it not? This is sort of a later concept. People sorted out what was scripture and what was not by whether or not they found it to be authoritative. So that's the first thing to

remember.

Later on when they were deciding questions of canonicity, they had these criteria and there were generally three. For something to be in the Canon, is it apostolic? Is it either from or associated with an apostle of the Lord Jesus? So apostolicity is number one. Catholicity is another.

Is it widely recognized as authoritative? Catholic just means general, widespread. The Catholic church before it became a church of the Lord Jesus, it was a church of the Lord Jesus. The word Catholic, capital C, meant it's the church that includes everybody.

You seldom find the word used in that sense anymore, but that's what it used to mean. Just universal, all inclusive. So apostolicity, Catholicity, and orthodoxy, is there anything in it that looks squirrely, that does not comport with other recognized authoritative writings of scripture? Apostolic, Catholic, orthodox.

Those are the things which became the criteria for this does or does not belong in the Canon, but these were sort of instinctive reactions that the early church had to various things that were circulating. There were disputes even early, and here are some of them. Origin, very early on, rejected the tradition that Paul wrote Hebrews.

It was commonly accepted that Paul was the author of Hebrews very early on, and I think that was a valid tradition that kind of lost its footing somewhere in the middle years of church history, but I think Paul did write it, I think. I think he purposely didn't put his name on it so that it wouldn't be rejected from hand. Paul, well, forget that.

He's a reject Pharisee. He's an ex-Jew, so we don't want to hear from him. He wrote it anonymously, so to speak, to try to get the ideas themselves, and all you have to do is read Romans 9, 10, and 11 to see where his heart was.

He would give away all of his rewards if he could convince some of his own people to come around, and I think Hebrews is that argument myself. There were those like Dionysus of Alexandria who didn't think the Apostle John wrote Revelation. Had been some other John, some later guy.

Eusebius was one of the first ones to divide the available books that were circulating in his day into categories. He said, all right, here are these that are pretty much nobody questions. The four Gospels, everybody thought those were good to go.

Acts, nobody really questioned Acts. The Pauline Epistles, everybody thought Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Corinthians, Romans, all of those, nobody really had any questions about those. First John and First Peter were pretty much accepted without question in those days, and Eusebius included Revelation in the generally accepted books.

He kind of got it classified. Some people said that's generally accepted. Others said, no, it isn't.

Then Eusebius had a second category, those that were disputed. He said there's quite a few people that aren't too sure about this. James was a disputed book.

Jude was disputed. Our letter, Second Peter, was in the disputed category. Second and Third John were disputed.

Then Eusebius had a third category. He said these, pretty much everybody thinks these don't belong. These are spurious.

This was the Acts of Paul, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Apocalypse of Peter, things like that. There were some who put Revelation in the spurious books. They just said, we're not taking that.

It's too far beyond the pale. It's just all symbolic and, what's the word, allegorical. But the accepted books and the disputed books all eventually were accepted by just about everybody.

That's what became our 27 books of the New Testament. Their authority was convincing and compelling and persuasive for those in the early centuries of the New Testament. The spurious books, almost without exception, everybody said, yeah, that really is spurious.

They got left out. If you go read those spurious books, by the way, you will quickly come to understand why. There is some hair-raising stuff.

They are not orthodox. They are not apostolic. They have never been widely accepted.

You have your Bart Ehrman school that says, well, maybe they were early on accepted by wide numbers of people, but then Constantine wiped them all out. No. The reason they were wiped out by Constantine is nobody accepted them anyway.

He just gave them the last kick out the door. There was, again, a few doubts that arose at the time of the Reformation. When you have your Protestants coming out and they start rejecting everything Catholic and they said, well, I'm not even sure those Catholics got the Bible right, and so they reexamined a lot of the books, but the Protestant church has ended up accepting all of the same books that the early councils of the church did.

Without exception, the canon overlaps. The Catholic church has thrown in the Apocrypha. They have, from the beginning, labeled those as deuterocanonical.

Don't let a Catholic try to tell you that their Bible is bigger than ours or the Protestants have thrown out books that the Catholics accept. They have never been given the same level of authority. They have never been recognized as having the same authority as your 27-book New Testament.

They have always been, and in the Catholic Bible today, they are deuterocanonical. They are in a separate section, segregated off. They say, well, we find these helpful but not authoritative.

So this question comes up because the book itself, we need to know that we have something here that is a message from God, something that we should take to heart and live in the light of until the Lord Jesus returns. We don't have to accept without question traditions of the past or decisions that were made in the past. You can demonstrate from history there's a lot of stuff that was done in the early church that's just flat out wrong.

So we should know not only that these are accepted but why they are accepted and it should make sense to us that they are accepted. So we'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, I'm going to give you just a little bit more in terms of the history and the thinking behind determining what is and is not authoritative or actually not even determining it, recognizing what is and isn't authoritative.

The authority comes from God and from His Spirit and this is what Peter gives us. The authority is there because men who speak under the impulse and the carrying along of the Holy Spirit, these are the ones we listen to. The authority is intrinsic to the book and it is up to us to identify and recognize those authoritative books.

We don't grant them authority, we recognize their authority. In the same way that we don't grant Jesus authority, we recognize His authority. So that's where we'll pick up when we come back from the break.