

Two witnesses

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[0 : 00] You have to Peter chapter 1. We'll be looking particularly at verses 12 to 21. Let's pray and ask God to help us. Lord, we've just sung that you are a God who speaks.

And Lord, we pray that you would indeed speak to us again through your living words. Do us all much, much good as we spend these few minutes looking at it now. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

This morning, as a number of you know, I was running in the 2024 Brighton Half Marathon. And I was very thankful after something that happened to me this week that I was running on firm concrete ground.

On Wednesday afternoon, I took myself off for a run. And just as I was entering into Preston Park, found a load of wet, muddy leaves before me. And I thought, oh, Daniel, be careful. You could slip here.

So I decided to proceed with caution. And before I knew it, I was on the ground. So I was thankful for the firm foundations of the roads of Brighton and Hove today when I was running.

[1 : 36] What's that got to do with 2 Peter? Well, Peter, so far in this letter, has been encouraging us to make every effort to be growing in godliness.

And as he says in verse 10, if you do this, you will never stumble. And he encourages us that we are heading home, heading home for a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But is this really the, is the Lord Jesus Christ really the right foundation to be building our lives on? Is living for him and seeking to grow in godliness, is that really going to keep us from stumbling? Is that really going to lead us to living with the Lord Jesus forever? And is it really worth living in light of his coming?

Which some, as Peter talks about in this letter, are casting doubt upon? Well, Peter believes so.

[2 : 57] And he has two witnesses in this passage to prove the worth, value, and indeed the certainty of building our lives on the firm foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But before we get there, notice in these first few verses, in verses 12 to 15, there's a bit of urgency to Peter's writing here.

Verse 13, Peter knows he's not got a lot longer to live.

And he's writing these things with a sense of urgency. I want you to know these things. I want to pass these things on to you before I go.

So this letter feels like it has a bit of urgency in Peter's mind. These things must be communicated. What things were, well, he's speaking in verse 12 of reminding them of these things.

[4 : 24] And verse 15, And I will make every effort to see that after my departure, you will always be able to remember these things. What are these things?

Well, we've seen already that Peter, right at the beginning of the letter, has reminded us of the gospel. Reminded us of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Reminding us that we boast, not in our own work to save us, but entirely in the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And God has equipped us with all that we need to be growing in godliness. And as I've already said, Peter encourages us to make our own efforts, make every effort to grow confident that God has equipped us to be able to grow in godliness.

With everything that we need to do that. He knows it's important for them to remember these things. Even though it seems from verse 12, that the Christians he's writing to are mature believers.

[5 : 48] Even though we know them, you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. He's writing to mature believers, but they need reminding of these things.

And many of us in this room are, by God's grace, mature believers. Peter says it's important to remember these things.

Don't forget the gospel. Don't forget that God has given everything you need to grow in godliness. And don't forget where you're going.

Don't forget that you're heading to receive a rich welcome in the Lord Jesus Christ. And Peter wants us to know with great certainty that what we believe and who we are living for is trustworthy.

He wants us to know that we are building our lives on solid ground and not on sinking sands. And perhaps he is particularly concerned about this because of false teachers which are around.

[7:08] Chapter 2 that we'll at least begin to look at next week is a chapter devoted entirely to false teachers.

And in chapter 3 Peter says that there are people who are casting doubt on the Lord Jesus' return. If they cast doubt on that, if Jesus isn't returning, then what's the point in living these godly lives? If he's not returning, then there's no judgment.

And if there's no judgment, well, live as you please. But Peter speaks here very clearly of the certainty we can have in the Lord Jesus.

And particularly of the certainty we can have about his return. Verse 16. For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power.

[8:10] That coming, don't think of Christmas, think of his return, second return to earth.

That's what Peter is referring to in that verse. And so with that context in mind, he calls two witnesses to help us see very clearly this is sure, this is certain.

And calling two witnesses, it's a thoroughly biblical idea. Deuteronomy 19 verse 15 says, One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of a crime or offence they may have committed.

A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. So Peter calls two witnesses. Verses 16 through to 21.

We're going to see who they are in just a moment. And he calls them because of the disputes around. Is Christ returning or not?

[9:18] Well, the first witness is eyewitness testimony. Verse 16 again. Christ is coming again in power.

That's the truth that Peter is defending. And to prove that to us, he is taking us back to the transfiguration. Which some of us on Wednesday evening were reading in Mark's gospel.

Peter, James, John went up the mountain with Jesus. And they saw him transfigured before them. They saw his face shining like the sun.

And his clothes became as white as light. Or as we read in Mark on Wednesday. So white that whiter than anybody in the world could bleach them.

They saw in that event an incredible glimpse of the majestic glory of Jesus.

[10:34] Jesus. And one day this Lord Jesus, who they saw in the mountain glorified. He's going to return in power.

The whole world, the whole human race will see his majestic glory. But not only did they see it with their eyes.

Not only did they gaze on his kingly brightness. In his face and his clothes which became dazzling white. They also heard the voice of the Father.

Verse 17. He received honor and glory from God the Father. When the voice came to him from the majestic glory. Saying, this is my son whom I love.

With him I am well pleased. They heard with their ears. The voice of God the Father saying, this is my son.

[11:41] He's reliable. He is who he says he is. Listen to him. Oh. Someone's ringtone. And so they heard with their ears.

And they saw with their eyes. The incredible glory of Jesus. The son of God.

What an experience it must have been. And it so impacted them. That Peter writes about it here.

And uses as evidence. Evidence to say this truly is the Lord Jesus. This truly is the son of God. He will do as he said he would.

And return again in judgment. And so readers. You are right to be building your life on him.

[12:46] We have really seen him. But those who are spreading doubt on Jesus' return. And maybe even some of us this evening.

May say, well it's all very well for you Peter. If I heard a voice from heaven. Then sure, I'd believe too.

How do I know it's true? Well this is eyewitness testimony. And it's not just Peter's.

It's James and John. They were with Jesus on the mountain too. News reports. Police investigations.

They will look for eyewitness testimony. To piece together what has happened in certain events.

Who's involved? Can we be sure of this? Well yes. They've seen it with their own eyes.

[13:47] And what they've said matches up with what they've said. I heard a series of podcasts last year.

On a slightly niche topic. The assassinations of Queen Victoria. The assassination attempts of Queen Victoria. And time and time again.

As they look back on the history records. So many evidence came from eyewitness testimony. Peter is saying.

We have really seen. We have really heard. The Lord Jesus. We were there. On that mountain. Not just me. James and John too.

If it was just Peter. Then we could well say. Maybe he was hallucinating. But I have not two. But three people hallucinating.

[14:44] The same thing. Well that's. Basically impossible. And so Peter says. We've seen his glorious majesty.

The Lord Jesus is. Coming again. In power. He is. He says he is. He says. And so.

Making every effort. To be growing in godliness. Living in light. Of the return of the Lord Jesus. It is not building our lives.

On sand. It is building our lives. On something firm. Of. But it is not just the eyewitness testimony. To prove it. There is also the prophetic witness. Verses 19 to 21.

[15:49] We also have the scriptures. The Old Testament scriptures. The prophets. Verses. And you will do well. To listen to them. As you will do well.

To listen to the Lord Jesus. That's the sort of. Thing that's going on. In these verses. It's reliable. Pay attention. Listen to it.

And so. What does Peter say? Verse 19. We also have. The prophetic witness. As something. Completely reliable. And you will do well.

To pay attention to it. As to a light. Shining. In a dark place. Until the day dawns. And the morning star. Rises. In your hearts.

I had a really. Helpful illustration. Last Sunday. When. When I was. Having some time off. And being at another church. Helpful illustration.

[16:48] Of the Old Testament. Scriptures. Of the prophets. Who speak in them. And the. The preacher was saying. They are like. Moons. So.

Hopefully. You understand this right. The moon. Shines its light. To earth. In the dark. So that we have. A light. Shining. When it's. When it's dark. But. But the moon.

Doesn't get. Its own light. It gets. Its light. From the sun. Which. Which reflects. Off it. To earth. And. The. The illustration. Is. Sort of saying. The prophets. The Old Testament. Scriptures. That they are like. Moons. Shining. Light. In a dark. World. But they.

The light. They shine. It's not from them. It's not their own. It's the light. Of Christ. And so. When we get. To the New Testament. We see.

[17:45] Him. Rising. Like. The morning star. As Peter describes. Here. The morning star. Himself. Rising. It was night.

And that the moon. Was shining. The Lord was speaking. Through. Human servants. But. But now. He's here. The son.

Of God. Himself. Has. Come. And now. He speaks. Verse 20.

Above all. You must. Understand. That no. Prophecy. Of scripture. Came about. By the prophet's. Own. Interpretation. Of things. For prophecy. Never had. Its origin. In the human. Will.

But prophets. Though human. Spoke from God. As they were. Carried along. By the Holy Spirit. It is God. Who speaks.

[18:42] Through. The prophets. Down there. Towards the end. Of verse 21. It tells us. That the prophets.

Though human. Spoke from God. As they were. Carried along. By the Holy Spirit. And the image. We should have there. Is. Is kind of. Of a. Of a sailing boat. A boat. That has sails. On it. But it needs. Wind. In order to. Carry the boat. Along. Power it along. And what Peter.

Is saying. Is that the human. Author. The human prophet. That's not enough. That they can't speak. God's word. On their own. They need the spirit. Of God. Working in them.

Speaking. Through them. Otherwise. They're going to be. Powerless. Without the spirit. It's an empty. Powerless. Work. Words. But with God.

[19:37] At work. By his spirit. The prophets. Were able. To speak. God's. Unchanging. Life giving. Words. Just as we sung. In that. That song. Just now. And so.

The source. Of our confidence. In the scriptures. Is from God. Who speaks. God. Who speaks. Through. The human.

Author. There. And just for. A couple of moments. Let's just turn up. Some. Some old testament. Scriptures.

Shall we. So. First of all. Exodus. 4. Exodus. 4. Verse. 10. The screen says.

Verse 10 to 12. My notes. Say. Verse 10 to 17. So. We'll see where we go. Exodus. Chapter 4. Definitely from. Verse 10. Moses said to the Lord.

[20:45] Pardon your servants. Lord. I've never been eloquent. Neither in the past. Nor since you. Have spoken to your servant. I am slow.

Of speech. And tongue. And the Lord said to him. Who gave. Human beings. Their mouths. Who makes them deaf. Or mute. Who gives them sight.

Or makes them blind. Is it not I. The Lord. Now go. I will help you speak. And teach you.

What to say. Moses. Is going to speak. Speak. Because God. Is going to.

Teach him. What to say. Going to give him. The words. To say. And that's. Echoed.

[21:38] That sort of. Repeated. Further down. When. After Moses. Protests. And says. Lord. Send me someone else. To speak. And so. His brother.

Aaron. Is. Given to him. But verse 15. Says. You shall. Speak to him. And put words. In his mouth. I will help. Both of you.

Speak. And will teach you. What to do. He will speak. To the people. For you. And it will be. As if. He were. Your mouth. And as if. You were God. To him.

It is God. Who's going to speak. Through. Moses. And Aaron. It's God. At work. Speaking. Through the human being.

Just a couple. Of other places. Jeremiah. Chapter 1. 4. To 11. Jeremiah. Chapter 1. 4.

[22:36] To 11. As we. We're sort of. Checking. What Peter. Is saying. See. Jeremiah coming just after Isaiah.

Jeremiah chapter 1, verse 4 to 11. The word of the Lord came to me saying, Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.

Before you were born, I set you apart. I appoint you as a prophet to the nations. Alas, sovereign Lord, I said, I do not know how to speak.

I am too young. But the Lord said to me, Do not say I am too young. You must go to everyone I send you and to say whatever I command.

Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you, declares the Lord. Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, I have put my words in your mouth.

[23:49] See today, I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.

I'll stop reading there. The Lord says to Jeremiah as he's called to be a prophet of the Lord, I have put my words in your mouth.

And final passage, Ezekiel chapter 3. So we've got Jeremiah, then we've got Lamentations, and then we come to Ezekiel.

And Ezekiel chapter 3, verse 1 to 3, first of all. And he said to me, Son of man, eat what is before you. Eat this scroll. Then go and speak to the people of Israel.

So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said to me, Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you, and fill your stomach with it.

[24:57] So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth. And then verse 10 and 11. And he said to me, Son of man, listen carefully, and take to heart all the words I speak to you.

Go now to your people in exile and speak to them. Say to them, this is what the sovereign Lord says, whether they listen or fail to listen.

Ezekiel has this sign of eating this scroll, eating the Lord's words. And he will be able to open his mouth and speak the words of the Lord.

Peter is right. Prophecy never had its origin in the human will. But prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

God gives them the words to say. They are his words. And so the prophetic message is another, the second, sure and reliable witness.

[26 : 10] The prophetic message are words from the unchanging God of heaven. And so we'll do well to pay attention to them.

And so coming back to sort of the main point of things, why I think Peter is talking, showing us these two witnesses.

Is there any point of living in light of Jesus' return? Is Jesus really coming? Is he who he says he is? Is he worth following?

Well, absolutely yes. And so is it worth making every effort to be growing in godliness? Is it worth battling with sin and temptations which come our way?

Is it worth gathering here on a Sunday evening to hear from God's word, to spend time with people, to be equipped to be living for the Lord?

[27 : 20] Well, yes. His word is sure and reliable. Jesus really is who he says he is.

The Old Testament prophetic message is a light shining in a dark place.

It's a faithful witness that points us to the morning star, to the glorious dawn of the Lord Jesus, who came into this world and who is coming again.

And we can be sure of that. Jesus is surely coming. And so we can live in light of his return with great certainty.

I'm going to pray. Father God, thank you. Thank you so much that you have spoken to us, spoken to this world's hundreds, thousands of years through the prophets, spoken your sure and unchanging words.

[28 : 36] And thank you that they point us to the glorious morning star, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has come into our world and is who he says he is.

He is God. And he will do what he says he will do. He will return again. And so, Father, we pray that you would help us, each one, to listen to your word, to listen to what Peter says and encourages us with, to live in light of his sure return.

Lord, help us. Help us to do that confident that you have given us everything we need to grow in godliness and confident, not in ourselves, but in the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, which alone can save.

And so we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.